ASA Reinvest Project Supports Students’ Travel to Australia for Crops Study and Competition

by Kevin Donnelly

Students from Kansas State University and the University of Wisconsin–Platteville recently returned from Australia where they competed in the Australian Universities Crops Competition (AUCC) in Temora, New South Wales courtesy of the ASA Reinvest Program. The students receiving the ASA funds were the top six winners in the national Collegiate Crops Contests held in Kansas City and Chicago in November 2015. This was the second trip supported by the ASA Reinvest grant for this project. Additional students from Virginia Tech and Iowa State University also participated in the AUCC and associated study tours of Australian agricultural systems prior to and after the competition.

The three Wisconsin–Platteville students joined with six students from Virginia Tech led by Dr. Ozzie Abaye (Virginia Tech). They travelled from Melbourne north through Victoria and southern New South Wales to Temora for four days of study and tours prior to the contest. Stops included several farms with mixed cropping and livestock production systems, an irrigated rice farm, a dairy, a cattle feedlot, the Coleambally Irrigation Cooperative, the Agricultural Institute (focused on sustainable production of rice and horticultural crops), a vineyard and winery, and a paddle steamer cruise on the Murray River. After the competition, their trip concluded with a visit to Healesville Sanctuary to view Australian native animals and Melbourne for sightseeing.

Five Kansas State students joined with 10 students from Iowa State led by Dr. Kevin Donnelly (Kansas State) and Dr. Erik Christian (Iowa State). After sightseeing in Sydney, they traveled to Cairns where they toured tropical agricultural systems in the Atherton Tablelands region in Queensland and spent a day at sea exploring in the Great Barrier Reef. For sightseeing.

Below: Students and faculty at the 2016 Australian Universities Crops Competition (AUCC). Students from Kansas State, Iowa State, Virginia Tech, and the University of Wisconsin–Platteville competed with students from five Australian universities. Right: The top six U.S. collegiate crops contestants from last year who competed in the 2016 AUCC. Left to right: Joel Dieckhoff, Emily Hefty, and Katelynn Mauk from the University of Wisconsin–Platteville; and Nicole Sudbeck, Samantha L’Ecuyer, and Michaela Simmelink from Kansas State University.