

## Sowing Seeds of Prosperity and Peace

HERE IN THE UNITED STATES we celebrated Presidents Day in mid-February. Among the brightest lights to ever shine in that office was our third president, Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson was a man of prodigious talents and numerous interests. In fact, another president, John F. Kennedy, once remarked at a gathering of 49 Nobel Prize recipients at the White House that never before had such talent been assembled there, except, perhaps, when Jefferson dined there alone.

Among Jefferson's greatest interests was the nascent science of agriculture. In a letter to George Washington in 1787, he stated, "Agriculture is our wisest pursuit, because it will in the end contribute most to real wealth, good morals, and happiness." He believed strongly that the independence of mind and self-reliance that farming bred could be a great bulwark of democracy in his fledgling country.

But he was fascinated not only by the great possibilities agriculture held for the nation's body politic. He was also a great student of new farming technology—some of which he developed himself. He also corresponded regularly with other like-minded farmers on the best methods of crop rotation, new seeds and plants to experiment with, and urged that agriculture be considered the first among the sciences at U.S. universities. "It is a science of the very first order. It counts among its handmaids the most respectable sciences, such as Chemistry, Natural Philosophy, Mechanics, Mathematics generally, Natural History, Botany. In every College and University, a professorship of agriculture, and the class of its students, might be honored as the first," he said.

Ever ahead of his time, Jefferson was even keen on experimenting with seeds

and plants from distant places and even made notes on the agricultural practices he found when he traveled. It is very likely that he would be pleased to find that many universities in today's world are following his example—studying comparatively the methods of various locations across the globe, sharing information and faculty expertise, sending students and faculty to far flung locations both to teach and to learn.

Our cover story, "Planting Seeds of Change," is the latest installment in our series on the internationalization of science disciplines. The focus on the global aspects of agriculture at universities around the world is helping a new generation of agricultural experts to understand cultural and environmental challenges and assist each other in solving some of the most pressing needs of our modern world. **IE**

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