

Natural Resources Conservation Service

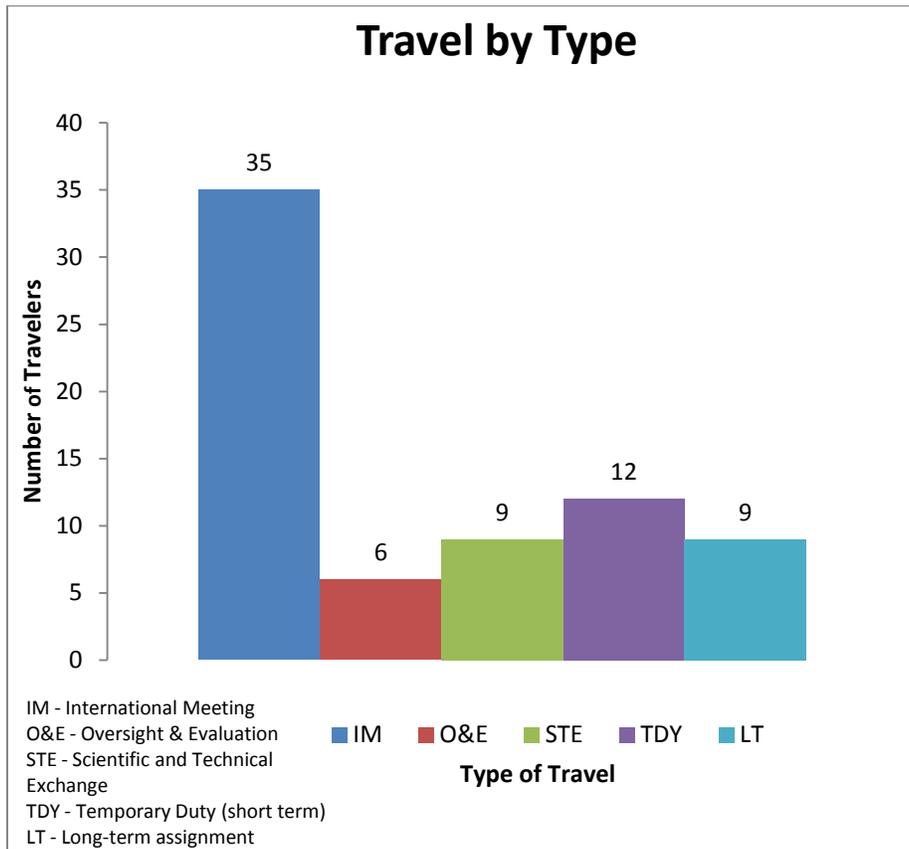
International Programs Division

Annual Report FY 2011

## International Activities

Although NRCS's mandate has a domestic focus, since its beginning the agency and its staff have been active in international meetings, collaboration with foreign governments, and international development assistance activities. Greater NRCS international involvement also conforms with current U.S. Government strategic concerns on global food security and whole-of-government approaches to fighting global hunger and improving food security as part of the government's Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative.<sup>1</sup>

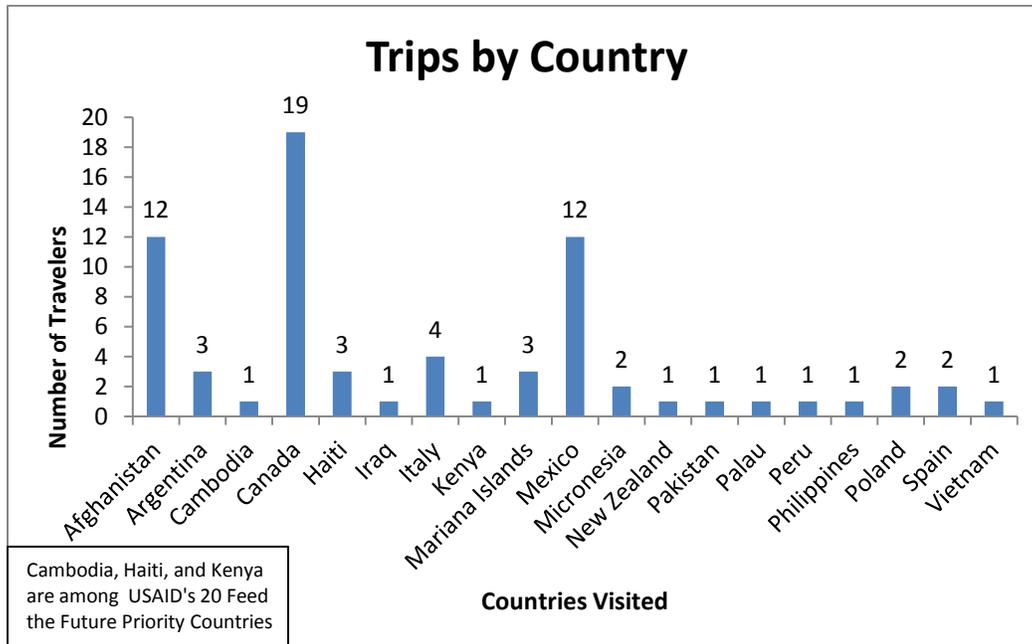
The following table provides a breakdown of international travel during fiscal year (FY) 2011. The majority of travelers (35) participated in international meetings.



