

IFMA20 Congress Delegate Evaluation Survey Report



20th International Farm Management Congress.

Healthy Agriculture for a Healthy World

Laval University

Quebec City, Quebec, Canada

Sunday 12th July to Friday 17th July 2015

A total of 353 people from 31 countries attended the 20th International Farm Management Congress.

Here is a breakdown of attendees by type:

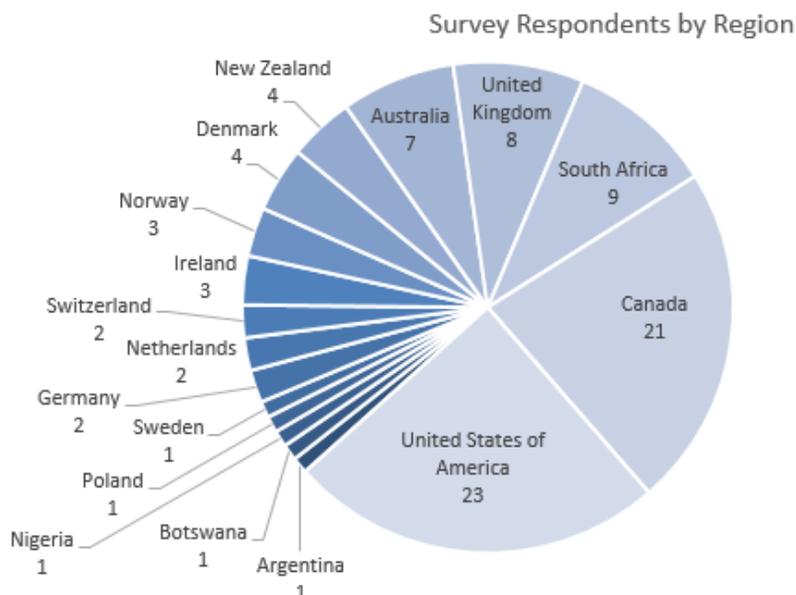
- Full Congress Delegates: 228
- One-Day Pass: 79
- Accompanying Persons': 46
- Pre-Congress Tour of Southern Ontario Agriculture: 30
- Post-Congress Tour of the Maritime Agriculture (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island): 37

The IFMA20 delegate survey was emailed to participants following the Congress, with reminder emails sent out. You can see the delegate evaluation survey form at the end of this report).

A total of 93 out of the 228 full Congress participants completed the survey, representing a 41% return rate. *Note – all percentage figures given are rounded to nearest number.*

Question 1 – Your country?

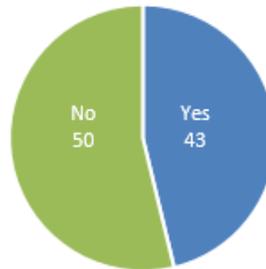
- Over 70% of the survey respondents came from 5 countries – USA (23), Canada (21), South Africa (9), United Kingdom (8), and Australia (7). Altogether 31 nationalities were represented at the congress, more diverse than recent congresses. 17 countries are represented within the survey results.



Question 2 – Is this your first Congress?

- 43 or 46% answered 'Yes' – 50 or 54% answered 'No' – virtually the same mix as those for IFMA18 & IFMA19.

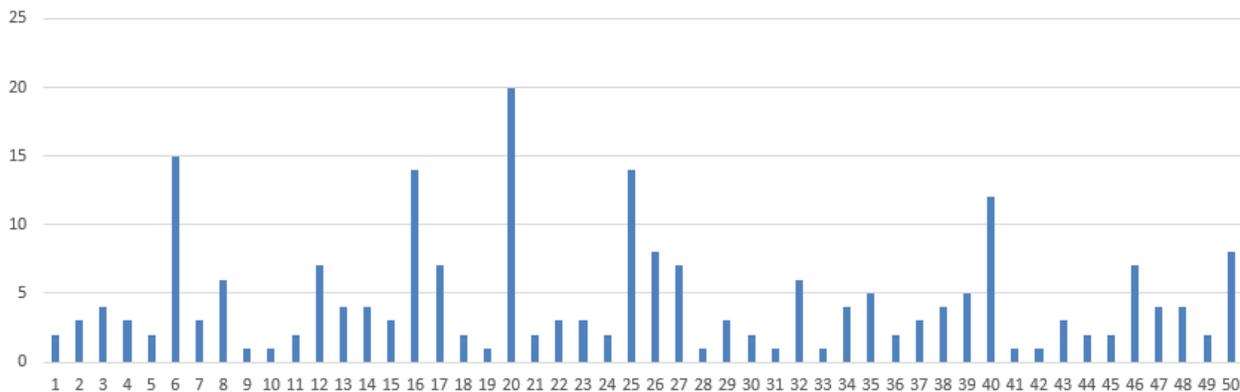
Is this your first Congress?



