



Office of International Programs *Monthly Newsletter*

March 2011

Reserve April 13 for Second Spring ACES International Lecture

On Thursday, March 17, Dr. Prabhu Pingali, Deputy Director of the Agriculture Development Program for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, presented on "Feeding the World—the Role of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation"—to over 150 people in the first lecture of the Spring 2011 ACES International Lecture Series.



The Office of International Programs is proud to announce that Dr. B.B. Singh, 2011 Sheth International Alumni winner, will be the second distinguished speaker in the series. He will present a talk on "Conventional and Molecular Plant Breeding—Some Observations" on Wednesday, April 13 from 10:30-11:30 a.m. in the Monsanto Room of the ACES Library, Information, and Alumni Center.



Opportunity to Work with Students from China This Summer

Students from Zhejiang University in China will be on campus for six weeks this summer. Faculty interested in mentoring one or more of these students to advance their scientific knowledge and enhance their international scope should email Ms. Carly Rakes at crakes2@illinois.edu. A \$500 honorarium will be given to each participating faculty per student.

Helping to Rebuild the Dairy Industry in Iraq

Agricultural production in the United States, as with everything else, can often be taken for granted—until you hear two Iraqis tell their story of how they hope to rebuild the dairy industry back home in Iraq. Jawad Al-Ali and Firas Mahmood, two USDA Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS) Iraqi Fellows, are spending eight weeks in the College of ACES with Dr. Mike Hutjens, Jim Baltz, and Travis Michel to learn more about modern dairy production practices by taking part in online course work, hands-on experiences at the U of I South Dairy Farm, and touring various facilities across the state. In mid-May, a five-day training program will be presented in Iraq to approximately 30 dairy industry people that will teach them how to develop dairy tools that Iraqi producers can utilize.

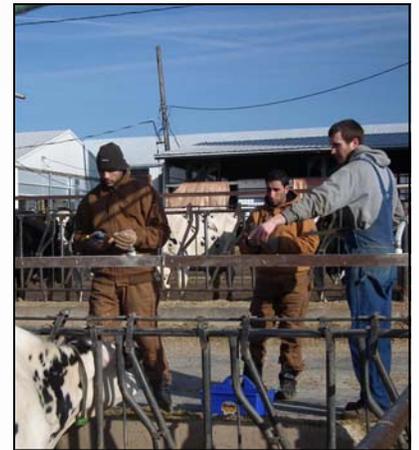


Photo courtesy of Jim Baltz

"There's just no comparison," said Al-Ali when describing Iraq's dairy industry in contrast to what we have here in the United States. Mahmood, who is an instructor in animal research at the University of Baghdad, says that much of the government's focus in Iraq is placed on beef production. "At the University of Baghdad, we have one milking machine total, and here there is a machine for each cow."

The dairy industry shows vast opportunities for growth to a country in need of change, said Mahmood. "Now should be our opportunity, because we are without Saddam." The Baghdad area has a huge market for the dairy industry, said Mahmood, as many people depend on cheese and milk. Currently, much of the milk is imported from their neighbors, such as Syria.

However, with opportunities come many challenges that lay ahead in rebuilding the dairy industry. Poor water quality, pollution from factories, price of production, and severe heat all create poor conditions for the animals, said Al-Ali. According to Hutjens, Iraqi cows typically produce about one-third of what American cows produce. Any local production is primarily used to serve a family's needs. If there is product beyond that, it is usually marketed locally. "They are subsistence farming; whereas, we have very intensive dairy farms," said Hutjens.

Lack of resources and education in Iraq also have a huge impact. Many of the farmers are unaware of modern dairy production practices. The scarcity of the Internet in Iraq removes their country from the vast amounts of information accessible to many other areas of the world. "If a farmer has a problem with an animal, he will usually go to the veterinarian," said Al-Ali, "but here there are Extension specialists who can share their knowledge."

Al-Ali and Mahmood plan on taking this world-class knowledge and education back home with them to educate the people on modern day dairy practices. These efforts to boost the dairy industry will be slow but steady, said Mahmood. "Iraq has many problems within the country, and until they are resolved, it will take some time."

In mid-May, Baltz will accompany Al-Ali and Mahmood as they present a five-day dairy production training in Iraq to dairy farmers throughout the area. Baltz has led the distance learning programs in animal sciences for 12 years, and his expertise has helped the Iraqis create videos and presentations in Arabic, in hopes of sharing this knowledge with others in Iraq. "Our goal is to have 10 to 12 programs in Arabic available," said Hutjens. "It's an exciting time. We are very pleased to have these two here."

Faculty Receive Grants for Projects with Mexico

Five projects were awarded grants through the College of ACES partnership with the Mexican government through CONACYT (Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología). Funds for this program are contributed equally by CONACYT and ACES Office of Research, and they are administered by ACES Office of International Programs.

