

KATHERINE KAHN

2004–06 AAAS Fellow at the U.S. Department of Agriculture

Kathy Kahn brought to her fellowship an interdisciplinary and intercultural background. Born and raised in London, England (she holds dual citizenship with the U.S.), she received her bachelor's degree in Israel, earned a PhD in molecular biology from the University of Missouri, Kansas City, and completed a postdoctoral position back in the United Kingdom.

Throughout her training, she was interested in the policy implications of her research on the disease resistance of plants. "I always had a strong interest in how we could use plant science in developing nations.

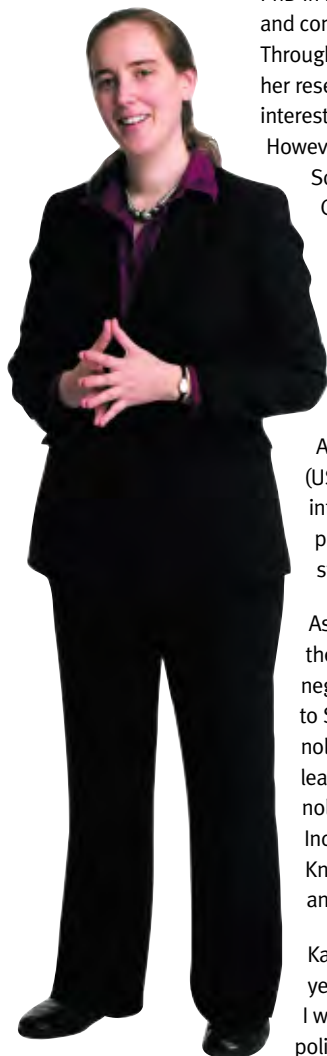
However, I wasn't seeing the research reaching the farmers," she recalls.

So Kathy spent nearly two years at the Danforth Plant Science Center in St. Louis, MO, working on the application of plant science. She also completed additional training in biosafety in Africa.

Kathy learned about the AAAS Fellowships from her PhD mentor and by attending a AAAS Annual Meeting during graduate school. When she applied to become a Fellow, she was thinking that the U.S. Agency for International Development would be a perfect fit. At the time, she had not heard of the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), where she ultimately accepted an assignment. During the interview and placement process, she was impressed with the FAS's pragmatic approach and how the agency interacts with international stakeholders concerned with agricultural interests.

As a member of the Biotechnology Group, Kathy has jetted around the globe for numerous meetings and conferences – to Mali, for negotiations on cotton, during which she met the country's president; to Saudi Arabia, where she was part of a U.S. delegation on biotechnology regulations; and to South Africa, for meetings with farm leaders and government officials to encourage the transfer of biotechnology to benefit poor farmers. Another highlight was traveling to India in February 2006 for discussions under the Agriculture Knowledge Initiative on how to harness the benefits of biotechnology and scientific research for farmers.

Kathy currently is serving as a renewal Fellow for the 2005–2006 year. "I am having so much fun," she says. "I'm exactly where I want to be." As of now, Kathy plans to pursue a career in public policy, staying with the government or perhaps working for a non-governmental organization.



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