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OLIVES, TRACTORS, AND HEALTHY BIRDS: THE FARMER-TO-FARMER PROGRAM

AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

DECEMBER 11, 2013

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PRESENTERS

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Patrick Norell, CNFA

Malina Dumas, Volunteers in Economic Growth Alliance (VEGA)

PRESENTATION

Julie MacCartee:

Good morning, everyone. I think we'll go ahead and get started. I'd like to welcome you all to the December Ag Sector Council seminar and thank you all for coming today. There was a snow day in Washington, DC yesterday, as you all know, and there's a lot of good food security events going on this week. So there's a lot of competition for us today and so we're really happy to have a nice crowd in the room today.

My name is Julie MacCartee and I'm a knowledge management specialist with the USAID Bureau for Food Security, and I am really excited about this event today showcasing three examples from the Farmer to Farmer program and innovative integration of volunteers. Farmer to Farmer is a large program and has been kind of catching some news lately and I think it'll be really interesting to see what our three speakers have to show us.

First, a few housekeeping items. Please silence your cell phones, however if you are a Twitter or social media person please feel free to keep them out, or if you're joining us online you can use the hash tag, Ag Events, to follow along on Twitter. We do have an online audience joining us today and we ask that people who are online to please go ahead and share your experiences if you have any link to the Farmer to Farmer program or any other agricultural volunteer program please share your experiences and your resources in the chat box.

I think we will have a few clarifying questions after each speaker today. We ask that you wait and hold your questions until after I call for them after each speaker. We'll need to pass the microphone to you for any Q&A period so that the online audience can hear all your questions and so we can record everything. And we are recording this event today so if you'd like to review any portion of it or share it with your colleagues after the fact you can do so.

All right, lastly before we get started I just wanted to call your attention to an event that is happening next week, a webinar run by the spring project on leveraging community videos for agriculture and nutrition behavior change in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. This will be with Rikin Gandhi of Digital Green, who I think many of you have probably encountered or have heard of Digital Green. They're really fantastic organization. We are also going to be doing a lot of Twitter engagement

surrounding this event, Twitter chat afterwards. We hope you'll join at 9:00 AM next Tuesday, and that is on agri links.

To give a brief introduction to today's event I would like to welcome Gary Alex with the USAID Bureau for Food Security, who is the program manager for the Farmer to Farmer volunteer program. So I'll pass the microphone over to him.

Gary Alex:

Thank you, Julie, and I'll give just a few words of introduction for this session today to introduce the seminar that presents some highlights of innovative uses of volunteer technical assistance in development programs.

USAID has a long history of support for and use of voluntary technical assistance in its programs and development efforts. That goes back to the early 1950s, a USAID predecessor organization, ICA, established mechanisms for voluntary technical assistance to work in development and in agriculture. And that support and emphasis on volunteer programs and support has continued to today.

The benefits of volunteerism can be many. One of the first and obvious ones is cost-effective technical assistance. That's often technical assistance from volunteers that bring an enthusiasm for their work and continuing support and engagement with their host organizations and additional resources for the program.

But maybe more importantly, accessing volunteers can bring in technical assistance that is very practical, that is state of the art and brings technologies, methods and practices from the U.S. private sector and other institutions to bear on international programs. And finally, the volunteers with their people to people exchange and the citizens' diplomacy present a real American face to our development assistance, in line with the tagline to our logo from the American people. They also help to broaden understanding of international development and development issues.

The program today is really oriented towards highlighting innovative uses of volunteers and how they can be very effective. The examples all come from the Farmer to Farmer program which has been active for about 25 years and provides about 600 volunteer assignments each year around the world. These assignments are very diverse and as an example the

programs being highlighted today. And they have involved in recent years some 20 different organizations have been involved in implementing these programs and providing the services.

We have a selection today of three of these and I will now just give a brief word of introduction, they're all programs, as I said, that are Farmer to Farmer programs but they are all examples of mechanisms that can be used by missions or other aid offices to access volunteer services with their own funding.

The first will be DeAnn McGrew, Winrock International, presenting the Partnership for Safe Poultry in Kenya. This was a buy-in project for Kenya in East Africa from Global Health and Mission funding that was used for a two-year program to build capacity in the poultry sector, responding to avian influenza.

The second will be Patrick Norell of CNFA, describing the Georgia Access to Mechanization project which was associate award-funded through an LWA by the Georgia mission.

And Malina Dumas from VEGA, or Volunteers in Economic Growth Alliance, will describe a Morocco engaging venture capital to strengthen agricultural value chains project. This was a small grant project which was, in this case, funded by the core Farmer to Farmer program but could well have been funded by mission buy-in.

So with that I'll ask DeAnn to take over.

DeAnn McGrew:

Good morning, thank you, Gary, and thank you, Agrilinks, for hosting and having us here. I'm here to talk about Winrock's Partnership for Safe Poultry program in Kenya, a completed program, and give you a little bit of information about the approach activities and lessons learned.

As Gary mentioned, this was a two, two-and-a-half year program from March 2009 to August 2011, \$1.1 million in total funding. Initial funding for the program came from the Kenya mission. There was additional funding provided for some limited regional activities from the East Africa Mission, then I think a little bit of -- finally maybe \$100,000 came from the PDP funding.

The program was active in nine districts across Kenya following the bird migration corridor, and looking specifically, because that's the way avian influenza would have come into the country. And then there were also limited activities in the region in Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania. The program utilized 45 total volunteers, both international U.S. volunteers as well as some East African regional volunteers, as well as a limited number of paid consultants and \$33,000 worth of in-kind grants. That was what -- under traditional Farmer to Farmer which usually utilizes only U.S. volunteers that's how this particular program was unique. It was unique in duration in that it was shorter than a normal Farmer to Farmer program. It was unique in that it had a very narrowly-defined scope. It was also unique in that in addition to U.S. volunteers it utilized local and regional volunteers, some paid consultants and grants to match those activities.

The program -- basically poultry is an important economic activity for smallholders throughout Africa, and in Kenya alone 75 percent of poultry producers, the majority of whom are women, raise small, free-roaming flocks that are highly susceptible to avian influenza.

So the program was designed to essentially promote improved biosecurity, to reduce the threat of avian influenza and at the same time increase the competitiveness of Kenyan eggs and poultry meat and increase income for these smallholder producers.