Question 3 – If 'no', how many previous congresses have you attended?

- The number of previous congresses attended ranged from 1-20 – the 50 who had attended a congress previously had attended 226 congresses between them, an average of 4.5 each.

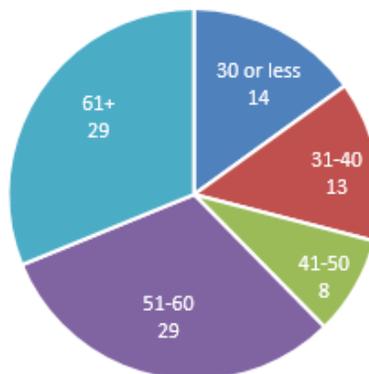
Survey Respondents (X Axis) by Previous Congresses Attended (Y Axis)



Question 4 – Please indicate your age

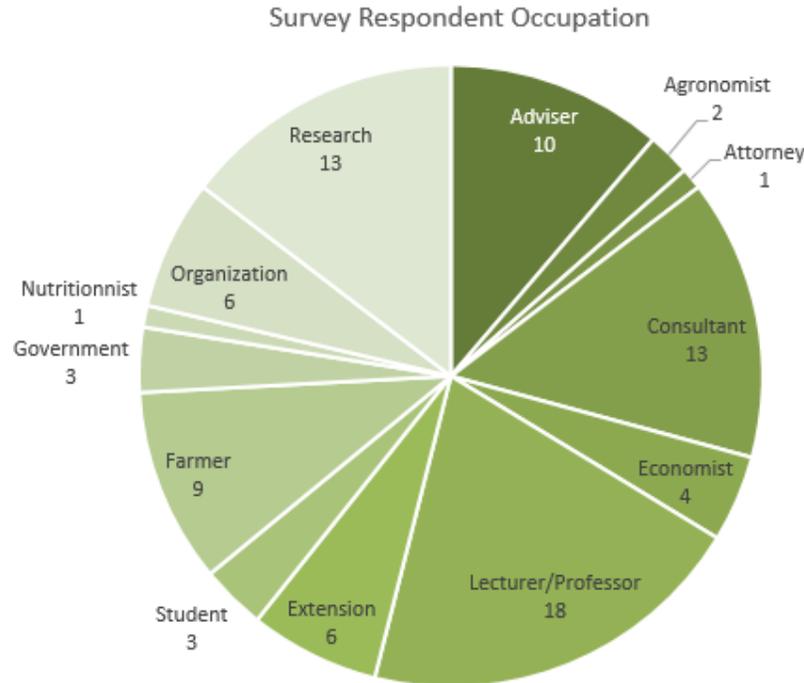
- Age 30 or less = 14 (15%), Age 31-40 = 13 (14%), Age 41-50 = 8 (9%), Age 51-60 = 29 (31%), Age 61+ = 29 (31%). These results are almost identical to IFMA19. The two older groups made up 62% of the respondents.

Age of Survey Respondents



Question 5 – Your Occupation?

- As expected, the occupations of the delegates were many and varied. The most prominent occupation was Consultant/Advisor (24%), followed by Lecturer/Professor (20%), Researcher (14%), and Farmer (10%).



Question 6a – If you are involved in “farm management” in terms of overseeing or advising on a farm or farms – please state the area you are involved in number of hectares or acres.

- There were 26 entries for this section with a total of 1,226,073 hectares (3,029,692 acres) – averaging 47,156 ha (116,526 ac) per entry.

Question 6b – If you are not filling in the above figure – how do you influence farm management?

- There were 26 ‘lecturers’ or professors and 13 financial accountants. There were 30 ‘Other’ responses with a wide range of connections to Farm Management, including 8 researchers, 8 consultants and 4 in extension.

Question 7 – How did you hear about IFMA20?

- 38 of the respondents had heard about the congress either because they were members of IFMA or had heard about it in IFMA Newsletters, 25 had heard from Colleagues, 6 from Internet Search, and 9 claimed to hear about the congress by other means including email invitation from Farm Management Canada, eNewsletter from Farm Management Canada, and email invitation from the Quebec Reference Centre for Agriculture and Agri-Food (CRAAQ).

