http://www.MSCNews.net/news/index.cfm?nk=55439

Scientist To Lead International Project On Postharvest Food Losses

A scientist with extensive experience in addressing international food and agriculture challenges has been named the new director of a Kansas State University project to reduce postharvest loss and food waste across the world.

Jagger Harvey will lead the U.S. Agency for International Development's Feed the Future Innovation Lab for the Reduction of Post-Harvest Loss at the university. The $8.5 million project is helping the countries of Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana and Guatemala reduce the amount of food that is lost or contaminated after harvest.

Also, the lab's scientists are evaluating postharvest problems in Afghanistan that reduce the nutritional value of available food and make the country's unique agricultural products more difficult to export.

Harvey will begin his new duties May 16.

"Jagger is an excellent scientist, an accomplished researcher and a leader with an international reputation," said John Floros, dean of the College of Agriculture and director of K-State Research and Extension.

"His expertise in plant pathology, mycology and mycotoxins, crop diseases and postharvest loss, as well as his experience in leading large international agriculture programs, is perfect for the needs of our lab," Floros said. "I am looking forward to Jagger joining our team and leading our Feed the Future Innovation Lab for the Reduction of Post-Harvest Loss to greater success."

Harvey is currently a senior scientist at the Biosciences eastern and central Africa-International Livestock Research Institute Hub in Nairobi, Kenya.

He is also an adjunct senior research fellow with the University of Queensland's Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation, and a fellow with the International Science and Technology Practice and Policy initiative at the University of Minnesota.

Harvey, a plant molecular geneticist, is leading research for development efforts funded by the governments of Australia and the United Kingdom, and by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. He has played key roles in programs funded by the government of Sweden, the Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture and others.

"I feel privileged to join Kansas State University on such an important USAID Feed the Future initiative," Harvey said. "To accelerate development and keep pace with global population growth, we must work to safeguard the staggering amount of our food lost after harvest. Collaboration across disciplines, sectors and regions is essential to sustainably address the challenges of postharvest loss and food waste."

The lab is one of four projects awarded by USAID to Kansas State University since 2012. Together, those projects are funded for nearly $100 million.

"The Feed the Future Innovation Lab for the Reduction of Post-Harvest Loss initiative has assembled a team of dedicated and internationally recognized scientists and partners in the focus countries," Harvey said. "I am eager to play a role in enabling this strong team to reduce postharvest losses in an expanding set of countries, gleaning insights that can help address this challenge at home and abroad, and improving livelihoods in the countries where the lab currently works."

Feed the Future is the U.S. government's global hunger and food security initiative. Nearly 800 million people suffer from chronic hunger, much of that rooted in poverty. By 2050, the world's population will edge very close to 10 billion people, which USAID estimates will require at least a 60 percent increase in agricultural production to feed everyone.

In some parts of the world, up to half of the food that is grown is never consumed due to such factors as improper storage, handling, transportation and other factors. Scientists at the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for the Reduction of Post-Harvest Loss say that increasing the proportion of food produced that is actually consumed is one of the most effective tools to feed people today and in the future.

"This project also is valuable to farmers in Kansas and the United States," Floros said. "What we learn in conducting research and working with some of the world's poorest farmers can often be applied to our own agricultural practices."