The approach of the program, as I mentioned, was linking targeted sector stakeholders in Kenya with U.S. and regional volunteers who provided assistance to increase efficiency, improve production and marketing, improve biosecurity, and following a number of activities that volunteers were directly engaged in.

First they brought together poultry sector analysis first. This included stakeholder inventories, value chain analysis, targeted studies on sector competitiveness -- this one was an interesting study that was done -- this competitiveness study showed a growing consumer preference for indigenous poultry as opposed to commercial broiler poultry meat. So it showed that there was an interesting opportunity and also a threat because of the biosecurity concerns. So a lot of these analyses led to further activities that happened for volunteers throughout the life of the program.

The program worked to strengthen local capacity of both government stakeholders as well as producers associations, etc. On the government side volunteers helped facilitate the development of a national poultry improvement plan that was fleshed out by the Ministry of Livestock and then later actually funded by the ministry to promote improvement in the poultry sector.

They also provided this type of capacity building, training for smallholder producers, on recordkeeping, marketing and management practices, developing business plans, developing feed formulations and certifications and developing feed standards.

They also worked on improved biosecurity practices. These were simple techniques -- everything from limiting contact, using a foot bath to prevent contamination, very simple biosecurity practices that were introduced that resulted in reducing mortalities from 20 percent to three to five percent. These are very simple, cost-effective things that poultry-producers could implement. And we worked with producers to do improved biosecurity practices as well as with traders.

The program also worked creating linkages to markets, market information and finance for smallholders. That was doing things like working with them to aggregate inputs so that -- to give them better access, promoting development of an innovative financial model that helped producers to really understand what the breakeven point was, and understand what inputs and outputs would be required that also provide the linkage to finance with the banks because the banks could understand how to finance this type of smallholder poultry production.

We also developed a poultry website that was eventually turned over, managed by committee through the ministry of livestock, and this was an open source data management site where it would provide linkages for those in this sector as well as information to stakeholders.

In terms of the regional expansion I mentioned that the East Africa mission added money to the program for some limited regional activities. These regional activities include a poultry sector value chain analysis in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda. Also there was a regional workshop and tour where we invited sector stakeholders representing all the value chain actors to come from each of the three countries, to Kenya, to sort of be

trained in programs, tools and practices, to do field tours to demo farms and see some of the activities and biosecurity practices at work. And finally a discussion of the value chain findings and the application of the PSPK model in each of their own countries.

The following were the key accomplishments and impacts of the program. The program trained more than 3,000 individuals and benefitted more than 12,000 households. Also leveraged an additional \$1.1 million in investment from both the government of Kenya, the private sector and donor funding. We were pretty proud of this, to have a \$1.1 million program; USAID investment leveraged an equal amount of funding from the government and private sector in Kenya.

It increased incomes and diversified diets for food insecure families through poultry production. We had people telling us that they were actually not only raising this for commercial purposes but eating eggs and poultry meat with their families for the first time. It empowered women as farmers and entrepreneurs, group leaders and businesspeople. Fifty-seven percent of the individuals trained were women. I mentioned earlier that 75 -- there's a very large percentage of -- maybe 75 percent of poultry producers are women, but the program itself worked with 57 percent women because women are mostly producers, not traders. They don't get involved in the processing as much; it's mostly at the production level.

The program also successfully changed both farmers and investors' perceptions of poultry as a profitable business. This was, again, part of the financial model, success of the financial tool that was developed. And it demonstrated that people would adopt biosecurity practices when there was an economic incentive to do so.

Again, we talked about the National Poultry Improvement program that was developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Livestock Development. It also -- the program increased access to safe poultry products by investing in the development and marketing of these indigenous poultry brands. We facilitated stakeholder dialog and contributed to building a body of knowledge on the poultry value chain, both in Kenya and in the East Africa region. Supported lasting improvements in the feed industry by assisting the Association of Kenyan Feed Manufacturers to improve feed quality and develop a certification

program for feed manufacturers. And this feed was specifically for indigenous poultry.

Strengthening the capacity of the Kenya Poultry Farmers Association they more than doubled their support to household members. Promoted efforts to produce high quality feeds. The Great Lakes University of Kisumu is now using these improved feed formulations and have instituted, introduced a new poultry science degree, the first in Kenya for this particular subject.

Finally increased production of safe poultry products through -- we had worked with 11 demo farms where we had introduced these biosecurity practices and these were -- we had farmer field days and brought people from the region, the stakeholders that came to the workshop to see this, really promoting biosecurity.

Lessons learned from the program. Again, the dual focus on smallholder production and measures to address biosecurity was a way to increase competitiveness in incomes. We were really showing that there was -- people would adopt biosecurity practices if there was an economic incentive to do so as we saw in the program.

Addressing market and market information, increase smallholder interest and their ability to move toward higher volumes of production. This financial model that I talked about was an essential tool for promoting the commercialization. Again, deliberate efforts to target women would have been strengthened. The project, when we worked with women's groups we worked with already existing groups, so we weren't involved directly in group formation. Had we been we could have almost worked with 100 percent women.

Utilizing volunteers, as Gary mentioned, this was a standard lesson is that it was a cost-effective and efficient approach for delivering this type of assistance. We also found that it was highly successive to pair U.S. volunteers with local volunteers because not only did it build the capacity of their beneficiaries but it also built the capacity of the local volunteers to be able to provide continued assistance promoting that sustainability.

The project's focus on this single value chain enabled it to have a very -- focused efforts contributed to the impact of the program and it also

allowed us to use more specialized technical experts as field staff. This is again a little bit unique for a traditional Farmer to Farmer program as a little bit more broadly spread. And so having such a narrow focus enabled us to also utilize high level poultry experts as staff. And finally the combination of technical assistance and grants enabled us to have a deeper impact.

That's all I have. Thank you.

Julie MacCartee: Thank you so much, DeAnn.

Now we'd like for you all to hold your kind of larger, more conceptual questions until the end but does anyone have a clarifying question for DeAnn's portion of the presentation? Yes, we've got one back here. We're passing the microphone. And please state your name and organization if you wouldn't mind.

Question: Just real quick -- Rob Mergenthaler, Office of Food for Peace -- just curious, you mentioned free roaming as a biosecurity risk, so what was the model you were using actually here? Was this was the American agribusiness model of just housing these chickens in one spot, concentrated in one place?