The following faculty members will each receive \$8,000 to work on projects with Mexican colleagues over the next year:

- Dr. Kathy Baylis (ACE) - studying the effect of various instruments in conserving Monarch butterfly habitat.
- Dr. Elvira de Mejia (FSHN) - working to increase understanding of the potential health benefits of amaranth proteins on the management of diabetes.
- Dr. Karen Chapman-Novakofski (FSHN) - expanding research on the relationship between dietary advanced glycation end products and indicators of diabetes severity.
- Dr. Margarita Teran-Garcia (FSHN) - taking a closer look at DNA sequence variants and population-specific environmental factors that may confer risk or protection for developing obesity and cardiovascular disease.
- Dr. James Pettigrew (AS) - addressing dietary energy measurement in swine production.

UIUC-CONACYT grants encourage collaborative research projects in the areas of food and agriculture and foster training of scientists and students. This partnership increases the quality and quantity of collaborative research and stimulates creation of multidisciplinary research projects that will mutually benefit the state of Illinois and the country of Mexico.

Stay Up-to-Date: Follow Us on Facebook

ACES Office of International Programs at Illinois is now on Facebook! We post the latest news, photos, links, and events. Like [our page](#), and start getting the latest information

on your
Facebook
news feed.



Faculty Feature: Dr. Mohammad Babadoost Associate Professor of Plant Pathology, Crop Sciences

Q: What is your research focus?

A: I joined the faculty of the Department of Crop Sciences in 1999 and have teaching, research, and Extension responsibilities. My research focuses on developing effective management of diseases of cucurbits (primarily pumpkin), horseradish, pepper, tomato, and apple. Illinois is the leading state in pumpkin and horseradish production in the nation. More than 90 percent of pumpkin production in the nation takes place in Illinois. My research offers effective strategies for management of internal discoloration of horseradish roots and Phytophthora blight of pumpkins. As a result, production of processing pumpkins in Illinois increased by 118 percent from 1999 to 2010 (with a goal of 150 percent increase in 2011). The outcomes of my research on management of Phytophthora blight have been widely implemented, resulting in substantial increases in pepper production and reducing 46 percent of fungicide sprays for control of summer diseases of apples.

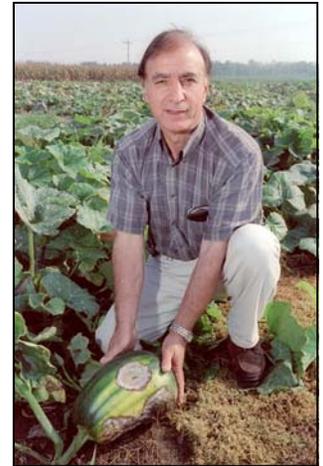


Photo courtesy of College of ACES

Q: What international ties do you have?

A: I assist international colleagues in establishing/improving their teaching, research, and extension programs. In the past 19 years, I have trained/mentored 28 graduate students from nine countries. I have reviewed research proposals from six countries, taught plant pathology courses in three countries, made 34 presentations in 16 countries, organized two symposia emphasizing international issues, served as an editor of five peer-reviewed international journals, collaborated in research and extension programs in four countries, served as a member of various international committees at Illinois and the American Phytopathological Society (APS), and served as the coordinator of the Library Assistance Program of APS to send 1,033 books as well as 1,889 volumes of journals and other educational materials to 96 universities and research institutes in 61 countries.

Q: What is the end goal of your project?

A: I have developed a profound commitment to sharing my expertise and knowledge in developing countries to advance the science of agriculture and increase crop yields.

Illinois Partnering in \$9.6M USAID Grant in India

In parts of India—specifically the less developed states of the Indo-Gangetic Plains—living on less than \$1.25 per day per capita is a harsh reality. They face problems of hunger, poverty, and child malnutrition.

Cornell University—in partnership with University of Illinois College of ACES; University of Georgia; Ohio State University; Tuskegee University; University of California-Davis; John Deere; Tata Chemicals Ltd.; and Sathguru Management Consultants—has been awarded a \$9.6 million grant from USAID-India to undertake a five-year project to work with Banaras Hindu University (BHU) to increase agricultural production and food security in the north of India.

The Agricultural Innovation Partnership (AIP) is being launched by India and USAID under “Feed the Future”, the U.S. government’s global hunger and food security initiative. The consortium will strengthen the capacity of state agricultural universities by revising curricula and developing innovative extension models. “Our main involvement will be to participate in developing new-generation of academic curricula for Banaras Hindu University,” said Dr. Prasanta Kalita (ABE), lead faculty member for Illinois on this project.