

European Turfgrass Society Holds First Conference

By Mike Fidanza, John Cisar and Stan Kostka

As the European Union has been evolving and growing in recent years, many European turfgrass scientists in academia and industry, as well as turfgrass practitioners, have formed a network of connections to diffuse and share turfgrass information throughout Europe. As a result, the European Turfgrass Society (ETS) formed on July 6, 2007, as many European turfgrass-related scientists and industry representatives gathered to officially ratify the organization in Pisa, Italy.

Dr. Marco Volterrani was elected the first president of the ETS. Volterrani is also the director of the Centro Ricerche Tappeti Erbosi Sportivi (*translation*: Center for Research on Turfgrass for Environment and Sports), University of Pisa (Italy).

According to the mission statement included in the ETS statutes, the primary objective of the ETS is the encouragement of a holistic view of turf, particularly with respect to its influence on urban and environmental quality.

Specific objectives of the ETS include: to provide a forum for scientists, consultants, companies and practitioners to discuss technical issues related to the turf surfaces; to spread innovative applications for the benefit of the turfgrass industry, national and local government and the European public; to encourage a systems-based approach to the study of turfgrass through multi-disciplinary groups working at different levels; to consider turfgrass knowledge in the broadest sense, including its use in sport and leisure, its role in improving urban quality and its importance in the mitigation of environmental effects such as soil erosion; and to develop a strong ethos to promote sustainable, low-input systems and solutions based on the conscious use of non-renewable resources.

So on May 19 and 20, Volterrani and the ETS convened their first conference in Pisa, a historic city in the heart of the Tuscany region. The city is world renowned for the Leaning Tower, but Tuscany is also known for excellent food and outstanding wines, especially Chianti. Almost 200 people attended from academia and industry from 17 countries.

Eighty-one research papers were presented (28 as oral presentations, and 53 as poster presentations) representing 178 contributing authors from 17 countries. Many turfgrass



researchers from the United States were in attendance to present research as well as support the efforts and success of the ETS. Also, turfgrass-related faculty from the University of Pisa provided a guided tour of a sports pitch (athletic field for you Yanks), a demonstration of an innovative bermudagrass sod production method and research on turfgrass species evaluation for the Mediterranean climate.

Research topics presented during the conference were varied, from basic plant nutrition research on turfgrass systems in Europe to research on turfgrass species and cultivars, soil water repellency, pest-management issues, turfgrass management and environmental quality and research on maintaining healthy and playable golf course greens and sports turf

surfaces (Magni, 2008). Also, undergraduate and graduate education opportunities in turfgrass science were discussed among many university researchers from Europe and the United States. For example, several European universities with agricultural programs are in the process of developing and expanding their undergraduate curriculum in turfgrass science in hopes of training students to work in the golf and sports turf industry in Europe and abroad. Also, several academics from the United States expressed an interest in collaborating with those European schools to offer advanced graduate-degree opportunities for those international students in the United States.

Attendees at this first ETS agreed to hold a research conference every two years. The second conference will be held in 2010 in France (location to be determined) and the third conference in 2012 will be in London to coincide with the 2012 Summer Olympic Games.

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REFERENCE

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