The International Dairy Federation

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ABSTRACT

The International Dairy Federation (IDF), a non-governmental, non-political international organization was established in 1903. The IDF derives its finances from the annual membership fee (current membership - 31 countries). Membership is accorded to countries through their National Committees representing the country's various dairy interests. These Committees are the link between IDF and the member country. The IDF Executive Committee deals with policy matters delegated by the Supreme body of IDF, the General Assembly, and develops proposals for General Assembly consideration. A permanent secretariat under the direction of Mr. P. Staal, Secretary-General, coordinates IDF activities and carries out the current business at the IDF House, Brussels, Belgium. The technical and scientific work of IDF, under the guidance of the Commission of Studies, is carried out in six special Commissions whose subject matter covers all aspects of interest to the dairy industry. The objective of IDF, which is to promote, through international cooperation, solution of scientific, technical and economic problems in the international dairy field, is achieved through the voluntary work of hundreds of the world's dairy industry leaders. This work is done by Groups of Experts or at Annual Sessions, IDF-sponsored Seminars or Symposia and Congresses.

The International Dairy Federation (IDF), which has its headquarters in Brussels, Belgium is the only international body concerned with the total dairy industry in the world. Thirty-one countries are members and are represented in IDF through their national committees. With the exception of the United States of America, which is not a member, these countries include the top 15 milk-producing countries in the world, thus IDF truly represents the world's major dairy interests.

The IDF is a non-profit, non-governmental organization created in 1903 to promote, through international cooperation, the solution of scientific, technical and economic problems in the international dairy field.

The IDF regularly holds annual meetings at which the work of the various Commissions and Groups of Experts is reviewed and discussed and the next year's work is planned. Every 4 years, in conjunction with the annual IDF meeting, there is held, in the host country, an International Dairy Congress. These Congresses, due to their varied technical and scientific makeup and the all-encompassing nature of their agenda, are extremely well attended by those in the dairy industry throughout the world. The recent (June, 1978) Congress in Paris was attended by delegates from over 50 countries.

Membership in IDF is only accorded to the member country through its National IDF Committee, hence this Committee organization is of vital importance.

COMMISSIONS

The General Assembly is the supreme body of IDF. The main administrative and managerial direction is supplied in IDF by the Executive Committee and the Commission of Studies. The operational administration is carried out at IDF headquarters by the Secretary General and his small support staff. Through the Commission of Studies various specific standing Commissions are appointed to deal with the different subject matter before IDF. At the present time, there are the following semi-permanent Commissions entrusted with certain responsibilities:

A. Production, Hygiene and Quality of Milk
B. Technology and Engineering
C. Economics, Marketing and Management
D. Legislation, Compositional Standards, Classification, Terminology
E. Analytical Standards, Laboratory Techniques
F. Science, Education

These special Commissions name Groups of Experts or working parties to deal with specific dairy problems. These Groups of Experts report back to the Commissions which in turn accept, reject or return the reports for further work. Those accepted by the Commissions are in turn forwarded to the Commission of Studies for final action (this usually results in publication of the report). Additionally, the technique of questionnaires, directed to National IDF Committees, is used to obtain information. There is also one other semi-permanent organization associated with IDF. This is the International Milk Promotion Group, which is concerned with promotion of the consumption of milk and milk products throughout its member countries and the ways in which this consumption may be increased.

GROUPS OF EXPERTS

The work of IDF which goes on all year is carried out by Groups of Experts. Each Group, and there are 85 Groups currently active, is composed of a number of highly competent experts in the subject matter under study. These experts are drawn from the top levels of the dairy industry and are nominated by national committees to work on a specific topic. The numbers of experts per group varies but would average about seven. These experts, all of whom give freely of their time and knowledge, usually meet once a year. They conduct the bulk of their work by correspondence and this work,
when completed, is of high quality and of major significance to the dairy industry.

Each of the six IDF Commissions deals with a specific, related group of subjects and meets at the time of the Annual Sessions. At Paris, 66 reports were presented by their respective Groups of Experts in the appropriate Commissions. These papers represented either mid-project or final reports of the Groups of Experts. A number of these were approved for publication by the Commissions.

A partial listing of the subject matter of these reports would include:

A. Standard method for somatic cell counting in milk.
B. Aseptic collection of milk samples - Isolation and identification of mastitogenic organisms.
C. Chemical residues in milk.
D. Code of practice for design and construction of milk collection tankers.
E. Recombination of milk and milk products - Technology and engineering aspects.
F. Methods for improving the quality of heat-treated milk.
G. General code of hygienic practice for the dairy industry.
H. Control of water and waste water in the dairy industry.
I. Forecasting milk supplies.
J. School milk.
K. Composite and modified dairy products.
L. Labelling of dairy products.
M. Yeasts and molds.
N. Coagulase-positive staphylococci.
O. Freezing point of milk.
P. Behavior of pathogens in cheese.
Q. Heat-resistant proteinases in milk.

