

## University awarded \$18 million to implement integrated pest management program in developing countries



Virginia Tech has won a new \$18 million, five-year grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) for a research program that will work to raise the standard of living of people around the world through environmentally sound agricultural practices as part of [Feed the Future](#), the U.S. Government's global hunger and food security initiative.

The Feed the Future Innovation Lab (formerly Collaborative Research Support Program) for [Integrated Pest Management](#) will conduct research and extension activities

with farmers, counterpart universities, and host-country government research institutes to implement ecologically sustainable pest and disease control strategies. The predecessor programs to this new award have been led by [Virginia Tech University](#) for the past 21 years.

USAID recently announced that Virginia Tech would once again lead the program, a move that represents a vote of confidence in the work that has been ongoing since 1993. The new program will have a strong foundation in areas such as sustainable intensification, ecological service provision, ecological research, and empowerment of women farmers.

"We've been forming partnerships, conducting research, and getting to know farmers all over the world for the past two decades," said [Rangaswamy "Muni" Muniappan](#), who has led the Innovation Lab since 2006. "Our work has shown great results, and we look forward to continuing the fight against hunger."

The competitively-awarded program will address new and emerging pest problems that plague farmers in the developing world, as well as model and manage the spread of invasive species. Program scientists will also be investigating ways to preserve biodiversity and offset the impacts of climate change on agricultural pests and diseases.

The new Innovation Lab, managed by Virginia Tech's [Office of International Research, Education, and Development](#), will commit its core resources to Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania in Africa and to Bangladesh, Burma, Cambodia, Nepal, and Vietnam in Asia.

The Asian arm of the program will include two main sub-programs: one focused on rice in Burma and Cambodia, and a second on horticultural crops in Cambodia, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Vietnam. The Nepal program will additionally address integrated pest management for grains and climate change impacts.

The projects in eastern Africa will focus on innovative crop protection research for increased production and preservation of high-priority Feed the Future staple crops like maize, wheat, and chickpea in Ethiopia; rice and maize in Tanzania; and high-value vegetables in Kenya and Tanzania. The program will also research and implement new strategies to control existing and emergent pest infestations in countries where farmers with limited resources are predicted to be heavily affected by climate variability.

“This program has been working on the ground with poor farmers, making a difference in their lives, and contributing to global food security,” said Guru Ghosh, vice president for [Outreach and International Affairs](#) at Virginia Tech. “We’re pleased to have the opportunity to learn from past challenges and build on our successes.”

As in all the previous phases of the program, U.S. researchers will strengthen and forge new partnerships with international colleagues and work directly with farmers. The core tenets will remain unchanged: The program will strive to reduce pesticide use, increase food production, improve health, and make a difference in the lives of poor people in developing countries all over the world.

“A small innovation in a farmer’s life can have a huge impact on their family and on succeeding generations,” said Muniappan.

#### About Feed the Future

*Feed the Future ([www.feedthefuture.gov](http://www.feedthefuture.gov)) 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 reduce hunger, poverty and undernutrition.*

#### About USAID

*USAID is the lead U.S. Government agency that works to end extreme global poverty and enable resilient, democratic societies to realize their potential.*

#### About Virginia Tech

*Dedicated to its motto, *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve), [Virginia Tech](#) takes a hands-on, engaging approach to education, preparing scholars to be leaders in their fields and communities. As the commonwealth’s most comprehensive university and its leading research institution, Virginia Tech offers 225 undergraduate and graduate degree programs to more than 31,000 students and manages a research portfolio of \$496 million. The university fulfills its land-grant mission of transforming knowledge to practice through technological leadership and by fueling economic growth and job creation locally, regionally, and across Virginia.*