



Dr. Rangaswamy (Muni) Muniappan: Winner in the Researcher Category for the 2014 BIFAD Award for Scientific Excellence in a Feed the Future Innovation Lab

Dr. Rangaswamy (Muni) Muniappan was recognized for his significant contributions to economic entomology, biological control, and integrated pest management research for well over four decades. His work had an important impact upon farmers, with estimates that his work on papaya mealybug alone has brought about economic benefits of between \$500 million – \$1.3 billion. When Indian farmers discovered a new pest afflicting the papaya in 2008, they applied heavy amounts of pesticides. In spite of this, losses were severe, and the pest spread to other crops. In 2008, Dr. Muniappan identified the pest as the papaya mealybug, and he went to work advising on how best to use biological control to combat the scourge. Within five months, the threat from the papaya mealybug had all but disappeared. This story has repeated itself in other locales where the papaya mealybug has surfaced and Dr. Muniappan has become involved: Sri Lanka, Ghana, and the Micronesian Islands. Dr. Muniappan's achievements also include control of such pests as the pink hibiscus mealybug, the fruit-piercing moth, the red coconut scale, the banana weevil, and the Asian cycad scale. He has discovered the presence of the banana leaf roller in Nepal and the tomato leafminer (*Tuta absoluta*) in Senegal. Discovery of the latter has allowed experts to be warned so that preventive biological control measures may be taken for this pest that likely threatens *all sub-Saharan tomato farmers*. Dr. Muni Muniappan is currently director of the IPM Innovation Lab at Virginia Tech, a position he has held since 2006. As leader of this multi-million dollar organization, Dr. Muniappan oversees 11 sub-programs that partner with 16 American universities and 51 partnering organizations overseas. Dr. Muniappan received a Bachelor of Science and a master's degree from the University of Madras in India, and a Ph.D. in entomology from Oklahoma State University.



The Board for International Food and Agricultural Development (BIFAD) is a Presidentially-appointed advisory council to USAID concerning issues related to food and agriculture. Questions concerning BIFAD can be directed to the BIFAD Executive Director, Susan Owens (sowens@usaid.gov 202-712-0218).

