

Plant Science, the SDGs and the Path to Sustainable Development

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For thousands of years, agriculture has served as the pathway to economic development. In fact, advancements in agriculture have nearly always translated into advancements for humankind. As farmers are able to better feed their communities and generate revenue, other advancements have been funded, benefitting all.

Today, agriculture is again at the forefront of a movement that will change lives and drive economic opportunity worldwide. I am referring, of course, to the UN's Post-2015 Development Agenda, specifically the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#).

At the highest level, the SDGs are about reducing poverty and increasing opportunity. Farming has a measurable impact across the spectrum: increasing yields; providing access to education; and using our natural resources wisely.

So how do you bring change to rural communities around the globe? How do you improve yields, feed more people with fewer resources, and help generate income that leads to greater opportunity?

The plant science industry is already contributing to these goals around the world, and has a central role to play as the international community commits to the SDGs.

Just as the use of mechanized tools and adoption of crop rotation methods improved outcomes for farmers in past decades, newer innovations from the world of plant science are changing the game for today's farmers. In a world where we must produce more food for a growing population while preserving natural resources in the face of climate change, technology can have a measurable impact.

For example, in Honduras, [farmer incomes have doubled](#), and thousands of families have moved over the poverty line as a result of [training in good agricultural practices and the responsible use of pesticides](#).

Likewise, biotech crops are leading the way in the fight against pests, drought and other hardships that can change a farmer's fortunes seemingly overnight. Since 1996, biotech crops have [increased production at a value of more than \\$130 billion](#). In March of 2015, a report by [ISAAA](#) found that since the first planting in 1996, [biotech crops have alleviated poverty for more than 16 million small farmers and their families](#). Maybe that is why, according to ISAAA estimates, virtually 100 percent of farmers who grow biotech crops grow them again the next year.

The sense of security that farmers feel when they have advanced tools to protect and improve their harvests benefits the whole family – and ultimately the entire community. With more efficient practices, farmers can send their children to school, rather than keep them at home to work on the family farm. And with greater access to education comes exposure to new opportunities.

With a focus on improving health and nutrition, alleviating poverty, and advancing education and sustainability, the SDGs are part of a revolution that will bring widespread change and opportunity throughout the developing world. The plant science industry, which delivers advanced tools that allow farmers to increase production while protecting natural resources, is key to the international community's efforts and a driving force behind the results we are already seeing.