Science Societies

Bowman Retires from International Agricultural Development Career

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Left: Dr. John Bowman, with bodyguards, evaluating potato trials in Mindanao, Philippines. Right: Bowman discussing disease control with USAID-supported vegetable farmers in Arusha, Tanzania.

John E. Bowman, Ph.D., retired recently from a career in international agricultural development, which took him on a journey of 40+ years working in 40+ countries. He has been an ASA member for more than 30 years. Most of his work was with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) where he managed programs

and projects related to food security, agricultural research, and human nutrition.

Dr. Bowman led horticulture and integrated pest management programming in the Feed the Future (FTF) initiative, a global food security directive launched by the Obama administration to reduce hunger and poverty in parts of Asia, Africa, and Central America. He also brought increased attention and funding to FTF efforts in horticulture, food safety, food processing as well as post-harvest loss reduction in developing countries. During 2012–2020, he directly supervised the USAID-funded Horticulture Innovation Lab (managed by the University of California–Davis), the IPM Innovation Lab (managed by Virginia Tech), and the core USAID grant to the World Vegetable Center (WorldVeg) in Taiwan.

Bowman completed his final two years of federal service as the Assistant Director of Preclearance for USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), managing U.S. produce inspection programs in more than 20 countries. He lived as an expat for significant periods of time in Brazil, China, Costa Rica, Mexico, Philippines, and Turkey, transferring innovative agricultural technologies to thousands of resource-poor farmers. In 2018, Bowman received the “Excellence in International Service Award” from the American Phytopathological Society followed by the “Outstanding International Horticulturalist Award” from the American Society for Horticultural Science in 2019.

Bowman received his Ph.D. in Plant Pathology in 1984 from the University of Illinois. He has now retired in the Washington, DC area and is engaged in opportunities to mentor youth who are interested in potential careers in international agricultural development.

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