



IFMA18 Congress – Delegate Evaluation Survey Report

18th International Farm Management Congress, Methven Resort Hotel, Methven, New Zealand

Sunday 20th March to Friday 25th March 2011.

Survey carried out during and after the congress

(Please see the attached delegate evaluation survey form at the end of the report)

A total of 100 completed forms were collected during the congress (60) and after by e-mail (40) – out of a possible 316 delegates. A 31.6% return.

Question 1 – Your country?

- Of the respondents 80% came from 7 countries – USA (21), New Zealand (20), UK and South Africa (9 each), Australia and Denmark (8 each), Canada (5). (Altogether 23 nationalities were represented at the congress).

Question 2 – Is this your first Congress?

- 41 answered ‘Yes’ – 59 answered ‘No’ – 41% and 59% of the respondents respectively (virtually the same mix as for IFMA17).

Question 3 – If ‘no’, how many previous congresses have you attended?

- The number of previous congresses attended ranged from 1-11 – the 59 who had attended a congress previously had attended 236 congresses between them, an average of 2.4 each.

Question 4 – Please indicate your age

- Age 30 or less = 7 (7%), Age 31-40 = 13 (13%), Age 41-50 = 23 (23%), Age 51-60 = 34 (34%), Age 61+ = 23 (23%). Again a similar mix to the IFMA17 survey – although a lower proportion in the younger age group.

Question 5 – Your Occupation?

- As expected the occupations of the delegates were many and varied. However the breakdown between Farmer / Farm managers, Consultant / Advisors (inc. Extension), Academic / Educators (inc. Students) and Researchers was complicated as several respondents were involved in more than one activity e.g. ‘farming and consulting’ or ‘education and consulting’. Some may have been involved across a wider number of activities than their entry indicated (e.g. Professor).
- As a result there were 105 activities entered (from 100 people) in these groups. 15 were Farmer / Farm managers, 35 were Consultant / Advisors, and 41 were Academic / Educators and 14 Researchers.

Question 6a – If you are involved in “farm management” in terms of overseeing or advising on a farm or farms – state the area you are involved in.

- There were 39 entries for this section with a total of 6,683,245 hectares (16,507,615 acres) – averaging 171,365 ha (423,271 ac) per entry. Of the total, 4m hectares (9.88m ac.) related to the President of the Agribusiness Club in the Ukraine. Consultants & Extension Advisors influenced 2.14m ha (5.29m ac.), and farmers and managers 0.55m ha (1.35m ac.).

Question 6b – If you are not filling in the above figure – how do you influence farm management?

- There were 26 ‘lecturers’ involved with the teaching of 6,276 students (range 10 to 2,000). There were 8 financial accountants and 33 “Others”.

Question 7 – How did you hear about IFMA18?

- Half of the respondents had heard about the congress by either attending IFMA17 or via IFMA Newsletters, 17 heard via NZIPIM notifications, 36 heard from Colleagues, 5 from Internet Searches, 15 from Conference Alerts (this is a specialist newsletter that advertises conferences where we had placed an advert but I wonder if some who ticked this box confused it with IFMA Newsletters about the congress), 2 claimed to hear about the congress by other means.

Question 8 – What were the main deciding reasons for you to attend this congress (tick up to 3)?

- There were 287 “ticked boxes” – of these: New Zealand had 65, Plenary Programme 25, Field Trip Programme 26, Combination of Papers and Field Trips 53, Pre and Post Tours available 17, International Networking 64, Opportunity to present a paper 30, and Other reason 7.

Questions 9 – 15 were rating evaluations - Excellent / Very Good / Good / Fair / Poor

Results are expressed as a percentage – rounded to the nearest full number for convenience

Question 9 – Plenary Sessions result (of 100 respondents)

- Excellent 60%, Very Good 35%, Good 5%, Fair 0%, Poor 0%

Question 10 – Contributed Papers result (99)

- Excellent 16%, Very Good 49%, Good 28%, Fair 5%, Poor 1%

Question 11 – Day Tours (98)

- Excellent 49%, Very Good 44%, Good 7%, Fair 0%, Poor 0%

Question 12 – Posters – of 84 respondents – some said they were not aware of their presence.

