well as the need for new crop acreage, which can greatly slow the rate of habitat destruction. Since most food production and farming in the developing world is done by women, such an increase in productivity also enables women to spend their time on other productive activities and better care for their families.

Biotechnology can also improve the health of citizens of developing countries by combating illness. Substantial progress has been made in the developed world on vaccines against life-threatening illnesses, but, unfortunately, infrastructure limitations often hinder the effectiveness of traditional vaccination methods in some parts of the developing world. For example, many vaccines must be kept refrigerated until they are injected. Even if a health clinic has electricity and is able to deliver effective vaccines, the cost of multiple needles can hinder vaccination efforts. Additionally, the improper use of hypodermic needles can spread HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Biotechnology offers the prospect of orally delivering vaccines to immunize against life-threatening illnesses through agricultural products in a safe and effective manner.

My bill establishes a grant program under the Foreign Agricultural Service in the Department of Agriculture to encourage research in agricultural biotechnology. Eligible grant recipients include historically black colleges and universities, land-grant colleges, Hispanic serving institutions, and tribal colleges or universities. Non-profit organizations and consortia of for-profit and in-country agricultural research centers are also eligible.

I encourage my colleagues to support this important piece of legislation.

30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 27, 2001

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the International African Arts Festival which annually contributes to the Brooklyn community through weekend long cultural events.

For the past thirty years, the International African Arts Festival has brought together those who wish to enjoy the music, dance, art, craft, flavors, colors, laughter, and love of the African Diasporan family as well as visitors from across the globe. Born on a stage, the festival grew into a block party. However, soon thereafter the location changed once again to the Boys and Girls High field.

In an effort to give back to the community, the International African Arts Festival holds an annual talent search, in which cash prizes and performance contracts are awarded to young people. The talent search has helped to launch the careers of several young stars. In addition, the Festival has awarded over $23,000 in annual scholarships to graduating high school seniors over the past eleven years. The International African Arts Festival is also responsible for the success of the Living Legends Award as well as the Ankh Award, both bestowed upon leaders and inspirational figures in the community.

The International African Arts Festival is committed to maintaining a connection with African tradition itself. A traditional African libation ceremony officially opens the Festival each year in salute to the spirit of the African ancestors. Over the course of its thirty years, the International African Arts Festival has brought a wealth of world-class entertainment to Brooklyn stages. The Festival maintains a deep connection with the residents of Brooklyn, employing over 300 people every year.

Mr. Speaker, for the past thirty years the International African Arts Festival has been an integral part of the community. As such, the Festival is more than worthy of receiving our recognition today. I hope that all of my colleagues will join me in honoring this truly remarkable event.

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE LINKS ACROSS AMERICA

HON. E. CLAY SHAW, JR.

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 27, 2001

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, the U.S. Postal Service links together cities and towns, large and small, across America through delivery of the mail. Since our nation's founding, mail delivery has been especially important to rural America, places that were at first a long walk away, then a long horse ride, and even for years a long automobile ride from the nearest downtown of a major city. The Internet today has helped reduce the distance between cities, and even countries, but mail delivery continues to be an important function for all Americans.

Most Americans, probably, are unaware that for decades rural letter carriers have used their own transportation to deliver the mail. This includes rural letter carriers who today drive their own vehicles in good weather and bad, in all seasons, in locations that can range from a canyon bottom to mountain top, ocean view to bayou. Rural letter carriers drive over 3 million miles daily and serve 24 million American families on over 66,000 rural and suburban routes. The mission of rural letter carriers has changed little over the years, but the type of mail they deliver has changed substantially—increasing to over 200 billion pieces a year. And although everyone seems to be communicating by email these days, the Postal Service is delivering more letters than at any time in our nation's history. During the next decade, however, we know that will change.

Electronic communication is expected to accelerate even faster than it has in the last five years. Some of what Americans send by mail today will be sent online. According to the General Accounting Office (GAO), that will include many bills and payments. In its study, U.S. Postal Service: Challenges to Sustaining Performance Improvements Remain Formidable on the Brink of the 21st Century, dated October 21, 1999, the GAO reports that the Postal Service's core business—letter mail—will decline substantially. As a result, the revenue the Postal Service collects from delivering First-Class letters also will decline.

While the Internet will eventually reduce the amount of letter mail rural letter carriers deliver, the Internet will present some new opportunities for delivering parcels. Rural letter carriers have for decades delivered the packages we order from catalogs, and now they deliver dozens of parcels every week that were ordered online. For some rural and suburban Americans the Postal Service still remains the only delivery service of choice. Today, the Postal Service has about 33 percent of the parcel business. However, if the Postal Service is as successful as it hopes in attracting more parcels, that could create a problem for rural carriers. Most items ordered by mail are shipped in boxes that, once filled with packing materials, can be bulky—so bulky, in fact, that many rural letter carriers already see the need for larger delivery vehicles.

In exchange for using their own vehicles, rural letter carriers are reimbursed for their vehicle expense by the Postal Service through the Equipment Maintenance Allowance (EMA). Congress recognized this unique situation in tax legislation as far back as 1988. That year Congress intended to exempt EMA from taxation through a specific provision for rural letter carriers in the Technical and Miscellaneous Revenue Act of 1988 (TAMRA). This provision allowed rural mail carriers to compute their vehicle expense deduction based on 150 percent of the standard mileage rate for their business mileage use. Congress passed this law because using a personal vehicle to deliver the U.S. Mail is not typical vehicle use. Also, these vehicles have little resale value because of their high mileage and most are outfitted for right-handed driving.

As an alternative, rural letter carrier taxpayers could elect to use the actual expense method (business portion of actual operation and maintenance of the vehicle, plus depreciation). If the EMA exceeded the actual vehicle expense deductions, the excess was subject to tax. If EMA fell short of the actual vehicle expenses, a deduction was allowed only to the extent that the sum of the shortfall and all other miscellaneous itemized deductions exceeded two percent of the taxpayer's adjusted gross income.

The Taxpayers Relief Act (TRA) of 1997 further simplified the taxation of rural letter carriers. TRA provides that the EMA reimbursement is not reported as taxable income. That simplified taxes for approximately 120,000 taxpayers, but the provision eliminated the option of filing the actual expense method for employee business vehicle expenses. The lack of this option, combined with the effect the Internet will have on mail delivery, specifically on rural letter carriers and their vehicles, is a problem we must address.

Expecting its carriers to deliver more packages because of the Internet, the Postal Service already is encouraging rural letter carriers to purchase larger right-hand drive vehicles, such as sports utility vehicles (SUV). Large SUVs can carry more parcels, but also are much more expensive to operate than traditional vehicles—especially with today's higher gasoline prices. So without the ability to use the actual expense method and depreciation, rural carriers must use their pay to cover vehicle expenses. Additionally, the Postal Service has placed 11,000 postal vehicles on rural routes, which means those carriers receive no EMA.

All these changes combined have created a situation contrary to the historical Congressional intent of using reimbursement to fund the government service of delivering mail, and