



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
International Programs Division
Annual Report FY 2012

November 8, 2012

U.S. Government Initiatives

Feed-the-Future

NRCS participation in the U.S Agency for International Development's (USAID) Feed-the-Future¹ (FtF) initiative continued to be strong, and has grown as the FtF program itself has developed. In October 2011, Secretary Vilsack and USAID Administrator Shah sent out a worldwide cable to all overseas missions, urging greater collaboration between USAID and USDA agencies. This was followed by a second joint USDA-USAID worldwide cable in July 2012 noting the progress in collaboration that had been made during the first 6 months of the fiscal year, and repeating the call for continued and increased collaboration between USAID and USDA agencies on food security efforts.

NRCS has been active in USDA's Feed-the-Future Global Food Security (FtF-GFS) Management Committee, the four FtF-GFS Operational Teams and the Research Committee. In addition to participating in quarterly teleconferences with USDA FAS field staff, NRCS has been involved in reviewing USAID and USDA strategy papers, FtF planning and reporting documents, country briefing papers and other related documents.

IPD has also been active in a number of USAID-sponsored FtF meetings. USAID's Bureau for Food Security, the lead bureau for Feed the Future, invited IPD to participate in a planning meeting in February for a Global Learning Exchange Event (GLEE²), and in the subsequent June meeting. Other agencies, international NGOs, and the private sector also participated.

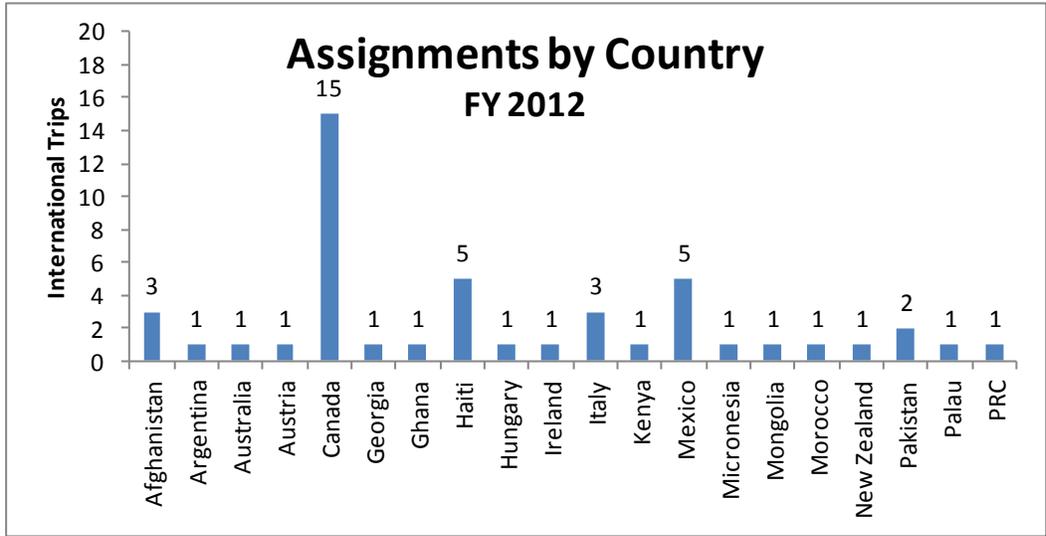
International Activities

Consistent with USDA and NRCS travel guidelines, international travel for FY 2012 decreased slightly from FY 2011. While the numbers of countries visited increased from 19 last year to 20 in FY 2012, the number of international trips dropped by 25; there were 47 international trips in FY 2012, compared to 71 in FY 2011. Once again, the majority of trips were to immediate neighbors (Canada, Mexico, and Haiti) of the United States. Fifteen NRCS staff traveled to Canada, mainly for international meetings, three employees went to Haiti a total of five times to work on a pilot soil survey project design, and four traveled to Mexico.

Of the 47 trips, one employee made five, one employee made three, three employees made two trips each, and 33 employees made one trip each.

¹ <http://www.feedthefuture.gov/>

² <http://www.agrilinks.kdid.org/library/nrm-climate-change-global-learning-and-evidence-exchange-event-resources>



Technical Assistance

Thirteen staff participated in nine technical assistance missions in FY 2012. Two missions (five staff total) were in support of the project design in Haiti. Two employees participated in an evaluation of the International Center for Agriculture Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA) activities in Pakistan (activities under the U.S.-Afghanistan-Pakistan Tri-lateral Initiative). Other Trilateral activities included ICARDA sponsoring a group of Pakistani technicians for training in Afghanistan and Colorado State University provided three in-country “watershed rehabilitation and



Haitian Technician Analyzing Soils at the USAID-funded Center for Rural Development Laboratory at Bas Boen



