

Guide for Planning Regional & National

IGA Conferences

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1. Introduction

We have put together this guide so that you'll know how your regional or national conference can become an official International Goat Association (IGA) event. Some of our former hosts shared their experiences in planning and carrying out Conferences with us, and we wanted to share them with you. This document will assist you and your team to plan and prepare more effectively, build on positive experiences, and avoid past mistakes.

As opposed to the International Conference on Goats, the objectives of regional and national conferences should focus on relevant regional and national issues and priorities.

Please include a proposed timetable for all Conference-related activities, including the development and go-live date of the website, invitation of speakers, submission of papers and posters, registration deadlines, etc.

2. Expectations of the Host Country

Potential host countries seek the prestige of hosting an official IGA Conference, and the IGA has specific expectations for using its name and logo.

The members of the IGA Board represent the values and objectives of many people working with goats and goat products throughout the world. Because our community is diverse, there are diverse expectations. For example, some members are dedicated scientists, who are mainly concerned to see the scientific aspects of goat production advanced. Others' main concern is to use research results to make improvements in goat production or the processing or marketing of products. Still, others want to learn about best practices for using goats to help raise people out of poverty. These different perspectives should not conflict; in fact, they are mutually beneficial. In establishing the program of the Conference, you should strike a balance between these expectations.

3. Host Country Organizing Committee

In your proposal, please include a list of potential candidates for the Organizing Committee. A new Organizing Committee should be established for each Conference. **Proposals should include a specific venue and dates for the Conference.** Your proposal will first be sent to the IGA Scientific & Regional Conferences Committee. If approved, then your proposal will be sent to the IGA President for final approval. **At this point, the IGA Scientific & Conferences Committee will assist and work with the Organizing Committee through the Chair, Vice-Chair or Secretary of both committees concerning the conference theme and title, the scientific program, schedule, etc. and additional issues mentioned in other parts of this document.**

Some of the factors that we found to be important were:

Organizing Committee Responsibilities

Committee members must be given specific areas of responsibility (portfolios). Limits of authority must be defined. These limits will involve explaining what decisions they can make on their own and what decisions must first be referred to the Committee. Methods and timing of reporting on progress and the information that must be reported must be clearly agreed.

Organizing Committee Portfolios

The members of the Organizing Committee must have clearly defined roles. The following functions should be allocated to different people:

- Chair**
- Vice-Chair**
- Secretary-Treasurer**
- Communication**
- Scientific program**
- Publications**
- Sponsorships and financial support**
- Social program**
- Technical tours**
- Facilities**

The core of the Organizing Committee must be relatively small. Extra members can always be co-opted onto the Organizing Committee if necessary for specific tasks. Sub-Committees can be formed to fulfill specific functions (e.g., publications; social program; technical tours). These Sub-Committees must report back regularly to the main Organizing Committee. Decisions of Committee meetings must be recorded and distributed to those concerned.

Organizing Committee Members

Organizing Committee members should be geographically close to each other, so that meetings are easy to organize, and are not expensive.

Commitment and Hard Work

Organizing Committee members must be involved in the business of the ICG (goat research, production, and/or development) and be prepared to spend increasing amounts of time dealing with conference matters as the ICG draws closer. Organizing Committee members who are appointed because of their status or connections must still be prepared to work. The work of the Organizing Committee will take up considerable amounts of time and energy. Most of us have our everyday commitments to our work and our family. These must be considered.

Frequency of Organizing Committee Meetings

As the time of the Conference gets closer the time between meetings will become shorter. You may need to meet twice a month. In the days leading up to the Conference, continuous consultations will be necessary. After the Conference, there is still much to do, and regularly scheduled meetings will be needed to wrap things up successfully.