- Excellent 7%, Very Good 36%, Good 44%, Fair 10%, Poor 4%

Question 13 – Social Program (94)

- Excellent 44%, Very Good 38%, Good 17%, Fair 1%, Poor 0%

Question 14 – Accommodation and arrangements (93)

- Excellent 37%, Very Good 44%, Good 18%, Fair 1%, Poor 0%

Question 15 – Overall how do you rate this Congress? (99)

- Excellent 48%, Very Good 47%, Good 4%, Fair 0%, Poor 0%

Question 16 – If you submitted a paper or poster Your assessment of the process?

48 respondents

- Excellent 58%, Very Good 31%, Good 6%, Fair 4%, Poor 0%

Question 17 – If you attended the Pre Congress Tour – 21 respondents

- Excellent 86%, Very Good 14%, Good 0%, Fair 0%, Poor 0%

Questions 18 – 21 requested written responses

Not all the respondents completed these – but only 4 made no comment to all questions. Most responded to at least some of the questions. There were of course lots of different suggestions and comments – so below are the ones that were mentioned most frequently or seemed most significant.

Question 18 – Please give two highlights of the Congress for you. (183 comments / possible 200)

- Where delegates had gone on the Pre Congress tour – (or the Post if survey submitted by e-mail) these were almost always listed as a highlight.
- Plenary Presentations as a group were often included as a highlight (25% of comments) - with Plenary Sessions 1, 2 and 3 each received several mentions. John Allen, Jacqueline Rowarth, Doug Avery and 'James' got individual mentions. Also the Rabobank, MFAT and Fonterra presentations.
- Field Trips as a whole (22% of comments) – but 'Mt Peel' was frequently listed separately. The Dairy and Arable field trips also had specific mentions.
- 'Networking' (15% of comments) – 'meeting and making new friends', 'socialising with international guests' all well appreciated and often listed. A frequent 'highlight' listed.
- On the social side – the social programme (4½% of comments) – with specific mentions of the BBQ (Lincoln) and the Dinner – but food at all meals was praised.
- 'Seeing the excellent team work', 'the excellent organisation', 'Field trips well run', 'good information', 'Methven's enthusiastic support for the event', 'the staff at the Methven Resort', 'the (quality of) people attending', (8% of comments)

Question 19 – Please give two areas where improvement could be made (93 comments / poss. 200)

- Accommodation – a few mentions, included: 'prefer single accommodation venue', 'inconsistency of standard', 'better & earlier information regarding' (but general understanding of the situation following earthquake in CH.)
- Contributed Papers - Whilst there had been 5 mentions of the Contributed Papers in the 'Highlights', there were many more comments in the improvement section: better programming of 'farm management' papers, more tightly themed, split the 'reviewed' from 'non-reviewed' papers, more time to move between papers, poor standard of some papers, shorten papers to 5 mins (speed dating format), give longer slots to better papers, rooms noisy, session chairs needed to be better informed, less slides (limit to 7), go straight to conclusions, and requirement for more information on the CP programme.
- Poster presentation comments: – 'positioning did not encourage reading', 'not enough time', 'people were not aware of them', 'needs a formal session'.
- Speakers – need to talk more slowly and clearly to assist non-English speaking delegates (several). Also 'always use microphones'. 'Longer discussion periods'.
- Programme – 'Days were too long', 'allow more free time' – 'Programme too long', 'end on Friday lunch time or soon after'.
- Lack of Internet and Email access was mentioned.
- Field trips – 'need chairs for long presentations', 'better arrangements and information regarding toilet breaks and facilities'.
- One or two mentioned there was too much emphasis on New Zealand in the content.
- There were several comments about the formal Dinner – the master of ceremonies poor taste jokes ('a disgrace to New Zealand') got several comments, also the amount of presentations by sponsors – too many and too long.
- Pre / Post tours – 'include all or most main meals in tour package'.
- 'Have a message board'.

Question 20 – How can more people be attracted to future Congresses? (107 comments)

- Inevitably there were several suggestions about the cost of attending, with lots of suggestions that we sponsor students, young farmers, people attending from developing countries etc. etc. Included identifying and listing possible sponsors – all much as suggested in previous congress evaluations.