The International Programs Division (IPD) received 88 travel requests from NRCS employees. Fifty-seven employees made a total of 71 international trips to 19 countries. Thirteen trips were to Afghanistan and Iraq and 58 trips to 17 other countries. Four employees made three trips, six made two, and 47 staff made one trip. Twenty-five of the travelers were minorities: 12 women and 13 non-White males.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.state.gov/s/dmr/qddr/>

Most of the international trips were to our neighbors, Canada and Mexico. Over a dozen NRCS staff were on long-term temporary duty (TDY) assignments to Afghanistan. Five staff traveled to three of the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Feed the Future (FtF) priority countries<sup>2</sup> – Cambodia, Haiti and Kenya<sup>1</sup>.



## International Meetings

NRCS employees attended international meetings to interact and collaborate with international partners about techniques and approaches for addressing the sound management and conservation of soil water and related natural resources. NRCS participants also benefited from exchanges with their counterparts by learning techniques and approaches used elsewhere. A total of 35 staff members participated in international meetings.

## Technical Assistance

Afghanistan and Iraq was the main focus for NRCS long-term technical assistance activities. Twenty-four NRCS staff members, including two women, completed or started long-term tours in Afghanistan and two staff members did short-term TDYs. Thirteen staff members remained incountry at the end of the fiscal year. Six NRCS employees, including one woman, completed long-term TDYs in Iraq.

<sup>2</sup> See Feed the Future – page 10

### ***The U.S.-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Watershed Working Group***

The U.S.-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral “Watershed Rehabilitation and Irrigation Technology Working Group” is a partnership between the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS); the Afghan Ministry for Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL); and Pakistan’s Agricultural Research Council (PARC). The working group focused on three identified key goals: (1) building a regional partnership and capacity for efficient use and conservation of water for agriculture, (2) improvement of soil and water conservation practices, and (3) preparing a cadre of “train the trainer” specialists and developing and institutionalizing the internal capacity to deliver Watershed Rehabilitation and Irrigation practices and systems in the respective countries.

The trilateral partners identified and focus on the following subareas: (1) on-farm water-use efficiency, (2) improved water conveyance, (3) small water storage structures, and (4) watershed rehabilitation practices. These will be addressed by demonstrating selected practices and technologies in Afghanistan at demonstration sites; developing the exchange of information, methods, and ideas between Afghanistan and Pakistan through facilitated visits; and identifying and reporting on practices and technologies found to be useful and that could be the focus of future collaboration. (The initial implementation partner in Afghanistan will be Colorado State University. The initial partners identified in Pakistan were Barani Agricultural Institute, the University of Agriculture-Faisalabad, and the University of Peshawar).

The U.S. working group, with NRCS as the lead in collaboration and coordination with FAS, the Cochran Fellowship program, and Colorado State University (CSU), conducted a study tour for six participants (three Afghan and three Pakistani) to Texas, Oklahoma, and Colorado. The tour introduced the participants to a series of soil and water conservation systems, practices, and technologies that could be adapted for use in target areas in Afghanistan and Pakistan. NRCS conducted the Texas and Oklahoma portions of the tour.



**NRCS National Design Construction and Soil Mechanics Center (NDCSMC) soil lab manager, LeeAnn Moore explains soil mechanics analysis procedures.**



**Tom Buchanan, irrigation district engineer, Altus, OK, demonstrated the use of irrigation siphon tubes to members of the trilateral team.**

### ***USAID/Haiti***

At the request of FAS and USAID/Haiti, NRCS staff participated in two assessment missions to Haiti. On the first mission, an NRCS engineer participated on a team for a “Natural Resource Management Assessment of Threats to Agricultural Production” for five priority watersheds that had been identified by USAID/Haiti. (Haiti is one of USAID’s 20 Feed the Future priority countries and one of USDA’s five priority Feed the Future priorities.<sup>3</sup>)

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<sup>3</sup> See Feed the Future – page 10

For the second mission, two NRCS soil scientists traveled to Haiti to meet with national and local officials, representatives of USAID/Haiti, local NGOs, project field staff, and other stakeholders to identify a priority site and activities. The team has drafted a proposal and is working with FAS and USAID/Haiti to finalize the proposed activities and scopes of work.



