University of Florida IFAS Extension Hosts Fellow Iraqi Agriculture Educators

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Introduction  Iraqi agriculture and extension personnel struggled to keep abreast of information and technology under the former dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. From April 2003 to March 2005, extension agents from the University of Florida worked with the Ministry of Agriculture to re-establish the Ministry and to develop ties between the Ministry and Extension in Iraq. During that time plans were developed to bring a delegation of Iraqi agriculture and extension personnel to the University of Florida to view first hand how Extension operates in the U.S. This program was designed by Extension faculty to provide an overview of the University of Florida IFAS system for Iraqi agriculture and extension personnel.

Objectives
Objectives for the Iraq team included:
- Observe advanced technologies in crop production using soil-less media,
- Evaluate a commercial and research dairy operation and discuss application for research, teaching, and the use of farmers' cooperatives,
- Provide an overview of the University of Florida IFAS system including teaching, research, extension, International Programs and International Center,
- To demonstrate how Extension transfers information from UF to the public, how needs influence research and teaching strategies.

Methods
The program was designed with tours of facilities and interviews with key individuals in extension and agriculture industry. The tour and seminars explored advanced technologies in greenhouse and crop production, dairy, soils at Disney EPCOT, University of Florida campus, research and education centers, and a local county extension office.

Results  The Deans from Sulaimani University and the College of Agriculture in Baghdad met with the Dean of the International Center at UF where an agreement between the University of Florida and two of the Iraqi agriculture colleges was signed. The Iraqi team identified major things that can be done, excluding monetary support upon their return to Iraq. The top ranking topics were: communication, training, equipment and materials for cooperative research, committed to using information from this program in Iraq, cooperation from UF IFAS faculty.

Conclusions  Iraqi team members are better prepared to work with diverse audiences and to assist colleagues with dissemination of information using extension methodology. They understood that our system combines federal, state and local governments and university extension faculty to provide a unique opportunity for delivery of research to the public via extension.

Educational Importance  Iraqi and U.S. agricultural educators are faced with similar issues and concerns. By collaborating on research findings, each country can benefit from the other. Iraq’s extension program has limitations to agriculture programming only. They realized benefits from the U.S. Extension model by including programs for the family and youth