

This is the second issue of the IPM Innovation Lab newsletter.

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IPM INNOVATION LAB

Feed the Future Innovation Lab for
Integrated Pest Management

Muni's Musings



Hello readers,

Welcome to the second edition of our Integrated Pest Management Innovation Lab newsletter!

In this issue, we talk to Dr. George Norton, the Principal Investigator on our Vegetable IPM for Asia project, and Aishwara Bhattacharjee, a graduate student working on our Modeling for Biodiversity and Climate Change project. We will also keep you up-to-date on our recent trips and workshops, and look at some of what's trending in insects and agriculture here and abroad.

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The USAID-funded Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Integrated Pest Management at Virginia Tech raises the standard of living of people in developing countries by working with them to develop the best solutions to the agricultural challenges they face. In addition to reducing damage caused by pests and diseases, the program also deals with issues such as gender, health, nutrition, equitable use of resources, and agricultural education.

PI Profile



George Norton, center, with Megan O'Rourke of Virginia Tech meet with a collaborator from iDE in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

George Norton has been with the IPM Innovation Lab, formerly the IPM Collaborative Research Support Program, since the very beginning in 1993. A professor of Agricultural and Applied Economics at Virginia Tech, he has worked on IPM IL projects in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. He is currently the principal investigator (PI) for IPM IL's Vegetable Crops and Mango IPM in Asia project, as well as a co-PI for the Vegetable Crops for East Africa project. Both projects focus on finding and disseminating IPM solutions to local fruit and vegetable pests and diseases to limit or eliminate the use of harmful pesticides while increasing farmer incomes and food security.

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Student Q&A





Bhattacharjee with local children while doing fieldwork at the Tuanan Orangutan Research Project in Indonesia.

Aishwara Bhattacharjee is a Ph.D. student in biology who was born in India and raised in Thailand and Bangladesh. She studies at the City University of New York, where she works in [Dr. José Anadón's lab](#) at Queens College. The lab specializes in evaluating the effect of global change on the ecosystem to understand how community distributions and different biomes will be impacted. Bhattacharjee is assisting Anadón in his work for IPM IL's [Modeling for Biodiversity and Climate Change](#) project in Nepal.

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Project Updates



We have received official USAID approval for all eight of our projects, and the planning has begun. In December, the IPM IL team met with partners in Ethiopia for a planning meeting on the *Parthenium* project and to lead a *Parthenium* workshop.

In January and February, IPM IL held planning meetings in Cambodia, Bangladesh, and Nepal for the Vegetable IPM in Asia, Rice IPM in Cambodia and the Modeling for Biodiversity and Climate Change projects. The participants took field trips to see farms and meet stakeholders; they also met with local scientists and administrators. Having these three projects in overlapping countries allows the scientists and managers of these programs to collaborate and work together to find solutions to the agricultural pest problems in the area.

Recent Highlights and Happenings



Associate Director Amer Fayad and Naidu Rayapati of Washington State University at the "Training on Diagnosis of Plant Virus Diseases in Vegetable

Parthenium workshop in Ethiopia

The team went to Ethiopia in December to begin planning on the current phase of the *Parthenium* project and to lead a workshop, where scientists discussed the advantages and challenges of biocontrol, the importance of gender when it comes to project planning, and the impact of *Parthenium* in Kenya and Tanzania.

Integrated Pest Management Innovation Lab leverages funding for project work

On a recent trip to Ethiopia for our *Parthenium* project, the President of Haramaya Agricultural Univeristy, Chemedo Fininsa, surprised us with a gift of 100,000 Birr, roughly \$5,000, for our work on *Parthenium* in East Africa. In addition, one of IPM IL's international partners, iDE, received a \$2 million award from the USAID mission in India to link biopesticide producers in India with distributors in Nepal and Bhutan.

Israeli scientists interested in our work

Two Israeli weed scientists, Baruch Rubin and Tuvia (Toby) Yaacoby, attended IPM IL's *Parthenium* workshop. *Parthenium* invaded Israel through the contamination of imported grains used in a fishpond during the late 1970s. Although the fishpond is in the upper Galilee region, *Parthenium* has now spread to many other areas of the country.

Nepal Climate Change project holds inaugural workshop

An inaugural workshop was held on January 29, 2016 in Kathmandu, Nepal, with over two dozen government agencies, academic institutions, and nonprofits participating. It included an overview of the project, and gave participants the opportunities to discuss research directions. These included: the management of *Parthenium hysterophorus* through biological control; finger millet and buckwheat as hardy drought-resistant crops; and combating the invasive species *Ageratina adenophora* through the restoration of native species. Speakers highlighted the environmental issues to be addressed, particularly the increasing problems

due to invasive species and pests, and the increasing vulnerability of rural communities in the face of a changing climate.

Virus workshop in Nepal

Associate Director Amer Fayad and Naidu Rayapati, a virologist from Washington State University, spent two weeks in February and March in Nepal leading a plant virus disease workshop, “Training on Diagnosis of Plant Virus Diseases in Vegetable Crops.” Sixty people attended, including dignitaries such as the former secretary of agriculture, and the USAID representative Navin Hada.

Twitter gaining impressions and followers

Our Twitter account, [@IPM_IL](#), has been gaining followers and reaching influential people. We have over 1,000 followers, with some noteworthy recent ones being: Gender CIAT, FEWS NET (the Famine Early Warning Systems Network), Marilyn Terrell, a researcher for National Geographic Magazine, and Lenni Monitiel, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development. Over the course of the past three months, our Twitter has gotten over 80,000 impressions.

What People Are Talking About



Here are some of the recent trending headlines that IPMers and Feed the Future fans are talking

about.

The Buzz on Bees

The big news in the insect world is that the EPA has found that **neonicotinoid pesticides cause harm to exposed bee populations**. Beyond just bees, **many species of pollinators are in trouble**, including birds, moths, and wasps.

Bananas in Trouble

The bananas you're pretty much guaranteed to find in any U.S. grocery store, a genetic variety called Cavendish, is **being threatened by a deadly fungus** known as Tropical Race 4, or Panama disease. It was first found on these bananas in southeastern Africa, and has spread to Australia. While it has not yet reached Latin America, where most of U.S. bananas are grown, scientists believe it is only a matter of time and are working hard to find a solution.

Monarch Butterflies

In some good news, there has been a **resurgence in the number of monarch butterflies** hibernating in the Mexican mountains this winter. The chairman of the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas in Mexico estimates that the population could have risen to 140 million, a sharp increase from the estimated 35 million just two years ago.

Flint, Michigan

Virginia Tech has been in the news thanks to the work of Professor Marc Edwards, who helped bring the **Flint water crisis to light**. For spring break, **he and a team of students went to Michigan** to do water testing. The lead contamination of Flint's water came to light when a resident of the town reached out to Edwards for help after officials had assured residents that their orange water was safe to drink. Edwards and his team tested the water and found that it had high levels of lead and was unsafe for human consumption.

A Look Ahead



Mark your calendars, there's a lot to look forward to!

Emerging Plant Disease and Global Food Security Symposium

March 23-24, 2016, at North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

Planning Meeting for Vegetable IPM for East Africa

April 4-6, in Ethiopia

Planning Meeting for Grains IPM for East Africa

April 7-8, in Ethiopia

Planning Meeting for Rice IPM in Cambodia

April 28-29, in Cambodia

International Congress of Entomology

September 25-30, 2016, in Orlando, Florida, USA

12th Arab Congress of Plant Protection

November 5-9, 2017 in Cairo, Egypt



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