

# Elevating Ag Education In Ecuador



## Introduction and Need

- Research suggests teachers, especially those in mid-career phase, tend to settle in comfortable and predictable patterns of teaching and sometimes burn out if not invigorated with motivating experiences (White, Bloomfield, & Cornu, 2010)
- The key purpose of this program was to give teachers a cultural experience connected to global agriculture concepts and issues

## How it works

- Teachers from 3 states were invited to participate in the 10-day *Elevate Ag Education* program in Ecuador
- Program directors worked with Experience International to develop program and itinerary
- Itinerary was purposefully planned in a way that met the needs of the teachers, exposed them to new cultural experiences and agricultural opportunities, and provided them an opportunity to travel across Ecuador
- Example tours included a dairy processing plant, organic farms high in the Andes, flower farm and processing facility, sugar cane farm and processor, and a cacao farm and processing plant in the Amazon Basin
- At each tour, participants learned about technical agriculture and natural resources management but also analyzed topics of sustainability, social justice, foreign aid, economics, food safety, and food security

## Results

- In total, 20 participants engaged in the experience
- Every teacher involved in the study abroad experience found the trip to be beneficial and felt they gained an awareness for other cultures
- From an exit survey, on a 5 point scale, teachers averaged between 4.21 and 4.36 regarding their agreement of gains in several areas
- Findings suggest the *Elevate Ag Education* can rejuvenate in-service teachers careers by providing them with challenging, immersive, and discipline specific professional development abroad that few have ever had the chance to do in their lifetime

## Conclusions and Future Plans

- Teachers involved in the trip have since continued communication with the schools in Ecuador to develop and exchange of information
- Further plans for the program include expanding the program to happen every other year, seeking out study abroad opportunities in other countries, and recruiting more in-service and pre-service teachers

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