Conservation Practices Information Sign at the ICARDA Soil and Water Conservation Demonstration Site

irrigation technology” training workshops for the Afghan Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL). An NRCS wetlands specialist assisted the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) with an assessment of potential impacts from a highway improvement project on a wetland in Ghana. The highway was improved under MCC’s Ghana Compact to improve agriculture market and trade access. A

range management specialist assisted MCC and USDA’s Agriculture Research Service (ARS) in

the training of Mongolian range management specialists and the development of a range quality and management assessment system. Another range management specialist assisted in

developing similar range quality and assessment measures for Inner Mongolia, China. At the request of the U.S. Forest Service, an NRCS engineer joined a Forest Service team to assist with



Mongolian Rangeland Specialist Counterparts

watershed rehabilitation training in the country of Georgia. There were a number of other technical assistance activities identified but which were not finalized because of personnel changes in the partnering agencies.

There have been a number of discussions with FAS and USAID about mechanisms for USAID to request

engineering expertise assistance from NRCS. The issue identified is that USAID has major engineering activities worldwide, but does not have the in-house expertise to cover the review of plans and proposals, do inspections of infrastructure development in the field, or do field assessments and designs.

Two IPD staff travelled to the NRCS National Design, Construction, and Soil Mechanics Center in Ft. Worth, TX, to participate as trainers and resource personnel for the training of 24 National Guard soldiers from Nebraska. The Agribusiness Development Team training that selected National Guard units receive is part of the overall training in agricultural skills prior to their being mobilized to Afghanistan.



NRCS Staff Training National Guard Agribusiness Development Team (ADT) in Basic Surveying and Soil Sampling Techniques

Long-Term Technical Assistance

At the start of FY 2012, there had been 13 NRCS staff posted as agriculture advisors with the Ministry for Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock in Afghanistan, and due to return to their home units in NRCS by the end of the fiscal year. Three new staff began 1-year tours during 2012 and one existing advisor extended his tour, resulting in a total of four NRCS staff remaining in Afghanistan at the end of FY 2012.

One NRCS staff started a 3-year long-term posting as a resource conservationist in the Republic of Palau in the Pacific Islands Basin.

Embassy Science Fellowship Program

One Embassy Science Fellowship proposal was accepted for 2012. The proposal was to examine existing piggy husbandry practices in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and provide training for improved piggy construction. Current piggy designs and management in FSM pose significant health risks to the local population and are major sources of environmental pollution. There were also public outreach presentations to students at the College of Micronesia and consultations with private land owners and local groups.

