Integrating International Agricultural Development Activities in Land-grant Universities and Colleges

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A recent World Bank report (8) classed over half (73 of 125) of the countries listed in its World Development Indicators as low-income or lower middle-income economies. Their per capita gross national products (GNP) are less than $1700, with a range of $80 to $1630. Agriculture contributes from 24% to 75% of their national gross domestic products, and a majority of their citizens live in rural areas although they may not be directly involved in farming. The adult literacy rate for these countries ranges from 5% to 95%. The authors state that “Agricultural production is a key factor in the development of most countries. In the poorest countries, it is critical.”

Most of these 73 countries are newly independent, having gained their sovereignty in the 40 years since World War II. Americans should reflect on a statement that one of our founding fathers made on the subject of national dependence and international interdependence. In 1820, 44 years after our own Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson said (14): “In an infant country such as ours, we must depend for improvement on the science of other countries, long established, possessing better means and more advanced than we are. To prohibit us from the benefit of foreign light is to confine us to long darkness”. This statement is relevant for the 73 developing countries mentioned above.

Our land-grant system

We should also remember the sequence of events in the development of our land-grant university and college system as we know