Question 8 – What were the main deciding reasons for you to attend this congress (tick up to 3)?

- The top ranked reasons for deciding to attend the Congress were as follows, ranked by number of responses in the Top 3: International Networking with 54 (22%), Papers and Field Trips with 46 (18%), Plenary Program with 42 (17%), and Quebec as a destination with 34 (14%).

Question 9 – Evaluate the Congress Components - Excellent / Very Good / Good / Fair / Poor Results

Results are expressed as a percentage – rounded to the nearest full number for convenience.

Plenary Sessions result (90 respondents)

Excellent 32%, Very Good 44%, Good 21%, Fair 2%, Poor 0%

Contributed Papers result (88 respondents)

Excellent 15%, Very Good 42%, Good 37%, Fair 7%, Poor 0%

Field Trips (88 respondents)

Excellent 38%, Very Good 47%, Good 11%, Fair 5%, Poor 0%

Posters – (83 respondents).

Excellent 6%, Very Good 27%, Good 49%, Fair 16%, Poor 2%

Social Program (87 respondents)

Excellent 26%, Very Good 47%, Good 21%, Fair 6%, Poor 0%

Accommodation and arrangements (91 respondents)

Excellent 34%, Very Good 37%, Good 21%, Fair 7%, Poor 1%

Overall how do you rate this Congress? (85 respondents)

Excellent 40%, Very Good 41%, Good 16%, Fair 2%, Poor 0%

If you submitted a paper or poster Your assessment of the process? (44 respondents)

Excellent 50%, Very Good 34%, Good 11%, Fair 2%, Poor 2%

If you attended a Pre or Post Congress Tour – (9 respondents)

Excellent 33%, Very Good 56%, Good 0%, Fair 11%, Poor 0%

Questions 10 –13 requested written responses.

Not all respondents provided input. There were lots of different suggestions and comments –below are the ones that were mentioned most frequently or seemed most significant.

Question 10 – Please give two highlights of the Congress for you (79 responses).

- The opportunity for networking with like-minded people from around the world was cited at the top highlight of the Congress by 40 survey respondents (27%), with numerous mentions of Sam Sebastian (Google), Louise Wendling (Costco), Vincent Cloutier (Coop Fédérée), and Steve Dauphin (Canadian Produce Marketing Association) followed by the Field Trips and Plenary sessions equally at 29 responses each (19%).
- The Farmer Panel also received notable praise from survey respondents, as well as the paper session, Quebec City, International perspectives on farm management, the overall experience, the organizing team, the opportunity for follow-up, social activities (especially the banquet) and the pre-congress tour.
- Some specific, noteworthy comments verbatim:
 - “The chance to get an international perspective on farm management issues”
 - "Potential for follow up and improving my work" “Eye opening from practical point of view”

Continued over...

"Quebec City - the history and culture related to Ag" "International networking and the concept of cooperation"

"Opportunity to learn from farm management professionals from around the world in both formal and informal venues"

"Opportunity to learn about agricultural production, issues and concerns in another part of the world from active operators"

"Papers: Great contributions from younger (scientists) were very inspiring"

"The new acquaintances, professional contacts and friends made"

"Meeting and connecting with farmers and farm managers from across the globe"

"Friendly environment to share ideas" "Amazing network of knowledgeable people"

"Papers from those from outside agriculture particularly Sebastian"

"The cocktail reception Sunday night was a perfect informal mixer for people to meet and greet, followed by the bbq on Monday with very welcome entertainment and Wednesday's banquet to kick it up a notch and bring everyone together to celebrate this opportunity!"

"Learning about management education and issues in other countries (paper sessions)"

"Hearing top-notch speakers on large international agricultural issues"

"Knowledge acquisition in best global practices in agriculture"

"The opportunities for networking were incredible" "The flawless organisation"

"Top level speakers in the plenary sessions. A diversity of countries participating"

"Opportunity to view internal workings of actual local farms"

Question 11 – Please give two areas where improvement could be made (73 responses)