DeAnn McGrew: Yeah, so basically to limit contamination they would have to be housed. So it was like small pens or something like that so that you could limit access into and out of the farm. But even if it wasn't like houses in the traditional sense here -- obviously we're not building large-scale poultry houses but even just fencing just to limit --

(Rob Mergenthaler): Free range but not free roaming, I guess is the distinction.

DeAnn McGrew: Exactly.

(Rob Mergenthaler): So they weren't completely reliant upon the feed that you were mentioning as their sole source of feeding, or was this just a supplement to that feed?

DeAnn McGrew: Originally most smallholders they're just producing poultry for -- it's almost like a savings account. So it's like you're producing chickens so that when you need school fees you go and sell your chicken.

(Rob Mergenthaler): Yeah, I understand, sure.

DeAnn McGrew: So the idea was if they wanted to be able to move to a more commercial production where they could produce birds, grow them and then sell them on a regular schedule, like a four-month, six-month schedule then they would have to use some type of improved feed. It wouldn't just be whatever, you're on your own with bugs and grass and that sort of thing.

(Rob Mergenthaler): The paid consultants that you brought out here, where were they coming from private sector?

DeAnn McGrew: Yes. We only used a couple of paid consultants. A couple of the paid consultants were national, like an Ethiopian consultant in Ethiopia to do the value chain analyses, Ugandan consultant in Uganda to do the analyses. Then we also have a couple private sector consultants and one of the avian influenza experts also was a consultant.

(Rob Mergenthaler): Thanks.

Julie MacCartee: One more clarifying question?

Question: Charles Uphaus, USAID. Did you do any studies about the income impacts on farm income benefits to the program?

DeAnn McGrew: We did a few case studies, and what we did is we took several of the beneficiaries and we looked at what kind of impact on their incomes it had had, and then also not just how did it affect their incomes but how were they utilizing those incomes, what were they paying for, what were they buying, what were they investing in. So we had -- again, with the small, two-year program we did some case studies to look at what impact it had at that level and how they were utilizing the increased incomes.

(Charles Uphaus): And you found what?

DeAnn McGrew: We found, of course, that their incomes increased and these were women and they were investing in their families, of course. So they were paying school fees, making sure the family was eating maybe more eat and eggs themselves, maybe taking the money to invest in other businesses, maybe like a sewing business or some other type of economic income-generating activity.

Julie MacCartee: Thank you. And there will be certainly more chance to ask specific questions to DeAnn after the other two presentations. So I'll hand it over to Patrick.

Patrick Norell: Thank you all for joining us today and obviously to USAID and Agrilinks for organizing this. I'll be talking about the Georgia access to mechanization program.

I guess the first thing to note about this program, the ways in which it's innovative in the world of Farmer to Farmer is that it was not primarily a volunteer technical assistance programs. ANP was a 30-month, \$5.1 million program that was intended to develop custom tillage services to serve Georgian smallholders. Custom tillage meaning that a small farmer that really couldn't afford to buy his own tractor would be able to go to a local private enterprise and contract that enterprise's operator and tractor to come to his field, plow it, plant it, apply fertilizer, provide harvesting services.

It was primarily a matching grants program. We had a one-to-one matching requirement, so for every dollar of USAID funds we required a dollar from the local partner. These were quite large grants -- USAID's contribution was maxed at \$150,000. In practice the local partners usually exceeded that one-to-one match. Because the local partners were responsible for construction costs USAID didn't cover that. And typically wanted to buy multiple pieces of machinery that weren't covered under the -- that our \$150,000 grant wasn't enough to cover.

Of course the goal was to provide more timely, better quality machinery services to smallholders in order to allow them to increase their productivity and increase their incomes.

So again, the 30-month, \$5.1 million project, it was a cooperative agreement, and an associate award, which was funded through at that time what was the Farmer to Farmer Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia Leader award for Farmer to Farmer.

I'd like to mention a little bit about how the program came to be because I think that's an important element of it. An associate award through the Farmer to Farmer LWA mechanism is typically an instrument for a

mission to buy into the program to facilitate greater use of volunteers to meet the mission's objectives in that particular country, and to help missions solve problems or address needs as they arise. It's a very flexible mechanism.

In this case the USAID Georgia mission had a request from the government of Georgia to help facilitate the introduction of new machinery and improved access to machinery services for smallholders. So CNFA was able to work directly with the mission to design this program in order to quickly meet a need that they had in responding to the government of Georgia.

It began with a concept note that we developed jointly with the mission, that concept paper was submitted by USAID Georgia to Farmer to Farmer here in Washington and cleared. And then once cleared, resulted in development of a full proposal for the full three-year program. So a collaborative process all along the way involving both USAID Georgia, both the mission in the field and Farmer to Farmer here in Washington.

Now of course Farmer to Farmer volunteers were a part of it, and this would not be the most innovative use of volunteers; this is something that Farmer to Farmer volunteers do all around the world. The most basic use of volunteers was firm level capacity-building in business and technical skills for the machinery service centers that were created through the program. We fielded a total of 25 volunteers over the 30-month life of the project. The vast majority of their work was dedicated to helping improve financial recordkeeping, business planning, marketing, helping these machinery service centers actually get out a unified brand; they all carried the same logo, they all had the same package of training, they all had the same uniforms, they became a recognized network for delivery of machinery services around the country. So volunteers contributed to the development of a brand identity and a unified marketing plan for these things, things like how to set prices, how to calculate costs, how to improve customer service.

Though this is not the most innovative use of volunteers it was interesting to note in Georgia that this was something that U.S. volunteers were uniquely qualified to do. The customer -- essentially retail level custom machinery service center model was something entirely new in the country. It had never been done before, it was the type of business that

didn't exist. At the same time it was something that American agribusiness professionals knew a lot about. There have been a lot of similar businesses like that in the United States. So they knew exactly how to teach their Georgian counterparts to develop and run these businesses.

Apart from the firm level assistance with machinery service centers volunteers also work to provide agricultural lending training for lending institutions and to work with the Ministry of Agriculture employees to improve their training capability and good agricultural practices.

The agricultural lending training is particularly of note. Volunteers work together with our long-term local staff, and we had a credit specialist on staff who was really working, again, at the firm level and with individual tool banks to do a matchmaking activity. He was hoping to develop business plans for each machinery center, shop them around to commercial lenders and try to obtain commercial finance, as part of the matching investment that these enterprises had to make in their projects.

