

The 43rd Nordic Dairy Congress in Lofoten, Norway 2013

With financial contribution from Mejeriteknisk Forum it was possible for me to participate in the 43rd Nordic Dairy Congress in June 2013. Participating in the congress gave me the opportunity to improve my dairy knowledge by listening to interesting lectures, meet colleagues from the dairy industry and of course experience the beautiful nature and the midnight sun in Lofoten.

The congress is held once every three years and for the first time in 1920. Participating countries are Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Iceland. The theme of this year's congress was: "*Nordic Dairy Industry – Future Perspectives*".

The congress was officially opened by Kjetil Høvde, president of the Congress from 2010 to 2013, followed by the Mayor of Vågan welcoming to Lofoten and finally with greetings from NMR representatives from each of the participating countries.

The lectures at the congress were divided into six sessions with each their theme:

Session 1: Future challenges in the Nordic Dairy Industry

Parallel sessions 1 & 2:

Session 2: Product quality & session 3: Nutrition and health

Session 4: Future products and possibilities

Session 5: New product technology

Session 6: New product properties

There were many interesting lectures, and I cannot go through them all, therefore I will here chronological point out some of the headlines from what I found the most interesting.

Session 1: The following representatives, from the Dairy Industry in each participating country, gave their view on the future challenges in the Nordic Dairy Industry: *Hanne Refsholt, President and CEO Tine SA, Norway; Jais Valeur, Executive Vice President, Arla Foods, Denmark; Lars Moberger, Chairman Mejeriteknisk Forum, Sweden; Matti Harju, Vice President Technology, Valio Ltd. Finland and Palmi Wilhjalmsson, Director Production, Mjolkursamsalan ehf, Iceland*

Their speeches were followed by a panel discussion where the audience could ask questions.

Session 1 gave a very good idea of the differences and the challenges, the dairy industry is facing in the Nordic countries. Some of the challenges are the farm sizes, rationalisation of dairies especially in Iceland, and for the EU members the EU-milk quotas that are to be abandoned. For the cooperative dairy companies one thing is common: Their objective is to pay a high milk price to the farmers, and they have to deal with more private label and compete against more imported dairy products.

Session 2: Of the parallel sessions I decided to go for session 2, where the title was "*Product quality*" in terms of animal health, differentiating of milk, environmental impact, microbiology and quality of dairy products. One of the speakers: Jacob Holm Nielsen from University of Copenhagen said that milk, as it is well known, contains a number of important nutrients, and still it is a lot cheaper than soft drinks. To compete against that, it is needed to add value to the milk. That can be done by different feeding of the cows, that can change the composition of milk. Though, that cannot be used as health claim and therefore the concept need to be telling the: "good story" from the farm according to Jacob H. Nielsen.

Session 4: The title of this session was: "*Future products and possibilities*" the lectures were about Nordic responds to the global trends in terms of differentiation and dairy products used for weight regulation.

What I found most interesting from this session was Martin Kruse from Copenhagen Institute for Future Studies who talked about the global trends. He believed that a possibility for the future could be explained by the words: "*Think global act local*", and that we in the future will see more protected regional names and specialties within the EU, such as Champagne and Feta. Kruse also thought, that we will see more culinary tourism and authentic food products. Furthermore he believe that the price of dairy products will increase!

Session 5: The title of the fifth session was: "*New product technology*" with filtration and heat treatment as the main topics.

Marianne Hammershøj from Aarhus University spoke about UHT - direct steam injection and infusion based on studies that have been done. Direct UHT is more gentle to the product than In-direct UHT as the heat transfer is very rapid in direct UHT, though direct steam consumes more energy than in-direct and there is doubt about the level of plasmin deactivation.

Richard Ipsen from University of Copenhagen held a lecture about microparticulation of whey protein based on a PhD study. The technique is that whey is concentrated and afterwards heated and sheared simultaneously. Miroparticulated whey protein (MWP) is ideal for replacing fat in yoghurt, cheese and ice cream where the creaminess with added MWP is almost comparable with high fat products.

Session 6: New product properties was the title of this session.

Hanna Jatila Senior Researcher from Valio gave her view on added value products. According to her added value is a way to stay out of bulk production and the method to make more profit and for the consumers it can be worth the extra investment. Added value can be vitamins, minerals, probiotics or lactose free milk products.

Judith Narvhus from Norwegian University of Life Sciences held a lecture about bioactive fermented dairy products and the possibility to change starting point for fermented products by protein fractionating. Also milk lipids can be changed to be more healthy.

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Overall there is many possibilities, also when it comes to probiotics and fractioning, though it is difficult to get EFSA approval according to Judith Narvhus.

Beside the lectures there were time to socialise and enjoy the beautiful nature, and the midnight sun in Lofoten. The first evening a bus trip was arranged to a distant place with a fantastic view over the sea – an ideal place to see the midnight sun. The following evening, Friday, a boat trip were arranged to the spectacular Trollfjorden.

Saturday evening it was time for Gala Dinner at Thon Hotel. The theme was local specialties from Lofoten and each dish were presented as a part of the evening's entertainment.

Being at the congress were a great experience and I had the chance to meet many new people from across the industry, beside learning from the interesting lectures.

Still, compared to the majority of the delegates at the congress, I am new in the dairy business and I found it very inspiring participating, and I will hereby like to thank Mejeritekniskt Forum for making that possible.

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