

Today's "information society" - characterized by a complicated and often confusing network of impressions, opinions and actions - necessitates a continuous accompanying scientific monitoring and reliable experience, in order to succeed in the fight against errors, misuse, wrong ideas and misconceptions. This also applies to the public opinion about the natural relationship between crop production and the demand for mineral nutrients, which are an absolute necessity for every plant growth as is water, carbon dioxide, oxygen and energy. It is often forgotten that cropping means a permanent removal of mineral nutrients from the soil with the fate of being finally accumulated in waste and waste waters. It is a misbelief to think that an improvement of crop yield potential by breeding or gene manipulation can replace fertilization. On the contrary! - High-yielding varieties need more fertilizers and better management practice. A similar erroneous idea is disseminated by representatives of the "Ecological soil cultivation movement" operating without mineral fertilizers - or the belief that the nutrient exhaustion of the soil by intensive cropping could be compensated only by organic fertilizing materials without nutrient control.

All these problems and others (recycling of nutrients from waste and waste waters, etc.) demand intensive, informative explanations in the public, in order to take into account the eminent role and function of fertilizers in the maintenance of a sustainable management of soil cultivation.

Since its foundation in 1933, CIEC has organized 11 World Congresses and 10 Symposia, and furthermore, numerous General Assemblies, of which some were combined with a scientific program having CIEC's character.

During this period, more than 2,000 representatives from 70 countries have actively contributed to these conferences by lectures, communications, discussion remarks, official speeches and other cooperative performances.

Thus, an enormous volume of scientific knowledge and experience has accumulated during nearly 65 years - a valuable mine, not only for historical studies of the complex "Crop Production and Fertilization", but also for new ideas and initiatives in relation to the increasing nutrition problems of the world.

To utilize such a rich source of scientific knowledge, CIEC has decided to publish a complete review of all programs of these international events on the occasion of the XIth World Congress in September 1997 in Gent (Belgium).

This review might be a suitable document for informing present-day agricultural scientists, experts and the interested public, what kind of fertilizer problems have been discussed in the course of more than half a century at international forums, and how the problems have changed during this period. Moreover, such a review may