



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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U.S. Volunteers Team Up to Bring Greater Food Security to Tanzania



Stephanie Tatge/CRS

Farmer-to-Farmer Volunteer Bill Horan teamed up with Peace Corps Volunteer Ella Wynn to help students in her school's agriculture club learn about soil fertility.

In Tanzania, U.S. Government agencies are collaborating under Feed the Future to bring science and innovation to communities in order to improve food security. Through an interagency partnership, Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) team up with experts from the U.S. Agency for International Development-funded Farmer-to-Farmer program, which recruits U.S. professionals to build the skills and expertise of those working in the agriculture sectors of developing countries.

Combining the talents of volunteers from both Peace Corps and the Farmer-to-Farmer program is a win for everyone involved: PCVs are skilled community mobilizers, ideally placed to generate interest and enthusiasm for food security projects in a sustainable way over their years of service. And their efforts are complemented by the resources, contacts and depth of technical expertise that Farmer-to-Farmer volunteers offer during their much shorter assignments (typically a few weeks). With support from these seasoned professionals, PCVs are better equipped to bring new interventions to their rural communities and monitor their success over time. Meanwhile, smallholder farmers benefit from the latest science and technology as well as ongoing assistance in adopting it.

This partnership enables both agencies to learn from one another and tackle big challenges in food security. For example, an estimated 40-50 percent of harvested crops in Tanzania are destroyed in storage due to rot, fungus or pests such as weevils. This serious problem is known as post-harvest loss. Many farmers try to manage it with chemicals. However, when used incorrectly, chemicals can turn crops into health risks for those who eat them.

Six PCVs set out to better address the issue of post-harvest loss—including weevil infestation, which can leave only hulls and grain dust in its wake. They joined Tanzanian counterparts and a local agricultural input dealer at a post-harvest management training hosted by Farmer-to-Farmer. At the training, they watched a demonstration of a new pest-prevention technology developed by Purdue University. The Purdue Improved Crop Storage (or PICS) bag is a triple-layered, hermetic

polyethylene bag that prevents weevils from consuming the crops stored inside it, and it contains no harmful chemicals. The PCVs also learned a four-step method to sensitize villages to the bags' utility and operation. After the training, the PCVs took the bags to their communities, where smallholder farmers are profoundly impacted by post-harvest loss. Currently, the PCVs are showing instructional PICS videos in their villages to build awareness of strategies to combat losses and help alleviate this barrier to agriculture-led economic growth.

In another example of collaboration, Farmer-to-Farmer volunteer Bill Horan joined Ella Wynn, a PCV secondary school biology teacher, to teach organic soil fertility and integrated pest management to her school's agriculture club. Thanks to Horan's time and expertise, 40 high school students are using the school's farm to make compost that can be applied as organic fertilizer to their cabbage and pumpkin crops. Even better, after seeing the success at the school, parents of the students are more likely to adopt new methods such as composting and frequent scouting for pest/disease damage. Students receive greens in their school lunches at least once per week, and excess vegetables from the school plot are sold to teachers and community members, allowing the club to expand its garden and to plan new activities.

"It has been a pleasure watching my students use the knowledge gained and incorporate it into their garden management," said Wynn of her collaboration with Horan. "As Njombe has the highest rate of HIV in Tanzania, I know that increased nutrition and income from farming practices will go a long way to help those community members who are already facing one of life's biggest struggles."