

Foreword

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We are very pleased to invite you to participate in this first electronic conference on "Tropical feeds and feeding systems" organized by the FAO Animal Production and Health Division.

With the wide extension of electronic communication over the world, this new technology is no longer a privilege of industrialized countries. Many scientists in developing countries now have access to it and the network is expanding very rapidly. It will soon become the most common means of exchange between scientists.

The role of animal nutrition and feeding systems has often been underestimated in livestock development programmes. However, feeds constitute the most expensive component of all animal production systems and any improvement in their use has an important and immediate effect on production level and cost.

During the last 20 years FAO has devoted a lot of efforts to improving knowledge on Tropical Feeds and Feeding Systems, starting with the publication of the book "Tropical Feeds" by Bo Gohl in 1975. Along the same lines, the research conducted by some pioneers has led to a better understanding of nutritional constraints and mechanisms involved in feeding animals in the tropics.

New technologies have been developed which are now applied in many countries. I would just like to mention amongst others:

- ammoniation of cereal straw with urea
- manufacture of multinutrient blocks
- sugarcane fractionation for feeding monogastric (on juice) and ruminants (on fibre)
- greater integration of multipurpose trees in feeding systems
- molasses-fish waste silages
- etc

The FAO Animal Production and Health Division is proud to have had a role in contributing to these achievements. However we are aware that much remains to be done in this field and that it is necessary to involve all scientists in working towards new developments. This is why we have great expectations from this electronic conference to which we invite you to contribute. Scientists such as yourselves have over the years accumulated a wealth of knowledge and we would like to help you in sharing your experience through this conference.

I have given the responsibility of organizing this conference to Rene Sansoucy, Senior Officer (Feed Resources) and Christophe Dalibard (Animal Production Officer)

As the Oxford Forestry Institute has a lot of experience in electronic communications and is already collaborating with FAO in various fields, they have accepted to cooperate in the management of the conference: Andrew Speedy who is a Lecturer from this Institute will act as conference coordinator.

Various well-known scientists have already accepted to contribute some "main papers" for discussion, and we look forward to your full participation in these discussions. Full details will be soon sent providing you with all necessary practical instructions on how to join the conference.

I thank you in advance for your contribution and wish you every success in this new venture.