But we also use volunteers to work beyond on a broader scale and actually build the capability of several lending institutions to better understand the risks associated with agricultural lending and to design products that are specifically tailored to agricultural borrowers.

So we conducted two ag lending workshops, 24 lending personnels from seven banks and one microlending institution participated, and we get good U.S. volunteers from the Farm Credit System and from commercial banks and rural areas. It's something that farmer volunteers are particularly effective in supporting.

All of this together, the work of our long-term local staff and the support from the U.S. volunteers actually resulted in more than a million dollars in new agricultural loans that were achieved through the program.

Then training of trainers for the ministry of agriculture, it's a process that is accelerating now, but at that time it was just at its beginning stages. The Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia was starting to reintroduce an extension service. So we were able to deploy U.S. volunteers to build the capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture extension agents in food safety, good agricultural practices, modern agricultural technologies and actually

to develop training materials for the machinery service centers themselves to provide training services to farmers.

So on two fronts, the sort of classic extension services which are usually a public good, operated by ministries of agriculture and the privately-funded, commercially oriented training activities of the machinery service centers with the goal of getting a well-educated client that gets a good result and comes back as a repeat customer year after year.

Also important and another item that U.S. volunteers were particularly effective in providing: conservation tillage, including the use of no-till equipment, which is something quite new for Georgia, and basic elements of soil conservation and the performance of machinery services, like don't plow up the hill, which is something they would commonly have furrows running vertically up hills, which when it rains leads to the soil running downhill, a tremendous problem with erosion.

As a result of the program we had 21 machinery service centers finally opened around the country, each one independently owned for-profit business, 194 jobs created through those centers, \$377,000 in new wages.

To judge the performance of the businesses themselves, again, this was a new business model for Georgia. We have \$1.78 million in sales of machinery services to more than 16,000 small holder farmers, the ultimate intended beneficiaries of this program. And remember, this is just in the 30-months lifespan of the program, so just what we were able to measure while we were on the ground in implementing.

2,245 farmers received extension trainings. That includes both the trainings provided by the machinery service centers and by the Ministry of Agriculture.

And the bottom line: what good did it do for farmers? Farmers surveyed reported an income increase of 68 percent, or \$5.3 million as a result of receiving access to timely custom machinery services.

I think that's it.

Julie MacCartee:

Thank you very much, Patrick. Do we have any clarifying questions for Patrick? Yes, from the same -- we'll take the gentleman in the back first.

Question: Rob Mergenthaler, Office of Food for Peace, again. The equipment that you were selling to the farmers, I'm very interested to know where those were from because I would think that, you know, in this -- particularly in this region it would -- I mean the most likely source would be the Belarus tractors.

Patrick Norell: Yes, well a couple of things to mention on that. One of our requirements for the program was that any equipment purchased had to be provided by a local dealer, by a manufacturer that had an official dealer who was able to provide parts and service after the sale. So there were some brands that were eliminated from consideration just because their lack of a local dealer.

Of those that did have a local dealer for sure the go-to, the first response for most of these entrepreneurs were the Belarus tractors because they were the tractors they knew. But we organized this process by which all the local dealers were able to market their products to the farmers, to the entrepreneurs, the machinery service center owners. And in fact the choices made by the machinery service center owners turned out to be pretty diverse. We had a good selection of Claas machinery, which is relatively high-end German manufactured machinery. A pretty good amount of Case-New Holland, which although it's one of our beloved American brands is actually owned by Fiat now and manufactured in Turkey. Probably the largest number of tractors were Chinese-made Fotong tractors. And it was a conscious decision -- people knew that they would probably be giving up something in quality and reality in exchange to get more tractors that they, in the short term, could use to earn more money.

Question: We've got a question from online; this one is from John Russell of -- oops sorry, I lost your -- Eco Food Systems in Oregon: "Are the centers typically owned by individuals or cooperatives?"

Patrick Norell: We did not have any that were owned by cooperatives, although that would be a perfectly-suitable business model. It just happens in the Georgian context that -- in the first place there's kind of a post-Soviet resistance to cooperation, and in the second place there's not, until this year, actually, maybe six weeks ago, a cooperative law in place that treats cooperatives as non-profit entities. A cooperative under Georgian law has

suffered in the past from double taxation, where it pays profit tax just as any for-profit company and then the members are taxes again on their dividends as they're distributed. So it has not been a viable business model. In this case they were all private enterprises, though not all individuals. Some of them were limited liability companies, some of them joint stock companies.

Question: Larry Paulson, USAID retired. Which farming operations best or most lent themselves to custom operations and which one didn't, and were there surprises on either end?

Patrick Norell: I wouldn't say surprises; I think the results we saw were pretty predictable. I will mention one real surprise that we had: we knew that our core grant recipients for this, our target market for establishing these centers would be those that were already involved in input supply. And seeing it through a previous program funded by the Millennium Challenge Corporation in Georgia had established a network of retail input supply businesses selling seeds, plant protection products, fertilizer. So adding on a customer machinery service component to their activities was relatively easy. And those were the core of our grantees, they performed as we expected.

What was interesting about this program was the very large dollar value involved in each project. So if we're giving \$150,000 grants and we require a one-to-one match and we say we're not going to pay for any construction or salaries, which drives the local recipients' match up that drove us into some different kinds of applicants that we hadn't worked with before, those kinds of companies that had that much money to invest in a project like this.

We were extremely wary of getting applicants without agricultural experience, without any kind of service provision experience, but I would say one of our most successful farm service centers was a bunch of young guys, 25, 26 years old with an entrepreneurial spirit, with an understanding of what customer service was about and with money to invest that really threw themselves into this and made this their main business from scratch. That was a pleasant surprise; we thought we were taking a big risk with that. That's what development programs sometimes are for.

Question: Charles Uphaus again, USAID. "Small farmer" is a term that's thrown around a lot of course here. Who was your target population? When you talk about small farmers in the Georgia context who are we talking about?

Patrick Norell: In the Georgian context the average landholding after privatization per rural household is 1.6 hectares. There has been some consolidation -- all these countries of the former Soviet Union are kind of at different stages in that consolidation process. But still -- and there've also been some depopulation of the countryside. There are an enormous number of Georgians working overseas, as is common.

