

IFAJ delegates approve constitution changes

Delegates unanimously approved a major update of the IFAJ's Constitution at the Federation's annual delegates' meeting during the IFAJ Congress in Japan in September.

"These changes provide a solid foundation for the future growth of the organization by enabling the IFAJ to respond more quickly to the many changes and opportunities facing our profession," said President David Markey.

The most significant changes to the Constitution are:

- The IFAJ Executive Committee was given the authority to decide in the future if the IFAJ should continue, or not continue, to issue IFAJ Press Cards and appoint regional vice presidents. In addition, the Executive Committee can designate working languages for events and communications. IFAJ's official languages will continue to be English, German and French.
- Proxy voting will be allowed at future annual delegates' meetings.
- Membership application procedures and job descriptions for IFAJ's officers were moved to the IFAJ Rules where they can be more easily changed with the times.
- Elimination of the individual membership. In the past, individual agricultural journalists from countries that did not have an agricultural journalist association could join as individual members. Few individual members ever joined.
- The past-president's term on the Executive Committee was reduced to one year from two.

Some of the changes to the old Constitution were made to bring it up-to-date with current technology. The revised Constitution will now allow for the IFAJ's newsletter to be an electronic newsletter instead of printed, and will allow the organization to maintain a directory of member contacts on IFAJ's website instead of printing a directory.

A number of the changes involved resolving inconsistencies within the Constitution that had crept into the statutes through the years, primarily when amendments were added. IFAJ's original Constitution was adopted in Paris on November 16, 1956, and had been amended nine times between 1956 and 2002.

With the IFAJ Constitution update completed, the Executive Committee will next move to revise IFAJ's Rules, to bring them into conformity with the Constitution. Changes to the IFAJ Rules have already been drafted and discussed. They will be reviewed again and are likely to be voted on during the Executive Committee's January 2008 meeting in Berlin.

Markey thanked former IFAJ president Paul Queck for his role in reviewing and revising the constitution. "It was a major undertaking to work on such a technical document with people from many different language backgrounds, and we thank Paul for his considerable input," he said.