



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Foreign
Agricultural
Service

FACT SHEET

USDA at Work for Agriculture in Afghanistan September 2008

Agriculture is the main source of income for the Afghanistan economy. Despite the fact that only 12 percent of Afghanistan's total land area is arable and less than 6 percent is currently cultivated, 80 percent of Afghanistan's population is involved in farming, herding or both. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is helping Afghanistan revitalize its agricultural sector through a variety of activities aimed to strengthen the capacity of the Afghan government, to rebuild agricultural markets, and to improve management of natural resources.

USDA Representation. USDA has a Foreign Service Officer assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, who also covers Afghanistan. In addition, one USDA staff member serves as the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) liaison in Kabul, Afghanistan. Since 2003, USDA has provided more than 70 different technical specialists on long- or short-term assignments and provided roughly \$192 million in monetized food aid.

Provincial Reconstruction Teams. By spring 2009, USDA will have deployed 50 individuals from 10 different USDA agencies to serve as advisors on PRTs. In Afghanistan, PRTs are led by the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) and are typically composed of about 50-100 military personnel (both force protection and civil affairs personnel) and a few civilians. The

PRT agricultural advisor is one of only a few civilians on the PRT; the others usually being U.S. Department of State representatives and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) field program officers.

Currently, USDA has 13 PRT advisors and one PRT liaison officer, each serving a one-year assignment in Afghanistan. These new advisors arrived in country in Spring 2008. All of the people selected, trained, and deployed for these assignments did so on a voluntary basis.

For PRTs, projects vary depending on the needs of the province. Projects have ranged from installing windmills to pump water for irrigation and livestock, training veterinarians to detect and treat parasites, rehabilitating a university's agricultural research laboratory, stabilizing eroded river banks and irrigation canals, developing post-harvest storage facilities, rehabilitating degraded orchards, mentoring provincial directors of agriculture to help them improve their services to farmers, and reforestation. All projects are aimed at helping Afghanistan reconstruct the physical and institutional infrastructure of its agricultural sector.

Technical Assistance. Ongoing USDA technical assistance has helped establish the Afghan Conservation Corps (ACC), which along with the Ministry of Agriculture,

Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL) has led to the planting of more than five million trees on Afghanistan's devastated landscape, the ongoing construction of agricultural extension centers in half of Afghanistan's provinces, the training of numerous key Afghan agricultural officials, and the initiation of a national system to control animal disease.

FAS along with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) provide technical assistance and training to help build Afghanistan's national capacity to detect and control animal diseases. A CSREES veterinarian is in the final year of a three-year assignment in Afghanistan, coordinating short-term assignments with land-grant universities (University of Georgia, Michigan State University and Texas A&M University) and other USDA experts from CSREES and APHIS to provide expertise and training to Afghanistan's MAIL staff, Kabul University veterinary and animal health faculty, and others in animal disease surveillance, data analysis, field response, lab diagnostics, and national planning for disease control. Under an agreement with FAS, Fort Valley State University, an 1890's land-grant university in Georgia, is producing an illustrated handbook of animal diseases of Afghanistan.

USDA provided technical guidance to Afghanistan's Ministry of Higher Education to improve the Ministry's use of USDA monetized food aid proceeds to build university teaching capacity in the agricultural and veterinary sciences. Similar assistance was given to MAIL in programming monetized food aid proceeds for use in improving its ability to deliver extension services. Efforts in agricultural extension led to the development of a prototype district-level agricultural extension facility and staffing model. The funds have also supported the construction of 17 provincial agricultural centers for extension and cultural activities. Activities

to assist in agricultural extension will focus on horticultural products. FAS has signed an agreement with the University of California-Davis to build MAIL's capacity to produce agricultural extension materials. In 2003, USDA, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of State, the Afghan Government, and the United Nations Office for Project Services, established the ACC, which is aimed at putting thousands of unemployed Afghans to work. USDA has provided technical guidance to assist the ACC and MAIL in developing a pistachio forest management plan for rehabilitating degraded pistachio woodlands. In 2006, target villages realized a 65-percent increase in income from pistachio nuts, with further growth realized in 2007. This project is being expanded to include other villages. USDA technical specialists from the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Forest Service have also provided training and consultation on improving the management of tree nurseries and on improving seed collection and storage, as well as soil and water conservation.

Trade-Capacity Building. The Cochran Fellowship Program (CFP) provides short-term training in the United States to help countries develop market-driven food systems and increase trade links with U.S. agribusinesses. In 2008, the CFP hosted eight agricultural extension agents from Afghanistan. Since initiating CFP training activities for Afghanistan in 2004, two Afghans participated in animal disease diagnosis and 14 women participated in a training program on the role of women in small agricultural enterprise developments.

The Norman E. Borlaug International Agricultural Science and Technology Fellows Program (Borlaug program) provides six-to-eight-week collaborative research training for entry-level scientists and policymakers from developing and middle-income countries. In Fall 2006, 11 Afghans participated in the Borlaug program to increase collaboration between Afghanistan's universities and U.S. faculty and scientists in the areas of animal

health, post-harvest processing, and plant protection.

The Faculty Exchange Program (FEP) brings university instructors of agricultural economics and agricultural sciences to the United States to work with U.S. professors to upgrade their technical knowledge and develop new and revised courses for their universities at home. In 2008, USDA hosted three FEP participants. In 2006, USDA hosted the first two FEP participants from Kabul University. In 2007, USDA had two additional participants, a horticulturalist, and an entomologist from Kabul University.

Food Assistance. USDA has provided food assistance to Afghanistan through two food assistance programs—the Food for Progress (FFP) and the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition (FFE) Programs. The FFP improves nutrition and supports agricultural and economic development projects in developing countries that are emerging democracies and are introducing or expanding free enterprise in their agricultural sectors. The FFE helps promote education, child development, and food security in low-income, food-deficit countries that are committed to universal education. The program provides donations of U.S. agricultural products, as well as financial and technical assistance, for school feeding and maternal and child nutrition projects.

In March 2008, USDA allocated \$23.2 million through a government-to-government FFP grant with Afghanistan. The grant will provide 11,500 metric tons of vegetable oil for sale in Afghanistan to support agricultural development. In 2007, USDA signed an FFP agreement with the

government of Afghanistan to provide 8,210 metric tons of soybean oil valued at \$9.5 million, including ocean transportation. The sale of the soybean oil in Afghanistan generated support for agricultural education, research, and extension, plant and animal disease diagnostics and control, food safety, and natural resource management. In 2005 and 2006, USDA implemented a total of six food assistance programs in Afghanistan, including two FFP agreements with the government and four FFP programs with U.S. private voluntary organizations. Mercy Corps is conducting agricultural development projects under the FFP program and World Vision implemented an FFE school feeding program. The value of food aid given since 2003 is roughly \$176 million.

USDA Proposals to Congress. The Administration's fiscal year 2009 budget request to the U.S. Congress includes \$12.5 million for USDA to help support the costs of participating in these activities in both Iraq and Afghanistan. The same funding request in the fiscal year 2008 budget was not included by the U.S. Congress. The Administration's Farm Bill proposal recommended \$20 million over 10 years for trade-capacity building and agricultural extension programs in fragile regions. Agricultural reconstruction and development are crucial for establishing stability in both of these countries, and USDA needs dedicated funding to have the resources to provide for its staff to play an effective role in achieving that goal.

General information about FAS programs, resources, and services is available on the Internet at the FAS home page: <http://www.fas.usda.gov>