Communication with the IGA

Regular communication with the IGA is essential to prevent confusion, conflicting expectations, and to relieve anxiety. Communication is a two-way process. **The IGA Scientific & Conferences Committee and the Organizing Committee Chairs must consult with each other regularly. Especially, authority to accept or reject papers, abstracts or posters must be clearly defined.**

4. Inclusiveness

The IGA is an international organization. Therefore, the activities as far as possible, should be inclusive, so that people from all countries can participate. Difficulties may arise because of differences in language, culture, and financial resources.

Language

Most national and many regional conferences will take place in the native language, but to attract more participants, we strongly recommend that all conferences have English translation when budgeting and logistics allow. The program should include information about language and whether English translation will be available.

Culture

It is necessary to recognize differences in culture, especially regarding religious differences relating to the way people dress, communicate, and eat. These differences should be accepted, and provision made unobtrusively to provide for the needs of delegates. Food preferences and allergies should be included on the Registration Form, and meals should include meat and pork-free options.

Financial Resources

Many delegates to IGA Conferences come from developing countries. It may be a problem for them to get funding to attend smaller Conferences. Therefore, the organizers must choose a venue that is not too expensive, and there must be a range of accommodations available so that those with limited resources can still afford to attend. IGA hopes that the Conference Organizers will find ways to support delegates who may need additional assistance, such as multi-tiered registration fees to ensure diverse participation.

5. Budgeting, Cash Flow, and Risk Management

Budgeting

A detailed budget must be included in your proposal. The budget should be as comprehensive as possible. You will have to make decisions regarding registration fees, and registration fee deadlines (early vs. late registration). These must cover all the budgeted requirements unless there is a firm commitment of sponsorship.

The IGA President will require budget updates for review, including pledges of support as well as written estimates from vendors.

Risk management

Hosting a goat Conference requires a substantial financial commitment, and there is a level of risk associated when organizing. It is essential to have organizations who underwrite the Conference so that if there is a loss, the individual organizers are not held responsible. **The IGA will not underwrite the risk of a Conference.**

Timing of the program and sponsorship

Please ensure that your conference does not coincide with other big events on the scientific calendar, such as world conferences or alternative IGA events. Timing is critical when asking for sponsorship. You should begin fund-raising as early as possible. An attractive brochure

indicating the main themes and benefits that can be expected from the Conference should support the initial phase.

When approaching potential donors, it is not sufficient just to write a letter. Request an interview with the responsible person in the potential sponsoring organization, or company, and deliver a letter and promotional brochure personally at that time.

Most organizations must work within strict budgetary controls and need sufficient lead time if they are to provide major sponsorship.

6. Conference Theme

A Conference theme must be included in your proposal. It should be attractive to:

- Those involved in scientific research
- Those involved with development projects
- Local and regional organizations
- International organizations
- Students and professionals
- Farmers and producers
- Private companies
- Potential donors, advertisers, and sponsors

7. Conference Program

A tentative Conference program should be submitted with each proposal. The titles of the plenary sessions, general sessions and roundtable discussions should focus on national and/or regional issues and priorities to attract the largest number of national and/or regional participants possible. Conference programs traditionally include:

- Overall theme of the Conference
- Plenary sessions
- General sessions
- Roundtable discussions
- Workshops
- Youth program
- Technical visits
- IGA general meeting
- IGA / gala dinner
- Social activities

The IGA Scientific & Conferences Committee must be involved in the decision-making process of the conference program until its completion by mutual agreement.

Plenary Sessions

These sessions should be scheduled where possible so that most delegates can attend. Try to have no more than two Plenary Sessions occurring at the same time and when possible, select diverse topics so that delegates can easily choose between one or the other. The Organizing and Scientific Committees should choose how many Plenary Sessions to have, and what the topics should be. Generally, the topics should be related to broad areas of

interest, such as nutrition, genetics, fertility management, health, fibers, meat, dairy, development programs, trade issues or marketing. Specific current topics may also be included, such as “advances in biotechnology,” and “specific disease problems” (such as PPR). **The IGA Scientific & Conferences Committee must be involved in decision-making about the Plenary Sessions**, especially regarding the topics chosen, the time allocated, and the invited speakers. The papers are usually reviewed papers.