So as a result of that you'd see families grouping their landholdings together. Still, the main clients for this program are talking about aggregate landholdings of five hectares or less.

Question: Dick Tinsley, Colorado State University, actually here to visit my grandkids, but enjoying the seminar. Okay, first of all as one who's spent a career with smallholder agriculture I can't emphasize the importance of mechanization in trying to get the drudgery out of the system. And I could go on and on for that.

But also I'd like to reiterate the comment coming online from the person in Oregon as to the fact that mechanization has got to be absolutely private. The use of government or public sector mechanization units and maybe even cooperative -- and you've mentioned that -- mechanization was discredited approximately 40 years ago, could never keep up with the maintenance, or subject to a tremendous amount of, shall we say, **bakshish** gratuity operations in which people paid a little extra and got priority on it, not getting to the smallholder farmers they were intended to.

Typically of the 10,000 service hours on a public sector ownership you get maybe 3,000, maybe 4,000 and the thing would be sidetracked. So I want to just say be very careful about how you keep that and try to keep this very, very much on the private sector, preferably individual ownership. Thank you.

Julie MacCartee: Do you have any response?

Patrick Norell: I just would mention I agree completely. I think that's quite true. And I mentioned during the presentation that this program came about as a

response to a request from the Government of Georgia. We were not -- USAID was not the only entity to respond; the Japanese government also responded to this request from the government of Georgia and funded a quite large program that put a much larger number of tractors, 200 tractors into a state-operated government-owned machinery service entity.

So we were a little bit worried as we were starting off the implementation of this program that we'd be competing alongside a state-owned behemoth, each one of these being -- each one of ours being individual, small, separately-owned businesses three, five tractors each, against this 200 tractor nationwide, government-owned operation.

As it turned out it wasn't an issue; obviously the government-owned company couldn't be responsive enough in service time to get the tractors where they were needed. They weren't competitive on price because the bureaucracy and oversight was slightly mismanaged.

Our centers profited and flourished and actually demonstrated their improved flexibility, better quality of service and improved financial performance in the face of the state-owned -- now they're trying to privatize it. At this stage they're trying to privatize the state-owned machinery service center.

Julie MacCartee: I think we have one quick clarifying question online and then we'll move ahead but we can certainly come back to questions for you afterwards.

Question: This is related to a question that you sort of already answered and it comes from Oliver Ferguson at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign: "How did you target the specific skills that you needed from volunteers?"

Patrick Norell: So we designed a training package, more or less uniform training package for the machinery service center owners and staff. As I have mentioned, CNFA's done a lot of input supply programs that are very similar to this in a lot of countries around the world. And the small business management skills for operating a retail service providing or input supply business, we understand pretty well what they are.

We also have an already standardized training curriculum. So we knew clearly that in working directly with the machinery service centers we would be looking for U.S. volunteers that had small business management

skills that understood basic financial recordkeeping, that knew marketing, especially at the retail level. And luckily those types of volunteers are ones that Farmer to Farmer doesn't have much trouble recruiting from the American public. That was relatively an easy task for us to figure out which kinds of volunteers we wanted and to recruit them.

Julie MacCartee: Thank you, Patrick, and we'll move along to Malina Dumas.

Malina Dumas: Thank you, good morning everyone. I wanted to start by just thanking USAID and Agrilinks for the invitation for VEGA to present out project at this panel today. As you can see the title is "Engaging Venture Capital to Strengthen Agricultural Value Chains in Morocco", and the main purpose of this short-term, one-year pilot project was to prove the hypothesis that there's strong demand for American industry expertise in Morocco and that this kind of technical assistance can really help scale the impact of venture financing in the country and beyond.

So what I'd like to do today is give a brief overview of VEGA and this pilot project, more of the design and the preliminary results, since this project just ended last month. So VEGA is actually a member-owned organization, we're a consortium of 23 members that you can see on the screen, and all of our members work in economic development and integrate volunteers into their activities.

You've heard about the LWA, Leader With Associate award mechanism today, and VEGA was actually created by USAID ten years ago in February as a Leader With Associate award to gain access to these member organizations and we've grown in our membership over the past ten years. But as Gary mentioned at the beginning of the presentation VEGA was also awarded the special program support project for Farmer to Farmer this year and VEGA is a non-profit organization in its own right.

So before we became the holders of the SFSP we were actually given a small grant by Weidemann Associates, the previous holder of this award. So this was made possible by USAID through Widemann Associates, and for this project part of the innovative model is to bring new Farmer to Farmer implementers to work in this area. So for this projects we opened up the possibility to all of our non-implementing Farmer to Farmer members to participate and the organizations that participated in the one-

year pilot were Crusoe International, the MBAs Without Borders pilot program through Pyxera Global which is formerly CDC Development Solutions and the International Executive Service Corp, IESC.

But the real cornerstone of this pilot is VEGA's new partnership with the Venture Capital Association in Morocco, the acronym is AMIC, taken from the French. And this partnership was facilitated by VEGA's program advisor, William Fellows, who's based in Casablanca. He's a former venture investor and he's been working in North Africa in economic development for over ten years. He's really the go-to person for venture capital information, projects, partnerships in North Africa.

And for anyone who's going to the Farmer to Farmer implementers meeting in Marrakesh in January you might get a chance to meet William Fellows and learn more about this project from him as we was really the instigator and designer of this program.

I'd like to talk a little bit about our partnership with the venture capital firms which worked very well in this one-year pilot. These VC firms and AMIC has been identifying and investing in high-potential innovative agribusinesses for years; the association was created in 2000. They have about 20 members and 13 associated firms. But they face major constraints in their investments of these agribusinesses. One is the management structure and a lack of human resources in the agribusinesses themselves and often the investment officer who's placed by the venture capital firm to work with the agribusiness lacks industry expertise. They're usually former bankers or accountants who don't have the industry expertise for the particular agribusiness that they're working with, any kind of food industry experience generally.

And so they're very receptive to outside technical expertise and voluntary assistance from new partners. And so the VC firms for VEGA, they gauge the demand of agribusinesses in their portfolios and screened the applications for technical assistance. They then put together the scope of work submitted to VEGA which has been cleared through Widemann Associates and we're able to recruit and send volunteers that match the expertise that they required.

Once the volunteers arrived in Morocco the venture capital firms also covered all of their in-country expenses such as lodging and transportation

and they provided some oversight of the logistics of the assignment which was very helpful and that worked well.

