



BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

First Legume Society Conference
2013: A Legume Odyssey

9-11 May 2013, Novi Sad, Serbia

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Book of Abstracts

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International Legume Society
Institute of Field and Vegetable Crops, Novi Sad, Serbia
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Legumes in Serbian folklore

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Legumes such as chickpea (*Cicer arietinum* L.), lentil (*Lens culinaris* Medik.), pea (*Pisum sativum* L.) and bitter vetch (*Vicia ervilia* (L.) Willd.) have been present in the everyday life of both Neanderthal and modern humans. Their primary role was food, but they were also regarded as plants with both medicine and supernatural properties. There are many records related to faba bean (*Vicia faba* L.) and other grain legumes in ancient Greece and Rome, as well as to common bean (*Phaseolus vulgaris* L.) in Aztec, Maya and Inca civilisations. Serbs are a South Slavic and originally Indo-European ethnic group, located mainly in Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and other neighbouring countries. The folklore of Serbs resembles those of other Slavic peoples and is intermingled with the one by the Pre-Slavic Balkan tribes. Plants are generally extensively present in the Serbian folklore, comprising cultivated crops, wild plants and numerous trees and shrubs. Like in the popular beliefs of other Indo-European peoples, faba bean had a strong chthonic character, representing a dish that was cooked and dedicated to the dead, especially to the ancestors of a family. It was also used and is still sporadically used in rural areas for divination. Faba bean has also been linked with fertility and was believed powerful enough to make women conceive by simply being consumed. In recent times, the role of faba bean was completely or fully replaced by common beans, following the advance of the latter in the agriculture of the Balkan peoples. Lentil shared certain features with faba bean, especially as a chthonic food, but was mostly regarded as a medicine. Yellow sweet clover (*Melilotus officinalis* (L.) Lam.) was regarded as a mighty protection from any disease, especially when held in wreaths above the house door. Red clover (*Trifolium pratense* L.) was also a talisman, especially the plants with four leaves, against any evil or disease, for 'unlocking any door' or finding out any secret, as well as in practical magic acts related to love, that is, to make someone falling in love with its owner. The last century witnessed a rapid degradation of many rural areas in Serbia and neighbouring countries, leading to an irreversible loss of traditional ways of life, including popular beliefs. Recent trends of reviving local communities could contribute to preserving many traditions, such as rich and unique folklore.

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In the rich world of global agriculture, diverse legumes can play key roles to develop environment-friendly production, supplying humans and animals with the products of high nutritional value.

The Legume Society was initiated in 2011 with two primary missions. One of them was to treasure the rich legume research tradition of the European Association for Grain Legume Research (AEP), with emphasis on carrying out its the triennial legume-devoted conferences. Another one is to fulfill a long-term strategy of linking together the research on all legumes worldwide, from grain and forage legumes pharmaceutical and ornamental ones and from the Old World to the Americas.

We do anticipate that the First Legume Society Conference will be a unique and genuine contribution to our common goals: to promote the legume research and all its benefits into all spheres of the society, linking science with stakeholders and decision-makers, and to demonstrate how an efficient, useful and firm network of the legume researchers of the world is possible and sustainable.

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