

The Sixth International Grassland Congress

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THIS Congress, sponsored jointly by the FAO of the United Nations, and the United States government, held at Pennsylvania State College, August 17 to 23, 1952, was a noteworthy milestone in grassland agriculture. The main purpose of the Congress was to bring together from all over the free world people who are interested in promoting better grasslands, in exchanging ideas and in observing grassland farming in action.

This was the first such congress held in America. All previous ones have been held in Europe. Following the first meeting in Leipsig, Germany in 1927, subsequent meetings were held in Uppsala, Sweden in 1930, in Zurich, Switzerland in 1934, in Aberystwyth, Wales in 1937 and in Noordwijk, Netherlands in 1949. Following the disruptions incident to war, the Sixth Congress was back on the original schedule of meetings at intervals of three years.

The international scope of this meeting was reflected in the total attendance of more than 1500 from the following countries and the United Nations.

Australia	France	Panama
Austria	Germany	Peru
Belgium	Greece	Philippines
Bolivia	Honduras	Portugal
Brazil	India	Spain
Canada	Iran	Sweden
Chile	Israel	Switzerland
China	Iraq	Thailand
Columbia	Italy	Turkey
Costa Rica	Japan	Union of South
Cuba	Jordan	Africa
Denmark	Korea	United King-
Dominican	Mexico	dom
Republic	Netherlands	United States
Ecuador	New Zealand	Uruguay
Egypt	Nicaragua	Venezuela
El Salvador	Norway	Yugoslavia
Finland	Pakistan	

The large number of foreign participants insured the bringing together of

the latest world-wide findings from experiments and experience on grassland agriculture. In general the attention of the Congress was focused on grasslands for (1) a more abundant production of meat, wool, milk, and other livestock products, (2) a more balanced agriculture, and (3) wise use of soil and water resources.

Within these general categories the comprehensive coverage of subject matter material was evidenced in the program which included lectures, discussions, exhibits, and demonstrations concerning every important phase of the world's grasslands, tilled and untilled—in terms of problems, progress, and needful research. Following the welcoming addresses by Secretary of Agriculture, Charles F. Brannan, Governor John F. Fine of Pennsylvania, President Milton S. Eisenhower of Pennsylvania State College, and Mr. Gove Hambidge, North American Regional Representative of F.A.O., the program continued in seven plenary talks and twelve separate sections: Genetics and Breeding; Improvement and Management of Pastures, Meadows and Turf; Improvement and Management of Range Lands; Ecology and Physiology; Soil Management and Fertilization; Seed Production and Distribution; Soil and Water Conservation; Harvesting and Preservation of Forage; Forage and Livestock Feeding; Machinery for Grassland Establishment and Fertilization; Experimental Procedure in Grassland Research; and Improvement and Management of Tropical Grasslands. Fully half of the 250 major papers were presented by outstanding experts who had journeyed far

to the meeting from countries other than the United States.

The Sixth International Grassland Congress represented a vast cooperative undertaking. Collaborating agencies included (1) Department of State, Department of Interior, Department of Agriculture, and Mutual Security Agency; (2) the Land Grant Colleges and Universities of the United States; and (3) nearly 100 scientific, industrial and trade organizations.

In this short highlight article mention of any names can only be made at the cost of omissions of others of equal merit. Nevertheless, even a fragmentary understanding of the organization of the Congress necessitates mention of a few officers, from among the scores, even hundreds, of officials of public and private organizations who gave unsparingly of time and effort to make this Sixth Congress such a real success. At the opening ceremonies Dr. Philip V. Cardon, Chairman of the U. S. delegation and of the organizing committee, was elected permanent President of the Congress. Two Vice-Presidents were also elected: Dr. C. A. Volia, Minister of Agriculture of Costa Rica and Dr. J. Griffiths Davies, Chairman of the Australian delegation. Dr. William M. Myers, University of Minnesota, was named Secretary General of the Congress. Deputy Secretaries General were Dr. Clark L. Willard, Department of State; Dr. Herbert R. Albrecht, Pennsylvania State College; and Mr. W. R. Chapline, Chief of the Division of Range Research, U. S. Forest Service, who had also labored for months as executive secretary of the organizing committee.

