



Office of International Programs *Monthly Newsletter*

September 2012

Wheeler hosts Cochran Fellows from Rwanda to learn IVF and embryo transfer techniques for cattle



Manzi and Hirwa work in Dr. Wheeler's lab. Hirwa is washing oocytes in preparation for in-vitro fertilization.

With the goal of improving their country's dairy production, two Rwandan scientists visited the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign campus during August 2012 for hands-on training in in-vitro fertilization (IVF) and embryo transfer techniques.

Dr. Claire Hirwa and Mr. Maximillian Manzi were hosted by Dr. Matthew Wheeler, professor of animal sciences, as part of the United States Department of Agriculture's Cochran Fellowship program. During their two-week visit, the scientists were trained in all steps of the embryo transfer process

and conducted IVF through cultivation.

The Cochran Fellows further benefited from a concurrent visit by Wheeler's longtime colleague, Dr. Luiz Nasser, of both the University of Panama and BORN Animal Biotechnology. Wheeler and Nasser have previously proven that their techniques are widely applicable with large-scale IVF and embryo transfer in South and Central America, where they have significantly improved cattle production, delivered embryos to clients all over Panama using different breeds, and produced approximately 3,000 pregnancies in two years. The pair is confident their techniques can help other countries, such as Rwanda, dramatically increase milk production and improve the genetics of their cattle.

Mr. Manzi, a director of livestock research and extension in Eastern Rwanda, explains his country's interest in Wheeler's technology, "Our indigenous breeds, which currently account for 77% of Rwandan cattle, have a very low milk production of only 2 Liter (L) per day, per cattle. This is not meeting the demands of our country, especially with the current population growth, so the government would like to increase milk production through crossbreeding. The average milk production for a crossbred cow is 15 L per day."

Hirwa and Manzi feel very good about the training they received, "After seeing and learning what is being done here, thanks to Dr. Wheeler and his team, we feel confident that the goals for cattle outlined in Rwanda's Vision 2020 program could be achieved at a reasonable cost."

The Cochran Fellowship Program provides U.S.-based agricultural training opportunities for senior and mid-level specialists and administrators from the public and private sectors who are concerned with agricultural trade, agribusiness development, management, policy, and marketing. This program has trained over 13,500 Fellows from 121 countries around the world since its inception in 1984.

ACES team organizes international workshop on teaching excellence in New Delhi, India as part of USAID's Agricultural Innovation Partnership



Dr. Hurley, Dean Hauser, Ms. Bo-Linn, and Dr. Kalita at international workshop.

As part of the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Agricultural Innovation Partnership (AIP), ACES is helping six Indian universities develop new agriculture curricula based on India's changing needs and market trends. Most recently as part of this project, ACES organized a

three-day workshop on teaching excellence during July 2012 in New Delhi, India.

The workshop, "Innovative Teaching for Improved Learning," brought together administrators and senior faculty to plan and strategize on enhancing the students' learning experience both inside and outside the classrooms. The organizing team from Illinois included Dean Robert Hauser; Dr. Prasanta Kalita, professor and leader in soil and water resources engineering; Dr. Walt Hurley, professor of animal sciences; and Ms. Cheelan Bo-Linn, a senior specialist in education and Head of the Center for Teaching Excellence.

Korban receives Visiting Professorship for Senior International Scientists sponsored by the Chinese Academy of Sciences



Dr. Schuyler Korban, professor of molecular genetics and director of the Office of International Programs, spent September 2012 in China as a Visiting Professor for Senior International Scientists, a position sponsored by the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS). The CAS invites a maximum of 100 scientists from all fields of science annually to participate in this prestigious program. Dr. Korban is pictured above with Prof. Shaoliu Li, Director of CAS.

