

Report for the 9th International Rangeland Congress in Rosario Argentina as the GSSA Representative

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The 9th International Rangeland Congress is the premier international congress for rangeland scientists in the world. The congress provided an excellent opportunity for rangeland scientists and practitioners to share their research and experience.

The GSSA is the major Society dealing with research relating to research and management of southern Africa's grasslands and rangelands. Natural rangelands provide the nutrition for almost all of South Africa's national herds (cattle, sheep, goats and wildlife) and the health of these rangelands is paramount to the sustained production of these herds.

The 9th IRC held in Rosario, Argentina, provided the international platform for the presentation of the results of research in range and forage production.

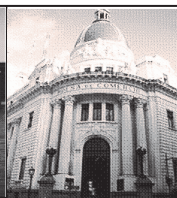
It further provided the opportunity to exchange information with international researchers from all continents and to expose these scientists to the science and practice of range and pasture management in southern Africa as strived for by the GSSA.

In terms of the Society, three of the major objectives were achieved:

- In promoting and creating awareness and opportunities in southern Africa for range and pasture scientists, technologists and farmers to confer and exchange ideas; and
- In disseminating knowledge and information in the field of rangeland science through attendance of congresses and publications;
- Encouraging liaison with other societies having similar or common interests both nationally and internationally



Images of Rosario - Wikimedia Commons



I co-chaired Session 2.2 titled „Diversified uses of Rangelands and Conservation” with Dr Nestor Maceira (Argentina).

I presented the closing summary for the session as well as the written summary for the closing congress for the session. My attendance allowed me to make platform presentations titled “The Value and Costs of Wildlife in the Eastern Lowveld of South Africa” (author Mike Peel) and a platform presentation for Winston Trollope titled “Assessing Range Condition - A Fire Management Decision Support System to Mitigate Climate Change in South Western Zambia”.

I further attended a breakfast meeting addressing the “Drylands” of the world with Constance Neely (FAO, World Agroforestry Centre USA/Kenya), Matt Barnes (Society for Range Management USA); Pablo Borrelli (Ovis XXI Argentina) and Brian Marshall (Savory Institute Australia).

The overall aim of the programme is to improve the livelihoods of and increase opportunities for development for poor people living in the drylands of Africa and the world. This will be achieved by studying and understanding a selection of successes in land rehabilitation and resource management, and using the knowledge obtained to stimulate the significant up scaling of successful practice.

The Congress thus provided an opportunity for the GSSA to:

- Promote improved cooperation between South African and international research groups.

- Highlight South African excellence in Science and Technology in the southern African sub-region;
- Encourage Science and Technology partnerships;
- Advances the achievement of strategic South African S&T priorities and strengthens global partnerships; and
- Enhance the internationalisation of the African Research Area.

The stand had many visits and the journals and copies of Grassroots were much sought after (I had to protect some copies or all of the copies would have been removed in the first hour of the stand opening).

As a co-chair of a session and keynote speaker the GSSA benefited through the organising committee paying towards my accommodation while in Rosario, my congress registration and through some negotiation on Freyni du Toit and my part the waiving of registration for the GSSA stand! The ARC gave me permission to travel, an investment in my time away from office.

Further return on investment was large through widespread interest in the GSSA stand and hopefully some of these contacts will subscribe either as Associate or Individual members (time will tell). Contact with members of the Drylands programme in particular has great potential for raising the profile of the Society in Africa.