**Discussion between NRCS soil scientists and their Haitian counterparts in Haiti.**

## **Outreach to Other Agencies and Organizations**

With the Obama administration, international engagement through the State Department and USAID has called for, where possible, a “whole-of-government” approach for development assistance and diplomatic initiatives. This interprets as an emphasis on turning to other U.S. Government agencies for technical assistance and expertise when the appropriate expertise is available.

NRCS has a number of established partners for international development activities, however the agency’s expertise is not currently as well known by other potential partners as it had been in the past. This is in part due to the turnover of field staff, changing priorities for U.S. Government development assistance, and other factors.

In order to increase NRCS’s profile and international recognition, IPD has been reaching out to other U.S. Government agencies, other donors, and international NGOs, to present and discuss NRCS’s capabilities and expertise. Meetings have been held with various offices within the FAS, USDA’s Cochran Program, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, Peace Corps, and selected individuals at USAID.

USAID’s pivotal role in Feed the Future and its ongoing partnership with Peace Corps indicates the desirability of these agencies as potential future partners. USAID’s Bureau for Food Security (the lead bureau for FtF) has been undergoing an extended reorganization, which has delayed

establishing contacts with that bureau. (When FAS was recently approached about a planned dialog between USDA and the Bureau for Food Security, it stated that such a dialog would not be possible in the immediate future.)

Initial contacts were made with international NGOs, including Mercy Corps (in Afghanistan as well as in Washington, DC), Counterpart International, and the American Soy Bean Association's World Initiative for Soy in Human Health (WISHH), among others. Initial contacts have also been made with the University of Minnesota's *Extension Center for Food, Agricultural and Natural Resources Sciences* and the University of Illinois Champagne–Urbana, as well as initial discussions with contacts at the World Bank.

Opportunities to meet in with project field staff and agriculture attaches have been used whenever possible to present NRCS capabilities to field staff who were passing through Washington, DC. Such contacts have included project managers for a project in Armenia and Georgia, a project manager being posted to Ghana (one of the FtF priority countries) and an agriculture attache who was being posted to South Africa (and who would work in the 10 southern African countries covered out of South Africa).

## **Other U.S. Government Initiatives**

### ***The Civilian Response Corps***

The Civilian Response Corp (CRC) is the U.S. Department of State's program to develop a strong civilian reconstruction and stabilization (R&S) mechanism to be able to respond to developing crises in other countries. The CRC has two components: the CRC/Active (CRC/A – trained people who are full-time CRC staff) and CRC/Standby (CRC/S – a trained cadre of people available for call up in the event of a crisis).

CRC/S members would continue working with their current USDA agencies. In the event of a major crisis, as declared by the Secretary of State and the National Security Council, CRC/S members could be called upon to deploy for up to 90 days, if their expertise were needed to support a reconstruction and stabilization response.

As of September 2011, there were seven USDA CRC/A members, two of whom were from NRCS (these employees left NRCS to join the CRC/A, with return rights to go back to NRCS at the end of their CRC service). Three former NRCS Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) members volunteered for CRC/S service.

IPD has been actively involved in the CRC/S development process. Chief White is the designated champion to support the CRC initiative in USDA. IPD staff participate in monthly CRC Working Group meetings, as well as in smaller weekly CRC sub-working group meetings.

The sub-working group has been examining the options for recruitment and possible administrative issues for standby members from USDA.

The sub-working group had originally planned to recommend and initiate a broad, USDA-wide announcement and solicitation of expressions of interest in the program for release by September 2011. However, the U.S. State Department initiated a reorganization and restructuring of the S-CRC R&S program, which has forced a delay in finalizing the USDA recruitment.

### ***Feed the Future (FtF)***

FtF is the U.S. Government's global hunger and food security initiative, with USAID as the lead agency. The Department of State and USAID have taken the position that they will endeavor to use a "whole-of-government" approach in the implementation of FtF (and other development assistance) activities. That is to say that, where possible, USAID will partner with other U.S. Government agencies for technical assistance in the implementation of activities, when the skills and expertise needed are available through other U.S. Government agencies.