ACES graduate students assist with surveying work in Zambia



As part of a project to evaluate the effects of livestock placement and possibly justify additional investments, two ACES graduate students have assisted with surveying hundreds of households in northern Zambia. By living onsite throughout the data collection period as well as managing a team of enumerators (pictured above)

who canvassed the remote study sites on bicycles to conduct the surveys, Clement Belanger Bishinga and Caroline Annah Takawira describe a challenging yet fulfilling experience.

Takawira, an M.S. candidate in agricultural and applied economics set to graduate in spring 2013, returned in late August after spending seven weeks in Zambia collecting data. She was responsible for assigning enumerators to households for interviews, working with local farmers to obtain directions to these households, observing interviews, checking completed surveys for errors and quality, and scanning data to provide to her advisors.

Belanger Bishinga, a graduate student in agricultural and consumer economics set to graduate in December, was also in Zambia from January through March. Because he managed the initial round of surveys, he was responsible for making sure that all types of households were surveyed, including those who received animals and those who did not.

Both Belanger Bishinga and Takawira stated that the cultural and language differences, as well as lack of basic amenities during surveying, were major challenges. However, both gained personal growth and fulfillment by the end of the experience.

Belanger Bishinga notes, "Any type of problems I faced were solved much easier towards the end. I realized I am able to adapt to a new environment and new organizations. I used interpersonal skills to learn Bemba, to get support from locals, to understand enumerators' difficulties, and to reach our objectives." He also gained experience in management. "I realized how challenging it is to maintain the quality of your best workers as well as motivate the less efficient."

Takawira enjoyed seeing that the project is making a difference in the lives of these farmers. "I talked to a widow who a few months ago could not afford to give her children a decent meal, let alone send them to school, but now because she received a dairy cow and is selling milk, she can afford to do all these things. Seeing that was very uplifting. I witnessed many great testimonies from farmers, and it was wonderful to be part of a project that is making such a big difference in people's lives." She adds that the experience taught her the real meaning of "working under pressure and in tough conditions" and that she now feels ready to tackle any challenge.

Because of the extra level of understanding that is gained from observation, both students encourage graduate students to get involved in the data collection process. Both also express deep gratitude for the help and support of their advisors. Belanger Bishinga is advised by Dr. Peter Goldsmith, and Takawira is advised by both Drs. Alex Winter-Nelson and Goldsmith.

Argentinian Consul General visits Illinois



The Honorable Marcelo Suárez Salvia, Consul General of Argentina, visited the University of Illinois campus on September 11–12, 2012. Mr. Salvia was accompanied by his deputy consul, Mr. Juan Ignacio Camio Bavasso. As part of his visit, Mr. Salvia met with ACES

faculty including Dr. Fabian Fernandez, Department of Crop Sciences, and Dr. Ted Funk, Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering. Mr. Salvia spoke on "Argentina: From the economic recovery to the Malvinas issue: History, Policies and Challenges" in a lecture hosted by the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies.

OIP to co-sponsor Food Security and Public Health in East Asia Symposium

OIP is co-sponsoring the Food Security and Public Health in East Asia Symposium to be held on the UIUC campus on October 4–5, 2012. This symposium is sponsored by the Women and Gender in Global Perspectives Program (WGGP) and the Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies (CEAPS). It addresses key issues in food and health aspects of human security and social change in East Asia, such as food and medicine; globalization of the food supply and consumption in East Asia; and migration issues of food security and health.

The symposium will take place in room 3057 Lincoln Hall, 702 S. Wright Street, on October 4th from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and October 5th from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. For any questions, please call 333-1994 or email wggp@illinois.edu.

ACES welcomes several delegations this fall

The ACES Office of International Programs is coordinating visits for several international delegations during the fall semester. Currently, our calendar includes:

October 9: National Defense University, International Seminar

October 10: Argentinian Schools of Agriculture Delegation

October 10–12: Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences Delegation

November 11–24: Far Eastern Federal University–Vladivostok (Russia), Training Program

Please contact Suzana Palaska-Nicolson at spalaska@illinois.edu if you have any questions about these visits.