



ILLINOIS  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

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## **University of Illinois Partner in \$9.6M Grant to Bolster Food Security in India**

URBANA – Could you live on \$1.25 per day? In parts of India—specifically the less developed states of the Indo-Gangetic Plains—living on less than \$1.25 per day per capita is a harsh reality. They face problems of hunger, poverty, and child malnutrition.

According to the US Agency for International Development (USAID), agricultural development is a proven engine of growth that reduces global hunger and poverty. That is why Cornell University—in partnership with University of Illinois College of Agriculture, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences (ACES); University of Georgia; Ohio State University; Tuskegee University; University of California-Davis; John Deere; Tata Chemicals Ltd.; and Sathguru Management Consultants—has been awarded a \$9.6 million grant from USAID to undertake a five-year project to work with Banaras Hindu University (BHU) to increase agricultural production and food security in the north of India.

The Agricultural Innovation Partnership (AIP) is being launched by India and USAID under “Feed the Future,” the U.S. government’s global hunger and food security initiative. Dr. Schuyler Korban, director of ACES Office of International Programs stated, “We are very pleased that this AIP project has been selected for funding by USAID-India, as the University of Illinois has had a long history of capacity building in agricultural higher education in India. India is among the fastest growing economies in the world, and we are eager to work with our AIP consortium partners in helping the agricultural sector in India where food and agriculture are critical for the well-being of all citizens of this highly populated country.”

Gary Robbins, director of food security, USAID (India), said that AIP was part of President Obama’s initiative to end global hunger and poverty. “As part of the strategic partnership between the United States and India, both countries have agreed to intensify our collaboration to increase agricultural production, develop efficient marketing systems, and reduce malnutrition for a sustainable and inclusive Evergreen Revolution.”

The consortium will strengthen the capacity of state agricultural universities by revising university curricula to include important issues such as market-led demand and the potential impact of climate change on agriculture. The consortium will also develop and pilot innovative extension models to improve the expertise of agricultural graduates in their provision of management and agri-technology support to farmers as they move from subsistence farming.

“This is a wonderful opportunity for our Illinois faculty to be actively involved in this project,” said Dr. Prasanta Kalita, lead faculty member for the University of Illinois on this project and Professor, Soil and Water Resources Engineering. “Our main involvement will be to participate in developing new-generation academic curriculum for Banaras Hindu University that will be transferred to other similar universities in India, to actively engage in research and extension initiatives for managing and utilizing natural resources, and to provide guidance in establishing a center for teaching excellence.”

More than half a century ago, the University of Illinois began a long-standing educational partnership with Pantnagar University in India—beginning the land grant model in India and laying the foundations for feeding a hungry country. Most recently, members of University of Illinois' ACES Global Academy took part in a 14-day immersion experience in India to study the food value chain systems there. Three of the Academy's members—Dr. Mary Arends-Kuenning, Dr. Hao Feng, and Dr. Mindy Mallory—also met with faculty at BHU.

The ACES Office of International Programs at the University of Illinois promotes the most effective use of faculty, department, college, and external resources to support and strengthen the international dimension of the College's research, teaching, and outreach activities.