

1st Australian Farming Systems Conference 2003



Toowoomba, Queensland September 7 - 10 2003



Call for Papers “Farming Systems in the Future”

Purpose

The First Australian Farming Systems Conference aims to provide a forum for exposure, dialogue and learning about Farming Systems (FS) approaches, methodologies, methods, and their application. Our purpose is to explore and challenge current thinking by sharing contemporary experiences and achievements from a diverse range of situations (including social, international, inter-disciplinary).

Background

AFSA (Australian Farming Systems Association) was formally established in 2001. Its primary goal is as a networking association amongst people interested in farming systems across Australia. It is associated with IFSA (International Farming Systems Association) which is a global organisation made up of regional farming systems associations and loosely affiliated individuals. IFSA participants include farming systems practitioners associated with universities, government agencies, and non-governmental organisations interested in agricultural development around the world. While early work began with a field and small farm focus, IFSA has increasingly been concerned about sustainable agriculture, policy and ecosystem issues on a watershed or larger scale. IFSA holds a global conference every two years so members can share research results and outreach methods. Most regional associations hold their meetings on alternate years. Recent IFSA conferences include Chile (2000), South Africa (1998), Sri Lanka (1996) and France (1994). This will be AFSA's First Australian Farming Systems Conference. For details about AFSA contact Christine King (President) christine.king@dpi.qld.gov.au

Cost

It is expected that registration will be \$550 AUD or less.

Who Should Participate?

With a conference emphasis on diversity and exchanging experiences and ideas, anyone with an interest in Farming Systems is welcome.

Researchers	Graziers	Farmers
Social Scientists	Development Practitioners	Environmentalists
Extension Agents	Consumers	Academics
Psychologists	Health workers	Anyone with an interest

Themes

Concepts behind Farming Systems (FS) approaches

This theme is interested in key concepts and ideas around Farming Systems (FS) approaches that differentiate it from other approaches used in agriculture and resource management. Understanding differences and changes (eg. values) might help predict which types of change may shape future theoretical frameworks. What are the principles and influences behind a FS approach? Why these? How have FS approaches been implemented? What has changed? Why? How do others do FS research, development and extension (RD&E) and how might we do it better and make it more effective? This theme will be suited to people with an interest in the more fundamental questions related to the nature and knowing of FS approaches.

Question - How are conceptual models now being shaped in FS projects and why has this changed over the past twenty years?

Sustainability and the contribution of Farming Systems approaches

This theme focuses on FS and sustainability including the physical, social or economic aspects and their interrelated impacts on FS improvement and sustainability. How are FS approaches contributing to sustainability? What options are there for progressing to more sustainable FS? What are the implications of these alternative options? How do we assess the appropriateness of FS options in relation to the social, environmental and economic context? People with an interest in the issues relating to interdisciplinary RD&E, sustainability and FS practice will be well matched to this theme.

Question - How has FS approaches contributed to a new appreciation of sustainability issues and what challenges lie ahead for FS work on sustainability?

Resilient Farming Systems in a complex world

This theme recognises the complex and changing world in which farming systems are located. It explores how FS approaches are situated and relate to current and future demands such as environmental certification, globalisation, intellectual property, food safety, quality assurance, trade labelling and large market forces. How do FS relate to these perceived demands and where do they fit? How adaptable are FS approaches to accommodate these changing challenges? What does it mean to have more resilient FS? People interested in how resilient FS might be designed and managed to allow for wider system issues will find this theme particularly useful.

Question - How responsive are FS approaches to changing and unpredictable circumstances?

Monitoring, evaluation and learning for Farming Systems improvement

This theme focuses on techniques, methods and methodologies for monitoring, evaluating and learning for FS improvement. Examples are being sought that include theoretical applications as well as practical experiences. What are some of the current concerns in monitoring, evaluation and learning and how are they addressed? How do we know that people learn and the system has changed? What about sustaining the learning process itself? This theme aims to attract people interested in sharing their insights and experiences with FS projects in relation to how they address monitoring, evaluation and learning.

Question - How are we using methodologies and methods to make sense of learning and change in FS situations?

'Uncommon' processes and partnerships for Farming Systems change: International, Alternative and Social

This theme looks to encourage new ideas from outside the common FS domain that can potentially contribute to FS change. These may include processes or methodologies from overseas FS projects, other cultures and philosophies, as well as other disciplines such as health, social work or psychology. Of particular interest is how can social aspects be incorporated into the FS arena. This theme also aims to provide a joint exploration of issues and questions that require 'uncommon' partnerships between mainstream FS with the international, alternative or the social (eg. horticulture, permaculture and organic systems; indigenous and bush food production systems; social, health and other related systems). Do we have the capacity to seek, work with and learn from other systems? Can a FS approach facilitate learning about 'uncommon processes' and the coming together of partnerships?

Question - Why will practitioners build working partnerships across their conventional disciplinary boundaries and what issues require such approaches over the next 5 years in Australasia?

Poster Sessions and Tool Bazaar Workshops: Challenging across system boundaries

The Poster Sessions and Tool Bazaar workshops will be focused on the perceived divides that exist in the farming systems environment and the tools we use to address these. We are looking for examples of innovative methodologies, methods and tools (eg. Participatory methods) that try to overcome divides between urban and rural communities; social, economic and financial; theory and practice; gender; indigenous and non-indigenous; scientists and community; and agencies/people across the supply chain. Tool bazaar workshops will be interactive and facilitated so that participants use the tools during the workshop. Posters will outline methodologies.

Papers and Timing

Intending authors are invited to submit the titles of proposed papers together with an abstract of about 300 words outlining the aim, content and the conclusions of their papers. Accepted papers will be printed directly from authors documents, using a template provided by the organiser.

- Receipt of abstract: 8 February 2003
- Accepted papers advised: 8 March 2003
- Full papers due: 8 May 2003

Submission of a paper abstract implies that the author will attend the conference to present the paper in person if it is selected.

All correspondence relating to the conference organisation, including proposals for papers and indications of interest should be addressed to:

The Conference Secretariat

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