General Sessions

Delegates must be invited to present papers or posters, and if accepted, these will be included in the general sessions. **Most delegates will not be able to get permission to attend a Conference unless they can present a paper or poster and may need a letter of invitation.** At the start, the Committee has only a vague idea of how many papers might be submitted, and no assurance as to how many of these will be acceptable. If large numbers of papers are submitted, you can decide to allow delegates to present a poster. Also, consider that many poster presentations have value, even if they do not strictly follow all scientific principles. Nevertheless, there must be standards to adhere to, and those can vary between the different sessions. It is important to schedule enough time for poster sessions so that people have time to walk past all the posters and allow time to stop and talk to the presenters about their work.

Roundtable Discussions

A roundtable is a “table” around which a few experts are invited to talk about a specific theme. Roundtable discussions should be scheduled either in the morning following the plenary sessions or during the afternoon. The number of roundtable sessions tends to increase because of specific requests from the IGA Board and others. Be careful to allocate enough suitable rooms for these discussion times.

It is important that the Chair organizes a sequence of short presentations to be made by experts to give the framework and context for the discussion, but the length of these presentations must be limited (no longer than 15 minutes) to allow time for adequate discussion. The Chair, a good expert on the issue(s) to be discussed, must actively encourage meaningful discussion by preparing a list of questions to be put to the invited speakers. At the start of roundtable sessions, presenters and participants should be diplomatically informed by the Chair that the main purpose should be to hold a **forum for discussion**. Otherwise, there can be a tendency for these sessions to be converted into a place where a few speakers fill up the time with papers on their favorite topics.

It is a good opportunity for someone to take notes and produce a summary of the discussions or conclusions.

Workshops

A workshop is a meeting whereby a group of people engages in intensive discussion and demonstration concerning practical issues, or a particular subject or project. During a workshop, examples are offered for sharing and for the comparison of methods and conditions of applicability. The Chair (an expert) leads the development of the theme with a short presentation by himself and/or by inviting a few experts to share their experience with a **practical demonstration or case studies**. Examples of past workshops: “Tools and models

to promote the quality of goat products” (IGA Regional Conference, Bella, Italy, 2007) or “Workshop on cheese sensory evaluation” (11th ICG, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain, 2012).

Youth Program

Due to the importance of engaging youth in goat production, processing, and marketing, the organizers should try to create opportunities for youth to participate in education, science, and skills development during the Conference. The IGA Committees and Board are a resource to help design youth activities, which will vary widely in each country. This is in addition to the “Young Scientist” scholarships that IGA (and perhaps other sponsors) provide.

Technical Visits

It is a good policy to break up the scientific parts of the program with some technical visits, preferably the day before or after the scientific sessions. Usually, a whole day is needed. It is good to give delegates a choice of what they would like to do. They can also use the day for a range of normal tourist options, or for shopping.

IGA Board or Regional Officers Meeting

National and Regional Conferences are convenient opportunities for Regional Directors, Country Representatives and Board Officers to meet and strategize about future activities such as projects, grant proposals or other conferences. Sometimes even Board meetings may be scheduled. These meetings may require meeting space equipped with internet technology.

Gala Dinner

The gala dinner is best scheduled for an evening before people will start leaving. A decision must be made whether the cost of this will be included in the Registration Fee, or whether it will be an extra cost. For example, accompanying persons will often want to go to the dinner, but they will not have paid a Registration Fee. In such a situation, they should be required to pay extra for the dinner. Registration information is critically important to ensure that catering is adequate and to be sure that the venue for the dinner is large enough. Traditional national dishes are appreciated, but with meat and pork-free options.

Social Activities

Social activities can be included, especially in the evenings. These are normally cultural events that are entertainment. It is a good policy to try to get sponsors to host (and pay for) these events. The sponsor should use this as an advertising opportunity. Refreshment breaks (tea or coffee, pastries, fruits) during the Conference should be long enough and be held in a suitable venue to facilitate informal discussions and opportunities for delegates to meet and make new friends/establish collaboration.

