What Is the PRT-Portal Program?

The PRT-Portal Program is designed to assist the Agricultural Advisors Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Iraq and Afghanistan. It augments these advisors' information by providing them with access to U.S. land-grant university resources through a consortium formed in 2007, led by the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Management at the University of Hawaii (UH) in partnership with AgriLife Extension at the Norman Borlaug Institute for International Agriculture and Texas A&M University (TAMU). The UH/TAMU team members use their past and current experiences and knowledge base for providing agricultural subject matter expertise to PRT members in conflict areas.

How Does the Program Work?

PRT units comprise military officers, diplomats, and other specialists who work with local leaders to support reconstruction efforts, foster economic development, and accelerate the transition to self-reliance. Agricultural advisors are among the PRT members in the field who are often confronted with questions, issues, and problems outside of their expertise areas. The PRT Portal website contains thousands of agriculture documents available to the general public. The site includes:

- extension publications, presentations, videos, and photos
- unique search capabilities that allow users to sort and search by geographic region, language (English, Arabic, etc.), major topic (horticulture, animal health, postharvest physiology), and more than 65 specific topics.
- a Previously Asked Questions area that allows viewers to find questions and consortium responses, complete with accompanying documents
- an agricultural library that links to extension resources on a wide range of agricultural topics.

PRT members who have questions not addressed by the resources on the website can submit their questions via ask@agriportal.net. The UH/TAMU team will address these questions with rapid technical responses and practical advice within 24–48 hours.

Videoconferencing

Videoconferences typically focus on pre-identified topics, such as beekeeping or artificial insemination techniques. These sessions usually include local community members who are interested in expanding their knowledge and abilities.

Looking Ahead

Some ideas for enhancing program benefits are:

- Increase the list of clientele to include other in-theater players, such as Agribusiness Development Teams, Military Civil Affairs Teams, etc.
- Facilitate transfer of institutional knowledge, perhaps by database building, so that lessons learned and relationships forged are not lost during turnovers.
- Conduct in-country assessments of portal use and ways to increase its effectiveness in Iraq and Afghanistan.

A PRT agricultural advisor inspects an infestation of brown-tail moth tent caterpillars at an almond orchard in Panjshir Province, Shutol District, Afghanistan.

A PRT advisor runs a training session on artificial insemination techniques for farmers in Muthanna Province, Iraq.

Beekeeping experts with industry and AgriLife Extension take part in a videoconference with their Iraqi counterparts.
PRT-Portal Program for Iraq and Afghanistan

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