

## Foreword

In February 2001 at the XIX International Grassland Congress in Brazil, there was a mood of pessimism about the adoption of tropical forage legume technology around the world. There was a perception that, although adoption in Australia had been satisfactory, adoption in other countries (particularly developing countries) had been weak, and that ongoing investment in research on tropical forage legumes therefore might not be justifiable.

A small group of delegates met during the Congress to consider what to do about this issue. They decided to undertake a survey of the use of tropical forage legumes around the world, using their networks and knowledge of particular countries to identify examples of successful adoption. The criteria for "success" were that: at least 50 000 ha had been planted in farmers' fields; or at least 50 000 small farmers were using a particular legume in a particular country or region; or the commercial value of a smaller area was particularly significant and sustained.

During 2001–04, the group systematically identified and considered more than 30 potential "success stories". Many did not meet the criteria and were rejected, even though, in some cases, successful adoption was clearly under way. Nineteen examples that clearly *did* meet the criteria were chosen. Individuals, who could provide authoritative information on the adoption of these forage legumes, were then identified, and short papers (poster presentations) were commissioned from these authors for presentation at a special session at the XX International Grassland Congress in Ireland in June–July 2005. Funds to support the participation of these invited authors at the Congress were found where necessary. An overview paper by Associate Professor Max Shelton, Dr Steve Franzel and Dr Michael Peters was also commissioned. This overview, the 19 commissioned poster papers and a number of other poster papers that were submitted to the session are assembled in this special issue of *Tropical Grasslands*.

To our knowledge, this was the first international survey of adoption of tropical forage legumes, and the results were surprising. The survey revealed that: at least 5 Mha of tropical forage legumes had been planted in farmers' fields by 2004; approximately two-thirds of this was in developing countries; and at least 500 000 farmers were benefitting from the technology. While in some countries the accuracy of the results cannot be assured, the estimate of the total area is probably conservative. For example, areas of some

legumes in Australia were not included; an unknown area of *Leucaena* in the Philippines was excluded because accurate estimates could not be obtained; and significant areas of *Mucuna* in central America and Africa were excluded because there was evidence that the areas may be declining.

The session also provided an opportunity to launch two new products, both of which are briefly reviewed in this special issue of *Tropical Grasslands*. The first was a Decision Support System to help identify forage plants suitable for planting in tropical farming systems anywhere in the world (Pengelly *et al.*, this volume). The second was a new book on *Stylosanthes* edited by Sukumar Chakraborty.

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### *R J Clements*

Members of the international working group (in alphabetical order) are as follows:

Dr Bob Clements (ATSE Crawford Fund)  
 Dr Bruce Cook (QDPI&F)  
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 Dr Carlos Lascano (CIAT)  
 Dr John Miles (CIAT)  
 Dr Bruce Pengelly (CSIRO)  
 Dr Michael Peters (CIAT)  
 Professor Rainer Schultze-Kraft (University of Hohenheim, Germany)  
 Associate Professor Max Shelton (University of Queensland)

Dr Colin Piggin and Dr Bill Winter (both at ACIAR) were corresponding members of the group.