- A number of areas for improvement were suggested by survey respondents. Top most frequently mentioned areas for improvement include:
 1. Paper Presentations (14) – better communications with presenters re: paper acceptance, ensuring presenters are prepared, providing more time for paper sessions, reducing the number of concurrent paper sessions to increase audience for presenters, and ensuring relevant grouping for the paper sessions to reduce the need to move between rooms
 2. Field Trips (13 responses) – providing more information on the stops in advance, and having experienced tour guides to provide commentary on agriculture in the area between stops
 3. Food (10 responses) – providing wholesome meals instead of boxed lunches, providing more fruit and vegetables and more continental options
 4. Conference Room Technology (8 responses) – ensuring the technology is working properly for the presentations (the clicker advancing the slides)
 5. Logistics/organization (5 responses) – better coordination of registration desk, coffee breaks and transportation schedules, ensuring ample room for guests to mix and mingle (ex. barbeque)

Some other suggestions for improvement:

- Better communication from organizers prior to the Congress including social media outreach
- Engage more young delegates including local farmers
- More networking/free time
- Icebreaker event on the first evening
- More Canadian (host country) content and information

Continued over...

- More posters
- Less Field Trips, move to ½ day Field Trips
- Less plenary sessions
- Ensure all English plenary speakers
- More time for Q&A after plenary and paper sessions
- More Friday content
- Theme more relevant to farmers, and ‘family farms’
- Improved Post-Congress tour
- Hold the Congress in one location – venue, hotel, etc.
- More farm management papers
- Improved knowledge of event at Laval and directions for guests (accommodations and sessions)
- More practical information – “that can be transferred directly to the field”

Some specific comments, verbatim:

“Basic farm physical and financial details for those farms visited on the Field Trip programmes to provide some structure to the discussions with the farmers/managers/spokespersons etc.”

“Maybe set up network specific spots. For example, those who are farmers could all meet up during lunch, those who are all farm managers, those at the university, and so on.”

“Farmer panel questions to be submitted prior and selected for relevance and speakers fore warned. Also more time for this section”

“More diverse panelists when discussing farm management. What is the female perspective on managing farms?”

“Less plenary sessions, more organised session, introduction of discussion groups for important issues”

“Field trip leaders do a more formal thank you to the field trip hosts and give them materials of invitation to the Scotland Congress and to the next day’s Plenary and Contributing papers sessions. Let’s get those field trip hosts to the next Congress.”

Question 12 – How can more people be attracted to future Congresses? (67 responses)

- Individual members promoting the congress was clearly seen as the no.1 means to improve attendance, along with targeting specific groups like farm organizations and the Nuffield Scholars to attract attendees (19 respondents or 28%).
- The second most prominent suggestion (13 respondents or 19%) related to differentiating the price for young or first-time attendees, and offering scholarships to young attendees. IFMA could approach ag businesses to sponsor younger delegates attending. A related suggestion included group discounts.
- Better promotion of the Congress via other agricultural groups, agriculture and non-agriculture publications and social media also garnered much support. Promotion can include the networking, the global perspective and big picture, the diversity of participants, the ‘farmer friendly’ atmosphere, and the learning + genuine enjoyment/fun of the Congress, using testimonials from participants.
- Also, reaching out to diverse audiences including young people and women drew mentionable support.

Other suggestions included:

- Providing more options for partial attendance
- Informing delegates the Congress can be written off as a business expense
- Securing high profile speakers

Continued over...

- Running a poster contest
- Providing information in presenters and paper sessions earlier
- Reduce the length of the Congress
- Broader content, more farm financial and business management content

Question 13 – Please add any comments you would like to make. (56 responses)

- Several of the comments here continued suggestions relating to Questions 10 - 12, most on similar themes to those already included, and have not been added here.

- A large number of compliments for the congress and the organisers. Some of them include:

“My best conference ever! Extremely well organized!”

“The Congress was a huge success. I commend the organizers for a job well done”

“This was the single best conference I have ever attended.”

“Awesome first time experience and I'm going to try my best to make it to #IFMA21”

“This was by far the best conference I have attended. I'd love to be part of the planning process for the future.”

“It was a cracking good week and a credit to the organisers”

“First congress which I attended. The organizers were very friendly. Great relationships developed during farm visits and allowing exchanges between people from different countries, which is quite constructive.”

“Very well organized - the organizers and host country team did a fantastic job. Many thanks!”

“I think team Canada did a great job in welcoming delegates to the Congress, showcasing fantastic information, and facilitating knowledge sharing across the world”

“The conference was very well organized. Appreciated the opportunity to learn, meet new people, and tour a variety of Canadian agricultural enterprises.”

“Excellent translation and audio visual of the plenary sessions.”

“Could discussion forums or workshops facilitated by trained facilitators be integrated to allow people to interact and discuss issues with each other - it would add to the networking experience.”

