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\$62.5 million fund for food security researchers announced at U of Guelph

GUELPH — Federal officials chose the University of Guelph as the backdrop for a funding announcement because of the school's connection with agriculture.

"There's so much focus on agriculture here," said Newmarket MP Lois Brown, parliamentary secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation. "We've had great projects and great partnerships with them, so it's a natural place for us to (hold the announcement)."

On Friday morning, Brown announced the launch of the second phase of the Canadian International Food Security Research Fund. Over the next five years, the federal government is making \$62.5-million in funding available for researchers who are working on practical solutions to hunger and malnutrition throughout the world.

The fund is a joint initiative between the Canadian International Development Agency and the International Development Research Centre.

Phase 1 of the fund was launched in 2009, with the government making \$62 million available to researchers across the country. In total, researchers from 11 Canadian universities and 26 organizations were supported through this fund.

Two projects by researchers at U of G were given grants during Phase 1 of the fund. Both projects had tables set up at the announcement, explaining how the money was used.

One U of G projects introduced tool kits for marginalized farmers in Nepal, Sri Lanka and India to help boost millet production. The tool kits include seed packages, low-cost technologies, micronutrients including zinc and magnesium, instructional picture books and a three-foot-tall grain storage bag.

Another research project focuses on using nanoparticles from agricultural waste products to help preserve soft fruit in India, Sri Lanka and Canada. This project received \$2.3 million from the fund during its first phase.

In a phone interview after the announcement, Guelph MP Frank Valeriote said he applauds the success of the U of G projects that have benefited from the previous funding.

Valeriote said he welcomes the support the federal government is making available to researchers through this fund, but said the positive news of Friday's announcement was only a small portion of a much larger picture.

"Canada has become outliers of the world's international aid communities," he said, pointing to the government's decision to withdraw from the United Nations Convention on Desertification.

"We cannot be fooled by the whitewashing that this government does when it comes to international aid."

He said through the Canadian International Development Agency the government is trying to connect international aid efforts with foreign commercial interests.

"CIDA was created to lift other parts of the world out of poverty by building capacity, whether they have the ability to trade with us or not."

The announcement of the fund was the signal to researchers to begin handing in funding applications. Brown said each application will be assessed in a case-by-case manner. The research projects considered for funding will range from those already well established to those just starting out.

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