



Office of International Programs *Monthly Newsletter*

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ACES to lead consortium of universities engaged in modernizing agricultural extension and advisory services in Iraq



A consortium led by ACES is collaborating with the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) to improve the livelihoods of Iraq's farmers by modernizing and strengthening their agricultural extension systems.

The new Iraq project, entitled "Harmonized Support for Agricultural Development (HSAD)," is led by Iraq's Ministry of Agriculture, executed by ICARDA, and funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). HSAD will target commodities that are crucial to Iraq's national food security, including wheat, barley, small ruminant products, and date palm. The U of I-led consortium's role will be to improve the delivery of extension services and develop the capacity of farmers and extension partners. For example, the team will work with Iraq to train and support local extension workers to be "knowledge brokers" and link farmers to markets by drawing on the expertise of innovative farmers who are already producing and marketing profitable agricultural products.

This new award is in addition to a \$9 million received in late 2010 when the University of Illinois was selected as the lead institution to undertake the "Modernizing Extension and Advisory Systems" (MEAS) project, granted by USAID. MEAS Project Manager Andrea Bohn says, "We are honored to receive additional funds to extend our missions to Iraq. It is a testament to the strong work we are already doing with MEAS in the arena of international agricultural development."

MEAS Project Director and Associate Professor of Family and Consumer Economics, Dr. Paul McNamara, explains, "To strengthen and expand Iraq's extension system, we will draw on our own experience through MEAS as well as the valuable experience our partners, UC Davis, Texas A&M, and the University of Florida, have had working in similar locations. Specifically, we will work on the structures Iraq uses to organize their extension system. We will work to expand the capacity of their extension agents, not only improving their technical skills in certain areas, like water management, irrigation, horticulture, and major crop systems, but also making sure the extension system is set up in such a way that allows the farmers to have a voice and input into the services that are delivered. Additionally, we and our partners have relevant experience using internet-delivered training programs that can be adapted for use for Iraq."

Bohn recently attended a high-profile HSAD inception meeting in Baghdad that included Iraq's Minister of Agriculture, H. E. Izz Al-Din Al-Dola, and ICARDA's Director-General, Dr. Mahmoud Solh, who welcomed the Iraqi government's strong support for HSAD. The meeting was also attended by senior USAID officials and numerous upper level government representatives. An outcome of the meeting was the establishment of three working groups on themes that are crucial for effective implementation: proven technologies with potential for rapid transfer to farmers, opportunities for strengthening agricultural extension, and a 'constraint analysis' on policy and value chains.

"The public extension system in Iraq is currently weak, given that there are staff but they are not well trained nor well equipped. This project will bring much stability to Iraq's farmers and will impact millions of people as more products become available through increased marketing channels," said Schuyler Korban, Director of ACES Office of International Programs.

HSAD is led by Iraq's Ministry of Agriculture with support from a coalition of national partners at country and regional levels. These include the Ministry of Water Resources, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the Ministry of Science and Technology, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources of the Kurdish Regional Government. Besides the university consortium, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) is another partner in HSAD.



Mark your calendar:

Distinguished International Lecture, April 9

Featuring Dr. Robert Zeigler, Director General of the International Rice Research Institute.

More details coming soon.

ACES International Profile: Lowell and Betty Hill, Ambassadors for Grain Quality



The Hills visit the Great Wall in 1987.

For the full version of this interview, along with more photos, please visit: http://intlprograms.aces.illinois.edu/Profile_Hills.

As I sit with Dr. Lowell Hill and his wife Betty at a coffee shop to learn about their research-inspired travels to more than 50 countries, a local farmer stopping by our table offers

further introduction to this amazing couple: "I have read Betty's manuscript and am reading one of Dr. Hill's books that I am underlining as I read. I like it because it's factual and still relevant. He's world-renowned; both of them are."

Hill, a professor emeritus of agricultural economics, retired from the College of Agriculture, Consumer and Environmental Sciences back in 1998 after a 35 year career of groundbreaking and highly successful work on grain quality. In the 1970s, he began working directly with local elevator managers to help them with their drying and quality problems. His work contributed to several changes in U.S. grades including the removal of test weight and moisture as grade determining factors in soybeans. Hill explains, "Test weight for soybeans was not a good measure of value, was not used by most of our competitors, and had been included originally because it was in the grades for corn."

Hill explains his initial motivation for international work: "To maintain U.S. competitiveness, it was essential to understand world markets as well as how other countries produced and marketed their grain. We were all competing in the same market. So, we needed to make sure our quality was equal to or better than our competitors. I also wanted to find out more about what the international markets wanted in terms of preferences for quality, and what our competing exporters were doing that made, in some cases, their grain preferential, for some buyers. We interviewed players in many countries to find out which attributes they desired and how other countries were meeting those attributes, either by virtue of their production processes, marketing processes, or their agricultural policies."

Out of all his travels and experiences, Hill lights up most about his 20-year internship program for nearly 30 graduates and undergraduates, where he helped his students see and explore the world. "The highlights for me are the successes of my students."

From local farmers to Argentinian families, and from local elevators to the foreign agriculture service and grain importers around the world, the Hills' work has had significant and positive influence on the international grain community. Hill's focus on and success in solving problems across lines of disciplines and cultures has inspired many others to expand their horizons.

ACES strengthens relationship with Sierra Leone and Njala University



Dean Hauser with Sierra Leone Minister of Agriculture Sam Sesay

A convergence of activities in Sierra Leone during January 2013 strengthened ACES' existing relationship with Njala University. A group of University of Illinois students participating in an annual two-week study-tour led by Dr. Paul McNamara were able to take part in a high-profile, three-day workshop on geographic information systems (GIS) led by Dr. Richard Cooke. The workshop attendees included the Sierra Leone Minister of Agriculture and ACES Dean Robert Hauser, who spent several days

in Sierra Leone during the intersection of these events. Additionally, seven U of I students arrived at Njala in January to begin an inaugural semester-long study abroad program. *To read the full text of this story, visit: http://intlprograms.aces.illinois.edu/Njala_2013.*

Winter-Nelson spends sabbatical in South Africa



A village in Zambia where Winter-Nelson is evaluating livestock

Dr. Alex Winter-Nelson, professor in agricultural and consumer economics, spent Fall 2012 at the University of Pretoria (UP) in South Africa, hosted by Dr. Johann Kirsten, Head of Pretoria's Department of Agricultural Economics, Extension and Rural Development. During his sabbatical, Winter-Nelson assisted several UP graduate students with their research projects, focusing on studies related to the Zambian sugar market and the Zimbabwean fertilizer market. He also used the opportunity to

pursue his existing work on livestock systems' effects on poverty reduction in northern Zambia.

Winter-Nelson says, "Pretoria has a large graduate program and several young faculty who are looking to make connections and understand how their research can fit into a larger, global context. I ended up giving small amounts of input on several projects and was able to contribute significantly to two projects related to the Zambian sugar market and fertilizer use in Zimbabwe. Getting involved in these studies was attractive to me because I was helping people make sense of research that had already been done. I helped them contextualize what they had and make small but strategic adjustments, and guided them to additional work they needed to do.

The UP study Winter-Nelson became most involved with looked at how the sugar prices in Zambia compare to international pricing and the effects of these prices. The second project Winter-Nelson provided significant assistance on focused on fertilizer use and fertilizer markets in Zimbabwe. Winter-Nelson greatly enjoyed his sabbatical leave: "Professionally it was great for me to develop these collaborative relationships. Pretoria has wonderful facilities and a lot of people doing interesting things; however, they are not very connected to the international research world, so it was mutually beneficial."