



RYLSKA, IRENA (IRIT)

Irena was born in Krakov, Poland, in 1923

After having survived the worst of all in concentration camps during the Holocaust, in 1951-1956 she studied agriculture, specializing in horticulture at the Higher School of Agriculture in Warsaw, Poland. In 1957 she received a MEng degree for her work on the influence of mineral nutrition on plant transpiration. During the years 1955-1957 she worked in the vegetable biology laboratory of the genetic institute of the Polish Academy of Science.

She emigrated to Israel in 1958 and shortly after began working in the vegetable division of the Field Crops Institute in the Agricultural Research Station (later ARO).

From the start of her work in the vegetable division (under the guidance of Dr. Slomnitzki) Irena Rilska worked on experiments in tomato winter cultivation under plastic – at first in low tunnels, later in walk-through tunnels and greenhouses. Her experiments and trials were carried out in close cooperation with growers throughout Israel, and in particular in the Arava in the desert south. Her research greatly advanced the growing of fresh tomatoes and peppers for export.

Together with Dr. Slomnitzki she also worked on some topics related to potatoes, such as: Breaking of dormancy, adaptation of the crop to the Negev region, and the breeding of local varieties resistant to Scabies and adapted to short-day growing.

Irena earned her PhD degree on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1972 for her thesis on “The effect of sub-optimal temperatures on flowering, fruit –setting and fruit-development in sweet pepper”.



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In 1985 Dr. Rilska was appointed as head of the Vegetable Division in ARO, a position she held till retirement in 1991. The then head of the Field Crops Institute, highly appreciating her contribution, said about her: "She is a professional leader, initiates research programs and development trends, and possesses rich experience in protected crops".

Dr. Rilska was also an active member of the lead team in the joint Middle East US-Egypt-Morocco-Israel Cooperation Research program MERC.

The agricultural community of Israel, including hundreds of vegetable growers from north to south, appreciate 'Irit' as they call her lovingly for her untiring dedication to them and their needs throughout her long career. She knows them all, was there always to advise them, participated in all regional meetings, and made a real contribution.