“An excellent experience - part of my schedule for the future”

“Thank you for an inspiring week with much good professional input!”

“The fact that the conference proceedings are accredited makes a notable difference from an academic point of view-make it an attractive conference to attend for academia. It something that needs to be promoted!”

“Re: post tour: Thelma, our tour guide, did an amazing job due to the lack of information provided to her by Leader Tours. She saved the post tour and worked very hard to accommodate participants' needs.”

Other comments/suggestions:

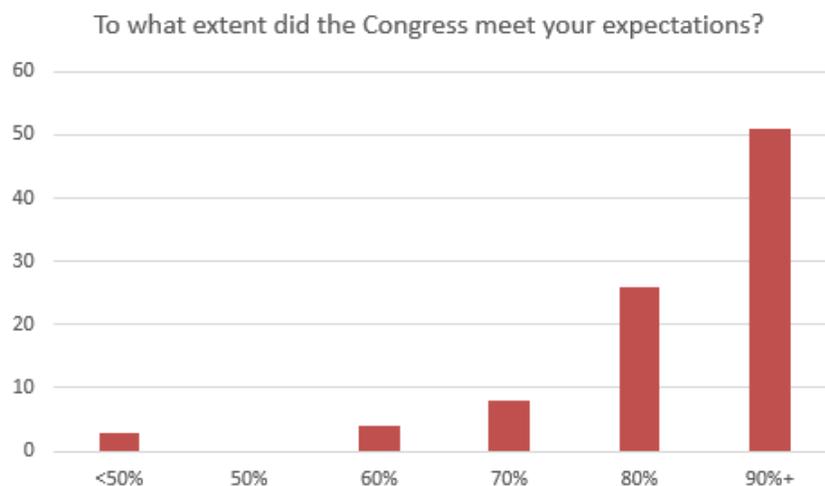
- If the farmer presentations on the Friday morning were held earlier in the week, more time would be available to delegates to follow up on their presentations

Continued over...

- To the plenary program:
It was very big difference in the quality and timeliness of plenary speeches. Those who destroyed the impression talked mostly about themselves and their own organization (The worst was Bonduelle, Wending and Hepler). Several also had unilateral posts where the critical questions raised afterwards, became superficially answered. I would suggest fewer speeches and a panel composed by someone other than the speaker, that more critical could discuss the content afterwards.
- I would like also see some general labourers, production managers and assistant farm managers of farms present at the conference.
Include micro-farming as a topic at IFMA21
- To eliminate confusion, registration for all congress activities and pre and post activities should be centralized via one form or office
- Plenary sessions, some speakers read papers , no copies no powerpoints and some were boring, while more time needs to be made available on last day for discussing different countries

Question 14 – To what extent did the Congress meet your expectations?

- Over 85 of the survey respondents (92%) felt the Congress met their expectations, ranking 70% or more.



Question 15 – Optional – your name please

- 49 respondents gave their name.

Conclusions

For the first time, the Congress Evaluation Survey was conducted in online format only, garnering equal percent response at a 41% response rate (however, from 93 respondents, over double the number of respondents) to previous years where a paper survey provided during the Congress was combined with email responses following the Congress. The benefits of an online survey is the efficiency gained when comparing responses and calculating percentages as the survey software provided this data automatically. And, survey responses can be filtered per type of respondent for even more information on attendees. For example, responses from those who have attended previous can be compared with those who participated in IFMA20 as their first Congress.

At a 40% response rate, one must be careful in analyzing the demographic data of respondents as only a portion of delegates are represented. While the proportion of “first timers” was higher than previous years at 46% (prior to NZ congress this had normally been at around a third of delegates), there may in fact be more “first timers” responding to the survey. It is encouraging to see so many first timers, while it is also incredible to see respondents who have attended 10 – 20 previous Congresses.

With nearly 30% or one-third of respondents under the age of 40, there seems to be a significant number of young attendees, however with such a low representation from 41-50 year-olds, perhaps there is a new gap we must look at addressing. Once again those in the 51+ age group dominate at 62% which should be no surprise as

people in this group are more likely to be able to afford the time and money to attend, and decide to attend without reference to others.

The wide range of occupations was much as we have come to expect, and this is a major attraction of the Congress, allowing an interesting exchange between all those involved in the industry. This is reiterated in the question that asks the respondents' main reason for attending the Congress – the opportunity for international networking came out on top, as well as when asked to provide two highlights of the Congress.

