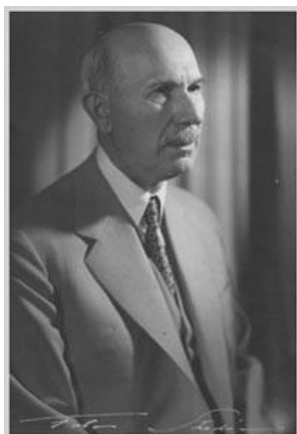


## PERSONALITIES FROM THE MERIDIANS OF THE ENGINEERING UNIVERSE



**Gheorghe Ionescu** -**Șișești** was born on the 16th of October in Șișești de Jos, a village situated along river Coșuștea, Mehedinți county. His father, Constantin Ionescu, the village's priest and his mother, a housewife, grew up their 11 children with love, and they educated the 8 ones who lived,

four boys and four girls. Gheorghe was the first born and he remained the first in everything.

### His life story

He attended the primary school in his native village, where his teacher, Mr. Trandafirescu gathered all the children in one room and taught them the lessons from 1st grade to 5th grade. Gheorghe listened carefully all the lessons and this may be reason he managed to understand how magic the study is. He also enjoyed practical lessons about agriculture and its secrets. His father was very content and believed that his son will follow the same career as his, and this is why he took him the Theological Seminary in Râmnicu Vâlcea. The clerks from the seminar didn't take into account the knowledge or the dreams of candidate Gheorghe Ionescu. He was too young, so he wasn't admitted. The priest Constantin Ionescu thought that his son could stay at home for one year, but he changed his mind and sent him to „Traian” High school from Turnu Severin, wanting to transfer him after one year. But, everything went for the best. The student Gheorghe Ionescu, hard-working, disciplined, intelligent, was quickly observed by his teachers. He got a scholarship and then, in the 4th grade he participated to a contest organized in Bucharest by

“Tinerimea Română” Society and he took the first prize. He simply was the best. In 1905 he graduated the high school, getting two degrees: one for sciences, other for humanities. He was also the first. From that moment on he could choose any career. He decided to become an agricultural engineer. Although his professors were amazed by his decision, they supported him to go to the

Superior School of Agriculture in Hohenheim. The manager of „Traian” High school and other 17 teachers signed a petition that contained a description of all his exceptional qualities. Moreover, they got a financial annual aid paid from the county's budget.

In the autumn of 1906, after completing his military duty as a volunteer, he started classes and he got his diploma on the 9th of March 1909 with the mention “*Very well to excellent*”. He was remarked for his analytical mind and he was advised to continue his studies at University of Jena, Department of Agriculture in order to get his Ph.D. diploma. He chose a subject related to his village: *The Agriculture of Romania*. On the 11th of February 1911 he got his Ph.D. diploma „*in agriculture, botanics and political economy*” with the distinction *magna cu laude*. He was the second Romanian who got this diploma at University of Jena. The first one was Grigore Antipa who got in 1892 the Ph.D. diploma in natural sciences.

### Research, part of his life

In autumn of 1911 he was hired as agricultural engineer at Clenciu-Spanțov farm in Ilfov County. The farm belong to the state, so he was able to use all his skills as a researcher. He had come from Germany with many ideas regarding the modernization of Romanian agriculture. He made numerous scientific experiments for improving the quality of wheat, corn, peas and beans. He presented most of his results at the Agriculture Congress that took place between 18-20 November 1912. The Minister of Agriculture remarked the originality of his paper and the innovating solutions proposed by him and he offered the young researcher a job as administrator of the farm belonging to Central School of Agriculture from Herăstrău. He started his teaching career here, in 1913 as a coordinator of students' practical activities. In 1915 this institution was transformed in an academic institute and it is entitled “*The Superior School of Agriculture from Herăstrău*”, and Gheorghe Ionescu was appointed associate professor, and then head of the Department of General Agriculture. He maintained this position until 1958. Research was part of his life, so in 1928 he founded the Central Institute of Agricultural Research where “*the first complex agriculture researches, systematically organized all over the*

country" took place. Twelve experimental research stations were also founded. The purpose of these researches was to obtain highly qualitative species of wheat and corn, to obtain a different use of fertilizers on different types of soil, to apply new methods of improving the sandy soils. In 1943 the A 15 wheat was obtained by selection and cross breeding. These species has a higher productivity and it was cultivated on more than 2 milion hectares until 1965. He also paid attention to theoretical aspects, formulating "the law of harmonic proportions of greenery factors". Moreover, during a conference held at the General Association of Romanian Engineers –AGIR, he said: "The modern life develops under the sign of mathematics, being neccessary to biologists, economists, but also to artists". For these activities he is considered to be the most important personalities of agricultural Romanian school of the XX-th century.

#### He wrote since his youth.

His first article was written during high school and it was entitled *The rural matter* and it was published in *Albina* magazine. During his military service (1906) he started to collaborate with *Ramuri* magazine from Craiova where he published articles and short stories for 60 years. As a student in Germany he published specialized articles in several magazines: *Câmpul și Jurnalul Societății Centrale Agricole din România*. Iată câteva titluri : *Pășunatul vitelor* , *Livezile și îngijirea lor*, *Analiza laptelui*. He continuously wrote until 1961: *Contribuții la studiul grâului românesc din punct de vedere fitotehnic (1916)* ,*Lunca Dunării și punerea ei în valoare (1933)*, *Rapița (1934)*, *Cultura porumbului (1936)* ,*Principalele tipuri de soluri din România (1939)*, *Agrotehnica (1947)*, *Buruienile și combatearea lor (1955)* , *La mise en valeur des terrains érodés en Roumanie (1961)* and the list may continue.

#### Professional Acknowledgment.

In 1925, at Grigore Antipa's proposal, he became part of the Romanian Academy as a associate member, and in 1935 as a full member, increasing the number of members from Oltenia. He was elected vice-president of the Romanian Academy on the 25th of May 1936. He also held this position between 1938 and 1941, 1959 and 1961 respectively. In 1961 he was elected the President of the Romanian National Society of Soil Sciences. He hept this position until the end of his life. He was minister of Agriculture between 1931-1932, 1937-1938 and 1939-1940. He received several extremely valuable distinctions and medals:

"*Steaua României*"-1921; "*Coroana României*"-1922; "*Croix de Commandeur de L'Ordre de Merite agricole*"-1924; "*Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur*"-1930(Franța); "*Steaua României cl. I*"-1938; "*Grand officier de la Legion d'Honneur*"-1940 (The French Government). He never forgot his village. He always remembered his teacher, Mr. Trandafirescu and the conditions he studies during his first years ; this is why he built a new school in his native village, Șișeștii de Jos, between 1939 și 1940. Despite all this, he considered himself "an ordinary man who tried to do his duty wherever he worked".

Gheorghe Ionescu Șișești died on the 4th of July 1967 , Otopeni.

*Column written by professor eng .Gheorghe Manolea, University of Craiova, Doctor Honoris Causa of Technical University of Moldova from Chișinău*