



# Partnership Case Studies

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## **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)**

### Foreign Agricultural Service, Cochran Fellowship Program

The Cochran Fellowship Program provides short-term training of two to four weeks for agriculturalists from middle income, emerging democracies, and emerging market countries. Under this program, foreign mid- to senior-level agricultural specialists and administrators from public and private sectors concerned with agricultural trade, agribusiness development, technology transfer, management, policy, and marketing receive training in the United States.

The Cochran Program was established in Section 1543 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, as amended in 1996. The Cochran Program is part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service, International Cooperation and Development, Food Industries Division (USDA/FAS/ICD/FID).

The goal of the program is to provide high quality training resulting in knowledge and skills that will:

- Assist eligible countries in the development of agricultural systems necessary to meet the food needs of their domestic populations; and
- Strengthen and enhance trade linkages between eligible countries and agricultural interests in the United States.

***What kind of training is provided?***

Trainees meet with professionals in their fields, participate in field observations and industry visits, experience on-the-job training, attend university courses and seminars, or participate in a combination of the above. No training that directly enhances a country's ability to export goods in competition with the United States is approved.

### ***How many people participate in the program?***

The Cochran Program has trained more than 7,000 international participants from 74 countries. In 1999 the Cochran Program provided 313 separate training activities for a total of 797 fellows as follows:

- Africa and the Middle East - 113 fellows
- Asia - 131 fellows
- Europe: Non-European Union - 215 fellows
- Latin America and the Caribbean - 149 fellows
- New Independent States - 159 fellows

In FY 2000 the program initiated activities in three new countries; provided training for 735 international participants from 20 countries, including food safety, sanitary and phytosanitary topics, and biotechnology training to 135 participants from 25 countries; and had a direct link to increased sales of U.S. agricultural products such as wine, livestock products, fruits and nuts, and high value products. In addition to U.S. direct funding (direct appropriations and budget transfers from the U.S. Agency for International Development [USAID]), the Cochran Program leveraged over \$1 million in nongovernmental contributions in order to extend the program to additional participants. Following is a regional breakdown of FY 2000 participants:

- Africa and the Middle East - 48 fellows
- Asia - 180 fellows
- Europe: Non-European Union - 156 fellows
- Latin America and the Caribbean - 165 fellows
- New Independent States - 186 fellows

### ***How are participants selected?***

Candidates for the program submit an application to FAS officers in the respective country. A USDA committee interviews and then selects candidates based on qualifications, FAS Officer recommendations, U.S. private sector recommendations, and the relationship of the candidates' proposed field of study to the country specific training plan. Cochran Program Washington staff travel abroad to interview candidates nominated by U.S. Government officials in-country.

### ***Who are Cochran Fellowship Program partners?***

Cochran Program training partners include:

- U.S. Government entities
  - U.S. Agency for International Development
  - USDA agencies: Food Safety & Inspection Service; Animal Plant Health Inspection Service; Federal Grain Inspection Service; Foreign Agricultural Service; Emerging Markets Program; Agricultural Marketing Service; Cooperative State Research Extension & Education Service
  - Food and Drug Administration
  - Environmental Protection Agency
  - Office of the U.S. Trade Representative
- U.S. agricultural trade and market development associations
- State departments of agriculture
- U.S. agricultural universities
- U.S. for-profit private sector organizations
- U.S. nonprofit sector groups
- Multilateral development organizations, including World Bank and International Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture
- Seventy-four foreign governments

### ***How is the program managed?***

USDA staff in Washington, D.C., administers the program in collaboration with USDA Agricultural Affairs Officers in U.S. embassies abroad. These overseas staffs work closely with host country officials (public and private sectors) and U.S. agribusiness staffs to devise annual training plans for Cochran activities.

U.S.-based agricultural trade and market development associations make their own annual requests for training activities under the FAS Unified Export Strategy (UES).

### ***How is the program funded?***

Annual Congressional appropriations provide the core funding for the Cochran Program. In 1999 appropriations made up about 41 percent of total funding. The Cochran Program also receives funding under the FREEDOM Support Act (FSA) through a transfer of funds from USAID. This FSA funding, which enables the program to work with 11 countries in the New Independent States region, composed 22 percent of total funding in 1999.<sup>1</sup> The program has also received funding for specific countries under USDA's Emerging Market Program (EMP). The EMP funding has allowed the program to expand activities in a number of countries, including South Africa, Vietnam, Brazil, and China. EMP funding accounted for about 22 percent of total funding in 1999. All of the above sources allow for multiyear use of the funding. [See *FY 2000 Inventory of Programs* for additional details.]

The Cochran Program pays for program and training fees when not provided by the host organization, emergency medical insurance, domestic travel expenses, lodging, and per diem.

The Cochran Program does not fund the international airfares for its fellows, except for those from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The fellows or their sponsors provide the international airfares as their contribution to the program. In 1999 foreign contributions for airfares totaled over \$1 million (about 11 percent of total funding). Multinational organizations and the U.S. private sector occasionally provide funding to train fellows. In 1999 about 4 percent of the total Cochran budget came from these organizations. [See *FY 2000 Inventory of Programs* for additional details.]

