

## Program Overview: Agriculture

### Agriculture Reconstruction and Development for Iraq (ARDI)

**A**griculture is the second largest contributor to Iraq's Gross Domestic Product and employs about 25 percent of its labor force. Due to years of poor planning, increasing soil salinity in the south and variable rainfall in the north, its grain yields are less than half that of its neighbors. Iraq will need to import at least \$3 billion per year in basic foodstuffs over the next decade if domestic agricultural production fails to increase.

USAID's ARDI program is a planned multi-year effort designed to expand agriculture productivity, rehabilitate key ecosystems and restore capacity of rural enterprise to produce, process and market agricultural goods and services. It provides full time support and services through regional offices located in Basrah, Samawah, Baghdad, Sulaymaniyah and Arbil.

In coordination with Iraq's Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), ARDI has revitalized the date palm sector by increasing access to commercially viable offshoots that will generate quicker and better returns on investment.



**Greenhouses for commercially valuable date palms**

ARDI has planted 43,000 date palm mother plants in 13 MoA orchards in 11 governorates. It has also replenished 120 private date palm orchards in Muthanna, Basrah and the Southern Marshlands with 4,800 high quality and commercially valuable date palm plants.

The Government of Iraq (GoI) can save hundreds of millions of dollars in foreign exchange by increasing grain yields and reducing dependence on imported wheat. Improved and cleaned seeds lead to higher yields and larger harvests that increase incomes for farmers. USAID's ARDI program provides seed cleaning services to farmers and demonstrates the benefits of such practices. Over 30,000 metric tons of grade 1 seed available to farmers for the 2005-2006 planting season.



**A refurbished tractor fleet and increased mechanization has produced higher grain yields**

Mechanization increases land usage and provides for larger harvests. USAID's ARDI program has worked to make Iraq's tractor fleet operable and provide sufficient incentive for agribusinesses to invest in country-wide infrastructure for agricultural machinery. Over 4,394 tractors have been repaired and returned to use for agricultural production.

Fruit and vegetable crops provide greater returns on investment than cereal crops and require a smaller area of cultivated



**Demonstration vineyards improve high value crop harvesting**

land. ARDI enhances the production of tomatoes, fruit orchards and grape vineyards by introducing new technologies and providing improved seeds. Three private sector grape nurseries have been established in northern Iraq with high quality, commercially viable varieties. Over 700 grape producing families will be able to improve their vineyards and increase production by accessing these nurseries.

USAID's monitoring teams are assessing the success of wetlands restoration efforts in Iraq's southern marshlands. The data collected will guide the MoA's policies and decisions regarding the marshlands. Information about the state of biotic development will enable USAID and the MoA to design programs that efficiently and effectively restore biodiversity, improve socio-economic conditions for the marsh dwellers and ensure the sustainability of resources.



**The southern marshlands continue their rehabilitation through monitoring and effective management**

The total area of present marshes is estimated at 40 percent of the original area recorded in 1977 whereas the restoration of the marsh habitat and organisms is between 60 and 70 percent of its original level. The gradual return of migrating ducks, geese and fish have been of particular note. ARDI has also rehabilitated irrigation infrastructure to improve 780,000 acres of land farmed by 132,700 families. Access to irrigation and drainage systems conserves soil and

water while providing for larger harvests.

USAID's ARDI program rehabilitates MoA veterinary clinics, establish private sector veterinary services, implement large scale vaccination campaigns and train tens of thousands of animal breeders on improved animal handling and care. Healthier livestock means wealthier breeders. A total of 67 veterinary clinics in 17 governorates, serving 130,000 livestock breeders and 5 million animals. ARDI has also introduced improved nutritional regimes to over 16,000 ewes and lambs and improved nutritional regimes and hormone treatments to 1,750 buffalo to improve reproductive efficiency in livestock in southern Iraq.

The basis for a sound, market-driven agricultural economy must be built on a proper regulatory framework that can supported on reliable information and quality analysis. Such an environment is bolstered through capacity development and training of appropriate specialists in Iraq who will be able to implement and sustain such a system. The ARDI program has trained 800 Iraqi public officials and private sector entrepreneurs in the areas of strategy development, decision-making and statistical surveys. It has also introduced 12,600 farmers, public officials and university staff to technologies for high value cash crops and cereal grains.



**Through training and investment Iraq will increase its agricultural capacity to meet its needs.**

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