

OBITUARY

Abdel-Aal Hassan Moubasher (1929–2018)



Professor Moubasher, the godfather of mycology in Egypt and Arab countries, is a great loss to mycology in the region. Born on 8 August 1929 in the Sharkia Governorate of Egypt, he graduated from Cairo University in 1951, gaining his PhD there in 1958 and a DSc in 1996. He was appointed as a Lecturer in Botany at Assiut University in 1959, where he remained for the rest of his career rising to be a Vice- President of the University in 1984 prior to his retirement in 1989 when he was appointed Emeritus Professor.

He sadly passed away on 17 June 2018 at the age of 88. We feel honoured to have known such a warm and inspirational figure, who demonstrated through his life just how much can be achieved by just one person with sufficient motivation and vision.

"It was a great shock for me to learn of Professor Moubasher's passing. He was a regular visitor to the International (formerly Commonwealth Mycological Institute at Kew), with which he had a relationship from the early 1960s. I met him there many times, and he first invited me to visit and teach in Assiut in 1985. He then sent two of his team to the Institute for more intensive training. As a scholar, he had a substantial output of research papers, and his 1993 well-illustrated and carefully documented book on soil fungi in Arab countries was a truly

tremendous achievement. But he was always keen to promote diverse aspects of mycology. When I last visited in 2007, I was amazed to see the new Mycological Centre building with teaching labs and collections of cultures and specimens running, and the range of courses starting to be offered; what an evolution from those early days! I feel honoured to have known such a warm and inspirational figure, who has demonstrated through his life just how much can be achieved by just one person with sufficient dedication and vision. His legacy will be the Centre he created, which I trust will go from strength to strength in the years ahead and become an increasingly important resource in the region".

“Professor David L Hawksworth CBE, Honorary President, International Mycological Association”

"I was sorry to learn that Prof. Moubasher has passed away. He was a pre-eminent figure of Egyptian mycology in particular, and Arab mycology in general. His achievements were many and impressive. They included a ground-breaking book on mycology of Qatar, and the establishment of an important centre for mycology in Assiut. His laboratory gave rise to several generations of mycologists not only in Egypt but also throughout the Arab world. His legacy will be felt for many years to come."

“Dr. David W. Minter, President of International Society for Fungal Conservation”

"The late Prof. A.H. Moubasher is, without contest, at the origin of the development of the science of soil mycology at the Middle East level, a theme of research to which he devoted himself after his doctoral thesis on fungi in relation with the major plant crop in Egypt, namely the cotton plant. After his Ph.D. degree from Cairo University he went on a leave to the International Mycological Institute. There he discovered the ‘tools and the dimension of the magic world of fungal taxonomy’. Upon his return and establishment at the new University of Assiut in Southern Egypt, he devoted his energy to the progress of our knowledge of this group of living organisms in this part of the world. His global scientific production is overwhelming but more important is his high level education activity judging by the fair number of young students he invested in this field of natural science. His success in the establishment of the Assiut University Mycological Centre at the turn of the last century is a keystone of his achievements. It makes no doubt his mycological companions will maintain and perpetuate his noteworthy scientific spirit".

“Dr. Jean Mouchacca, Natural History Museum, Paris, France”

"No real mycology in Egypt before Moubasher and indeed the credit for initiating real research concerned with Egyptian fungi must be given to late Professor Abdel-Al H. Moubasher (Botany Department, Faculty of Science, Assiut University). In the early 1960s, with colleagues and students, he broadened the scope of mycological research in Egypt by conducting many studies on fungi. These included aspects such as: cellulose-decomposition, thermophily, osmophily, seed and grain mycobiota, phylloplane fungi, mycotoxins, and aquatic fungi. Moubasher, with his colleagues and students, have published more than 250 scientific papers to date, and in 1993 he published his major contribution to mycology in the Arabic World, the lavishly illustrated Soil fungi of Qatar and other Arab Countries. He examined my PhD thesis in 2003 and his recommendation not for me but for all mycologists in Egypt is the road map till now. We lost a real scientist and humble professor, God bless his soul".

A. Professor Ahmed M. Abdel-Azeem,

University of Suez Canal, President of Arab Society for Fungal Conservation, International Mycological Association.