58th Australian Cereal Chemistry Conference—Outstanding Program Attracted International Speakers, Provided Something for Everyone

Anne Bridges

A broad-reaching program successfully attracted many attendees to the 58th Australian Cereal Chemistry Conference. Held this year on the beautiful Queensland Gold Coast beaches with rolling surf not far from the conference rooms, the speakers may have expected local scenic competition, but it was not to be as all speakers enjoyed well-attended sessions.

The program was a journey from recent advances in cereal sciences, with a range of topics linking the results of the powerful genetic technologies, to the functional properties of a variety of cereal grains. It covered developments and new understandings in nutrition and cereal quality and also included updates in traditional products and considerations of future opportunities. Other areas of the program covered biofuels, grains for animal feeds, and a hot topic in Australia—the new deregulated wheat industry.

International speakers brought a perspective on changes that are happening globally. In the United Kingdom, the switch to domestic wheat supplies has presented key questions with respect to the understanding of the links between molecular markers and quality traits specific to local varieties and market needs. Highly-respected Australian research groups contributed papers on beta glucans (reminders of the valuable legacy Bruce Stone has contributed to cereal science in Australia) and updates on starch and protein research results were also well represented.

The glycemic index, fructans, and folic acid were highlighted in the nutrition area.

The interest and geographical closeness of most of the research groups to both the subcontinent and all Asian countries ensured a strong interest in flat breads and other Asian cereal-based products. Researchers determining grain traits that are more suited to these markets, measuring the performance of the flours in manufacturing a wide range of breads and noodle products for export and domestic markets, presented their results.

The close scheduling and locations of both the 11th Wheat Genetics Symposium and the Genomics for Cereal Scientists Workshop encouraged some participants to attend multiple meetings, opening the door to new options for scientists in the Asian and subcontinent areas for future research collaborations. Next year’s conference in Wagga will certainly be an opportunity for them to see and experience the agricultural end of the cereal supply chain.

No conference can claim to cover the new potential markets today without a session on biofuels and fodder crops. This year, a broad range of topics took attendees from wheat straw, sorghum and fermented canola, to Australian native grasses.

Students made up more than 15% of participants at the conference and this ensured an excellent poster program as well as

1 Chair, AACC Intl. Approved Methods Technical Committee, Anne Bridges & Associates, Melbourne, Australia; annebridges001@earthlink.net.

doi:10.1094/CFW-53-6-0315
© 2008 AACC International, Inc.
many networking opportunities for both the leaders of research
groups with openings in their laboratories and graduate students
planning their next career step.
A late afternoon informal discussion on work underway on
bread analysis methods attracted a surprising number of attend-
ees and a lively discussion indicating that hot topics of broad in-
terest will always attract an audience.
The abstracts for all of the papers in the 58th conference will
remain available on the conference webpage and the Proceedings
are in preparation and will soon be available for sale.
No report on an Australian Cereal Chemistry Conference
would be complete without mentioning the social activities. The
exhibitors enjoyed unlimited interactions with the participants as
all lunches and morning and afternoon breaks were scheduled
among the exhibits. Moreover, the table top format ensured that
everyone had a chance to present their products to the best advan-
tage.
The 2008 Crackers Golf Tournament was another great outing,
and what it lacked in numbers it certainly made up for in the qual-
ity of participants and networking opportunities. It offered a great
opportunity for some of us to enjoy the warm air (very important
for Southerners in winter months) and to take a short break from
the organising activities. I can personally highly recommend this
event to all future conference attendees.

Presentations and celebrations were saved for the final confer-
cee dinner when Dai Sutter (Westons) received the RACI Found-
ers Award, Tony Blakeney (Cereal Solutions) received the RACI
Megazyme Award, and Cassandra Black (DPI Vic) received the
RACI Poster Award. As expected, everyone had a wonderful eve-
ning.
Thanks go to the 2008 AACC Intl. Downunder Section confer-
cee organising committee, the AACC Intl. headquarters staff for
“urgent help” in setting up the website, and special thanks to con-
fERENCE chair Robert Cracknell, Rosemary Blakeney, and Mal-
colm Allen who kept the registration desk humming.

Anne Bridges received her academic training in Australia and Cana-
da. She is chair of the AACC Intl. Approved Methods Technical Com-
mittee. She has participated in many international conferences and
discussions regarding the importance of validated testing of agricul-
tural biotechnology traits. Most recently she has been working with
ILSI International on training programs and symposia in Brazil, Argen-
tina, Columbia, Singapore, India, and China. She has worked in prod-
uct development and quality in both health care and consumer food
products for a number of companies including 3M and General Mills
Inc. Bridges is now based in Australia and shares her time between
consulting on food quality and safety, and agricultural biotechnology
issues, method validation, and humanitarian relief work.