

In memoriam: Antonio Sotomayor-Ríos

October 28, 2025

Antonio Sotomayor-Ríos

Antonio (Tony) Sotomayor-Ríos, a member (60 years) and Fellow of ASA and CSSA, passed away peacefully on June 7, 2025 in San Juan, Puerto Rico in the company of his closest family. He contributed to agricultural science research and education throughout his professional life and well past his retirement. He was a respected scientist, educator, adviser, and philanthropist.

Sotomayor-Ríos was born on Sept. 9, 1931, in Maricao, Puerto Rico. He earned his B.Sc. degree in 1952 from the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) in Mayagüez and his M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees in 1958 and 1964, respectively, from Purdue University. Upon returning to the island in 1964, his early research included the introduction, field evaluation, cytology, and taxonomy of tropical grasses while working for the Agricultural Experiment Station of the UPR.

During 1973–1974, he was visiting professor at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras, which brought new professional contacts, ideas, and prospective students

who would later go on to earn graduate degrees under his mentorship. He later returned to Mayagüez where he taught and continued research in tropical forages before transitioning in 1975 to a position as research geneticist with the USDA-ARS Tropical Agriculture Research Station (TARS) in Mayagüez. His research during those years included improvement of maize, sorghum, millet, forage grasses, and legumes for the tropics.

From 1980 until his retirement in 1997 he was research leader for the USDA-ARS-TARS and for USDA-ARS Germplasm Introduction and Research Unit in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. He directed and led an important program in agricultural technology for college graduates from Puerto Rico and Caribbean Basin countries for many years. After his retirement from USDA-ARS, he taught at UPR-Mayagüez until 2001 and served as interim Dean and Director from 1998 to 1999.

Sotomayor-Ríos participated in many professional activities, including serving on advisory boards, in editorial positions of journals, membership in professional societies, and other service positions. Of special note is his service (i) on the Sorghum Crop Advisory Committee, National Plant Generic Resources Board of CSSA and ASA and (ii) as chairman of the ASA Membership Committee from 1978 to 1987. He was a founding member and served as president of the Caribbean Food Crops Society. He authored and coauthored more than 120 papers, abstracts, and technical publications.

Sotomayor-Ríos lived an enjoyable and fruitful retirement, first in his coffee farm in Barrio Limón in Mayagüez and later in the mountains of Caimito in the company of his wife Carmín Bueso. During those last years, he was able to expand his knowledge by exploring new ideas in plant breeding while growing heliconias, anthurium, tropical roses, and other plants. He dedicated much time towards strengthening agricultural civic organizations such as The Heliconia Society of Puerto Rico and Club Horticultura

del Oeste.

Tony Sotomayor-Ríos was loved and cherished by family, including his four children Antonio, Ramón, David (who is an active member of ASA and SSSA), and Brenda from his marriage with his wife Diana Ramírez-Tió who passed in 1992. Sotomayor-Ríos was deeply loved by 12 grandchildren, whom in turn he adored and admired. He followed his siblings and grandchildren in all their personal and professional activities. He will be remembered as a person of strong integrity yet with a special capacity to form personal connections. He will be loved as a truly generous and unselfish father, grandfather, academic, and professional.

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