HOLA! Apimondia Congress in Argentina

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Apimondia’s 42nd International Congress was held at the spacious “La Rural” facility in Buenos Aires, Argentina during 21-27 September 2011.

The author welcomes you to the 42nd Apimondia Congress

I felt several compelling reasons to not miss this Congress. I was given the nod to be the Association of Caribbean Beekeepers’ Organizations’ (ACBO) First Representative at the General Assembly of Apimondia Members since ACBO became an Associate Member of Apimondia earlier this year. The Congress presented a unique opportunity to visit Argentina; a country that is relatively close to the Caribbean in terms of past and projected venues for these Congresses, and one that is amongst the world’s top honey producers and exporters.

The number of bee hives in Argentina is 4,500,000. This is about the same as the combined human populations of the four biggest English speaking Caribbean Island States: Barbados, Jamaica, St Lucia and Trinidad & Tobago. The 28,000 registered beekeepers in Argentina is equivalent to half of the population of Tobago, the island where I live.

With the experience of five Apimondia Congresses under my belt, I had a fair idea of how such congresses were organised: opening and closing ceremonies, scientific presentations, ApiExpo, poster displays, mini courses, technical visits, cultural evenings, opportunities to renew and establish acquaintances, and so on. This Apimondia Congress lived up to those expectations and provided more.

In retrospect, the persistence of the Argentine Beekeepers’ Association in submitting bids since 2001 to host their second Apimondia Congress was indicative of their commitment to stage a Congress that would distinguish itself as being well organised, and moreover, positively enhance Argentina’s image as a global leader in the beekeeping sector. At the onset, the smooth organisation of the Congress’ registration procedure signalled the efficiency with which all elements of the Congress were to be executed. The Chairpersons of the sessions I attended ensured the timeliness of presentations. Round table debates, new to the format, covered a range of topical issues and generated lively discussion. One of the identified emerging concerns was the impact of genetically modified crops on honey.

Proposed changes to Apimondia’s constitution were approved by the General Assembly. Perhaps the most significant of these are limiting the President’s term in office to two sessions, and the addition of five new Regional Commissions, each headed by an elected President, to Apimondia’s Executive Council. These Commissions are to provide support to national and regional beekeeping associations, and to collaborate with the established Scientific Commissions in implementing regional programmes and projects.

As informative as the sessions and meetings were, the two day technical tour which I attended (one of four offered) added value to the Congress experience and ensured lasting memories of my Argentine sojourn. ‘Sampling’ beekeeping with colonies of European bees located amidst blossoming Acacia was indeed a delightful experience. We were told that Varroa is present and colonies are treated twice a year and requeened every two years.

Mr Lucas Daniel Martinez, President of the 42nd Congress, and his Committee did an excellent job in planning and staging this international event which attracted 8,500 delegates from over 100 countries.

Apimondia’s President, Mr Gilles Ratia must also be complimented for exceeding his goal of expanding Apimondia’s membership to 100 countries: it now stands at 103 – an increase of 34 countries since 2009.

There is much to look forward to at Apimondia’s 43rd Congress to be held in Kiev, Ukraine in 2013. South Korea’s selection as the venue for the 2015 Congress (after a keenly contested bidding contest with China) also suggests a strong and healthy future for Apimondia.

I am indeed grateful for the opportunity provided by Apimondia and our Argentine hosts to tangibly connect with my brothers and sisters in the global beekeeping community, and I wish to thank Vita Europe Limited for their financial assistance towards making this possible. My dream is that one day a Caribbean State will welcome the international beekeeping community to an Apimondia Congress in the region.

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Further information about the 43rd Apimondia Congress will feature in this Journal - see Look Ahead, page 12

A Gaucha (a popular Argentine icon)