

United States Department of Agriculture



International Programs Division Annual Report – FY 2004



Serving Conservation Globally

Thou shalt inherit the Holy Earth as a faithful steward, conserving its resources and productivity from generation to generation. Thou shalt safeguard thy fields from soil erosion; thy living waters from drying up, thy forests from desolation, and protect thy hills from overgrazing by thy herds, that thy descendants may have abundance forever. If any shall fail in this stewardship of the land thy fruitful fields shall become sterile stony ground and wasting gullies, and thy descendants shall decrease and live in poverty or perish from off the face of the earth. The "Eleventh Commandment" given for the first time on a broadcast talk in Jerusalem in June 1939, by Dr. Walter Clay Lowdermilk, the first Assistant Chief of the Soil Conservation Service.

FOREWORD

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) still believes in the "Eleventh Commandment" which was broadcast in Jerusalem by Dr. Lowdermilk almost 66 years ago. Technologies have changed, generations have come and gone, but the basic principles of stewardship, conservation and sustainability are still some of the driving forces that attract new employees and help NRCS retain others in Washington and across the nation.

The knowledge base NRCS employees have is one of the most valuable resources of our agency. Through their technical expertise they have resolved many critical soil, water and other resource problems nationally and internationally. The track record NRCS has established in addressing resource issues has people from all over the globe asking for NRCS planning and technical assistance. While our congressional funding is for our domestic programs; through partnerships and collaboration with other agencies, non-government organizations and private volunteer organizations, NRCS professionals have been sent to many parts of the world.

The International Programs Division (IPD) takes pride in working with NRCS managers and supervisors to find the right people to meet the resource challenges globally. The NRCS people who go on international assignments are professionals who work long hours in countries whose cultures, language and climates are completely different than what they may be accustomed. Time and time again the NRCS professionals and technical experts who have traveled on foreign assignments have met the challenges, forged new friendships, and have grown personally and professionally as a result of their experiences. The benefits from international assignments to NRCS and NRCS employees are immeasurable. NRCS specialists have provided capacity building, transferred technology, and they have become more aware of agricultural global issues.

National Headquarters and field office staff have taken time from their rigorous schedules to inform and show foreign visitors NRCS' programs and activities. The concept of "locally led" conservation is one that is being adopted by many countries and governments.

The IPD is constantly thriving to make the international assignment experience as problem free as possible for NRCS travelers. Suggestions on ways to improve the IPD's service delivery are always welcomed. The IPD's first and foremost concern is the safety, security and well being of NRCS employees.

We thank all of the managers and supervisors who allowed their employees to assist other countries and who hosted foreign visitors. The IPD appreciates the many sacrifices that NRCS employees have made as they left their families and jobs to assist our international brothers and sisters in conservation.

I sincerely appreciate the work and efforts of the IPD staff Gail Roane, Manuel Ayala Jr., Marita McCree, Peaches James and Camilia Carter for finding locations for our foreign visitors to visit, assisting with the travel of our employees and for maintaining the relationships with other agencies which are critical for our success. The activities documented in this report are a result of their combined and commendable efforts. Without their help and dedication none of what follows would have been possible.



Melvin Westbrook

Director, International Programs Division

Technical Assistance

NRCS has supported the Department's Initiative to assist in reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. NRCS advertised six-month-detail opportunities and sent three NRCS people to different provinces in Afghanistan. Every person that returned from the assignment was impressed with the Afghan people and with the work the U.S. military is doing.

The following employees went to Afghanistan:

- Manuel Ayala, Jr., International Program Specialist, International Programs Division, Beltsville, Maryland
- Gary Domian, Assistant State Conservationist, Durham, New Hampshire
- William O'Donnell, Assistant State Conservationist, West Union, Iowa



NRCS has played a major role in USDA's support of Operation Enduring Freedom.



Afghanistan: Afghanistani landscape and ecology offer many challenges to NRCS personnel.



NRCS agricultural advisors use various modes of transportation to reach their destination.

