

The Association Liaison Office for University Cooperation in Development
Promoting Higher Education Partnerships for Global Development



U.S.-Mexico
Training, Internships, Exchanges and Scholarships

Brief Quarterly Report



Partnership Title: Decision Support of Ruminant Livestock Systems in the Gulf Region of Mexico

U.S. Institution (s): Cornell University

U.S. Partnership Director: Robert W. Blake

Host Country Institution (s): Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán (lead), Universidad Veracruzana and Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Forestales, Agrícolas y Pecuarias (INIFAP), Campo Experimental "La Posta", Veracruz

Host Partnership Directors: Juan Ku Vera and Guillermo Ríos

Report Period: October 1, 2004 to December 31, 2004

Brief description of activities and accomplishments

Consensus-building activities in this quarter continued with a focus on research and outreach priorities for the ruminant livestock industry in the Gulf region. Main activities and accomplishments included (chronologically):

- *October 11-15.* Short course #2, *Uso de un Modelo Computacional para el Manejo Nutricional de Bovinos y Ovinos* (Use of a Computational Model to Manage Nutrition of Cattle and Sheep). Principal instructors: Luis O. Tedeschi with Francisco I. Juarez and Bertha L. Rueda. This event served 21 male and 6 female participants (UADY graduate students, UADY and Veracruz faculty, undergraduates, and representatives of governmental and regional cattle producers organizations) and was videographed. Participants received a booklet and CD-ROM of supporting literature (9 articles, 8 in Spanish).
- *October-December.* Planned and conducted a rapid appraisal of 60 beef production systems in eastern and southern Yucatán (Tizimín and Peto). This effort, which complements our previous inquiry of sheep producers, was coordinated by Guillermo Ríos and R. Blake and conducted by Claudia López and Andrés Calderón.

- *October-December.* Three UADY Steering Committee meetings were convened by co-director Guillermo Ríos to discuss content for core courses of the joint teaching and research platform. Through this process, including the short course series, new UADY graduate students have been identified as probable platform participants.
- *November 6.* Guillermo Ríos, Juan Magaña and R. Blake participated in the **Día del Ganadero 2004** (field day) at the INIFAP-La Posta Experiment Station in Veracruz. Primary objectives were to evaluate how a similar event could serve producers and other livestock industry players in Yucatán. A follow-up report and recommendations were submitted by Drs. Magaña and Ríos to Dr. Fernando Herrera, Director of UADY's School of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (FMVZ).
- *November 11.* Invited workshop speakers (A. Ayala, R. W. Blake, J. Ku). Como estructurar una propuesta para obtener financiamiento. Taller—Preparación de Propuestas Científicas para Solicitar Financiamiento. (How to Structure a Grant Proposal. Workshop on the Preparation of Science Proposals for Funding.) Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán, Dirección General de Desarrollo Académico, Coordinación General de Investigación y Relaciones Interinstitucionales.
- *November 15-19.* Short course #3, *Análisis Bio-económico de Alternativas Tecnológicas y la Dinámica de Sistemas Agropecuarios* (Bioeconomic Analysis of Technological Alternatives and the Dynamics of Agricultural Systems). Principal instructors: C. F. Nicholson with R. Blake, Bertha Rueda and Eduardo Canudas. This event served 19 male and 8 female participants (graduate students from UADY and Germany, faculty from UADY and Veracruz, undergraduates, and representatives of governmental and regional cattle producers organizations) and was videographed. Participants received a booklet and CD-ROM of supporting literature (17 articles, 13 in Spanish).
- *November 19.* Press conference with F. Herrera, R. Blake, G. Ríos and C. Nicholson about our TIES project and activities. The following newspaper article plus a television news report resulted from this conference:
 - Page 12, Sección Imagen, *Diario de Yucatan*. 20 November 2004. **Convenio de colaboración para investigación conjunta. Acuerdo entre instituciones de Mexico y EE.UU.** (See article in attached file: *Diario de Yucatán 20 noviembre de 2004.pdf*)
 - Other press releases in the UADY archive:

<http://www.uady.mx/sitios/prensa/boletines/nov-04/19-nov-04.html>
<http://www.uady.mx/sitios/prensa/boletines/oct-04/19-oct-04.html>
<http://www.uady.mx/sitios/prensa/boletines/sep-04/20-sep-04.html>
<http://www.uady.mx/sitios/prensa/boletines/sep-04/17-sep-04.html>
<http://www.uady.mx/sitios/prensa/boletines/sep-04/02-sep-04.html>

