Exciting news from Southern Africa is that three of the largest beef cattle breed societies have decided to join BREEDPLAN - Brahman, Simmental and Simbra. Peter Massmann, CEO of the Simmental and Simbra Society of Southern Africa, explains that it has not been easy. “We decided to join BREEDPLAN in 1994 but spurious claims by our local authorities about data ownership of our members thwarted our original attempts [to join]. However, we can now firmly put the past behind us and consider the future knowing that we have joined one of the best performance and registration systems in the world.” Peter says that this, together with their well known visual evaluation system will improve their service to stud and commercial producers in the five countries they serve. The system is also approved by the 29 country strong World Federation.

The Brahman Society is just as excited. New CEO of the society is Dr Paul Lubout. “The decision of the Brahman in South Africa to appoint a geneticist as CEO indicates how serious they are about performance testing. Joining a world class system will help us achieve our goal to become even more performance orientated”, says Paul. Over 60% of commercial cattle in South Africa have Brahman in them.

In terms of membership, the Brahman breed society is the largest beef breed society in South Africa with 560 members. The Simmental society is third with 370, and Simbra is the fastest growing society, 110 members. The South African breed societies also work closely with their Namibian, Zimbabwean and Botswana counterparts. The Simmentaler and Simbra societies in these countries have all their registrations and performance data recorded in South Africa. The Brahman societies from these countries have their data analysed in the South African Brahman office.

An integrated registration and performance system has recently been installed in the Brahman office and by the time this newsletter appears a similar system should be installed in the Simmental and Simbra office. Although breed societies in South Africa have measured and received EBVs for growth traits, no EBVs have been calculated for reproductive traits such as Days to Calving or any of the carcass traits.

South African breed societies are also interested in exchanging semen and embryos with their Australian counterparts so that across-country evaluations can be conducted in the future.

The first BREEDPLAN course in collaboration with the Brahman and Simmental association was very well attended. We plan to hold 15 such courses throughout South Africa in the next few months. Producers are shown how BREEDPLAN reports are interpreted, management groups are formed and some theory is also explained.

As with the cricket and rugby, we would like to compete on equal terms with our Australian counterparts. Being part of the BREEDPLAN system will allow us to achieve this goal.

Michael Bradfield

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