USDA has reviewed the existing portfolio of USDA sponsored activities and determined that the Department will focus on five countries and two regions of the 20<sup>1</sup> FtF priority countries where USDA has an active presence: Haiti, Guatemala and the Central America region, Bangladesh, Ghana, and Kenya and the East Africa region. NRCS currently has an active involvement in Kenya and Tanzania, and is working with USAID in Haiti to prepare a proposal for a pilot capacity-building activity with the Haitian Ministry of Agriculture.

IPD has been actively involved in securing NRCS's presence as part of the USDA's participation in the Feed the Future process, and IPD and NRCS staff have been involved in the planning and reporting being undertaken by the five Feed the Future operational teams, the Feed the Future research team, and the Feed the Future management team.

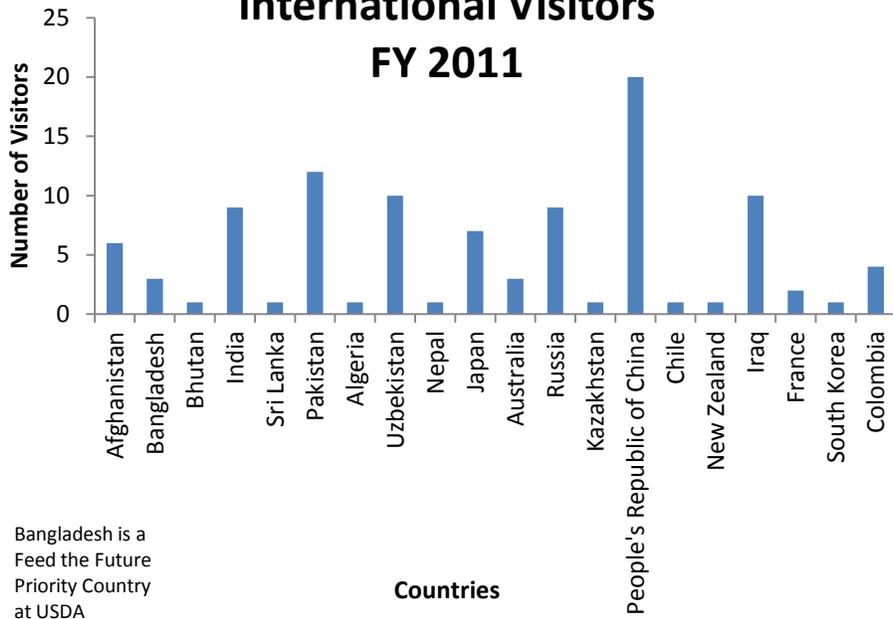
### **Embassy Science Fellowships**

NRCS is a leading USDA agency in support of the Embassy Science Fellowships Program. Eleven fellowship applications have been submitted for consideration in FY2011.

### **International Visitors**

NRCS received 101 international visitors from 20 countries in FY 2011. (In recent years the number of visitors averaged around slightly more than 100 visitors per year.) The largest number of visitors in any given year generally come from the People's Republic of China. The only visitors from USAID's 20 Feed the Future priority countries came from Bangladesh (three individuals) and Nepal (one participant).

# International Visitors FY 2011



Bangladesh is a  
Feed the Future  
Priority Country  
at USDA

Countries



Iraqi soils scientists at Washington, DC, briefing before traveling to the National Soils Laboratory in Lincoln, NE.



A Pakistan trilateral member gets to meet some real Oklahoma cowboys during the study tour.

At least 19 employees, two of whom were women and two non-White males, participated as official hosts or points of contact for meetings with foreign visitors.

### **IPD Staff**

Melvin Westbrook, director

Herby Bloodworth, program analyst

Marita McCree, program analyst

LeRoy Duvall, international program specialist

Linda Risdien, program assistant

In addition to participating in the field planning for the U.S.-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Watershed Working Group field activities, IPD staff participated in training of Agribusiness Development Teams (ADTs) deployed in Afghanistan. IPD staff also participated domestically in a review of NRCS's Virginia Natural Resources Inventory and Soil Survey Program, including field office visits, reviewing agreement portfolios and other official documentation; and participated as a trainer and resource person with an NRCS team in Fort Worth, TX, training a Nebraska National Guard ADT prior to their being mobilizing to Afghanistan in FY 2012.

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<sup>i</sup> USAID's 20 Feed the Future (FtF) focus countries are Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia in Africa; Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal, Tajikistan in Asia; and Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, and Nicaragua in Latin America.