GRADUATE STUDENT REFLECTIONS OF AN INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL EXPERIENCE IN CHIHUAHUA MEXICO

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Introduction
Participating in a course with the focus of international agriculture is a rewarding experience. Many graduate students enrolled in agricultural courses do participate in courses that involve international agriculture. However, a complete understanding of international culture and agricultural practices can be better understood by real time contact within that particular environment. This proposed poster will reflect students’ perceptions of international agriculture after participating in a five day experience in Chihuahua, Mexico. No participants enrolled in AGED 5311, Human Dimensions in International Agricultural Development, have experienced first hand, international agricultural practices in real life situations. Students’ knowledge and perceptions about international agriculture will be gathered before and after the international experience and presented in this poster. The experience at hand will take place November 9-13, 2004.

Purpose
The purpose of this poster is to present thoughts and perceptions from class members before and after participation in an international agricultural experience in Chihuahua, Mexico.

Major Points
The proposed poster will address the perceptions of an international experience before and after the actual experience occurs. After the experience has occurred, a post focus group of the participants will take place to gather reflections of the experience and to gather information to see if prior knowledge and perceptions of international agriculture practices have changed.

Conclusion
An international agricultural experience can be of more benefit than participating in a lecture-picture based curriculum. The actual experience provides a hands-on relationship with the culture and practices that are performed outside of the United States. The perceptions of an international experience will contribute to life-long knowledge. In turn, the participants in this project may share their experience with peers and create knowledge for others to understand different culture, practices, and norms in other agricultural societies outside of the United States.

Educational Importance
Students’ perceptions for agricultural production in the United States are often focused on the “American way”. By participating in an international experience they will be introduced to different practices and develop an understanding of why those practices do exist. Many farming areas outside of the United States are not designed to gain a profit but mainly for family consumption. It is important for students that are obtaining a degree in agriculture to understand and reflect agricultural practices that are performed in areas outside of their mainstream knowledge.