



STBA honours CRC-SPF contribution. November 2002

Recently the Southern Tree Breeding Association (STBA) honoured the Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Production Forestry (CRC-SPF) for its contribution to the STBA at its Annual General Meeting and dinner in Hobart (November 2002). The STBA is an industry tree breeding cooperative that runs the national tree improvement programs for Blue Gum and Radiata Pine. It is based in Mount Gambier and counts many CRC-SPF partners amongst its membership. It has had breeding programs in *Eucalyptus globulus* since 1995 and *Pinus radiata* since 1983.

The CRC-SPF won two awards on the night. The first was for "Best Franchisee of the Year", a natty hat with the STBA logo, which was accepted by Greg Dutkowski. This award was a little tongue in cheek, stemming from the CRC-SPF highlighting as a major achievement in its last annual report the STBA software for genetic analysis (TREEPLAN®).

While the CRC-SPF has no direct stake in the software, which the STBA will be using to build its national and international genetic evaluation business, CRC-SPF scientists have made a significant contribution to its development. The software has been written by the Animal Genetics and Breeding Unit at the University of New England, but Greg Dutkowski and Luis Apiolaza contributed many ideas that helped them make the leap from analyzing cattle and sheep breeding programs to tree breeding.

Tree breeding is more structured than animal breeding, as we use designed trials, usually administered by a single authority, rather than the more chaotic situation in animal breeding with many studs doing their own thing and trying to amalgamate a lot of unstructured data. On the other hand, tree breeding is much less advanced in understanding product quality and markets, and thus what we measure is much more liable to change. Flexibility of measured traits was just one important idea that Greg and Luis brought to the software design team.

Greg also received another award on the evening, "STBA Scientist of the Year". While Greg commented that in 2002 he had in fact done less scientific things for the STBA than in many previous years, he was chuffed to have his efforts acknowledged. Greg received a very nice trophy for his efforts, which he likened to a mini-Melbourne Cup. In some shameless self promotion, Greg left the cup on a table in the tea-room in Hobart for over a week for everyone to admire.

Greg has been associated with the STBA since 1990 (2 employers ago!), and is currently serving his second term on the Board of the STBA. In that time he served on the Technical Committee for a number of years, and its data management and quantitative genetics sub-committees, helping in the supervision of projects in those areas. He has also directly worked in doing genetic analyses for the STBA over the years. While Luis Apiolaza and René Vaillancourt currently serve on the Technical Committee, Greg also serves on the Board's audit and constitutional review sub-committees.

The traffic is not all one way however, as Dr Tony McRae (General Manager, STBA) serves on the Genetic Improvement PCC, and they sponsor a SPIRT grant and many minor research projects. The STBA is an associate member of the CRC-SPF. The partnership between the STBA and the CRC has benefited both groups through easy access to research material, and as an avenue for rapid uptake of research results.

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