The Poltava experience: Building international relations to benefit University of Illinois Extension and the Agrarian Academy of Poltava, Ukraine

Martina Mohrbacher
University of Illinois Extension
214 Mumford Hall
1301 W. Gregory Dr.
Urbana, IL 61801
Tel.: (217)244-9633
Fax: (217)244-5403
E-mail: mohrbchr@uiuc.edu

Kevin Brooks
University of Illinois Extension

Abstract
In 2006 and 2007, the University of Illinois Extension organized an international experience and business development opportunities to Poltava, Ukraine. As a part of the Ukrainian activities, the first and second International Agrarian Conference at the Poltava Agrarian Academy was delivered. Eleven educators from U of I Extension and three educators from Purdue University Extension participated in the conferences. Personal and professional contacts were expanded across other disciplines outside of agriculture. In addition to enhancing knowledge of food and nutrition issues as well as tourism opportunities and challenges, contacts for youth peer-to-peer leadership training were established and online classes in agricultural marketing were developed.

Major components of this continuing relationship with Poltava are the cultural/educational experiences for Extension staff, the exploration of business opportunities for Illinois based interests and the professional and personal contacts made.

This poster highlights the cooperation between U of I Extension and Poltava Agrarian Academy and the benefits of this partnership to the Extension system and its constituency and elaborates on future plans and developments. Cultural differences influence economic partnerships and educational cooperation. By participating in experiences like these, Extension staff are better qualified and prepared to assist Illinois based agribusiness as well as research teams to cooperate successfully with Ukrainian partners. As next steps, a swine breeding research project is in preparation, a 4-H online / Skype leadership training project will start off in October 2007 and there will be several online classes offered by U of I Extension educators to Ukrainian students. These projects exemplify the importance and value of international engagement and this project in particular.

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