So we received a mix of requests for assistance from both startups and mid-growth firms and we actually received more interest than we were able to fill in just a one-year pilot project. And given the success of the project we've also continued to receive subsequent requests.

On this slide I put just a few highlights of the impact of volunteer assignments that I won't go over in detail but I did want to mention that as with the other presenters from Farmer to Farmer typically the experts that VEGA accesses are high level senior experts, often retirees who have very specific skillsets in targeted industries.

The one thing that was innovative about this particular pilot project is that we also partnered with our member organization that I mentioned, Pixar Global and used to be CDC Development Solutions with MBAs Without Borders program and this was a very successful new partnership in which we were able to place a longer-term volunteer.

For this pilot it was just two months but the MBAs Without Borders program typically places recent MBA graduates with several years of work experience in developing countries for six months to a year or longer. So we would have liked to have extended this assignment but it came to fruition towards the end of the pilot project. But it received very strong satisfaction from the host organization, from the investment officer with Moroccan **Best** in this particular case.

So that recent MBA grad was able to actually sit within the company for two full months working full-time, able to conduct more in-depth market research, really see the strengths and weaknesses of the organization on a variety of levels. One of the highlights I put up on the screen is developing a customer relations management system for the organization but she also covered a lot of different areas and they asked -- their one complaint was that they wished that they could have had her for longer.

As you can see in the picture we also had a former senior vice president of McCormack Spice, his name is Harold Howe Hanley. He works with our member organization, IASC and he had very relevant expertise working with saffron producers in Agadir, Morocco and with some other

beneficiaries as well. Just kind of to emphasize the citizen diplomacy aspect and the value of volunteers once he came back to the U.S. he continued to engage with these companies via email and connected them to his brother, who's a patent lawyer and could help with some other issues that they were facing so we see a lot of value with these kinds of volunteers.

Another one of our volunteers was on his ninth Farmer to Farmer assignment so this was his first time working directly with VEGA and with some of the other members but he's worked in the former Soviet Union and other countries typically with firms that are not as far along as the one he was working with in Morocco which is a mid-growth firm around since the 1970s that even exports to the U.S. and Subway is one of the consumers but they had a lot of issues that he was able to help them with to help further scale their production and their environmental considerations.

I'm going to finish on this slide talking about some of the lessons learned from the project. Given that this is a one-year pilot and it was one of the first projects that VEGA more directly implemented we had a lot to learn and we have a lot to learn from our Farmer to Farmer implementing partners but we did see that there's a strong demand for American expertise in particular in Morocco. It's relatively easy for these firms to access European expertise, sometimes volunteers from Europe and sometimes these kinds of consultants can be very expensive and we wondered in the beginning if the American expertise would really add value. And then after going to Morocco in October and meeting with the beneficiaries and hearing about their experiences and the demand that this actually spurred we can see that American expertise is desired -- and this kind of goes to a point further along that I won't go over later that there are misconceptions about the U.S. versus EU market regulations and the Moroccans tend to think that it's impossible to enter the U.S., that it's much more difficult but really it's just a lack of understanding and even an introductory conversation with one of these volunteers who comes to understand their company's position and their products. They see that there are major opportunities as well as challenges that they wouldn't have considered. And so that really helps them moving forward.

As I mentioned previously there's a desire for either longer-term assignments or for repeat assignments so to have a short-term assignment,

a senior level expert go out and then six months or 12 months later go back to the country and follow up with the beneficiaries to ensure that their recommendations are properly implemented.

[Off mic conversation]

The next one is that in the design process VEGA didn't really take into consideration the impact of seasonality on these activities. One year is a very short period of time to implement a project and we are dealing with a variety of different agribusinesses that work with different crops, have different harvest times. And so it was a little bit difficult to match up when we were able to recruit the specific technical expertise when the volunteer would be able and then keeping in mind that around harvest times it was impossible to send the volunteers because the entire management would be out of the office and not able to conduct oversight of these assignments.

One thing that's interesting is the Moroccan government's focus on agriculture. There's an initiative called Green Morocco that's pumping millions of dollars into the agriculture sector from the government, and in light of the Arab Spring these kinds of initiatives are very important and much talked about in the country as a way of keeping it stable. And many of our beneficiaries, if not all, have received free land from the government or other kinds of resources that have made it possible to start new ventures that they wouldn't have even thought of otherwise. But these also do come with more regulations.

And one example of how this impacted our project is that a volunteer was able to go into the country and completely redesign a **prune** production facility that was on the planning stages and this completely saved the project because the commodity that they were going to use to fuel the system tripled in price in the past year and they would have actually had to scrap the idea and the volunteer was also able to make the facility 30 percent more energy efficient. But since the design was completely redone they had to resubmit these plans to the Moroccan government and that pushed off their construction date for about six months. And again, when we went back in October they were requesting follow on assistance for the same volunteer or another volunteer through another program to come back and help oversee the actual construction and the implementation of his recommendations.

Going back to another point we did include translation in the budget for this project but it was difficult to find French-speaking technical experts from the U.S. and in order to really be able to hit the ground running it would have helped to have an interpreter available to help read the documents that are in French or help facilitate some conversations with people who didn't speak English in the country.

And then just to conclude my presentation I did want to mention that we had a meeting with two of the project volunteers here in DC with Gary and others at VEGA's office and they mentioned that they would really like to have the opportunity to follow up on their work and with the one-year pilot project it's not necessarily possible given the resources but it's very important for the volunteers to see that their recommendations are implemented, they're interested in going back or just having email communication to help provide follow-on assistance to ensure that their work is really sees results.

And they also asked to have more information about the companies before they went to the field, since I mentioned the venture capital firms were actually putting together the scopes of work and they were typically very brief and just a few sentences about the kind of expertise they were looking for. But the volunteers want to prepare several weeks in advance, they'd like to read up on the company's current capacity as much as possible so that again they can really make the most of one or two weeks in the country if they're on a short-term assignment.

So to conclude, we at VEGA do feel that this project validated the premise that our American technical assistance can help scale and sustain the impact of venture financing in agribusinesses in Morocco and we hope to be able to build on this partnership that we've created with AMIC with either current partners or future partners to leverage their resources and follow-up on this increased demand from Moroccan agribusinesses and venture capital firms. So if you would like more information about the project you can contact me at the email address on your screen and I'd be really happy to hear from anyone and I'm also available to answer your questions today so thank you for your attention.

