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# MIZZOU

## BIFAD Challenged to Get Research to Farms

Agricultural development panelists issue challenge to U.S. researchers.



Julie Howard, senior adviser to the administrator on research, education and extension for the U.S. Agency for International Development, shows the annual report for the agency's Feed the Future campaign to increase food security. In a meeting at MU, Howard spoke to a panel of academic advisers to USAID about the need for more farmers in the developing world to adopt the agricultural technologies and techniques pioneered at American universities. Photo by Shane Epping.

*Story by Erik Potter*

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**P**resenters to the Board of International Food and Agriculture Development (BIFAD), meeting at the University of Missouri,

challenged U.S. universities to do more to ensure that agricultural research breakthroughs make it to the farms and fields of the developing world.

“In Kenya and Ghana, the maize being used is mostly from the '80s,” says Julie Howard, senior adviser to the administrator on research, education and extension for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). “Why is that? What must we do as researchers to make sure the products of our research are known to the public-sector seed [systems]?”

BIFAD, with MU Chancellor Brady J. Deaton as chair, is composed of academic leaders appointed by President Barack Obama to advise USAID on its efforts in promoting health and food security in the developing world.

The challenge from USAID, Howard says, is for universities “not only to think about generating new technologies but what it will take to scale the adoption in the field.”

Saharah Moon Chapotin, team leader for agriculture research in the USAID Bureau of Food Security, stressed the need to better engage U.S. universities as USAID moves forward in its work on “sustainable intensification” — where farmers not only adopt new production-boosting technologies brought in by assistance agencies but also continue to use them after the agencies leave.

Illustrating an example of that challenge, Dale

Bottrell, professor emeritus of entomology at the University of Maryland, presented a case study on Southeast Asian rice farmers whose crops were badly damaged by the brown planthopper insect in the 1970s. A reduction in pesticide use — which was killing the planthopper's predators more than the planthopper — tamed the planthopper plague. But a generation later, farmers were back to using pesticide as they diversified their crops, and the damaging planthopper is back.

Bottrell called for innovative technology — “a pest management iPod” — to disseminate information to farmers to promote continuity in farming techniques.

Sylvie Brouder, an agronomy professor at Purdue University, said “a lack of data, connectivity, policies, technology and memory of best practices” are keeping the benefits of university research from being fully realized in the developing world.

During a break in the session, Deaton said that MU researchers are aware of the challenges before them. “We're constrained by the resources we have as a university, but we have partnerships with other universities, with funding agencies, with the private sector,” he said. “There are major challenges with the growth of global population, with the need for greater expansion of agricultural production within an ecologically sustainable system. But we have outstanding scientists who are involved in this research, and we're going to be a vital part of the solution as we go forward.”

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