

President's Report to the NZARES 2012 AGM, 30 Aug 2012

I am pleased to report on the activities and developments undertaken by the New Zealand Agricultural and Resource Economics Society committee over the 2011-12 year. Many thanks go to all the members of the committee who have really been very busy this year on a number of things outlined below. The year has been particularly challenging for all of us who are (or were) part of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry as the transition was made to the new (or old... for those with long memories!) Ministry for Primary Industries. I gratefully acknowledge the support MPI continues to provide to its staff to undertake Society business and attend the conference.

The relationship with our sister organisation, AARES, has been further strengthened over the year, as outlined below. We are grateful for the contribution of airfares by AARES to enable the attendance of Dr Mal Wegener, who will present a paper focussing on renewable energy tomorrow.

The NZARES organisation appears in good heart, if perhaps open to more ideas on how best to serve its members and the best interests of NZ's primary industries and natural resource sectors. There is significant work to do in being able to meet the governments objective of increasing exports to 40% of GDP by 2025 while still supporting the environment desired by NZers – and the profession we are all in must be a key source of ideas and analysis if this is to be achieved.

AARES Awards

The Heading West Award went to Kim Hang Pham Do of Massey University, who attended the AARES 2012 Conference in February in Fremantle, Western Australia. Her paper submitted for the award was entitled: "*Transboundary water resource management: A bargaining approach to the Mekong River Basin*", and was jointly authored with Harold Houba and Xueqin Zhu from the Environmental Economics and Natural Resources Group, Wageningen University in The Netherlands.

The Heading East Award was not awarded in 2012.

The New Zealand Branch Undergraduate Prize for 2011 was awarded to Sebastian Doelle, who recently completed a Commerce degree at Lincoln University. Sebastian particularly excelled in environmental and resource economics and is now working at the NZ Treasury. The award enabled Sebastian to attend the 2012 AARES conference as well as providing one year of free Society membership.

The 2012 AARES Heading North award winner is Dr Tess Stafford of the University of New South Wales. She presented her paper on "*Ignoring the multi-species aspect of labour supply decisions in spatially explicit bio-economic fishery models*" at the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association in Seattle in August.

NZARES Post-graduate Awards (\$1500 per person)

Ms Maiki Andersen of Lincoln University used stated preference non-market valuation in her research that explores "*Is there a significant difference between Maori and non-Maori*

values towards preservation and protection of water resources". Maiki is presenting a paper on this work entitled "*Cultural differences in environmental valuation*" in the choice modelling session during this Conference.

Mr Tom Ndebele of Waikato University is tackling the question "*How green is your electricity supplier?*" for his PhD, using choice modelling to explore drivers of household electricity decisions. He intends to present on his work at the 2013 NZARES conference.

Committee activities

Meetings

We had five teleconference committee meetings with the main purpose of planning the 2012 conference and put out three newsletters and several email updates. Thanks to everyone for your positive and helpful input, and the willingness to take on the various activities below.

Best paper process

This year, the committee have developed and are trialling a new system for identifying participants and then judging the best papers at the 2012 conference, whereby self-nomination occurs when papers are submitted to the programme. A small team of judges will ensure that all nominated papers are read and the presentation attended, rather than leaving judging to each of the session chairs as in previous conferences. The intent is to become more professional and transparent in how papers are judged so that those who put in considerable effort to achieve the distinction of best paper can be assured of the judges' full attention. Your feedback on the success of this approach, and any needed refinements, will be appreciated by the incoming committee.

Website

The Committee appreciated the support provided at the last AGM for the role of webmaster (Alex Kravchenko). This made the process of communicating to members via the website a lot quicker and easier than in the past. Many thanks to Alex for his work. He responded promptly and provided helpful ideas that we had not even thought of (e.g. preventing spam registrations for the conference).

The newsletters are now available via the website, and we discussed putting more information up such as information on the various Awards and their criteria (including links to the AARES website), and President's reports. We recommend the incoming Committee consider this further.

The Annual Conference web registration process was further enhanced this year to include credit card payment via paypal (and remove the cheque payment option), as recommended at the 2011 AGM. This has proven to be a time saving method, although there will always be organisations or individuals who require an invoicing approach. I recommend we make an appropriate grant to Alex for his input.

With Alex's help we looked at options for a password access part of the website where Committee documents could be stored. We settled on using Google Groups for this purpose, and various documents are now stored there including Committee minutes. Newsletters, papers concerning the NZARES-AARES discussions (canvassed later in this report). It is easy to add or remove people's access to this group as Committee members change over time, and it

requires password access so is secure. We have begun to document the process to organise the Annual Conference so the information is not just in one or two wise heads!

If you have not done so already, all members should peruse the website and provide feedback to the incoming Committee about what you would like to see added / removed / changes. Also, please visit the AgEcon website (found via a link on the NZARES site) to find papers from past conferences. Where you find papers that you may have given in the past are missing, please bring these to our attention.

Council and AARES

Ahead of the conference last year, NZARES received notice that AARES would be restructuring, largely due to a “cleanup” of tax status for non-profit organisations initiated by the Australian government. This and the previous committee were concerned about what this might mean for NZARES. Following some exchanges of letters, and attendance by your incoming President at the AARES Conference in February, we are pleased to report that the AARES restructuring will not change the relationship between AARES and NZARES. We will get the capitation grant as long as we run an AARES event, which is our key note session where the AARES President presents a paper. We also are required to hold an AARES NZ Branch AGM which can be at the same meeting as the NZARES AGM. AARES members elect a NZ Branch President, or can agree it be the NZARES President. Other officers duties can be carried out by the NZARES, since capitation is paid direct to NZARES. An NZARES Committee member who is also an AARES member can be co-opted to be the AARES NZ branch liaison and participate in AARE Council meetings.

Special Sessions and Speaker Costs

Following the addition of special sessions in 2011, the committee has continued the approach in the 2012 conference, in the belief that such sessions benefit members by introducing different perspectives on resource management issues. This year we have two special sessions; one on natural capital and ecosystem services with a focus on soils, directly following on from a plenary session on the same topic. We saw this as an opportunity to bridge the gap between disciplines; economics, science and policy. We also have a special council focussed session and have been pleased with Sandra’s efforts to engage her council colleagues up and down the country. Learning from the 2011 experience, the Committee made it clear up-front that there would be no expectation that any costs would be covered for these sessions.

Last years committee recommended that a clear policy be developed that covers the registration and other costs for invited speakers involved in these special sessions. There is interest in holding more special sessions next year. So as interest grows the need for a policy increases. The committee has developed a draft policy, which we will put to this meeting (thanks Tony).

Sponsorship

A start was made on thinking about a more organised approach to gaining conference sponsorship, but pressure from other work and activities on committee members meant that this was not undertaken this year. We recommend to the incoming committee that this could be an activity that begins near the end of the year before the conference, to enable more value to be negotiated with potential sponsors and to better align with organisations’ forward planning for the financial year.

Murray Doak, President NZARES, Ministry for Primary Industries, Christchurch