

Sustainable tropical pasture systems

Proceedings of the Fourth Australian Conference on Tropical Pastures held at Toowoomba, Queensland, in November 1990.

This issue of *Tropical Grasslands* publishes papers presented at the 1990 Australian Conference on Tropical Pastures, the fourth conference in a series held since 1975 under the auspices of the Australian Standing Committee of Agriculture. The fourth conference was sponsored by the Tropical Grasslands Society of Australia, with the organisation shared by the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and CSIRO Division of Tropical Crops and Pastures.

'Sustainable tropical pasture systems' was chosen as a topical and provocative theme for the 1990 conference. Sustainability issues relevant to native grazing lands, sown pastures and ley pastures in cropping lands were addressed for tropical and subtropical environments of northern Australia. Participants represented a wide range of state and federal government organisations, universities, agri-business and primary producers.

Presentations at the conference recognised the vital interplay among biological, sociological and economic elements involved in the sustainable use and development of pastures. There were twenty invited papers presented by scientists and four case studies of sustainable farming systems presented by primary producers. In addition, there were 15 poster presentations.

The Harry Stobbs Memorial lecture was featured in conjunction with the conference. Dr Carlos Lascano, CIAT, Columbia, presented this address, choosing to focus on the management of grazing resources for animal production in the savannas of tropical America.

A major aim of the Australian Conference on Tropical Pastures is to foster the exchange of views on pasture themes from a variety of perspectives including research, extension, education, agri-business and primary producers. Some 130 delegates from a spread of these backgrounds and interests had the privilege of contributing and interacting at the conference.

Now, through the publication of the proceedings, a wider audience can share in the knowledge and some of the intellectual stimulation generated there.

This issue of *Tropical Grasslands* should attract the interest of those dealing with pasture, crop and animal production over a wide span of tropical environments. Subjects covered include some environmentally sensitive and often emotive issues of tree control or management; cattle management practices; stocking rates and native grazing land stability; implications of nutrient deficiencies of pastures and fertiliser practices; decision support software; soil fertility and stability; ley pasture and agroforestry opportunities; and the likely impact of climate change. A paper on socio-economics and the adoption of pasture technology will be published in a subsequent issue of the Journal.

The four papers from primary producers, representing a cross section of farming enterprises and experiences, are compelling reading. They are most stimulating and encouraging. Through sound management practices, including reduced stocking rates, pasture improvement, contour farming and tree planting or preservation, these producers are improving their properties and financial position. Little surprise that conference delegates unanimously saw primary producers as key participants in future conferences!

Enhanced communication and interaction among primary producers, extension workers and scientists will facilitate the drive towards the sustainable use and development of tropical grazing lands during the 1990s. The Fourth Australian Conference on Tropical Pastures and its published proceedings should make a valuable contribution to that process.

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Dr D. Gramshaw Chairman

Mr R. M. Jones Secretary

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