Technical Assistance

Manuel Ayala was in Kabul, Afghanistan August 8–October 23, 2004 serving as the Agricultural Coordinator for USDA staff who are stationed at various U.S. Military Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT). The purpose of the PRT is to provide a secure and stable environment in rural provinces from which development and reconstruction activities can take place. This is a high-priority Departmental initiative that may affect future reimbursable technical services in Afghanistan.

The employees represented the U.S., USDA, and NRCS professionally and we should all be proud of the sacrifices and contributions they made to assist the people and government of Afghanistan.

Among the many projects started by the NRCS employees were the following:

- Developed Conservation farm plan for Tarnac Farm (Osama Bin Laden's headquarters)
- Developed a specification for mine removal
- Explored cotton and soybean varieties
- Supplied veterinary clinics with equipment
- Assessed the potential for artificial insemination
- Designed and developed a potato sorter
- Assessed winter wheat production
- Purchased better fertilizer and seeds for some communities
- Assisted women's groups with poultry information and nursery stock production

Afghanistan: NRCS personnel serve as advisors to help rebuild Afghanistани agricultural infrastructure.



Scientific and Technical Exchanges

Scientific and technical exchanges allow specialists to exchange information and technology and to enhance conservation of global natural resources. These assignments are usually less than three weeks in duration and may consist of numerous trips.

Last year, 16 NRCS personnel traveled on 19 assignments to five countries.

John Moore, National Hydrogeologist, traveled to El Salvador five times to work on a 3-year research grant awarded by the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service. John provided innovative alternative methods for developing inexpensive, small scale water supplies in areas with limited access to water. He presented field training to cooperators and to the El Salvador Water and Environment Agency. Inspecting 20 new water systems installed by this grant gave John the opportunity to provide additional training.



El Salvador: Gabions are installed in streams to divert water to dry wells.

El Salvador: Horizontal wells are lined to prevent water loss through seepage.





**El Salvador:
Gravity-fed
irrigation lines are
installed at planting.**

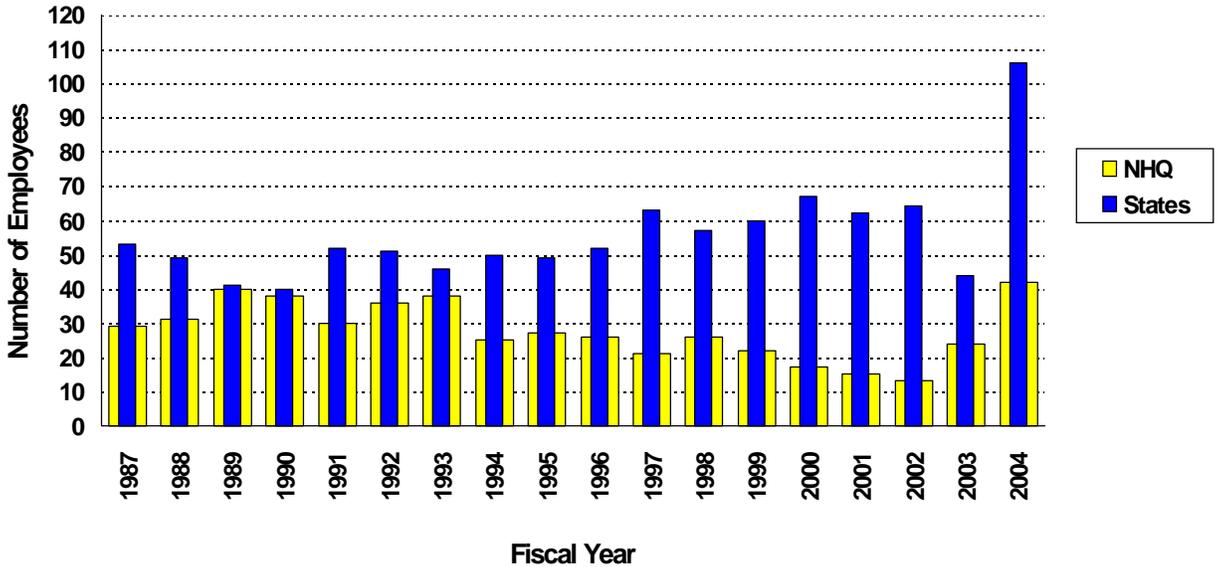


**El Salvador: Local
Producers are able
to raise a crop
during the dry
season to go from
subsistence to
sustainable farming.**

