10 Years of Agrilinks: A Community Retrospective
The Past, Present and Future of Agricultural Development
April 29, 2021
Zachary Baquet serves as the Strategy and Learning Advisor with USAID’s Bureau for Resilience & Food Security (RFS). He leads the bureau’s Learning Team in efforts to improve the learning and knowledge sharing enabling environment within RFS and beyond. Joining USAID in 2008 as an American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Science & Technology Policy Fellow, he served in USAID’s former Office of Agriculture (2008-2010). In the Office of Agriculture, he worked on food security, the integration of climate change and natural resources management into agriculture programming, and knowledge management issues. Working in the Bureau for Food Security from 2010 to 2020, he led a team that provided support to the bureau around knowledge management, training, open data, and learning agendas. During this time, he also launched the Agrilinks.org learning platform. Baquet has an undergraduate degree in Physics and Astronomy, Ph.D. in molecular biology, and did post-doctoral work on neurodegenerative disorders.
Michael Michener, 
Deputy Assistant Administrator, USAID Bureau for Resilience and Food Security

Prior to working at USAID, Mr. Michener most recently served as Vice President for Product Policy and Innovation with the United States Council for International Business in Washington D.C., and just prior to that as Director of Multilateral Relations for CropLife International in Brussels, Belgium. Mike represented these trade associations before a range of international organizations – including the United Nations, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum. Previously, Mr. Michener served with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, first as Administrator of the Foreign Agricultural Service and then as Minister Counselor at the U.S. Mission to the UN Agencies in Rome. Mr. Michener has also worked for the U.S. Department of State in several roles, including senior governance advisor and strategic planner for stability operations, civil-military affairs specialist, and senior advisor for democracy and human rights programs in Iraq. Mike also worked for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security as an Asylum Officer and USAID as a Democracy Advisor in Bosnia and Kosovo.
Mywish Maredia,  
Professor, Agriculture, Food, and Resource Economics, Michigan State University

Mywish K. Maredia is a professor in the Department of Agricultural, Food and Resource Economics at Michigan State University with robust experience in conducting research and capacity building activities in Africa, Asia and Latin America. She focuses her work on the nexus of agricultural economics, food security policy, international development, and impact evaluation. She has led several research initiatives involving field experiments and extensive data collection on a wide range of topics. Maredia has also worked as a consultant with many international organizations, served as the director of the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Food Security Policy from 2016-2020, associate director of the USAID–funded Bean/Cowpea and Dry Grain Pulses CRSP from 2000-2009, and as a member of the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment of the CGIAR’s Science Council from 2006-2011.
Vern Long, 
Chief Executive Officer, World Coffee Research

Vern Long is the Chief Executive Officer of World Coffee Research, the world’s first global, collaborative agricultural R&D organization for coffee. A plant breeder by training, Long brings 25 years of experience in international agricultural research with a focus on smallholders, and deep expertise on genetic resources policy. Prior to joining WCR, Long served as the director of the Office of Agricultural Research and Policy at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), where she managed a global program portfolio of >$140 million per year. Long has substantial experience convening diverse stakeholders — from industry, national governments, CGIAR international agricultural research centers, university scientists, and farmers—to formulate a shared crop research agenda to improve productivity among smallholder farmers. Her work has spanned low- and middle-income countries in diverse geographies including Central America, West Africa, East and Southern Africa, and South Asia. She has served on various multi-donor working groups, including as Chair of the Agricultural Research Working Group of the Global Donor Platform on Rural Development based in Bonn, Germany.
Rob Bertram is the Chief Scientist in USAID’s Bureau for Resilience and Food Security, where he serves as a key adviser on a range of technical and program issues to advance global food security and nutrition. In this role, he leads USAID’s evidence-based efforts to advance research, technology and implementation in support of the U.S. Government’s global hunger and food security initiative, Feed the Future. He previously served as Director of the Office of Agricultural Research and Policy in the Bureau for Resilience and Food Security, which leads implementation of the Feed the Future research strategy and related efforts to scale innovations in global food security efforts, working with a range of partners. Prior to that, he guided USAID investments in agriculture and natural resources research for many years. Before coming to USAID, he served with USDA's international programs as well as overseas with the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) system.
Researcher’s perspective on the state of agriculture and food security: Looking back to move forward

Mywish K. Maredia, Michigan State University
Role of Researchers in Development

• Stakeholder/partner
• Bring rigor, analysis, and evidence to guide development efforts
• Objectivity (credibility)
• Help in accountability
• Foster learning
• Expand knowledge frontiers
Past 10 years
Foci of research—Big picture
Top 25 words in published articles of top inter-disciplinary development journals

Global Food Security, 2012-2020 (key-words)

World Development, 2010-2020 (titles)
Past 10 years

Indicators of development—Big picture
Food Production, Calorie production

• Globally, food production has increased
• Last 5 years, the curve has flattened and seems more volatile for Africa
Food Production – Micro-nutrient rich foods

• Overall, increasing trend in Asia and globally
• Africa—Trend declining for milk and flattened for vegetables and fruits

Gross per capita Vegetable and Fruit Production Index

Gross per capita Milk Production Index

Data Source: FAOSTAT
Food security/nutrition outcomes—The Big Picture

- All indicators—trends are either flat or slightly increasing instead of declining.