### ***How are the program's logistics arranged?***

The Cochran Fellowship Program Officer arranges the training program. Training sites are selected on the basis of seasonal variances and growing seasons;

trainer availability; and schedules at training sites.

### ***How does the program accomplish partnership?***

The Cochran Program partners with U.S. industry in three ways. First, for fellows nominated by U.S. industry, the program provides the participant's expenses, while industry provides the staff and out-of-pocket expenses to train the individual(s). Second, for fellows who have not had previous contact with U.S. businesses, the program provides a risk-free opportunity to meet and form relationships. Third, since the vast majority of the fellows represent food safety and sanitary and phytosanitary institutions, Cochran training can eventually result in the alleviation of some trade impediments to the benefit of a number of U.S. agricultural industries.

Cochran staff actively work with U.S. private agribusiness industry officials to inform them about the availability of Cochran fellows and their interests and specific needs. Often trade alliances form between fellows and the American businesses or organizations providing training, field trips, or information to the fellows.

### ***Is this a difficult process?***

It is sometimes challenging to identify appropriate U.S. agro-industries interested in meeting with all fellows. Interest depends largely on the market potential of a fellow's country. For example, it is much easier to involve U.S. industry when arranging a training activity for fellows from Asia or Latin America because of the strong economies in those countries, than to arrange the same activity for fellows from Africa or the Central Asian Republics of the New Independent States. The Cochran Program uses USDA's broad network of contacts throughout the United States to identify trade associations, private agribusinesses, U.S. agricultural universities, and state departments of agriculture to assist with the selection of appropriate partners.

### ***What challenges does the Cochran Program face in its partnership with other U.S. and foreign governmental organizations?***

Cochran Program officers arrange complicated training programs to meet the

specific needs of each individual fellow, arrange for visas, and communicate with some countries where communication systems are often disrupted. Most fellows must receive training within a specific time period (between May and November) because of the agricultural nature of the training. Although about 70 percent of Cochran fellows speak English, interpreters must be provided for those who do not speak English. In these instances, a translator is provided for the duration of the training. For training activities requiring coordination with regulatory agencies (training in areas of sanitary and phytosanitary issues, biotechnology, World Trade Organization negotiations), it is difficult to schedule activities due to the demands on regulators' time.

### ***What benefits does the Cochran Program provide?***

The training provided by the Cochran Program has helped to resolve certain trade disputes, decrease some nontariff trade barriers, and foster collaboration between the public and private sectors of the United States and the participating countries. The benefits of partnering with the U.S. private sector include:

- cost savings to the program,
- relevance of training to increased trade linkages,
- networking opportunities for Cochran fellows, and
- networking opportunities for U.S. agribusinesses.

Mid-level fellows have risen through the ranks to hold positions of authority in both the public and private sectors. For example, at least two former Cochran fellows have become Ministers of Agriculture. They pledged to work closely with U.S. agencies to resolve nontariff trade barriers in the areas of livestock genetics and meat products.

To paraphrase a Chinese saying, "You do business with who you know," the opportunity to work with U.S. agribusiness pays dividends to U.S. agriculture and foreign organizations for years to come. After their training, Cochran fellows purchase an estimated \$25 million of U.S. agricultural products per year. Many of these purchases are first-time purchases and are expected to lead to further trade in the future.

***Give an example of the Cochran alumni spirit.***

USDA's Agricultural Trade Office (ATO) in Shanghai reports that, "...inspired by a vegetarian restaurant visit in Washington, D.C., Xiao Ting (GAP Restaurants) opened a similar operation in Shanghai. This has resulted in the need for GAP to source additional products. The company now uses imported celery, avocado, radicchio, and other vegetables from the U.S. in their newly-opened vegetarian restaurant."

The Cochran Program actively supports alumni groups. So far, alumni groups have been organized in the Ukraine, Turkmenistan, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Colombia, Malaysia, and Vietnam. Most of these groups recognize the value of the Cochran experience and each year invite returned Cochran alumni to make presentations to the group on their training in the United States.

### ***Is there a formal evaluation process for the program and its sponsors?***

Several mechanisms are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the program:

- Fellows submit a written evaluation to their Cochran Fellowship Program Officer upon completion of the training program.
- U.S. sponsors are required to submit a short written report on the outcome of the training.
- A year after the training is completed, each fellow is sent a follow-up evaluation to complete and return.
- USDA Agricultural Affairs Officers submit annual evaluations of the program.
- The program periodically contracts with an outside organization for a formal evaluation of its activities in a specific country. Formal evaluations have been completed for the following countries: Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, South Africa, Cote d'Ivoire, Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela, Trinidad & Tobago, Panama, and China.

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<sup>1</sup>The State Department now refers to the NIS region as Eurasia.

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