International Meetings

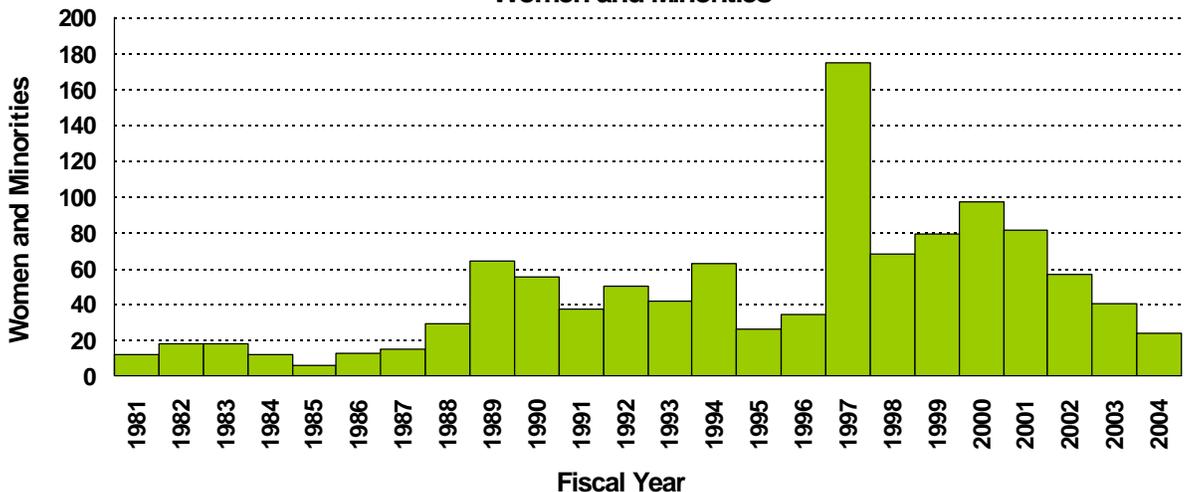
International meetings play an important role in NRCS' mission for international conservation. These meetings provide opportunities for NRCS to inform others of our achievements in addressing natural resource concerns and implementing innovative technologies on America's working lands.

