

José de Oliveira Pires Correia Contreiras  
(1914 - )

Doctor José Contreiras was born in Lisbon where he initiated his academic career in the Medical School (1932). Although he was a particularly successful student during the two preparatory years he then made a radical option and asked to be transferred to the College of Agricultural Sciences. He graduated as an Agronomical Engineer in 1939 and later (1942-1945) went as a graduate student to Cambridge (UK) where he returned in 1948 to obtain his PhD in Plant Physiology. Between 1940 and 1983 he was member of the research staff of the “Estação Agronómica Nacional” at Oeiras. Early in his career he was appointed to create a Department of Plant Physiology and in 1963 became senior researcher. Recipient of several pos-doctoral fellowships both in Europe (University of Brussels and Madrid) and in the USA (where he visited several universities and research centers during the fifties and sixties) he participated in a number of important international scientific programmes.

Other than his research activities he taught as invited Professor in the Faculty of Sciences of the Lisbon University (1969-1978) and has been often involved in consulting activities by ministerial appointment (Advanced Agricultural Studies of the Mediterranean in 1968; Committee for utilization of the exterior space in 1969; Re-structure of the Portuguese Science Foundation in 1974) but always declined official permanent positions.

His research interests were mainly focused on plant respiration and the enzymology of cellular oxidases. He published ca. 30 research papers, a few thematic articles in Encyclopedia, two biographical works and a newspaper section on science opinion. In the present he is engaged in writing a book on “Initiation on Chemical Thermodynamics”.

In 1994 he was nominated honorary member of the Portuguese Society of Biochemistry by occasion of the Symposium on Plant Physiology “Dr. Jose Contreiras” held on the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Lisbon. In 1996 he was made Doctor “honoris causa” by the University of Lisbon.