- *November 20.* One-hour interview (R. Blake with G. Ríos and C. F. Nicholson) about our TIES project on the weekly radio program, *Revista Universitaria*. Broadcast 8:00-10:00am, Mérida.
- *November 24-26.* Invited symposium speaker (R. Blake). **Perspectivas de la Investigación Pecuaria en el Mundo Tropical: El caso de la respuesta en leche en ambientes difíciles.** Pages 108-127 in *Simposium Situación Actual y Perspectivas de la Investigación Pecuaria en el Mundo*. XL Reunión Nacional de Investigación Pecuaria Yucatán 2004, Mérida.
- *December 9.* Invited speaker (R. Blake). Ecological impacts of land use for livestock production in the tropics. Workshop entitled, “Function of Tropical Ecosystems”, (Funcionamiento de Ecosistemas Tropicales. University of Göttingen-Autonomous University of Yucatán (UADY; Germany-Mexico), Deutscher Akademischer Dienst (DAAD) project with UADY Department of Management and Conservation of Tropical Natural Resources. In Spanish.
- *December.* **Family Well-being and the Countryside** (Bienestar Familiar en el Campo), a 15-min video-documentary, was one of the student projects in the UADY School of Anthropology course, *Media Analysis and Production*. Subjects were four families (and their communities) who participated in our rapid appraisal of farming systems with sheep. Four undergraduate women wrote the script and produced the video based on their eye-opening, first-ever, rural experiences in September and October 2004. This documentary resulted from novel collaboration between UADY’s School of Anthropology and the School of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science, which was catalyzed by our TIES project.
- *December.* Commenced planning and recruitment of needed funding for a second short course on the dynamics of agricultural systems. This event would be held in Veracruz the first half of April.
- *December.* Initiated arrangements for a 20-day short term training visit at Cornell by UADY Professor Armín Ayala. Target period: April-May 2005.

Activities outline for the first quarter of 2005

- *February 16-18.* Conduct a workshop (i. e., short course #4) entitled, *Evaluación del Potencial para Progreso Genético en Poblaciones de Ganado Rumiante en la Región del Golfo*. 1. *Estructuras de las bases de datos y estrategias analíticas*. 2. *La Aplicación de Esquemas Nucleares para el Mejoramiento Genético* (Evaluation of the Potencial for Genetic Progress in Ruminant Livestock Populations en the Gulf Region. 1. Database structures and analytical strategies. 2. Application of Nuclear Schemes for Genetic Improvement).

This event is being organized by the TIES lead institutions and the Colegio de Posgraduados, Campus Cárdenas, Tabasco.

- Conduct a second (additional) short course, #5, focusing on the dynamics of agricultural systems with livestock. This event would be jointly financed by all TIES partners and an external donor. Expected dates: April 4-15.
- Establish a partnership web site.
- Teach a Yucatán version of Cornell's *Livestock in Tropical Farming Systems* for UADY students (R. Blake with G. Ríos and Juan Magaña). Dates: February-April 2005.
- Code the survey data of constraints on Yucatecan sheep and cattle systems.
- Plan and carry out in June a Yucatecan **Día del Ganadero** en Tizimín.
- Hopefully, three Mexican applicants will be admitted by Cornell University for Master degree programs under our TIES project.

Serendipity catalyzes opportunity to better link with farmers

Claudia and Andrés were taken aback when they arrived in Tizimín. Their inquiries about the management of cattle and pastures were met by producers with other things on their mind. First, they needed to get things *off their chest*.

Producers wanted to set their own priorities. They made clear their needs—more technical support and closer university ties. Complaining that needed information is not reaching them, they acknowledged feeling distanced and, as a result, less confident in the UADY.

Farmers said they needed a portfolio of effective technologies, information on how to use them, and tailored short courses in their own community. Priority technical issues included the management of costs of production, alleviation of productivity constraints, marketing, and credit.

Such good fortune from frank talk led to a UADY document summarizing these initial sentiments (to be complemented by the survey results themselves). This document, *Problemática y Retroalimentación Planteadas por Productores Bovinos del Oriente del Estado de Yucatán*, has been circulated to various producer associations for confirmation or additional feedback to guide future research and outreach. Thus, our TIES program located an excellent foundation of need from which to build better relationships between UADY and its producer clientele, including joint planning the first **Día del Ganadero Yucateco!**