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## University Awarded \$13.7M Competitive Grant to Support Research on Sorghum and Millet and Decrease Hunger in Africa

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K-State home » DCM » News and Editorial Services » News Releases » 2013 » University awarded \$13.7M competitive grant to support research on sorghum and millet and decrease hunger in Africa

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## University awarded \$13.7M competitive grant to support research on sorghum and millet and decrease hunger in Africa

Thursday, July 25, 2013

14

MANHATTAN -- The U.S. Agency for International Development, or USAID, has announced that Kansas State University is the recipient of a \$13.7 million grant from the agency to help end poverty and increase food supplies in semiarid Africa. The award was made under Feed the Future, the U.S. government's global hunger and food security initiative.

The five-year grant establishes the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Collaborative Research on Sorghum and Millet at Kansas State University. With it, the university will serve as the nation's leading center for international sorghum and millet research, as well as a key component in Feed the Future's mission to advance solutions to hunger, poverty and undernutrition in developing countries.

"With its selection, USAID has strongly validated Kansas State University's preeminence in sorghum and millet research and agricultural science," said [Timothy Dalton](#), associate professor of agricultural economics, who will serve as director of the Feed the Future Collaborative Research on Sorghum and Millet Innovation Lab.

As director, Dalton will oversee the development and management of a sorghum and millet research network led by Kansas State University. The network -- for which the university will act as the research and information leader -- will be comprised of USAID, various agriculture-centric U.S. universities, and universities, research centers, industries and nongovernmental organizations in three African countries.

Through the research network, leading U.S. scientists at partnering universities and institutions will focus on improving the productivity, disease resistance, agronomy and value of sorghum and millet crops in Ethiopia, Senegal and Niger. Additionally, the researchers will help train scientists in those countries and will develop improved crop varieties that will benefit other countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Sorghum and millet are important food crops in the arid African lands, Dalton said. The technologies and innovative approaches developed through this program will build resilience in farming communities subject to frequent drought and help smallholder farmers adapt to climate change.

Ethiopia is the most important sorghum-producing nation in East Africa because it has the largest acreage of sorghum crops on which millions of impoverished farmers rely, Dalton said. It also is one of the centers of genetic origin for sorghum, which may lead to new germplasm for U.S. farmers.

Senegal and Niger are both in West Africa. Senegal grows pearl millet, the most widely grown subspecies of the grain, as it has adapted to the harsh semiarid environment. Niger is one of the largest sorghum-producing countries in West Africa and neighbors several other important sorghum-producing countries in the region.

"The overall goal with those three key producing nations is to improve farmers' productivity with sorghum and millet, which will reduce poverty and hunger," Dalton said. "Additionally, we want to help the farmers with value-added product development to increase benefits to consumers, the private

### Source

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### At a glance

Kansas State University is the recipient of a \$13.7 million grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development. The grant is to help end poverty and increase crop food supplies in semi-arid Africa by improving the sorghum and millet crops in three African countries.

sector and farmers."

Although the consortium's efforts are focused on helping Africa, Dalton said he anticipates benefits for American famers and universities as well. Research on food security, production and value-added products could also improve U.S. crops and products. Additionally, the assistance of graduate students and postdoctoral researchers will be integral in strengthening national research and development capacity in each of the target nations.

Feed the Future Food Innovation Labs are part of Feed the Future's efforts to encourage multidisciplinary research, training and capacity building that address the problem of food insecurity and undernutrition in developing countries. The labs support leading researchers and students in the U.S. and around the world in seeking solutions to overcome hunger and poverty in developing countries.

Feed the Future is the U.S. government's global hunger and food security initiative. With a focus on smallholder farmers, particularly women, Feed the Future supports partner countries in developing their agriculture sectors to spur economic growth and trade that increase incomes and reduces hunger, poverty and undernutrition. More information is available at <http://www.feedthefuture.gov>.

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