



IFNS Vice-President Report – 6^{inc} Scientific Programme

23 April 2014

Dear Councillors,

I would like to inform you of the activities that were carried out during the period 2008-2016 in preparation for the Sixth International Congress of Nematology (6thICN) in Cape Town. The work to prepare the scientific programme for the 6thICN started in 2009 when local organizers visited Rothamsted Research and we had our first meeting to agree on the activities to prepare the programme. The original local organizer (LO) committee (*i.e.*, Mieke Daneel, Driekie Fourie, Alex McDonald and Shaun Berry) was subsequently re-organized due to health problems of Alex McDonald and the stepping down of D. Fourie as Chairman of the Local Arrangements Committee due to Academic commitments. Nevertheless, Driekie remained actively involved with the organization of student awards and sponsorship. The new Chairman was Mieke Daneel; and Rinus Knoetze was responsible for organization of the Scientific Programme. Frieda and I met with Mieke and Driekie at various symposia and annual meetings of several nematology societies, including Corvalis (SON, 2011), Adana (ESN, 2012) and La Serena (ONTA, 2014) to organize the programme.

Programme development

Through the period 2009-2014 I have maintained continuous communication with the LO and the IFNS President (Prof. Frieda Decraemer), and as much as possible with the councillors.

To select the topics initially we revised the programme for the 5thICN (Australia, 2008). The LO expressed their interest in preparing a programme with their own input and selection of the main topics (*i.e.* Themes) to be included in the programme. They submitted their proposal to IFNS Vice-President and President, which in turn was revised and discussed with the IFNS officers. The revised programme was circulated to the Federation councillors to add, change or approve the draft. We received feedback via email from 11 out of 13 society councillors (April 2013). We all agreed on a programme that consisted of 15 Themes, each Theme comprising four subthemes.

Chairs

To facilitate the organization of the Themes and chairing of the corresponding session during the congress, LO and IFNS officers agreed that each theme would have appointed one Chair and one Co-chair (*i.e.* Chairs); both being responsible for initially contacting four potential speakers in order to extend to them an invitation to participate in their session. We also agreed at this stage that the speakers for each Theme would only be by invitation from the Chairs and that the majority of papers offered at the congress would be presented as posters. However, these initial arrangements had to be changed and adjusted later on due to the greater demand for oral slots and the sponsorship requirements of some delegates and students.

The selection process of Chairs, Co-Chairs and potential speakers was made in consultation with LO and IFNS councillors who provided a list of candidates. This selection was made according to the number of nominations forwarded to us and also with the purpose of having a balanced participation of delegates from the geographical region or IFNS society in order to encourage the participation of a larger number of societies/organizations attending this very important event. We had a very positive reply from colleagues accepting to Chair the different Themes. However, to get invited speakers was more difficult due to the world economic crisis that very badly affected travel funding of many institutions to support attendance. At this stage, no support could be offered to invited speakers by the LO and some nematology organizations expressed their concern about the number of delegates that could afford to attend the Congress, despite a reduction in the original registration fee already made by the LO in an effort to encourage attendance. This situation made difficult a formal commitment from speakers and even some Chairs to the Congress, which resulted in one of the Themes of the programme being cancelled and some delegates being unable to attend the Congress. Nevertheless, most Chairs were very enthusiastic and proactive in getting their speaker list completed before the deadline of registration (31 January 2014) although others had to wait and see who had registered for the Congress before choosing from the delegate list a list of speakers for their sessions.

Theme sessions

We were informed by the LO by September 2013 that we would have space for up to eight speakers and two sessions per theme, since there would be facilities available to host four sessions running in parallel. Because of this new development we asked the Chairs if they could invite four more speakers to their Theme/session and chair the Theme in two sessions instead of one. Each of the two sessions was then planned to last 80 min with four speakers. We were also requested to contact ten keynote speakers for three plenary sessions.

Oral slots

One of the goals of the LO was to bring as many graduate students as possible to the Congress. The LO and colleagues representing several nematology societies (e.g., ESN, ONTA, SON, SBN) did an excellent job in getting sponsorship for students to attend the Congress. However, there was a lack of communication between some of the societies, IFNS and LO regarding the requirement of graduate students to give an oral presentation to receive the grant. Therefore, the programme had to be adjusted to meet these needs. This situation was also repeated with some of the delegates as sometimes the offer to give an oral presentation slot was not enough as institutions required their delegate to Chair a session in order to guarantee sponsorship. These are aspects that may need to be addressed in the future when preparing the programme.

I contacted the former Vice-president (Dr Aurelio Ciancio) and one of the local organizers of the 5thINC in Australia (Mike Hodda) who provided valuable advice about how to re-structure the programme to make it as flexible as possible to give space to the request of delegates, and ensure greater participation yet also maintain the scientific quality of the programme.

Congress visibility to members of societies

Communication between us and councillors was crucial to remind their members over the dates of the Congress over such a long period of time (2008-2014). Some organizations posted the information on their websites. We asked the LO to send reminders to the councillors to keep the delegates of their societies/organizations updated on programme progress. Information about the event was provided regularly on the IFNS (<http://www.ifns.org/>) and NSSA (www.6thICN.com) websites.

I attended nematology and crop protection events in the Americas, Europe and Africa to give information about the Congress, approach potential Chairs, speakers, keynote speakers and graduate students.

Final remarks

The scientific programme has been successfully completed and covers 14 themes, 1 Bayer Forum, 3 workshops, and 3 poster sessions. There will be 231 oral presentations and 189 posters. We obtained the agreement of many outstanding nematologists to participate in the scientific programme, and covering the various areas of research demanded by the programme, including links with industry, so as to ensure a high quality and state-of-the-art Congress. The programme contents can be seen at www.6thICN.com

More than 430 delegates are expected to attend the Congress. The LO goal of having the participation of as many students as possible will ensure that about 50 students will attend

the Congress. The LO have also made a great effort to involve nematologists from developing countries and have delegates from most nematology societies that are IFNS members.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Chairs for their effort and hard work in preparing their sessions, to Mieke, Rinus, Frieda and LO members for the continuous effort and discussions to improve the scientific programme, and Haddish Melakeberham, Janete Brito, Loes den Nijs and Driekie Fourie for their work in organizing the student competitions, sponsorship and awards. I also would like to acknowledge councillors support and inputs to the programme, especially Aurelio Ciancio, Rodrigo Rodríguez-Kábana, Danny Coyne, Shashi Sharma, Mike Hodda, Johji Miwa, Marissa T. Vinciguerra, Satish Dhawan, Sanaa A. Haroon, H. Manzoor, Larry Duncan, Sergei Subbotin, Loes den Nijs, and Ricardo Souza.

Thanks also to the IFNS Secretary (Safia Siddiqi) and President (Frieda Decraemer) for their support in keeping the congress information posted on the IFNS site.

Finally, I would like to thank Roland Perry and David Hunt for valuable discussions and Dr Angela Karp (AgroEcology Department) for her support to complete my duties as IFNS Vice-President as a Rothamsted visiting worker.

Best wishes,

Rosa H. Manzanilla-López

IFNS Vice-President