



## FROM EMMRW TO ICoMST - SOME FEATURES OF THE BIRTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Professor emeritus F.P. Niinivaara, Finland.

The organizing committee has asked me as promoter of the cooperation and as the organizer of the first congress 1955 to tell you about the birth and development of this congress.

The first congress was held in Hämeenlinna in August 1955. It was attended by a group of 22 meat researchers from seven European countries. As this 50<sup>th</sup> congress is being held again in Finland, it could be said that, the congress has returned to its roots.

This congress was first called “The European Meeting of Meat Research Workers”, EMMRW. It soon expanded, as participants from other continents attended it, too. In 1987 the name was changed to “International Congress of Meat Science and Technology”, ICoMST. We, the “founding fathers”, could not even imagine that a small group of European meat researchers would grow into a large international congress.

Meat is connecting people over the world.

I am very happy to have the opportunity to tell the prominence of the meat scientists of the world about some memories of the birth of the first meeting.

My own career as meat researcher started after the World War II in 1946. European cities had been bombed to ruins. Finland had its share of bombs. Helsinki was badly ruined. The main building of this University was burned. This festival hall we are sitting now looked like a black ghostly skeleton after the fire. After spending five years in grisly war, I could continue my studies. We did not win the war, but we reached our goal: Finland kept her freedom and was never occupied.

The University was rebuilt, opened its doors again, and I was able to continue my studies of biochemistry. As a mentor and teacher I had the famous biochemist Professor Virtanen, who just had received the Nobel-prize in chemistry. This acknowledgment – a Nobel-prize to a Finnish scientist- was like a shot of stimulant to the depressed people of a ruined country. I had been participating in the research work which he presented in his Nobel-speech in Stockholm.

When I passed my final examinations in December 1946, Professor Virtanen came to me and asked if I would be interested in starting to work as head of a meat research institute. He said: “I have been asked for a suitable person, and I consider you suitable for this mission”. And he continued and said unforgettable words:” I think meat research is an important task. Valuable research has been done with dairy science, which I also have taken part in. Meat is economically and nutritionally just as important as milk. That is why I wish that you would take on this task and start developing meat science in our country.”

This was the testament of the Nobel laureate to a young biochemist. I promised to take on this task and I think I have fulfilled it. Meat research and teaching meat technology has become my life work. For this task I have given my best years. It has been 57 years since I took on this task, and here I stand – still lecturing about meat. When I started in 1947, I was perplexed. Meat science. What ever is it? Dairy science and professor Virtanen were well known, but what would meat science be like?

I decided to leave for an excursion abroad in hope for finding ideas from the world. In 1952 I visited Sweden, Norway and Denmark without finding any research work being done on meat. In Germany, I found



one very modest meat research institute. It was founded in Berlin, but was destroyed in the bombings. The rest of it had evacuated to a small South-German town called Kulmbach. With this institute I had many years of cooperation. As an acknowledgment for this, I was first foreigner to receive the Rievel-medal, which is given by this institute to scientists for outstanding work in meat research.

Next year, in 1953, I had the opportunity to visit the American Meat Institute Foundation in Chicago. This Institute had somewhat more capacity. A discussion with Dr. Niven gave me the idea of studying useful bacteria in fermented sausages. After returning I concentrated in this research and in 1955 was able to publish my thesis about this subject. This was the foundation both for the research of Starter cultures and their use in producing dry sausage.

During my excursions I met many distinguished and sympathetic meat scientists. We discussed the possible cooperation between research institutes and scientists. I noticed that the scientists did not know each other personally, but were only reading the publications of one another. It would be very much more useful if information about the work and goals of the institutes would be better available. It also would be more economic and efficient.

Everybody seemed very interested in developing cooperation. It was suggested that all of us scientists should meet to discuss how to start and how to carry out the cooperation. I promised to organize the meeting if it were held in Finland. Everybody was ready for this. So in the spring of 1955 I sent invitations to institutes and persons I knew would be interested in this meeting. This was to be the first meeting of the "European Meeting of Meat Research Workers". There were representatives from seven countries attending this meeting.

They were:

Prof. Reinhold Grau, Germany, Dipl. ing. Mogens Jul, Denmark  
Dr. Hans Baretta, Holland  
Dr. Olle Dahl, Scans laboratorium, Sweden, Spice manufacturer and butcher J.-P. Daul, France  
Dr. Hans Wyttenbach, Switzerland  
Director Hermann Herzer, Switzerland  
Dipl.ing. Martti Knuutila, congress secretary, Finland  
Dr. F.P. Niinivaara, congress chairman, Finland

The congress was also attended by a number of representatives of the Finnish food industry, Altogether, 22 persons were attending the meeting. This committee worked out the guidelines, which have been followed for 50 years. The most important issue of the first congress was how to create the cooperation. These individuals created the main lines and the content of the future conferences.

The program of this first meeting consisted of the same topics, which have for half a century remained as part of the meeting. So, in addition to being an occasion for discussing the scope of cooperation, the meeting was also the first congress of meat researchers. There were eight lectures: Professor Grau talked about the meaning of chemistry in meat research; Mogens Jul talked about gas stunning of pigs, Martti Knuutila talked about microwave heating in meat industry, Hans Baretta about the importance of education; I talked about using starter cultures in producing dry sausage; Olle Dahl about the influence of the race on quality of beef. Eino Niemistö talked about a modern solution in handling slaughter by-products, and Eini Laakkonen talked about the meat products in domestic economy. J.P. Daul suggested an alternative solution for the cooperation in form of a subcommittee in the Council of Europe. This solution was considered inefficient and complicated.

The congresses have been held fifty times without a fixed secretariat. It has only had to be cancelled once. This was in the year 1968 in Czechoslovakia. The "Proceedings of the Congress" was already printed, but instead of congress participants the country the country was occupied. Part of the congress participants had already arrived and were caught in the middle of a riot. This would have been the end of the congress series, as the next host country was not elected yet. An emergency meeting was held in Vienna, and it was settled that I should host the 15th congress in Finland. There was only eight months time for the organization, but the congress series was saved. The spirit of meat was stronger than the tanks.



This congress series is a miracle. From a small European beginning it has grown into a world congress, which today is held for the 50<sup>th</sup> time and with 330 participants. It has always acted on a voluntarily basis, without an elected board or fixed secretariat. In 1955, with high border walls between countries and obligatory visas, we could not as far as imagine this amount of popularity. East and West were divided by the iron curtain, Europe was in ruin, and above these ruins political storms were raging. In these conditions we were building up a co-operation between the meat researchers of different countries. The whole thing seemed utopic. But we made it.

Kenneth Johnson writes that the driving power has been the “spirit of meat” -which he thinks was born in the finish sauna. *Meat is tender, but the spirit of meat is always strong.* I hope the spirit of meat will be the driving force for Meat Congresses in the future, too.

R. B. Sleeth said in the 41<sup>st</sup> congress in Texas:

*“Friendships that last a lifetime are one of the greatest conference benefits.”*

I wish to all of you pleasant days in Finland, in the birth country of ICoMST.