

FRIEDRICH AUGUST FERDINAND CHRISTIAN WENT
1863-1935

Frits Went was born in Amsterdam on 18 June 1863, the son of a stockbroker. After his primary and secondary education (HBS), he enrolled at the university of Amsterdam in 1880 to study biology. He studied under H. de Vries and received his doctorate in 1886 on an anatomical-physiological dissertation on vacuoles. In 1887 Went studied with E.A. Strasburger in Bonn and Ph.E.L. van Tieghem in Paris. From 1888 to 1891 Went studied at the Zoological Station in Naples and at 's Lands Plantentuin in Buitenzorg (the botanical gardens of the Dutch East Indies, now Kebun Raya at Bogor, Indonesia).

From 1891 to 1896 Went was director of the sugar-cane experimental station at Kagok on Java. His chemical-physiological research on the diseases of sugar-cane resulted in the standard work on these diseases, written together with J.H. Wakker, *De ziekten van het suikerriet op Java* (1898). During his stay in the Dutch East Indies, the tropical flora and fauna made a deep impression on Went. While there, he also admired M. Treub's work on science and agriculture.

In 1896 Went was appointed professor of botany at the university of Utrecht, where he taught botany and pharmacology. His tenure at Utrecht was characterized by an enormous growth in the number of students in botany. In 1918 a new, modern, Botanical Laboratory was established, where Went expanded his plant-physiological researches into many areas, especially temperature responses, tropisms, and auxins (growth hormones). He encouraged many students to do graduate work in plant physiology: between 1896 and 1934 he directed 65 dissertations.

In 1902, Went married Johanna Emilie Rosalie Adolfine Susewind. The couple had two daughters and three sons. The oldest son, F.W. Went, also became a botanist. He was the first to get a Ph.D. under his father on auxin studies.

Went was very influential scientist, in advisory functions, in popular writings, and in serving on national and international boards. After World War I he promoted the re-establishment of contacts between scientists from the various belligerent nations. At home Went's advice was sought by government committees on colonial agriculture and on scientific matters in general. In 1907 Went brought the Centraal Bureau voor Schimmelcultures (Central Bu-

reau for Fungus Cultures, CBS), an institution for the study and preservation of fungi and yeasts, founded by him in 1903, under the direction of J. Westerdijk. Went became a member of the Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1898 and was president of the division of natural sciences from 1921 to 1931. He presided over the Dutch Botanical Society from 1905 to 1915 and from 1920 to 1925.

In the 1920s Went was chairman of a government committee named after him, which prepared the establishment of the *Organisatie voor Toegepast Natuurwetenschappelijk Onderzoek* (TNO; Organization for Applied Natural Scientific Research; 1930). He served as TNO's first president.

After his retirement in 1934, Went was offered an extraordinary professorship in general botany at the university of Leiden, but ill health prevented him from actually giving lectures. He died on 24 July 1935 in Wassenaar, near Leiden, honored with several doctorates honoris causa and with memberships in numerous national and international scientific societies.

Primary works

Bibliographies in 'Went-nummer', Koningsberger, *Went*, and Küster, 'F.A.F.C. Went' (see below).

Letters in the libraries of the universities of Leiden and Utrecht.

Secondary sources

'Went-nummer', *Vakblad voor Biologen* 14 (1933) 189-224, with a bibliography; V.J. Koningsberger, *Prof.Dr. F.A.F.C. Went. Herdenkingscollege, gehouden in het Botanisch Laboratorium te Utrecht op Woensdag, 9 October 1935* (s.l., s.n.: 1935), with a bibliography; J. van der Hoeve in: *Verslagen van de gewone vergadering der afdeling natuurkunde, Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen* 44 (1935) 90-95; E. Küster, 'F.A.F.C. Went', *Berichte der deutschen Botanischen Gesellschaft* 53 (1935-1936), with a bibliography, a list of dissertations and biographical literature; W.J. van der Schoor, 'Biologie en landbouw: F.A.F.C. Went en de Indische proefstations', *Gewina* 17 (1994) 145-161.

H.P. Bottelier, in *BWN*, vol. 1, 650-651; F.W. Went, in *DSB*, vol. 14, 255.

[L.C.P.]