

and the impacts of nutrient removal on long-term forest productivity. Today, as a result of falling profits and difficult trading conditions there is renewed interest in increasing the profitability of forest production. The question of how we can produce more by making better use of the natural resources for any particular site, thereby producing more value with fewer (sustainable) inputs. This is especially important since an increasing area of existing forest land is now entering the third rotation.

He found a stark contrast between issues of importance to New Zealand forestry compared with many countries - where deforestation and biodiversity loss are considered the most important issues. In many countries these topics have grown beyond forestry circles into major political issues.

## Tim Barnard (Scion)

Tim Barnard, as representative to the Montréal Process Technical Advisory Committee and as leader of the Forests

for People group at Scion, focused on recognising the value of forests, and on practical frameworks that help guide the debate among governments and people on how to protect and grow forests.

He noted that at no other time in our history has the value of forests been so highly recognised. Nevertheless, governments world-wide are struggling to come up with the right set of tools to value forests for their carbon sequestration, clean water, human environment and biological diversity. Another pressing concern is that forest owners and governments are on the back foot when it comes to deforestation - in light of increasing pressures from beef and dairy cattle production or palm oil.

One of the major shifts visible in this conference, he says, was the drive towards local ownership and local control of forests. Greater local control and ownership in forests helps ensure these forests have a greater future - and cause less social upheaval in local communities.

## Many sessions, long hours

Hugh Bigsby

World Forestry Congresses are held every 6 years and organised by the FAO. As would be expected for an event with this title, they are large events and cover a wide range of topics related to forestry. The 2009 World Forestry Congress held in Buenos Aires was no exception. 7000 people, 63 contributed paper sessions, 5 plenary sessions, two half-day forums, and covering everything from ecology to economics related to a theme of "Forests in development - A vital balance". Add to this a wide variety of side events organized by NGOs, governments and international agencies, which filled lunch hours and evenings and there was something for everyone. This is the type of event to go to if you want to be able to cover a wide range of topics in one place and to be in largely interdisciplinary audiences. The only problem with this many people, you had to plan well to be assured that you could get into the sessions you wanted to go to.

New Zealand and the NZIF were well represented at the congress. The Minister of Forestry, David Carter spoke at a couple of plenary session and others presented papers or chaired sessions. The NZIF also supported one side event organized by the Institute of Foresters of Australia that focused on development of professional forestry bodies and a number of NZIF members were in attendance or on the panel at that side event.

For me, the congress meant 12 hours every day for 5 days. The first sessions started at 9:00 am each morning and finished at 5:00 pm, with side events during lunchtime and from 6:00 or 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm in the evening. Fortunately, the Argentinian tradition is to eat late, so showing up at a restaurant at 10 pm was not a problem (except for digestion

- massive steaks and great wine). Simultaneous translation was new for me as well, and generally it worked well. The exception was when presenters were speaking in French, which although I am not fluent in, I understand enough of to find it disconcerting to be roughly following what the speaker was saying over the sound system but also having a delayed version of it in english coming through a headset.

Visiting a new city for a week also gives you a chance to see how the locals live and to gain enough local knowledge to survive. How to order a black coffee, *café doblé solo*, which always comes with a glass of soda water, and for lunch the local cross between a meat pie and a samosa, an *empanada*. I was also introduced to *Yerba Mate*, a type of tea that comes from a shrub that is common in this part of South America. You drink mate by adding hot water from a thermos to a cup filled with mate, let it soak a bit and then sip the tea through a straw. You could always pick out Argentinians at the congress, because they all carried a thermos and a bag for their cup and mate. Although there is a history of wealth and the buildings and parks that go with this, walking in Buenos Aires these days means that instead of looking up at the buildings, you need to be looking down at the footpath for broken pavement. Add to this the fact that there are lots of dogs and no one picks up after them.

Although the congress did not have any field trips, I was fortunate to be able to travel to the northern province of Misiones and visit a former student who works for Alto Parana. This gave me a couple of days touring their plantation forests and a chance to see Iguazu falls after a major rainfall.