Data Source: FAOSTAT
Looking ahead

Foci of development research—Big picture
Past 10 years
Key aspects of learning

• Tackling development challenges is a marathon, not a sprint
  – Requires concerted, sustainable efforts/investments
  – Requires partnerships – multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder, multi-disciplinary
  – Requires creativity and innovation
  – Requires learning and adapting
  – Requires capacity strengthening
  – Requires power to influence decision makers

AgriLinks is a good example of a platform that fosters several of these requirements and helps us better prepare for and run for this Marathon
Thank You

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Aligning public & private investment for the SDGs

J. Vern Long, CEO, World Coffee Research
Communications platforms guide development of shared agenda
Drives transparency and accountability

• *Looking back*: AgExchange on Agrilinks
  • Global Consultation for Global Food Security Research Strategy
    – New ideas introduced – identified blind spots
    – Enabled richer, more diverse conversation about priority topics
Deepens alignment toward shared goals

• Looking forward: Private sector perspectives
  – Environmental, Social & Governance reporting
  – FTF indicators
  – Risk management & global supply chains
  – Distributing vs concentrating production
  – Climate crisis - more companies examining GHG emissions/mitigation
Looking forward

• Mutual accountability
  • Metrics for impact
  • Sharing evidence/best practices

• Facilitate conversations
  • Industry-wide engagement
  • Bridging communications between national governments and industry to advance sustainability goals
10 Years of Agrilinks: A Community Retrospective

Thank You!

www.worldcoffeeresearch.org
The Arc of Feed the Future: 10+ years informed and vetted thru Agrilinks

Rob Bertram
U.S. Agency for International Development
About **870 million** people suffer from chronic hunger

More than **3.5 million** children die from undernutrition each year

The world’s population will increase to more than **9 billion by 2050**

Food production will have to **increase by 60% by 2050** to feed the world

Agricultural production will be significantly impacted by **climate change**
2007-2008 Food Crisis: Policy Tipping Point

- Unexpected!
- No Single Cause
- Civil Unrest
- Political Instability
- Policy Failures
- Reprioritization of Food and Agriculture

Global cereal prices (US$/ton)

Source: Data from FAO 2014

Notes: The changes are calculated assuming current policies are maintained
Feed the Future

- Announced in 2009 at G-8 Summit in L’Aquila, Italy, with $3.5 B investment
- Addresses root causes of hunger and undernutrition
- Whole of government
- Staples-led growth
- Major private sector role
1. Help farmers produce more
2. Help farmers get more food to market
3. Support Research & Development to improve smallholder agriculture in a changing climate
4. Strengthen Regional Trade
5. Create a better Policy Environment
6. Improve Access to Nutritious Food and Nutrition Services
New Ways of Doing Business under Feed the Future

- **Country-led**
- **Focus on Women and Gender**
- **Integrate Nutrition and Agriculture**
- **Support Sustainable Intensification of Smallholders**
- **Strengthen Capacity of Local Institutions (public, private)**
- **M&E to support real-time learning**
- **Accountability: Impact at population-based scale**
Raising Agricultural Productivity in Low Income Countries Delivers Inclusive Economic Growth

**Extreme Poor:** 2/3 work in farming. Productivity growth in agriculture has highest impact on poverty reduction of any sector.

**Global undernourishment:** remains significant and is on the rise.

**Climate change:** will hit agriculture hard particularly where large numbers of poor live.

**Economic Transformation:** impeded by slow ag productivity growth in poorest countries.

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**Percent change in $1.25/day poverty rate from a 1 percent increase in productivity**

Source: Ivanic & Martin (2018)

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**Poverty Elasticity of Growth by Sector**

Source: Ivanic & Martin (2018)
Agricultural productivity growth has made food cheaper and saved land.

In low income countries, lower food prices are a major driver of poverty reduction and economic development.

Emerging concepts: Aspirations and Evidence

- Policy recognized as gap
- Scaling and role of private sector in it
- Resilience
  - Expanding crises and conflict
  - Means to avoid reduce humanitarian expenditures
  - Multi-sectoral, sequenced, layered, bespoke
- Food Systems
- Agro-ecology
- Inclusion
For food prices to remain constant, annual yield gains would have to increase:

- from 1.2% - 1.7% for maize
- from 1.1% - 1.7% for wheat
• The challenge is to achieve sustainable transformation via smallholder farmers
• Existing and future technologies are essential
• Farmer choice—seeds, fertilizer, breeds
• Context for technology scale-up is crucial
• Integration of multiple technologies is needed
• Information—weather, market, extension
• Reduce risk—catalyze investment at all levels
Overcoming rising challenges to achieve critical development outcomes requires innovations and information:

- Ecological approaches: improving resource use efficiency, for example, by using soil conservation practices to improve fertility.
- Genetic approaches: using improved crop varieties and livestock breeds better adapted to climate change and other stressors.
- Social approaches: strengthening networks of farmers, advisors, and agro-dealers that increase community resilience.
My wish list…?

- Knowledge/techs./capitalization of smallholder systems
  - Small scale irrigation
  - Mechanization (less drudgery/loss; storage; reduce mycotoxin)
  - Diversification—high value/nutrit.
- Major productivity/affordability gains especially for quality nutritious foods—poor consumers benefit most!
- Renewed SDG 2 Consensus for a Climate-Challenged World

Photo from: Rohana P. Subasinghe
Happy Birthday
Agri-Links!!!
Needs to be climate smart:

• Increased productivity per unit land, labor, capital—plus decreased emissions intensity
• Reduces risk, including climate risk
• Co-adaptation through biomass/org. matter
• Resource-use efficiency
• Efficient, prudent use of inputs
• Technologies—diverse and available
• Resource management practices
• Information intensive
Major opportunities for CSA…and profit!

• Input market—resource use efficiency
• Irrigation innovation/efficiency
• Risk-spreading/service provision on capitalization
• Reduce postharvest losses
• Market efficiency—better information for farmers
• Drying/processing innovations
• Streamline trade to reduce transit times
Thank You!