

Juha Hirvilammi (Sarka – the Finnish Museum of Agriculture)

Victor Forselius. Innovator in Finnish agriculture in transition

Since the 1870s, the Turku-based Victor Forselius' trading house was the main supplier of agricultural machinery, fertilizers and animal feed. The new agricultural technology in disseminating Forselius can be considered to have had a significant effect on the increase of the Finnish economy. Business sold its products all over the country. An important tool were printed catalogues, which Forselius published more than 300. Initially, he sold mainly imported goods, but while the domestic production increased, the product range was mainly locally manufactured agricultural technology.

Victor Forselius was the son of Huittinen's parish clerk. As a farm boy, he learned all about Finnish farming of the time at home. He became an orphan at the age of 12, but graduated from high school and graduated from the Helsinki University with a master's degree in 1864, majoring in zoology. He studied in Germany, Gera trade academy and attended at the University of Leipzig Wilhelm Roscher, that time the authority of economics, lectures. By his education in economics, Forselius was the absolute top among businessmen of his time in Finland.

Forselius led to the 1866-1873 school Turku School of Economics and renewed it significantly. During his presidency, inter alia, the facility received the first female students. He published the eighth editions of the first commercial calendar in 1871-1903 (Finland Handelskalender).

Forselius started in imports in 1868 and became in the 1870s the main agricultural machinery and equipment, such as plows, sowing, mowing and threshing machines as well as tools, seeds, fertilizers and animal feed, supplier. Besides those, the dairy equipment were the strongest field for Forselius. Large part of the trade in the 1870s was the machinery for the dairies, mills and sawmills. Power machines, especially in the English Ruston, Proctor & Co.'s steam engines were an important category.

Forselius business was with the Helsinki-based P. Sidorow (founded in 1873) among the first agricultural sector specialists in Finland. Only in the 1890s, two other major competitors arrived (Agros Oy, Suomen Maanviljelijäin Kauppa Oy). Forselius business became a limited company in 1903, and it continued to operate after his death. Depression of the 1930s brought down the company; the bank merged it 1932 into SMK, which subsequently ended up in the Finnish cooperative union (SOK).

One of particular interest of Forselius was poultry care. He is a pioneer in this field in Finland. He sold his field supplies and imported breed chickens, as well as other new livestock breeds. He founded the association Friends of poultry in 1896, was the editor of the association's magazine and book series and wrote, among other things chicken care guides. At Huittinen, his home parish, he had the estate of Pelto-Laurila, which he used for farming experiments. He held there chicken care courses, as well as courses in beekeeping.