

Agricultural Economics, Sociology, and Education

College of Agricultural Sciences

# M.E. JOHN SEMINAR SERIES



**Rachel Bezner Kerr**

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Development Sociology  
Cornell University

## **“Digging into Efficiency Narratives in Africa’s New Green Revolution, and Unearthing Agroecological Alternatives in Malawi”**

Calls for a new Green Revolution in Africa have been accompanied by a core productivist argument about the inefficient nature of African smallholder agriculture, the need to ‘feed 9 billion’ and questions about how to improve efficiency of African agriculture to do so. In this presentation, some of the core assumptions and accompanying narratives about efficiency in conventional agriculture linked to the ‘new Green Revolution’ discourse will be examined, deconstructed and critiqued. Using evidence from long-term research on agroecological alternatives being applied by farmers in Malawi, I will point to alternative framings of efficiency in light of social and ecological considerations, using concepts from political ecology, feminist theory and critical agrarian studies.

**Rachel Bezner Kerr** is an Associate Professor in Development Sociology at Cornell University. She has published two edited books, 13 book chapters and 34 articles in journals such as *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *World Development* and *Food Policy*. She was given the early Achievement award from the Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences in 2016. Her research in Malawi was highlighted by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food in his Malawi report in 2013. For the past 17 years, she has worked with the Soils, Food and Healthy Communities organization in Malawi, and is now the project director of the Malawi Farmer to Farmer Agroecology project, which works with 6000 farmers in northern and central Malawi.



Friday, March 24, 2017

2:30—3:30 pm

215 Armsby Building