- Having cheaper accommodation for students etc. Target students – scholarships for presenters, focus on young professionals.
- Better promotion - Promotion by linking-up with national farming organisations including young farmer organisations, agricultural economics societies, universities. Promote more strongly to farmers. Wider and more targeted promotion.
- Advertise the quality of speakers, the practical nature of congress, and the benefits to be gained from attending. Advertise in Journals and on websites of similar organisations.
- Changing the perception of the congress, improve appeal to wider ag. involved groups such as animal sciences, agronomy.
- Venue & Country must be attractive to delegates (one said avoid Africa for now). Good host country vital.
- Increase the amount of publicity through more channels. Delegates to send e-mail lists to Hon.Secretary. Extend to South America and Asia.
- Personal member promotion clearly seen as the no.1 means to get attendance – ‘Get members to promote the congress more’, ‘get them to pledge to bring another delegate’. ‘One-on-one marketing’. Word of mouth promotion. Use personal endorsements.
- One comment asked ‘did we really want larger congresses – this one was about right’.

Question 21 – Please add any comments you would like to make. (72 comments made).

Several of the comments here continued suggestions relating to Questions 18 and 19.

- A large number of congratulatory comments: ‘congratulations to the team’, ‘for overcoming the earthquake’, ‘outstanding job’, ‘world class’, ‘Organisers should get a gold medal’, ‘extremely well done’, ‘Exceptionally well run, tight scheduling, punctual. Content diverse, relevant, and plenaries well presented’, lots and lots of “thank you” s, ‘fantastic crew’, ‘great people and venue’, Tricia, Ann & Mark all got specific mentions. ‘Organisers should be proud’ and much more. The students were also highly appreciated. And a ‘Thanks to NZIPIM and Lincoln and Massey Universities’.
- Methven generally got the “thumbs up” from delegates, ‘Methven resort top class service & friendly staff’, ‘enjoyed community involvement’, ‘Methven resort was superb venue and place to stay’, ‘food was good all day’, ‘quaint location made for informal and rural feeling’.
- ‘Perhaps have other forms for presentations - workshops, discussion groups’.
- ‘Possibly allow more time for plenary discussion, reduce no of contributed paper sessions’
- ‘Consider taking congress to Africa soonest to really make it international, not Europe and NA only’.
- ‘Happy to have found IFMA, will attend Poland. Applaud change of Journal name’
- ‘Watch the cost for future congresses’. ‘Methven accommodation overpriced’.
- ‘Poster opportunity for young scientist - we missed out’

Question 22 – Would you attend an IFMA Congress in the following countries (2015 onwards)? Please number in order of preference 1st, 2nd and 3rd only.

No of respondents = 90 (however 2 or 3 people just put “all countries”, also some ranked the full five countries and some just one or two. In assessing each country’s score your reporter realised that all the options had to be given a rating – so any unranked countries were given an equal score amounting to number of unranked countries (i.e. there were 5 options – so scoring from 1 for best to 5 for least preference = 15 total points available – so if 3 countries are ranked on the form the unranked ones received 4 points each. The lowest number of points equals the most popular country.

- Scores were: China 200, Canada 216, Nigeria 325, Germany 267, France 271.

And / Or name another country:

- Other Countries suggested: There were many – but frequently mentioned but in no particular order were Russia (as well as other Central and Eastern European Countries), India, South America (Argentina, Brazil, Chile), the Scandinavian countries with Denmark most favoured, South Africa, Australia.

Question 23 – Optional – your name please: 78 respondents gave their name.