As an overall observation, the meeting was ably organized and smoothly handled. Simultaneous translation, a special communication system resembling the United Nations set-up, was used with translators passing along talks in French, Spanish,

and German to those who did not understand English, by way of earphones and miniature radios. Translation itself was handled by a special team provided by the Department of State.

In view of its pioneer work in grassland research and its ample facilities, Pennsylvania State College was especially appropriate as the meeting place of the Sixth Congress. In dealing with the multitudinous details of housing, dining, meeting rooms, campus tours, student guides, and the many other requirements, this largest of the agricultural colleges of the United States proved to be a splendid host.

Technical summarization of this Congress is not possible here. It is hoped, however, that sketchy review of a few selected highlights particularly pertinent to rangelands may reflect the significant tone of the meeting: optimism over the world-wide possibilities of increasing food production from grasslands—the major expandable agricultural resource.

For example, range-plant improvement through genetics and breeding holds equal promise to the success stories of other groups of crop plants. Along with the rather orthodox objectives of forage plant improvement go requirements for high maintenance of grassland productivity, such as the selection or development of suitable legumes which are still lacking over vast grassland areas of the earth.

Various speakers reiterated this theme: It is fundamental, always and everywhere, that range improvement and management must be based on solid ecological principles.

Significant, too, was the repeated reminder that such practices as artificial reseeding and weed control should be regarded as valuable supplements to, rather than substitutes for, good management of grazing lands.

In a broad look at reseeding there is need not only for wider application of the

well established rules for success, but also for increased production of seed of authentic strains and for improved scientific standards to safeguard their purity.

Trends in weed control, a rapidly growing range management practice, include a gradual widening of the scope of biological control, and an expanding use and development of herbicides applied from the ground and air.

Numerous speakers stressed the universal and increasing need for site evaluation as the only sound basis for efficient application of range improvement practices, and for most successful integration of grazing and other agricultural production.

Especially significant, also, from the standpoint of global land use and maximum food production for a growing population, was the conclusion that good range management usually is good watershed management. In other words, a well-husbanded cover of grassland vegetation will also be satisfactory for erosion control and water yield.

"Stump-jumping" rangeland plows, brush-removal equipment of great weight, and increasing employment of aircraft for reseeding, fertilizing, and spraying, all attest to recent rapid advances in machinery for range improvement. Most needed, apparently, are new developments in ground rigs for rough use on rough range land.

The session devoted to improvement and management of tropical grasslands proved of especial interest, from standpoints of newness of subject matter, variety of formidable problems, and high potentials for increased food production.

Recent advances in experimental procedure in grassland research were presented and discussed; and the vital related techniques of disseminating research findings strikingly illustrated by the Agricultural Extension Service in connection

with the annual field day held during the Grassland Congress and attended by 15,000 farmers.

An imposing array of exhibits set up by about 65 companies and agencies afforded members of the Congress an opportunity to review and, in many cases, to see in action modern grassland equipment and recent scientific developments.

Following the conclusion of the formal sessions, four specially arranged and guided tours were conducted to afford opportunities for foreign participants to see samples of scientific advances and field experiments in grassland farming as well as their practical application under varied conditions. These 2-week tours traversed four major grassland areas of the United States: the Midwest, the Northeast, the South, and the West.

Proceedings of the Congress, which will include all papers presented and other Congress developments, will be published this winter in a 2-volume set of approximately 800 pages each.

By and large this Sixth International Grassland Congress was a most significant demonstration of notable advances in grassland agriculture. Such a full and free exchange of technical experience and knowledge, cannot help but have dividends beyond the very worthy theme of "more and better grass." Working together as a cooperative team, appraising the world-wide situation, obtaining a better understanding of other nations' viewpoints, and establishing personal and official channels for future interchange of ideas for meeting common problems, are bound, not only to further grassland agriculture but also in the words of President Cardon, to "contribute soundly to the advancement of human welfare the world over." May it not well be possible that this will prove to be the most important result of the Congress?

New Zealand was chosen as the meeting place of the next Congress, in 1955.