Julie MacCartee: Thank you, Malina. Well, in a moment I'll ask all three of our presenters to come up to the front for further discussion. But first are there any questions specifically for Malina and about VEGA's experience. Gary?

Gary Alex: Just you might say how much the budget was for the project.

Malina Dumas: The budget was approximately \$93,000 for a one-year pilot and we ended up extending for two months in order to meet some of the demand that came towards the end of the project.

Julie MacCartee: Any other specific questions for Malina? All right, well you'll still have the chance. I know there may be more general questions about Farmer to Farmer or for all three speakers, so if you all wouldn't mind coming up to the front. We've got these four very knowledgeable individuals; this is your chance to grill them on any aspects of their projects. And please remember to state your name and organization when asking a question.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: Chris Goldthwaite with Cantera Partners and I had a question for Patrick. You mentioned mobilizing loans from local banks in support of the enterprises. I'm wondering if the level of local interest rates was an issue or a problem at all.

Patrick Norell: Absolutely. In short, yes. I believe at that time -- Georgia also has a little bit more liberalized system. They can make loans in foreign currency, which is not always the case. So I believe on Georgian lottery loans it was somewhere around 24, 25 percent annual interest; on U.S. dollar loans somewhere around 10 or 12 percent interest. It's certainly a constraint but it's better than in some places.

Question: Charles Uphaus, again, USAID. Speaking from considerable field experience an issue with Farmer to Farmer has always been how to make it strategic, how to make sure that the volunteers can have a real multiplier, a strategic effect on the agricultural system in the country. It looks like in the case, certainly of Georgia and the poultry in East Africa you've been successful in doing that but I wondered if you had any -- and Morocco, although I served three years ago I don't know the situation there as well. I know there's no longer any USAID agricultural program of any size there. But I wonder if you'd care to comment on that and how you managed to achieve what looks to have been a pretty good strategic fit with the ongoing USAID program.

Malina Dumas: Sure. So speaking to our experience in Morocco you're right that there's not really a focus on agriculture anymore. And our program advisor, William Fellows really sees this as a negative for Morocco. Agriculture is a majorly important sector in Morocco, a lot of people conduct farming activities and it's -- like I said, the Moroccan government is putting a lot of money into this. But it's actually we really like this new partnership because it's even better to have the venture capital firms really pointing out which agribusinesses are going to be able to raise up industry standards. They're creating a win-win by showing that it pays to play by the rules. And by combining development technical assistance with this venture financing instead of having a development organization deciding which businesses to assist on its own and targeting specific regions for purposes other than perhaps the impact that these agribusinesses can potentially have on the broader economic climate this is actually a great

model for follow-up on USAID's activities in this country in the past. So again, we're hoping that we can continue this collaboration with the venture capital association with more venture capital firms and create more impact by really targeting agribusinesses that have the most potential for impact on smallholder farmers on the standards of these industries as a whole. And we welcome collaboration with other organizations in this area as well. And from a program advisor also mention that it's not just in Morocco that this can really have a major effect; we're looking at other countries in North Africa and on the African continent and in other countries as well. It seems to be a good model for targeting better the technical assistance that can be provided from the United States citizen volunteers. Does that answer your question?

Julie MacCartee: Go ahead.

Gary Alex: If I could comment on that question for the general or the core Farmer to Farmer program, that it is an ongoing issue. And also every one of the 600 or 700 volunteer assignments a year are somewhat unique in the circumstances. So it varies. But the program in general has moved in the last couple years to addressing that and achieving broader impact from volunteer work through probably two strategies: one is to work with a partner organization in-country, which might be an extension service or an agribusiness association or some entity that will help disseminate the results in the recommendations for volunteer services. So that's one mechanism using -- that somewhat leaves some remaining impact or recommendations that are more broadly disseminated.

And the other is simply there's increasingly programs are scheduling volunteers to present public presentations, often at universities or in other relevant for a of their experiences and findings in the country.

Julie MacCartee: We have a question from our online audience.

Question: This question comes from Kristen **Malaidza** from the University of **Tzakuba** in Japan: "Transfer of technologies or innovations from developed countries to developing countries is usually not straightforward. How does Farmer to Farmer ensure that volunteers modify their technical assistance to suit the target beneficiaries and ensure sustainability?"

Patrick Norell:

That's an excellent point and one of the biggest challenges in implementing Farmer to Farmer. It's something that the Farmer to Farmer implementer staff, particularly local staff in the field have to constantly battle with to explain to the volunteer who has come from an environment in U.S. agriculture that benefits from modern technology and a lot more capital to explain to that volunteer that they can't simply recreate the environment that they're used to operating in the United States and the developing country.

So guiding the volunteers to be able to recommend low-cost, highly-replicable, low-tech improvements that can have an immediate impact on productivity and on incomes. Often one of the pieces of advice that we give volunteers is to think back to the way their fathers or grandfathers conducted their agricultural production and that many of those simple approaches are suitable to driving real improvements in the developing world today.

DeAnn McGrew:

We also do a lot I think to mitigate that beforehand with detailed scopes of work. I mean we were talking earlier about really trying to get a statement of the problem but also looking at the host profile and providing some details to the volunteers in advance to explain to them the level of the business or the cooperative or whatever that they're working with sort of to give them a better picture of the status of this organization and what type of technologies they're going to need to bring to bear to be able to make this successful. Fortunately with technology we're able to oftentimes put the volunteer, the identified volunteer in contact with the host organization or at least with our field staff in advance to work out a lot of these issues. They're tossing ideas around saying would this work, what about this, what about this technology? Do they have access to this? So sometimes we're able to hash out some of those details in advance of the assignment to try to mitigate that.

And then another thing that I think has been pretty successful is across the board it's like bringing -- so the volunteer goes out with his advance information, completes the assignment and then at the end of the assignment, when they're getting ready to make full recommendations we work really hard with the volunteer, the beneficiaries and the field staff to make sure that the recommendations are adopted, that everybody is in agreement, that these are ways to move forward. And if there is any kind of disagreement with the recommendation then we try to address that at

that time to try to make some kind of adjustments to those recommendations.

Julie MacCartee: Do we have any other questions, either in person or online? Yes?