8. Technical Program

It is a good idea to include a section of the program on practical applications. Many of the delegates are involved directly in commercial production or development programs. The Organizing Committee should consider allocating time to aspects which are not normally considered as part of the scientific program, but which may be very significant

in the practical implementation of goat husbandry in different contexts. Some training activities that you should consider are:

- Breed exhibition,
- A practical application of certain software for diet formulation,
- Functions of specific instruments,
- Presentations of products for goats and/or kids,
- Cheesemaking demonstration or something similar.

9. Scientific Program

Format for Papers

The correct format must be clearly stated and readily available to prospective authors. Papers submitted in the correct format are a great help to the editors. We recommend that you use the Instructions to Authors for the IGA journal *Small Ruminant Research*.

Editorial Process

The editing process is one of the biggest tasks, greatly facilitated using e-mail and efficient computers. The Organizing Committee must bear in mind that many of the people working with goats throughout the world are from developing countries with very limited budgets, and these electronic systems may be unreliable. Language differences may also be a major handicap. The Editor must build up a resource base of efficient Sub-Editors who can send submitted papers to experts for review. Each paper should be sent to three reviewers, and a tight schedule must be maintained for getting replies. If reviewers are unable to do the tasks within a period of a few weeks, they must notify the Sub-Editor, and refer the Sub-Editor to an alternative expert who may be able to help. Once the initial screening for scientific acceptability has been carried out, the papers must be scrutinized for correct details of format, grammar, etc. They must then be returned to the authors for alterations, and the corrected versions re-submitted. Editing so many papers is an enormous and often frustrating task. The objective should be at least to have a Book of Abstracts for the Proceedings printed in time for the Conference. If the Conference organizers wish to publish these papers in full proceedings or a journal, then further editorial work will certainly be necessary.

10. Accompanying Persons' Program

Apart from the social activities within the general Conference Program, the Organizing Committee should ensure that there is an attractive program for accompanying persons (normally family or friends of the delegates). The Accompanying Persons Program might include participation in some of the Conference activities (technical tours, Gala dinner), but should also include a choice of options to participate in tourist activities. This task can be contracted with a reputable commercial tour operator.

11. Links to Tourist Programs

Your proposal should include information regarding tourist activities outside of the Conference program. Commercial tour operators of good standing, known for their reliability, should be asked to offer short and long tours. Delegates should be able to get full details of these beforehand (from brochures and websites) so that they can choose what they want, and budget for the extra expenditure.

12. Website

A website with a Conference logo will need to be established soon after you are chosen to host a regional or national conference if one does not already exist. **The IGA logo should be prominently placed on the website, but a sentence indicating that the Conference is organized under the auspices of IGA should be added to avoid misunderstanding with other sponsors.** The contents of the website must be as comprehensive as possible and should be regularly updated. It must be linked to other useful websites (e.g., the IGA website). The IGA Scientific and Conference Committee must also approve the website contents.

13. Conference Venue

Your proposal should include information about the accessibility of the proposed Conference venue. Conferences should ideally be located within reasonable distances of international airports. The ability to secure visas is an important consideration when selecting a venue. See the document “Regional & National Conference on Goats: The Choice of a Venue” for additional information.

14. Registration

Registration should be done through the website. Information about food preferences and handicap access should be collected at the same time. You will need an active group of people responding to emailed questions: to ensure delegates can obtain their visas, ensure that all registrations are correct, that payments are received and acknowledged (receipted), that a list of delegates is continually updated, and that all other questions and inquiries are quickly answered. The delegates may need to be referred to the scientific sub-committee if their questions relate to their papers or posters. They may need to be referred to hotels about accommodation arrangements, and they may need to be referred to travel agents for links to tourist programs and eventual discounts from national airlines. Payments for registration should be done by direct transfer into the Conference account wherever possible but must be accompanied by some other communication, so that money coming in can be clearly identified.

