1st International Congress of Trufficulture: 2013

Teruel, Spain
March 2013

Nigel Wood
Why go?
The Teruel conference was a new entrant to the European/international truffle conference circuit

- Conference: 5–8 March: 2 ½ days of papers & 1 day tour

- Post conference technical tour (8-14 March) visiting
  - truffieres
  - nurseries
  - field stations
  - truffle product producers – charcuterie, cheese-makers & other processors
  - truffle markets & festivals
  - restaurants, hotels and bars
  - regional research and extension laboratories

in regional towns across Northern Spain and France
Teruel, Spain and the Conference

Teruel and Spanish trufficulture

• Teruel is an important centre in Spain’s major truffle growing areas, along with nearby Sarrion

• 10,083 Ha planted in Spain

• Spanish truffle R&D and extension well supported during the noughties, but under funding pressure in post GFC Spain.

The conference

• ~300 delegates

• around 8 Aussies and lots of other “New (truffle) World” people – USA, Chile, Argentina, South Africa, China - joining the “traditional & new Europeans”

• strong regional & national media interest
A beautifully organised conference
The conference

• well supported by Spanish growers, associations, institutions & governments
• no startling new discoveries announced, but steady advances in a wide range of science and practice in a growing number of countries evident
• good cultural program coupled with Teruel truffle festival
• strong organisational and website support from a small dedicated team
• most papers now at www.tuber2013.com in English, along with all abstracts
The post conference technical tour:

rural Spain . . .

and continuing media interest
The post conference technical tour: Spain & France

• practically oriented, but with plenty of science, extension and culture, especially in Spain
• a great mix of ~ 30, largely international, participants
• a typical day: 8 am: on the road to an R&D centre, nursery and/or truffiere, rugged up against unseasonal cold; 2 pm: 3 or 4 course lunch, then more driving, truffieres, markets, nurseries or local government visits; 8.30 pm: arrive overnight destination, then 4 or 5 course dinner at 9, bed at 12 (!) and lots of camaraderie and inventive discussion along the way
Just some value added and regional products
And value added truffle products – with insights into culinary tourism
2 favourite conference moments pictured
The post conference technical tour gang
Also a personal journey

- the 2\textsuperscript{nd} day of the conference, I’m front page of the regional & national newspapers
- great people involved in the global truffle industry
- becoming more scientific, market focussed and seriously competitive
- global industry largely “gathered up” by European distributors
- but global growth opportunities await Australian producers
My conference take-aways . . .

• is Australia a global leader in yield? (~100 Kg/Ha vs ~40 Kg/Ha)

• European marketing tightly controlled – stand by for a global “appellation contrôlée” and “no Perigord truffle” attack

• the “New (truffle) World” offers challenges and opportunities

• new markets beckon: Asia, Latin and South America, the Middle–East, and old markets can be cracked

• the Aus domestic market shouldn’t be ignored

• significant additional economic benefits from truffle related culinary tourism – more than doubles Aus truffle industry economic impact

• ours is a low carbon, environmentally sustainable industry, and

• lots more can be done with value added products and services.
So what is do be done?

- a 2014 or 15 International Conference in Australia?
- international market development and intelligence
- local market development initiatives of all targeted kinds – invent an “Australian trufficulture”
- Association driven standards; grower education; consumer exposure; more international liaison
- focus on quality Australian product and avoid price competition
- expect & prepare for a European onslaught
- growth in truffle related agricultural extension, university teaching & research, mycology, culinary tourism, ag/hort brand development etc, and
- new partnerships with large and boutique producers to do this
- funded by a maturing industry, consumers, stakeholders and governments
Hated the tour . . .
Can’t think of why I wanted to give up the day job . . .