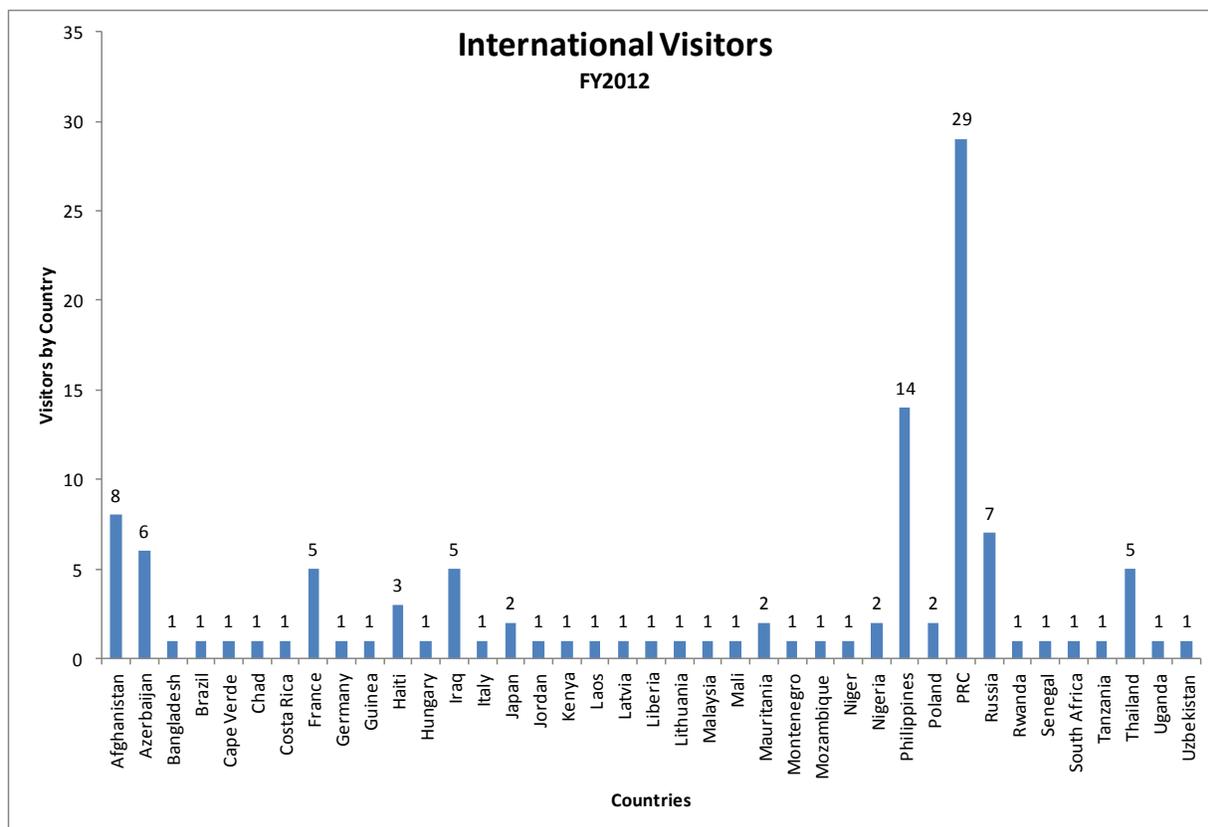


Scientific and Technical Exchanges

Two staff participated in Scientific and Technical Exchange (STE) missions. One has been involved in a long-term program to monitor and maintain weather stations in Antarctica. The other participated in meetings in Hungary, at the request of Purdue University, to help with the classification of salt-affected soils in order to both improve soil taxonomy and incorporate taxa for these soils in the future Universal Soil Classification System.

International Visitors

There were 116 visitors from 39 countries who visited NRCS facilities during FY 2012. Twenty-four NRCS staff served as the primary contacts for the visitors. As in preceding years, the most visitors (29) came from the People's Republic of China (PRC), followed by 14 from the Philippines; eight from Afghanistan; seven from Russia; six from Azerbaijan; five each from France, Iraq, and Thailand; three from Haiti; two each from Japan, Mauritania, Nigeria, and Poland; and only one visitor each from the remaining countries.



International Volunteers

There were seven international volunteers who worked with NRCS this year, one each from Canada, Columbia, Italy, Myanmar, the Netherlands, Nigeria, and the UK. The volunteers’ technical areas included four students (majors unknown), one GIS analyst, one agricultural engineer, and one environmental science background.

Other Activities

IPD developed a portable display board that has three display panels. One person can transport it to meetings or other locations and set up to provide a quick view of IPD’s international activities, including the International Visitors Program, the Embassy Science Fellowship Program and short- and long-term technical assistance. The display board will be available to set up during international meetings, workshops and other events. The initial three panels will eventually be supplemented with other text and images that will be interchangeable, depending on the venue and participants in future meetings.

IPD prepared the text for an “Employee Spotlight” piece on Jon Fripp³, NRCS civil engineer with the National Design, Construction, and Soil Mechanics Center. The article was prepared to recognize Jon’s contributions to NRCS’s international efforts. Jon has undertaken at least eight TDYs to Afghanistan, and other assignments elsewhere, both in his official duties as well as

³ <https://my.nrcs.usda.gov/PopSpotlightArchive.aspx>

taking annual leave in order to participate in development assistance activities with Engineers Without Borders and other international development assistance organizations.

A two-page information sheet was prepared for distribution to potential development assistance partners – USAID, Peace Corps, the World Bank, international NGOs, universities and others. The objective is to provide a concise overview of the variety of NRCS technical expertise that is available for deployment overseas and to demonstrate some of the activities that NRCS has participated in within the realm of international development assistance. The draft was forwarded to the NRCS Public Affairs Division. They edited the document and the end product was posted to the NRCS Web site for downloading by online visitors.

The trifold brochure that IPD has been using since 2006 was revised and updated. The target audience for this document is mainly NRCS staff with the objective of informing employees of the benefits from participating in international assignments and encouraging them to consider to do so. The draft document was submitted to the Public Affairs Division and is still “in process.”

National Bulletin 280-12-3, “International Assignment Candidates Database,” was prepared to reannounce the IPD's *database of and for employees who are interested and available for international assignments*. There were two objectives in doing this: to inform employees of the existence of the database and encourage interested individuals to register and to increase the number of people and the array of technical qualifications represented in the database, so that in the event of an international emergency or in response to a request for technical assistance, IPD would be able to quickly identify qualified and interested specialists.

In order to reach out and increase awareness in USAID, MCC, the land-grant universities, NGOs, and others about NRCS's international activities and expertise, a two-page newsletter of NRCS international development activities was prepared. The document provides a very brief synopsis of NRCS staff's involvement in international development activities. The first edition was distributed in September, covering the period January through June 2012. The distribution list included USAID, MCC, NRCS, FAS staff in Washington, DC, and at overseas posts; Peace Corps; and a number of other land-grant university and international NGO contacts.

IPD Staff

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