Question: Fred Smith with Insight Systems Corporation. The origins of the program were really focused on the exchange value of volunteerism and the Farmer to Farmer programs, and over the years they've been challenged -- for example from some of the questions you've been getting about how you fit in strategically. But I wanted to ask about the exchange aspects of the program and how you measure and monitor those and how you're able to continue to improve the value of those exchanges.

Julie MacCartee: Anybody want to take that?

DeAnn McGrew: Well the measuring and the monitoring is very difficult, as you know. I mean obviously we strongly promote the value of the person to person exchanges and I think the Farmer to Farmer program at large we're trying collectively to promote outreach, engaging volunteers to do other types of outreach, both in the country as well as back at home to promote those types of exchanges. But measuring it, I don't think we've figured out a successful way to do that yet. Gary, thoughts on the measurement?

Gary Alex: No, it's a very difficult thing to measure. We monitor the outreach activities, especially back in the U.S. The press releases, the presentations that return volunteers give at their local Rotary Club or university department or whatever forum they're in. And these are very substantial numbers. There's a lot of local publicity generated and a lot of exchange of the experience.

Anecdotally it's almost all positive; that's what people are talking about. But to capture how many people that reaches and the extent of increase in understanding of foreign assistance and international issues, development, that's a tough one. And we don't have a mechanism to do that.

There's other equally important outreach in the local countries that we work in, that Farmer to Farmer is in. And that varies. Quite often there's a good bit of press generated on stories of volunteer assignments: there's the presentations that volunteers do that I've mentioned. So there's a good

bit of outreach there, publicizing U.S. programs and USAID development efforts.

Patrick Norell: One example I'd note on the people to people, the citizen diplomacy aspect of the program which it really is difficult to measure, but I think Belarus is an interesting case. We don't have a very good relationship with Belarus, obviously. The Belarussian government is extremely suspicious of international, and particularly Western European and American organizations. However we have been implementing the Farmer to Farmer program in Belarus for, gosh, I don't even know, eight years or so at least, maybe more. And CNFA through the Farmer to Farmer program is the only western organization registered with the government of Belarus. The reason for that has been taking a little bit of extra effort to have U.S. volunteers make presentations to university students to conduct trainings for government of Belarus extension -- or Ministry of Agriculture extension personnel. Gradually over time the powers that be in Belarus have seen that the program's not a threat; we're just helping farmers grow more and earn more money. And they've come into contact with ordinary Americans who don't have anything but the best intentions for Belarus and the Belarussian people. And I think it's been effective in that sense; it's a living example of citizen diplomacy being effective.

Julie MacCartee: *I think we have an online question.*

Question: Yes, this question comes from Muhammad **Baro**, and it's for all of the presenters: "Is child malnutrition a part of your concerns for any of your programming, in addition to some of the economic issues that you guys have addressed?"

Malina Dumas: I can start and say no for VEGA's small pilot project that that would not have been in this scope. We were pretty targeted and working with the venture capital firms' requests that were directed to VEGA. So not for this program.

Gary Alex: It has not been in the past, however with the advent of Feed the Future and the need to coordinate Farmer to Farmer with other mission-funded development programs I think it's a new activity that we'll see for Farmer to Farmer volunteers. Nutritional outcomes are not directly related to the indicators that we report to USAID on for Farmer to Farmer. But I think it

would be quite possible for us to recruit nutrition volunteers and to support other Feed the Future programs through.

Question: Quick question for DeAnn. My name's Elliott Masters with Abt Associates. Having not noticed Myanmar in the table which was shown there, first of all congratulations on a wonderful project. My quick question is whether or not Winrock has considered bringing such an approach to Myanmar and elsewhere within Southeast Asia.

DeAnn McGrew: Absolutely. Also, there was similar research done by Winrock's JDR, J.D. Rockefeller III's scholars in Southeast Asia, similar research on poultry competitiveness, avian influenza, that sort of thing. Absolutely we're very interested. We've considered it, we marketed it. One of the challenges right now that we're facing -- this was true as the program was ending even in Kenya. Poultry is not typically one of the Feed the Future focus areas and even in Kenya everybody was really excited about the program, they were really happy with the results; nobody had any money to fund it because all of the money was tied to other cereal crops or large-scale livestock or something like that. So absolutely we are interested in looking at that, for Myanmar would be a perfect example, but it's just a matter of getting agreement between government stakeholders, USAID and everybody on the same page. Thanks.

Julie MacCartee: Do we have any other burning questions? It looks like we have one more from online.

Question: This one is from John Russell of Eco Food Systems in Oregon: "Again to everybody, is there typically ongoing contact after their in-country assignments are over between Farmer to Farmer volunteers and the enterprises they help?"

DeAnn McGrew: Yes.

Gary Alex: Definitely.

Patrick Norell: Yes.

Malina Dumas: Yes.

Julie MacCartee: A resounding yes.

DeAnn McGrew: It goes back to the measurement. We were talking about we don't have good measures to show how many, what percentage are in contact, that sort of thing. But we know anecdotally that volunteers do remain in contact. And it's really amazing and impressive sometimes the things that happen after the assignment. Sometimes the biggest impact happens long after the assignment is complete because these relationships have been established.

Julie MacCartee: One more from in-person?

Question: Yes, Erin Vasey, USAID Farmer to Farmer. Just to comment on that and relate that back to the question about measuring the people to people impacts I think this is really one of the major impacts and the differences between working with volunteers as opposed to consultants. It's that long-term -- that long-term follow-up and those long-term relationships that are formed. And again, the measurement, as DeAnn said, is the big challenge there. Anecdotally, from following up with these volunteers and with the host organizations as well over time we see that so many of these, the volunteers develop long-term relationships and that consulting relationship goes on for years and years. The impacts happen a lot of times after the project has already ended.

Julie MacCartee: Thank you for your comment. I think we are winding up a bit on the questions. I wasn't sure if any of you had any final thoughts you'd like to throw out there? If you're not jumping at that then I think we will go ahead and wrap up.

Thank you all very much for coming. We have evaluations on all of the seats and there should also be an evaluation link online and we always appreciate if you let us know that you've come and give us suggestions for how we can improve next time. Of course we invite you to continue the conversation with Agrilinks; you're welcome to get in touch with us with the emails that are on the board there or reach out to the presenters with further questions, further networking. And we really, really appreciate your participation; we'll see you again in January I hope. So thank you all for coming.