

# Norway - I'll never forget it

*By Alltech scholarship winner Gavin Grobbelaar  
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**Taking part in the IFAJ 50<sup>th</sup> congress in Norway was a career defining experience. Travelling to a country that is so rich in natural beauty and unique culture made the story topics I picked up on during my experience extremely easy and fun to write back in my office in Johannesburg.**

The meticulously planned field trips that ran like clockwork made gathering information an absolute pleasure and so did the friendly and helpful volunteers.

The congress allowed me to network with some of the most amazing

journalists and people I have ever met. Getting to know hundreds of people from vastly different cultures was easily the highlight of my trip.

I discovered that my colleagues in other countries also take great pride in their jobs and practice true professionalism while working, but still remember how to have fun after the work is done.

The contacts I have made will stand me in good stead for the rest of my professional career and meeting them through the opportunity provided for me by Alltech and the IFAJ means that I can travel to more than a dozen countries in future and never feel unwelcome.

Working among some of the world's top agricultural journalists at the congress taught me a couple more tricks of the trade and skills I have already put to use here at home.

To be completely honest I never had a plan about how I would approach the congress in the weeks leading up to it. Getting everything in order and meeting tight deadlines really had me moving to get to the airport on time.

But in retrospect this was a blessing in disguise because I had no preconceived ideas about how the congress would be, besides the chilling but just as thrilling thought that once I stepped onto the plane I was all on my own on my way to Scandinavia - a part of the world I never thought I'd visit.

Not having an initial plan made every single moment an exhilarating one. Not knowing what to expect, wondering which amazing person from a completely different background to mine I would meet on the next day's field trip and what intriguing information I would collect next about Norway and its agricultural industry kept me on my toes every second.

My mind blowing experiences made writing articles an absolute breeze. A two-page question and answer feature with the Norwegian Minister of Agriculture that revealed the unwavering support from government for its farmers received positive feedback from my editor and deputy editor who described it as "a very interesting piece" and said how "amazing how there's a friendly relationship between the Norwegian government and its commercial farmers".

A photo-essay that illustrated 'the dancing farmer' who showed off his unbelievable on-stage acrobatics at Rudi farm near Lillehammer was also well received by my news editor.

A two-page feature about the innovative agri-tourism industry in Norway that generates a large portion of farmers' turnover struck a chord with some of our readers who can relate to the failed efforts by South Africa to get an agri-tourism industry off the ground, despite the vast attractions we have to offer.

For as long as I live I will remember my experiences at the 50<sup>th</sup> IFAJ congress with great fondness, but not with as much fondness as the friends I made.

***Picture: Gavin at work in Norway.***