Conclusions

- Disappointing that not more delegates completed the forms – they were distributed earlier during the congress for collection near the main conference hall entrances and at reception – but the ‘trauma’ on Friday afternoon meant that many people missed them. It is pleasing that a further 40 were emailed in after Kerry Geertson’s e-mail appeal.
- The proportion of “first timers” was again higher than normal at 41% (due to higher than normal local attendance) – usually this is around 30%.
- The spread of the age grouping was somewhat better than we often believe – but clearly we would like more people in the 31-40 age group (those building their career and family – so more difficult for them to get away?).
- The mix of professional groups was much as we have come to expect, except that there was a strong research group in New Zealand. There seems to have been quite a large number of policy makers – government, bank etc. in the ‘Other’ section. We need to continue to work hard on attracting all groupings – but in particular in the farmer and consultant / advisor groups.
- The land area ‘managed or advised upon’ figure was much higher than for the US and should be used to attract sponsors. However more than half of the total land area influenced by the responders related to one person representing a country association. Again several people who could have answered this question chose not to. The addition of the new section on Lecturers was valuable with their impact on students.
- The question about where people heard about the congress strongly emphasises the importance of personal recommendations by members.
- The reader can make their own conclusions of the Ratings Questions (7-15), but these show that in general we have an excellent basic formula for the congress and that the 18th Congress was highly appreciated by virtually all attendees. In the important areas for those who attended - the content of plenary papers and day tours - it was very highly rated, and there were many good comments and expressions of thanks to the organisers and the venue providers.
- The Pre Congress tour was a great success getting universal approval and high praise from those who participated – (and I know this was also true for the Post Congress Tour).
- Internet and Email access are important – so good and adequate facilities including Wi-Fi for these should be provided if at all possible.
- Again Posters **must** be given a higher profile than we have achieved at the last two congresses. Some younger attendees like to use a Poster submission as a way to get funding to attend, and as a way to ‘try out’ IFMA congress attendance.
- As usual cost control in terms of Registration and Accommodation featured in the survey – a continuing struggle for the congress organisers when offering a great deal of diversity spread over a week.
- There were several requests that the congress end at Friday lunch time or very soon after to allow people to catch flights that day.
- In terms of preferred countries for congresses in the future China came out top of the list, but Canada was a very close second. The wide arrange of alternatives to the 5 countries listed is also interesting as it shows a keenness to visit all parts of the world, but we do need to have attendance at our congresses from many of these countries for us to be able to select suitable Congress Organisers, and for them to take responsibility for future congresses.

IFMA18 CONGRESS 2011

DELEGATE EVALUATION FORM

The Council of IFMA ask you to complete this questionnaire to help both them and the organisers of future congress in their planning of future congresses.

Please complete the following: (place an X in the boxes that apply to you).

1. Your country: _____
2. Is this your first Congress: Yes No
3. If no, how many previous Congresses have you attended: _____
4. Please indicate your age:
30 or less 31-40 41-50 51-60 61+
5. Your occupation: _____
6. a) If you are involved in "farm management" in terms of managing, overseeing or advising on a farm or farms – please could you give us an indication of the area you are influencing:
Number: _____ acres OR hectares
b) If you are not filling in the above figure – how do you influence farm management?
Lecturer (no. of students _____) Financial / Accountant Other
Describe other _____
7. How did you hear about IFMA18?
IFMA Newsletter NZIPIM Newsletter Colleague Internet Search
Conference Alerts Other _____
8. What were the main deciding reasons for you to attended this Congress (tick up to 3)
New Zealand The Plenary Programme The Field Trip Programme
Combination of Papers and Field Trips Pre & Post Tours available
International Networking Opportunity to present a paper to international audience
Other reason _____

We are interested in your evaluation of the Congress (please tick one box in each row)

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor
9. Plenary sessions					
10. Contributed papers					
11. Day Tours					
12. Posters					
13. Social program					
14. Accommodation and arrangements					

Continues over >>>

Excellent Very good Good Fair Poor

15.	Overall how do you rate this Congress?				
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16.	If you submitted a paper or poster to the congress – your assessment of the submission process				
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17.	If you attended the Pre Congress Tour				
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18. Please give two highlights of the Congress for you:

19. Please give two areas where improvement could be made:

20. How can more people be attracted to future Congresses?

21. Please add any comments you would like to make:

22. Would you attend an I FMA congress in the following countries (2015 onwards)?
Please number in order of preference 1st, 2nd, 3rd & 4th only.

China Canada Nigeria Germany France

AND/OR name another country: _____

23. Optional – your name please: _____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH INDEED – YOUR FEEDBACK IS MUCH APPRECIATED.

The Evaluation Survey Report will be published on www.ifmaonline.org in the Articles section.

All members will be informed via the IFMA Newsletter when it is published.

TK 05/05/2011