



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://feedthefuture.gov/article/how-farmer-farmer-gave-one-man-window-world>

How Farmer-to-Farmer Gave One Man a Window Into the World



Bruce Williams

Ms. Claudia and Bruce in her cellar. All the food was preserved by Ms. Claudia.

Guest blog by Bruce Williams, Farmer-to-Farmer volunteer.

For over 20 years, I have been a passionate volunteer with Farmer-to-Farmer, a program that pairs volunteer American farmers and ranchers with their counterparts in developing countries to tackle the root causes of hunger and poverty through agriculture. As a volunteer, I have had the opportunity to travel the world and meet farmers in other countries, share common experiences in agriculture with them, and teach them about new and modern technologies and practices.

When I was in Ukraine, I met a farmer who proudly showed me his brand-new John Deere tractor, which he had purchased on a previous trip to the United States. While I was in Moldova, an 80-year-old woman named Claudia shared her homemade fruit compotes and canned meats with me as we bonded over our passion for agriculture and waited out a snowstorm together. These experiences reminded me of two valuable lessons: (1) Modern agriculture requires education, experience, and great business acumen and, (2) People find a way to communicate and help each other, regardless of language, age, gender or culture.

These lessons, and countless others, would have never been possible without Farmer-to-Farmer. A friend referred me to the program and, in 1995, I went on my first assignment to Nicaragua. At that time, I worked for the North Carolina State Extension Service and had no idea how much my first trip to Central America would change both my personal and professional outlooks. In the years since, every assignment has allowed me to be both a teacher and a student, which is why I've volunteered again and again.

As a teacher, I have witnessed firsthand how this volunteer program creates an environment for positive cultural and educational experiences for farmers in developing countries to thrive. Across the world, farmers are applying their skills to grow crops and make an income for their families. And while many of these families own few possessions, they will share

their food, time, and stories with you. If I can share some knowledge or technology that will make them more successful, the world becomes a better place.

But Farmer-to-Farmer volunteers aren't just sharing information — we're also learning and bringing knowledge back home to our own farms and communities. For me, every assignment is an opportunity to learn new technologies — and ways to communicate them across languages and cultures -- whether I am in the field on a local farm, interacting with interpreters, or hosting a visiting farmer in my native North Carolina. I have been greatly enriched by the people I have worked with in numerous countries. Many of these colleagues — now friends — have visited me here in the United States and we still communicate regularly and discuss growing old together. I feel that I am a better person, and a better informed citizen, because of these relationships.

For those farmers, ranchers, teachers, and entrepreneurs that are willing to volunteer their time, I encourage you to try volunteering overseas with this program just once. Your efforts will be rewarded in new experiences, new knowledge, and especially new friendships. It will change the way you view agriculture. It will change the way you view the world.

Farmer-to-Farmer is a volunteer program funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development that pairs American farmers and ranchers with their counterparts in developing countries. These volunteers are just one example of the many Americans that are working to help boost global food security. In doing so, they're contributing to the mission of the Feed the Future initiative to tackle the root causes of global hunger and poverty—and contributing to progress.