NRCS Travelers on International Conservation Assignments from NHQ and States

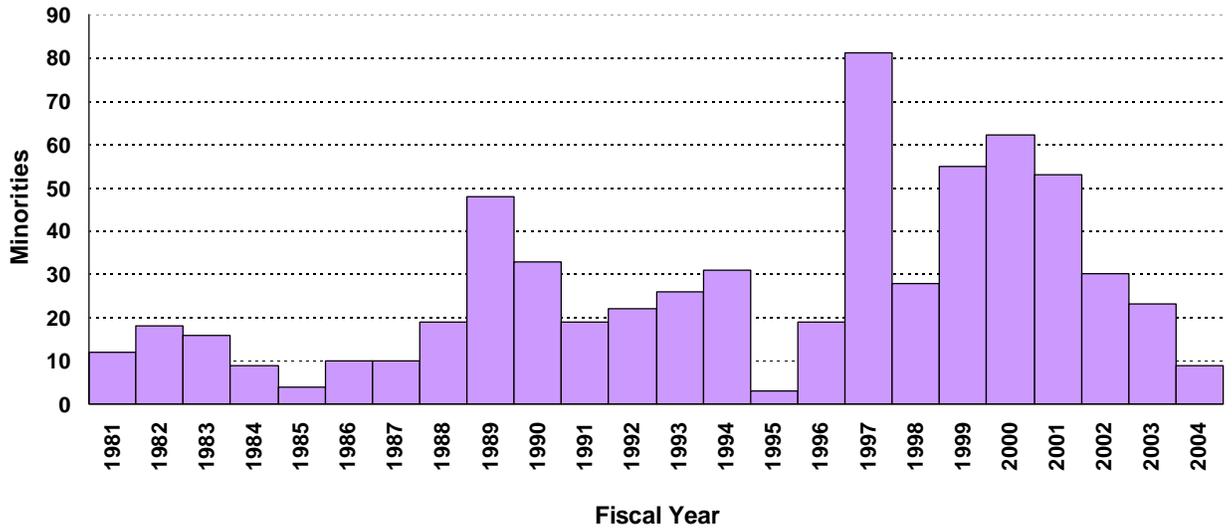


In 2004, 103 NRCS specialists traveled to 28 countries for 53 conferences, workshop, and training sessions. One of the most notable meetings was the International Certified Crop Advisors (CCA) Meeting in Ottawa, Canada during October. Chief Bruce Knight's discussions with the CCA Board of Directors helped in the successful implementation of NRCS' Technical Service Provider (TSP) process. Input from the CCA directors assisted Chief Knight in formulating TSP policy and procedures.

International Assignments Completed By NRCS Women and Minorities



International Assignments Completed By NRCS Minorities



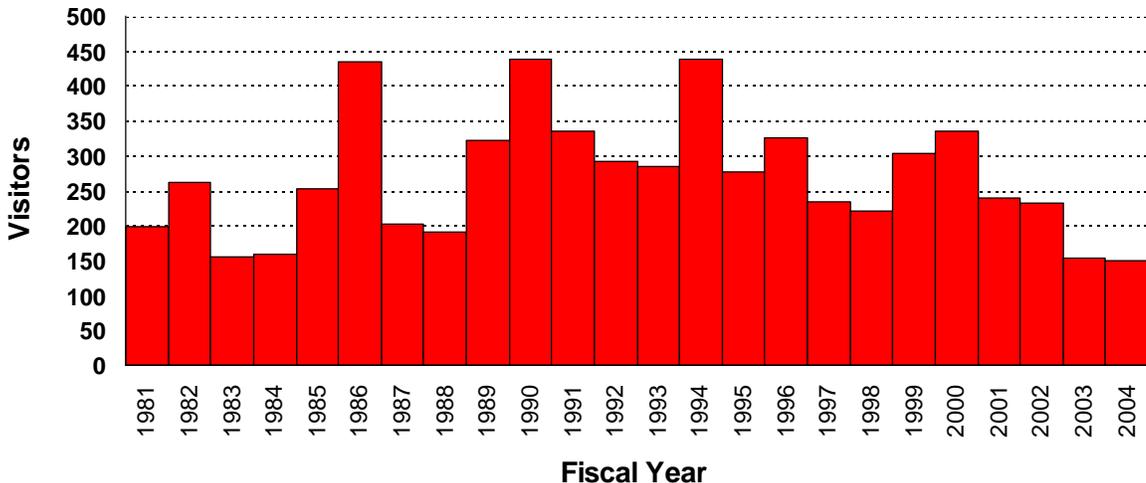
International Visitor's Program

NRCS has a real opportunity to help people from other countries plan and apply effective conservation measures. Foreign students, ministers, technicians, administrators, farmers, and volunteers observe and discuss conservation programs in the United States. Most of the programs are hands-on and field oriented and are individually tailored to the needs, capabilities, and desires of the visitor to provide maximum benefits. Programs are conducted by NRCS employees in the course of their normal on-the-job duties rather than in a classroom setting.

Last year we received over 150 visitors from various countries. The highest number of visitors were from China and Japan. The IPD anticipates a continuing need for hosting international visitors, and we encourage you to recognize that this program plays an important role in international resource conservation and outreach.

We invite you to consider the ways in which the Program has been, or can be, an influence in your career—in your personal as well as professional development goals.

NRCS International Visitors



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