Payment information must include bank fees and, to the extent possible, it would be preferable to avoid extra fees generated from currency exchange operations.

Communication should be excellent before and after arrival so that each person is made to feel welcome. Some sponsors will want to include gifts that can be given to each delegate. Each delegate at registration should be given:

- A legible name tag,
- A Conference bag, containing a welcoming letter, promotional information, a Program for the Conference, and a Conference document (Proceedings) with the Abstracts of the scientific presentations, on paper or flash drive,
- Tickets for Conference meals,
- Certificate of Attendance,
- Welcoming gifts.

Registration fees should be waived for any of IGA’s Board of Directors who attend. If this is not possible, then please immediately communicate this to the IGA President.

15. Accommodation

A range of accommodations should be offered because many delegates cannot afford expensive hotels. Nearby universities will sometimes make dormitory rooms available for low cost. Booking and payments should be the responsibility of the delegates. The Conference website and announcements should include a list of hotels within easy reach of the venue. A reliable system of shuttle transport must be available between them.

16. Payments

How money is handled is always an issue. Currency fluctuations are a problem. Some delegates only pay their Registration Fees upon arrival. You will need an organized security plan so that there is no risk of losing money or having it stolen. Personal checks should be avoided because sometimes there is a risk of them not being honored by the Bank. It is now possible to process credit cards through smartphones and tablets or to use PayPal or other electronic apps. Remember that receipts must be provided for all money received, to maintain a hard copy list of those who have paid.

17. Catering

It is usual for the Conference to provide lunches and refreshments at tea breaks. Catering must be budgeted for and can be quite a large expense. An accurate estimate of numbers is essential, and some control of access (lunch tickets) is necessary. The welcoming meeting at the beginning of the Conference is an ideal event for sponsors. Other catering could be planned for the gala dinner. Delegates must be informed about which meals are included in the Conference program, and which meals they must budget for separately. It is helpful to let them know roughly how much to budget for these extra meals.

18. Publications

Format

Clear guidelines must be given about the format of the papers and posters to be presented. You should discuss these issues with the IGA Scientific & Conferences Committee.

Guidelines on which papers are eligible for publication must also be defined: only plenary / invited / any scientific / only on request from the scientific committee.

Timeline

A clear indication must be given of the requirements for the time of submission of papers. Be careful to allow enough time for this process. The papers must be sent to reviewers or referees and returned with comments. A decision must be made about their acceptability, and if changes or corrections need to be made, they must be sent back to the authors. If possible, they should be back to the Committee in time so that at least an Abstract can be included in the Proceedings, if not the full paper. This process can take months. Then the publications must go through a process of proofreading and be submitted to the printers. The costs involved in these activities must also be budgeted.

Invited Papers

A clear timetable and clear directions about the format must be given to the authors of invited papers as well (e.g., the length of the paper). Try to get the text of these presentations before the Conference, so that they can be included in the Proceedings. The

authors must be given the time allocated for their paper in the program, and the method to be used during the presentation, e.g., PowerPoint presentations should be brought on a flash drive. (See 9. “Scientific Program”).

19. Presentations at the Conference

PowerPoint Presentations

Most presenters use PowerPoint to accompany their oral presentations, and these should be made available to the delegates after the Conference. You can ask presenters to send their PowerPoints electronically or by flash drive but have a system to store and later share all presentations, such as through the IGA website.

Chair and Co-chair Orientation

Finalize the list of chairs and co-chairs of the sessions (who may be from the host country) at least a month before the Conference, so they can arrange to arrive early. Schedule an orientation before sessions begin that includes a tour of the facility, use of technology, and expectations for introductions and time-keeping. This “walkaround” with the chairs can help identify potential obstacles such as access to the stage or podium and to adopt a common style for leading the sessions.