

Nuffield International Farming Scholars Report from the Fourth Session of the United Nations Environmental Assembly – UNEA-4

Two members of the Nuffield International Farming Scholars program were part of the nearly 5,000 delegates at the [fourth session of the United Nations Environmental Assembly](#) (UNEA), referred to as UNEA-4, in Nairobi, Kenya in March. Simon Mattson, a Nuffield Australia Scholar and arable farmer growing sugarcane and other crops, and Luciano Loman, a Nuffield International Scholar from Brazil who is a partner in a technology company providing farmers with real-time decision support systems to more effectively and efficiently manage inputs and resources, were the first Nuffield Scholars to participate in this global event.

This report shares insight and comments from Simon and Luciano, reflecting their views as agri-professionals and experts in their fields. As an organization, Nuffield International does not have specific policy positions, but recognizes and believes firmly in the urgent need for farmers, ranchers, fishers, and other production professionals to be at the center of global policy conversations on agriculture, food systems, nutrition, health, and the environment.

The theme of UNEA-4 was “Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production.” A key feature of the gathering was a series of high-level, interactive sessions termed “Leadership Dialogues.” The Leadership Dialogues are explained by UNEA as being “designed to provide ministers and leaders from civil society, business community, and international organizations with the opportunity to engage in an interactive exchange of views on priorities, best practices, challenges, and actions,” all relating to the theme mentioned above ([UNEA website](#)).

The UNEA-4 Leadership Dialogues were:

- “Environmental challenges related to poverty and natural resources management, including sustainable food systems, food security and halting biodiversity loss”;
- “Life-cycle approaches to resource efficiency, energy, chemicals and waste management”;
- “Innovative sustainable business development at a time of rapid technological change”.

Outside of the Leadership Dialogues, plenary sessions, bilateral meetings with individual countries and special sessions/forums on specific topics were also held to engage participants and discuss topics falling under the theme on innovative solutions.

The Nuffield International Farming Scholars participation in UNEA-4 was coordinated by [Emerging Ag Inc.](#), and arose as part of the Nuffield International membership in the [International Agri-Food Network](#).

Insights from the Nuffield Farming Scholars

As noted by Luciano Loman (Nuffield International Scholar – Brazil):

“It became clear, for a first-timer like me, that UN events as such are the final moves of immense ‘world-sized chess games’ with many stakeholders, discussing and trying to agree on resolutions that are of varied relevance and interest for each country.... The “chess game” starts already months prior to the assembly When the event starts, a lot has already been done.”

Both Luciano and Simon commented on the space that exists for agricultural producers to play a role in discussions at the UNEA event.

Simon Mattsson (Nuffield Australia Scholar) shared his engagement with the Farmers Major Group, and the discussion that took place to craft a [statement](#) to be put forward by this group. Simon noted that production agriculture, and particularly farmers from developed countries, seemed to be under-represented in this group. Simon expressed his assessment that the statement, as presented, was not reflective of global agriculture and seemed to focus more on indigenous and organic farming. As part of the Farmers Major Group, Simon was able to lend his voice and provide language to work towards a more inclusive statement that reflects a broader swath of production agriculture.

Agriculture and the Environment

There is an inherent connection between agriculture and the environment. The active engagement of farmers, ranchers, fishers, horticulturalists, and others in the production agriculture sector in forums like UNEA is important to ensure the connection is not overlooked or underrepresented when policy is being discussed and formed.

Luciano summed the dynamic of agriculture and the environment well by sharing *“farmers from all over the world are willing to act today and use the knowledge that the whole community is continuously learning. Farmers are very aware that their most valuable treasures are their soils, ecosystems and pollinators, for those promote life and better crops - therefore farmers are continuously adapting its best practices to ensure its own sustainability.”*

Call to Action for Nuffield Farming Scholars

As this was the first UNEA-4 meeting that Nuffield Farming Scholars attended, it was an important opportunity for the organization to evaluate the forum as a potential standing event for Scholars and to better understand how future participants can participate and engage. The feedback from Simon and Luciano was swift and strong on this front: Nuffield Farming Scholars **must** be part of future conversations.

As shared by Simon, *“with agriculture performed on roughly 50% of our planet you would expect a big ag presence at UN level, you would be wrong! Agricultural policy in most countries is written in an attempt to meet resolutions signed at Un level years before hand, if you are unhappy with ag/environment policy you need to go back to the start.”*

Luciano frames the larger challenge and call to action for agri-professionals: *“Time has come for agriculture to stop being perceived only as ‘part of the problem.’ It has to be embraced by society as a fundamental part of the solution for environmental sustainability.... Agriculture has to – and will – play a central role in developing and implementing solutions to feed the increasing population while continuously restoring and taking care of the environment that we have left. The many forms of agricultural activity are also key for social and economic development.”*

When asked about potential next steps and actions moving forward, Simon noted *“Nuffield International in conjunction with Emerging Ag could and should play a much larger role in extending the good messages of agriculture and also working to bridge the gap between the two camps of agriculture I mentioned earlier. Agriculture is very poorly represented at this level and we are all paying the price of legislation that is written by government to meet UNEA resolutions signed off on years before hand.”*

You can read more insight on [Luciano's perspective](#) and [Simon's insight](#) on the UNEA-4 meeting. A [video interview of Simon](#) by Dr. Jean Lonie, Nuffield International Relationship Manager, is also available.

Nuffield International Global Engagement

Nuffield Farming Scholars are engaged leaders at the local and national levels, and are playing an increasing role as voices for production agriculture on the global stage. With their understanding of production agriculture as well as their personal interest and involvement in the outcomes of global policy discussions, Nuffield Farming Scholars are vital translators and peer leaders in activities regarding food production, food security, environmental resource management, and innovative partnerships and activities to ensure a sustainable future for global agriculture and the people involved in and reliant on the industry – which is every citizen on this planet.

About Nuffield International

Nuffield International Farming Scholars inspires people to make a difference in the world of agriculture. This work is done by developing the individuals in agriculture who will shape the future of agriculture and our local and global communities.

The Nuffield International Farming Scholars program is a unique global network of farmers and agri-professionals that focuses on:

- Personal capacity building
- Excellence in agricultural production, distribution, research, and management
- Local, national, and global thought leadership

A non-profit organization with a growing global footprint, Nuffield International supports the efforts of member nations while administering the development of the scholarship program to include individuals from around the world.

The aims of Nuffield International are to:

- Nurture the Nuffield Farming Scholars 71-year heritage and build on its legacy;
- Develop and inspire leadership in individuals in agriculture;
- Provide a model for existing and future member countries;
- Encourage international agricultural communities and organisations to become involved with the Nuffield program, increasing cooperative learning through the resulting globalized agricultural network;
- Promote resources and experts to inform and advise policy makers, governments, and NGOs, and build global reach in the world of agriculture;
- Challenge thinking, encourage innovation, and ensure the transfer of knowledge and ideas locally and globally.

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