In addition, during the individual sessions of the Commissions, special papers are presented by invited speakers on subjects which, in a number of instances, appear in the future program of work of IDF.

The system of utilizing the world's knowledge through formation of working groups of experts is the basis for the success story of IDF and, to a large extent, is unique to this organization.

IDF has as its objective the solution, through international cooperation, of scientific, technical and economic problems in the international dairy field. In the seventy-five years of its existence, its success in meeting that objective makes it unique in terms of international organizations.

SOME OBSERVATIONS

There are several observations which I would like to share with you about IDF. These observations stem from my association with IDF since 1969. During this period I have seen IDF as a delegate from Canada, as a member of the IDF Executive, as President of Commission D and, since the Quebec City Sessions in 1976, as President of IDF.

My views, opinions and consequent observations about IDF have naturally changed and have been modified as I became more familiar with the work of the Federation but can, I believe, be objectively expressed as follows:

The first and most lasting impression is that of the truly international make-up of IDF. What IDF possesses, and what I suspect is lacking in so many international organizations, is a clear-cut basis of common interest which transcends national boundaries and with which all members can readily identify. The interest to which, I refer is, of course, the dairy industry.

There is, I suspect, a rather unique common bond in all of us who have made the dairy industry our career. That this exists on a national level is perhaps not too strange but to see this common interest leaping the barriers of distance and language is a rewarding experience.

The next impression that one gains from association with IDF is the very high quality of delegates who attend annual sessions. I refer here to the high level of expertise and the vast repository of knowledge and experience that is available to IDF in the search for solutions to problems of the dairy industry.

Another observation which one can make about IDF is the diversity of interests represented by delegates to Annual Sessions and by those serving on Groups of Experts.

All facets of the dairy industry are represented: production, processing, government, research, education, supplying and marketing. Interests range as do topics of study. Included are highly specific, highly technical scientific topics such as "peroxide and T.B.A. values in anhydrous milkfat" and economic analysis as embodied in the work dealing with "methods of market demand analysis for the short, medium and long terms."

IDF has something for everyone in the dairy industry and the flow of information, reports and studies from IDF to National Committees is indicative of the diversity of work and the cooperation that exists between all associated with IDF.

I must mention also the association on a personal basis that flows from the work of IDF. The close cooperation between members of groups of experts and the personal rapport which is thereby established between individuals and thus between countries facilitates an easy exchange of ideas - on a number of topics of concern - between the members of IDF. Thus contacts made within the fraternity of IDF expand into lifelong, valuable links.

A final observation but, I believe, an important one. No country is unique in having to face problems and challenges in its dairy industry. The more one sees of the world's dairy industry the more one realizes that problems know no national boundaries and that solutions must be sought by cooperative effort from all sources.

The experience of other countries can be and is of immeasurable value in the search for solutions to problems. We must avoid narrow, parochial thought and must seek answers wherever they can be found.
many instances, we find in so doing that there is absolutely no necessity in trying, as we so often feel we must, to re-invent the wheel. The answer lies, in many instances, just over the horizon in the experience of others. IDF provides the international forum for such cooperative exchange of thoughts, experiences and solutions.

NORTH AMERICAN PARTICIPATION

While Canada has been a member of IDF for over 25 years, we did not play an active role until 1970. As a background to our decision in Canada to proceed with active participation in IDF and to develop the sort of national committee structure which could ensure this close involvement, we made a careful assessment of the advantages to Canada of membership in the IDF. Canada shares many common features with the United States, not the least of these being the ability to objectively analyze the alternatives, benefits and costs of any situation and to make appropriate decisions on the basis of this analysis. This we did and came to the strong conclusion that we should be “in” as a member of IDF and “in” on an active basis.

This revitalization in the 1970's led to a reorganization of the Canadian National IDF Committee. A more representative Committee was developed with a better base of financing.

As a result of this membership base, the Committee is in a position to assist, where necessary, with the travel and living costs of its official delegates to IDF annual meetings, its members on Groups of Experts and Permanent Committees and its nominees to scientific symposia and seminars. Also, and of very real importance, the Committee can now develop, on a constantly expanding basis, the means of providing effective communication and utilization in Canada of the results of the work and activities of the IDF.

Currently Canada has members on 18 Groups of Experts and, in making this positive contribution to the international exchange of ideas, has reaped the benefits of involvement and participation to an extent far greater in value than the cost of our annual membership fee.

The United States of America, while not a member, participates in the work of 25 Groups of Experts in Commission E through the involvement of the AOAC on joint IDF/ISO/AOAC standard groups. Additionally, corresponding membership is held on two Groups by American scientists.

Hence to some Americans, albeit a limited few, IDF is a known commodity. A strong body of interest regarding IDF membership exists in the United States of America. Concerns also exist that the development of a National IDF Committee in the United States of America could diminish the domestic authority and autonomy of some member organizations. This has not proven to be true in other IDF member countries.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS


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