

## **Contemporary Scholars Conference (CSC) 2009**

### **28<sup>th</sup> Feb – 7<sup>th</sup> March 2009**

**The 4th International CSC brought 2009 Scholars together from all parts of the globe to look at the key issues facing farming. The Conference highlighted the differences between northern and southern hemisphere agriculture as well as subsidised versus unsubsidised systems.**

#### **In the UK**

In London, students had a private tour of the Houses of Parliament and met members of the House of Lords during a session hosted by Lady Hazel Byford. Later that day they were guests at New Zealand House for a discussion on global agricultural trade. This was followed by a reception hosted by The New Zealand Ambassador on the 15th floor penthouse overlooking Westminster. Notable figures from farming, related industry and government (10 embassy's represented), were guests at the reception including HRH The Duke of Gloucester, Patron of the Nuffield Foundation who moved a vote of thanks on Nuffield's behalf.

A constant theme in the CSC was climate change and how agriculture across the world is poised to tackle it. Graham Sinden of the Carbon Trust explained his organisation's approach to carbon footprint labelling in the UK and the discrepancies in how it's measured. The talk at Australia House produced a heated debate, especially as several of this year's scholars are studying carbon offsetting and related topics. Methane produced from waste food in landfill and livestock farms was also a hot topic. Bronwen Jones, of the UK Government's Department of Agriculture said scholars had to be ready to face these issues head on.

After two days of presentations and discussions covering a range of issues from carbon foot printing to agricultural collaboration, new recruits left the city for some grass roots study. On tours in Kent and the Cambridgeshire countryside a number of issues were picked up on which impacted on many of the new scholar's studies.

#### **In Europe**

Scholars boarded the Eurostar to visit a French Co-operative near Lille, then to the French and Belgian war graves and battlefields. This proved a poignant experience for all, and one that united the students in their experience. Accompanied by Alan Forbes, a professional tour guide in the area, Nuffield Australia's CEO Jim Geltch brought the deserted trenches to life with his knowledge of the Australian's role in war history. In later discussion it was thought that the battlefield tours brought a clearer understanding for the international scholars of a past need for European unity, especially in agriculture.

The following day in Brussels the new scholars had a glimpse of the intricacies of EU policy with excellent speakers at the heart of planning. Micheal Treacy, head of the Irish

Farmers Association gave a frank slant on the importance of lobbying. Mr Treacy put pressure on the new scholars to get involved in the political process globally. Irishman Dereck McCabe enjoyed the opportunity to thrash out some of the bigger issues in agriculture: "As individuals we're very isolated in our communities and we rarely get together to have inspirational discussions like this" he said.

Students also met Carmello Troccoli, Policy Advisor to Coldiretti, an Italian co-operative representing more than 1.5 million farmers. He believes labelling and honesty with consumers is essential especially with issues such as climate change and GM crops on the global agenda: "Labelling is key – I insist on transparency. In Italy farming is linked to tradition and small farms and consumers are in turn linked to that. They eat and talk about food in my country. We cannot ignore them" he said.

Australian Scholar Adam Butterworth, who runs an oyster hatchery in South Australia said: "There has been a range of open discussion on this conference from lots of different areas of agriculture. I'll go home with a renewed sense of vigour for my business." 2009 UK Scholar Michael Dart who is planning to study the Slow Food movement, summed up the Conference saying: "I have learned this week that we all have tonnes in common with scholars across the globe. Equally we all have a lot of the same challenges in farming to face."

### **Number Crunching – the 4<sup>th</sup> CSC**

46: Speakers gave talks to scholars during the tour.

2: Guest scholars joined the group for the European Tour – from South Africa and Zimbabwe.

80: Minutes of premier rugby action enjoyed by scholars at the Madjeski Stadium, Reading.

54,896: Names of Commonwealth soldiers lost in action between 1914 and 15th August 1917, with no known grave. The names are engraved on the walls of The Menin Gate.

49: Farmers and agriculturalists awarded Nuffield Scholarships in 2009.

133.8 billion: European Union annual budget in Euros.

43: Percentage of annual EU budget spent on agriculture, rural development, environment and fisheries.

6: Different hotels stayed in by students during the conference.

1: Cornishman lost in the lifts at HSBC, Canary Wharf.

Kate Little  
2009 UK Scholar