

The NextGen workshop and IFMA

by R4D young farmers

Mateusz Kaczocha – Poland; Tomasz Fluder – Poland; Simon Cretnik – Slovenia; Tamara Wind – the Netherlands. These four young farmers tell shortly about their farm and especially about the experiences during the IFMA congress.

Prior to the 23rd International Farm Management Congress (IFMA23) in Copenhagen, there was the possibility to join as young farmers the NextGen workshop. This workshop was held on the 25th and the 26th of June in Laholm, Sweden. In total there were nine countries represented: Tasmania, United States of America, United Kingdom, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Poland, Slovenia and the Netherlands. On behalf of the Resilience for Dairy (R4D) project four young European farmers were participating: After an introduction of the workshop and IFMA23 we went on a farm visit to Ståme Holstein. This is a family farm with dairy, arable and social activities (like ko-safari and hosting car meetings). After a ride on the ko-safari and some time to ask additional questions to the farmer and his son we had to go back to our accommodation and needed to start with our strategic plan for this family farm. For this task, we were split up in three separate groups and we did work on the strategic plan for 1.5 days on basis of the strategic “canvas” method. This encompassed an internal analysis, external analysis, risk analysis, competition analysis and skills of the farmer. Each group got help from one of the moderators of the workshop. On Sunday each group had to present their “strategic canvas”.

After the last presentation we traveled by taxi and train to Copenhagen to attend the International Farm Management Association (IFMA23) congress (from 26th of June until July 1st). In the evening, we had the Welcome Event with a delicious barbecue. This was the first opportunity for us to meet the CurrentGen” (next gens from previous years). On Monday and Wednesday, the two plenary sessions and multiple paper sessions were scheduled. During the two paper session time slots, we could choose to attend one of four sessions. On Tuesday and Thursday, fieldtrips were scheduled focusing on a variety of agricultural topics, including dairy farms. On Friday, the last plenary session was held. In this session, we, as NextGen participants, also were requested to present our reflections on the strategy workshop and other experiences during the conference. With the whole group, we presented four subjects: The strategic farm case, found outcomes, network and social experiences, and our vision on the next NextGen meeting.

Below is summarized what we as European group presented about the subject “Network and social experiences”, which we as group presented to the audience. Probably this networking and the social contacts were the most important part of the NextGen experience. It was a great opportunity to meet all of the present NextGens in Sweden before the start of the conference. We could get to know each other a bit, especially during the discussion parts lead by Ove Karlson, Trevor Atkinson and Jakob Vesterlund Olsen. During the whole conference it was a positive happening to be mixed up with the ‘ExperiencedGen’ or even ‘NewGen’ as well as NextGens. It was nice to have the opportunity to learn from each other and hear about how others run farms in their countries and continents.

The networking and social part was in fact an excellent opportunity to experience personal development in about one week. Off course, knowledge about strategic management is important (and surely no

offence to our course leaders), but the personal development part was one of the most valuable experiences of this week.

Personal experiences - Tamara Wind, the Netherlands

I am from a dairy farming family in the province of Friesland. This is an intensive dairy farming area with lots of grassland. Our farm is a specialized dairy farm.

On forehand, I had actually no idea what to expect to attend a workshop and conference like this. It was my first time. However, I was surprised (in the positive way) about the whole week. I have met a great group of young people at the workshop. I have learnt more about other cultures. In addition, it was nice that we (almost) all were also attending the conference in Copenhagen. I never had the feeling of being alone as an attendee from the Netherlands. The diversity in the program gave also the opportunity to have a broad overview of all the divers' subjects. By being able to choose your own program and fieldtrips, and meet attendees all over the world, it was possible to look during the conference beyond my own interests and create a broader view of the agricultural world. Besides, I had, thanks to Abele, the opportunity to speak for the first time on one of the paper sessions. As also described above the social and networking part was personally the most valuable for my own personal development. It was a wonderful experience, I will never forget!

Personnel experiences - Mateusz Kaczocho, Poland

I am student of farming. I work on my 100ha farm, which focuses on producing wheat, corn, sugar beet, barley and rapeseed. My parents and me also run a company which handles agricultural services, mostly dealing with seeding and collecting the plants from the fields. Last year we introduced strip tillage on our farm what makes our fields more productive. Moreover, we have a small animal production, being 500 pigs and 50 bulls.

Best experiences for me of IFMA and the Next Gen project was meeting people from all around the world. Every one of them has other experiences and look at the management of farming differently. We could see that for the whole world, we have a kind of similar problems, but sometimes we look at them differently. This event helps me in leading my farm and company. I have now contacts with mostl people from the Next Gen project, with who we exchange our experiences online.

Personnel experiences - Tomasz Fluder, Poland

I am a student of agriculture at the University of Life Sciences in Poznań. Together with my parents, we run a 100-hectare farm. We grow triticale, wheat, rye, corn and grass. The farm also has cattle (65 heads), including 27 dairy cows. My main task is to manage the herd (feeding cattle, arranging feed rations, breeding cattle and milk quality control).

By participating in Next Gen, I was able to notice the differences between farm management resulting from the specific climate in many countries. Conversation with the participants of the congress and the preparation of presentations increased my knowledge in the field of economics, ecology and general farm management. Such knowledge may be useful in the future.

Personnel experiences - Simon Cretnik, Slovenia

As dairy farmer, I like innovations. When I saw the permeable artificial floor during a study visit to the Netherlands, I became enthusiastic. The freedom for the cow to move around is a big plus. In the meantime, a new barn is built in the hilly region I am living in Slovenia. The artificial floor is the first one in use in Slovenia in a commercial herd. It separates the urine and feces at the source. The feces removal is done with a manure robot. It was a big chance for me to be able to participate in the strategy training of Next Gen at the IFMA meeting in Denmark and Sweden. As young farmer, I met colleagues from many countries. Although my professor guide from University of Ljubljana was worried that I may feel a bit lost at such an international meeting, the opposite was the case. I enjoyed the company of other next gens very much and the interaction with senior visitors to the meeting was rewarding. The professional team that guided the strategy training was stimulating us very much. They deserve a lot of credit for their input and friendliness. I hope very much that the next gens from Europe can stay in touch and that I will meet again some others who visited this congress. It was a great networking experience



Participating four Next Gens in front plus guides in the back of picture