We need to continue to work hard on attracting all groupings – but in particular the farmer and consultant / advisor groups. And again, do our best to assist younger people to attend. The most common solution to attracting younger delegates was providing a price differentiation and scholarship options for younger attendees.

The land area 'managed or advised upon' figure was substantial, but unfortunately several people who could have provided figures for this question chose not to, which is unfortunate as this is seen as vital in marketing the Congress to sponsors.

The question about where people first heard about the congress strongly emphasizes the importance of personal recommendations by colleagues (IFMA Members).

The reader can make their own conclusions of the Ratings Questions (9), but these show that in general we have an excellent basic formula for the congress and that the 20th Congress was highly appreciated by virtually all attendees. In the important areas for those who attended - the content of plenary papers and field trips - high ratings were received. Also, for the paper submission process. Later as respondents were asked to highlight two areas for improvement, notably respondents sought a better field trip experience through more information being provided and more experienced tour guides who could speak to the local area. Many felt the food could have had more variety and served in a more formal setting, while a significant number thought more time could be allotted for discussion following plenary and paper sessions, perhaps reducing the number of sessions. Or perhaps, seeking an opportunity for organized discussion sessions on given topics instead of plenary and paper sessions.

There were many good comments and expressions of thanks to the organisers and the venue providers, and the general hospitality experienced in Quebec.

The Pre Congress tour was a great success getting universal approval and high praise from those who participated – unfortunately the Post Congress Tour ran into some complications in planning and logistics, leaving the majority of participants unsatisfied. The need for detailed information about each day and each stop was emphasised.

In terms of suggestions for improvement and attracting more delegates not mentioned above, respondents emphasized the preference to have all of the events in one place, promoting Congress attendance to the field trip hosts, continuing word of mouth and target marketing to potential attendees and supporters, running a poster contest, allowing for more partial attendance, providing information on plenary and paper session speakers and titles earlier, and continuing to secure speakers who are not trying to sell delegates on their company or credentials.

As usual the need to keep costs down in terms of the Registration Fee featured in the survey – a continuing struggle for the Congress organisers when offering a great deal of diversity including meals and entertainment, not to mention transport, throughout the week.

Overall, 92% of the respondents ranked the Congress experience 70% or higher.

Our thanks go to all those who completed the Congress Evaluation Survey – your participation greatly assists IFMA Council and future congress organisers when planning congresses.

Report compiled and edited by Heather Watson, IFMA20 Council Representative, Canada – September 2015.

Copy of delegate evaluation form follows:

IFMA20 CONGRESS 2015

DELEGATE EVALUATION FORM

The Council of IFMA ask you to complete this questionnaire to help both them and the organisers of future congresses in their planning.

Please complete the following: (tick boxes that apply).

1. Your country: _____

2. Is this your first Congress:

Yes No

3. If no, how many previous Congresses have you attended: _____

4. Please indicate your age:

30 or less 31-40 41-50 51-60 61+

5. Your occupation: _____

6. a) If you are involved in "farm management" in terms of managing, overseeing or advising on a specific farm or farms – please could you give us an indication of the area you are directly influencing:

Number: _____ acres OR hectares

b) If you are not filling in the above figure – how do you influence farm management?

Lecturer (no. of students.....) Financial / Accountant Other

Describe other _____

7. How did you first hear about IFMA20?

IFMA Newsletter IFMA Member Colleague Internet Search

Other _____ Don't know

8. What were the main deciding reasons for you to attend this Congress (**tick up to 3**)

Québec CA The Plenary Programme The Field Trip Programme

Combination of Papers and Field Trips Pre & Post Tours available

International Networking Opportunity to present a paper to international audience

Other reason _____

9. We are interested in your evaluation of the Congress (please tick one box in each row)

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor
Plenary sessions					
Contributed papers					
Day Tours					
Posters					
Social program					
Accommodation and arrangements					
Overall how do you rate this Congress?					
If you submitted a paper or poster to the congress – your assessment of the submission process					
If you attended the Pre Congress Tour					

10. Please give two highlights of the Congress for you:

11. Please give two areas where improvement could be made:

12. How can more people be attracted to future Congresses?

13. Please add any comments you would like to make:

14. To what extent did the congress meet your expectations?

<50% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90%+

15. Optional – your name & country please: _____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH INDEED – YOUR FEEDBACK IS MUCH APPRECIATED.

The Evaluation Survey Report will be published on www.ifmaonline.org in the Articles section. All members will be informed via the IFMA Newsletter when it is published.