

## CLOSING SESSION: ADDRESS BY CONGRESS CHAIR

B.R. Christie

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This is the last day of the 18th International Grassland Congress. If you are like me, you will have very mixed feelings about today:

- happy to be going home or moving on to a tour or other activity;
- sad to be saying goodbye to friends that you met here, or to friends that you made here;
- enthusiastic about ideas that you have acquired while here and want to test or act upon;
- regrets because you may have missed a special talk or poster.

However you feel, I hope you will agree that this Congress has generated much enthusiasm and interest. Let us not lose that enthusiasm. The other day, I was speaking to a former colleague who had retired many years ago. He was surprised that these Grassland Congresses were still continuing. His comment was that he had expected them to disappear before now.

We must have something unique here, otherwise the Grassland Congresses would have disappeared like many other Congresses of this type. These Congresses are one forum where delegates can discuss the performance of plants and animals, and their interactions with the soil, environment, economics, climate, etc. In recent years, the topics presented at these Congresses have become more varied and broader, representing the diverse nature of the topic and multidisciplinary requirement for its study. This is a good sign.

As we leave, we need to remind ourselves, the general public and our governments that grasslands comprise a significant portion of the earth's surface. These grasslands are important not only for food production in the future, but for ensuring stability of production. These grasslands can continue to be used for food production year after year, which cannot be said for many agricultural crops. As someone once said, "The bread baskets of today are the dust bowls of tomorrow." We have learned, at great cost, that continuous grain crops lead to deterioration of the soils. Grasslands, alone and in rotations, are necessary to ensure that today's breadbaskets continue to be productive.

This Congress was attended by 1,018 registered delegates, 68 students and 103 accompanying persons, for a total of 1,189 persons; and these have come from 94 different countries. During the program, there have been 60 invited presentations and almost 800 posters. These represent a wealth of information for all of us to consider in the months ahead.

Many people have contributed to this Congress. The members of the Organizing Committee have been meeting since October, 1992, and I want to acknowledge their contribution. I especially want to thank the Vice-Chair of the committee, Paul Gillen, who has made an invaluable contribution. Also, Marjorie Zingle, who has been our Executive Director and has spent many hours ensuring the success of the Congress. I also want to thank:

Jock Buchanan-Smith, Chair of the Program Committee  
Duane McCartney, Chair of the Venue Committee  
Paul McCaughey, Chair of the Publicity Committee  
Guy Allard, Chair of the Tours Committee

Ken Stoner and Gerald Huebner, Co-Chairs for the Trade Show  
John Benham, Treasurer

There is one other person who is unable to be with us today, who did much work in preparing the original invitation - Dr. Jack Winch. Jack is known to many of you and he devoted a lot of time to the preparation of the invitation and the initial planning. We wanted to publicly acknowledge that effort, but unfortunately, Jack is not able to be with us today. His contribution is recognized and very much appreciated.

Thank you for coming to Canada to attend this Congress. I also want to thank all those who presented papers, and a special thanks to all of you who presented posters.

Our best wishes to our colleagues from Brazil; we look forward to visiting them in 2001.