



USDA at Work for Agriculture in Afghanistan

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Agriculture is the main source of income for the Afghan economy. Eighty percent of Afghanistan's population is involved in farming, herding or both, even though just 12 percent of Afghanistan's total land area is arable and less than 6 percent is currently cultivated. In December 2009, the White House noted that the U.S. government's top reconstruction priority is implementing a civilian-military agriculture redevelopment strategy to restore Afghanistan's once vibrant agricultural sector. 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, rebuild agricultural markets, and improve management of natural resources.

USDA Representation. Currently, USDA has 52 agricultural experts in the field and 10 agricultural staff based in Kabul, including three Foreign Service Officers. Since 2003, USDA has deployed more than 100 people for medium- and long-term assignments in Afghanistan. All agricultural experts selected, trained, and deployed for these assignments do so on a voluntary basis.

Projects vary for agricultural experts depending on the needs of the province. As members of a fully integrated U.S. government team, agricultural experts have helped to install windmills to pump water for irrigation and livestock, trained veterinarians to detect and treat parasites, refurbished a university's agricultural research laboratory, stabilized eroded river banks and irrigation canals, developed post-harvest storage

facilities, established nurseries and reforested areas, rehabilitated degraded orchards, and mentored Afghan agricultural extension workers. All projects are aimed at helping Afghanistan reconstruct the physical and institutional infrastructure of its agricultural sector.

USDA agricultural experts in the field serve as part of civilian-military units led by U.S. or coalition military forces. These units typically compose 15 to 100 military personnel (both force protection and civil affairs personnel) and civilians. The USDA agricultural expert is one of only a few civilians in the unit, along with representatives from the U.S. Department of State and field program officers from the U.S. Agency for International Development, among others.

Technical Assistance. USDA technical assistance to date has helped to construct agricultural extension centers in half of Afghanistan's provinces, train key Afghan agricultural officials, and initiate a national system to control animal diseases. FAS, along with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), are providing technical assistance and training to help build Afghanistan's national capacity to detect and control animal diseases.

With regard to strengthening marketing channels and standards for Afghan fruit, Afghan apples and other fresh fruit began being air-freighted to India in 2009 for the first time. In May 2009, a Kabul businessman obtained his certification to begin exporting

raisins to Europe. In addition, the nation's first concentrated juice factory opened near Kabul in October 2009, selling out its entire production for 2010 in just six weeks. The plant employs hundreds of Afghans and is planning an expansion so it can continue to ship its products across the globe.

In 2009, a USDA veterinarian completed a three-year assignment in Afghanistan to coordinate short-term assignments with U.S. land-grant universities (University of Georgia, Michigan State University, and Texas A&M University). Other USDA experts provide expertise and training to Afghan Ministry staff, Kabul University veterinary health faculty, and others in animal disease surveillance, data analysis, field response, lab diagnostics, and national planning for disease control.

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.

In 2003, USDA, in collaboration with the State Department, the Government of Afghanistan, and the United Nations Office for Project Services, established the Afghan Conservation Corps (ACC) with the goal of putting thousands of unemployed Afghans to work. With guidance from the Afghanistan

Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL), the ACC planted more than five million trees on Afghanistan's devastated landscape. 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, participating 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.

U.S.-Based Training. 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. The CFP has hosted 30 Afghans since 2004, including 16 women. In 2008, the CFP hosted eight agricultural extension agents from Afghanistan. In November 2009, the CFP and instructors from Colorado State University hosted six Afghan veterinarians in their efforts to help Afghanistan improve the health of their livestock herds.

The Norman E. Borlaug International Agricultural Science and Technology Fellowship Program (Borlaug Fellowship Program) provides six to eight week collaborative research training for entry-level scientists, university faculty, and policymakers from developing and middle-income countries. Since 2006, 17 Afghans have participated in the Borlaug Fellowship Program to increase collaboration between Afghanistan's universities and U.S. faculty and scientists in the areas of animal health, rangeland management, and horticulture.

The Faculty Exchange Program brings university instructors of agricultural economics and 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. Since 2006, USDA has hosted nine participants from Kabul University. In February 2010, three Afghan university instructors of soil science, forestry and veterinary medicine arrived at Purdue University to begin a four month their four-month program. Other participants have been teachers of forestry, horticulture, soil science, and entomology.

Food Assistance. USDA has provided food assistance to Afghanistan through two food assistance programs—the Food for Progress (FFPr) and the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition (McGovern-Dole) programs. Since 2003, USDA has provided roughly \$256 million in food aid to Afghanistan. The FFPr 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 McGovern-Dole Program 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.

Recently, the American Soybean Association received a Food for Progress grant estimated at \$26.9 million with the potential to benefit 223,150 Afghans. In FY 2009, USDA provided Afghanistan with \$32 million in food assistance under FFPr. This figure includes a \$15 million wheat agreement signed in April 2009 with Shelter for Life International. Proceeds from the sale of wheat in Afghanistan will be used to fund the expansion of irrigated land, expand market access, and provide credit. USDA also

provided an additional \$17 million in FFPr assistance directly to the Government of Afghanistan.

In March 2008, USDA allocated \$10.3 million through a government-to-government FFPr grant with Afghanistan. The grant provided 5,500 metric tons of soybean oil for sale in Afghanistan to support agricultural development. USDA food assistance to Afghanistan in FY 2008 also included a \$10.2 million FFPr agreement with Roots of Peace to enhance grape and orchard production and provide business and credit services. In addition, World Vision implemented a McGovern-Dole school feeding program, which provided for take-home rations to students, teachers, and school personnel in more than 500 schools.

Trilateral Working Groups. In May 2009, the Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United States agreed to establish three working groups on food security, trade corridors and water management. All three countries announced their selections of six to eight members for each of the working groups in October 2009. The countries convened the first-ever Agricultural Trilateral meetings in Doha, Qatar on Jan. 19-21, 2010. Nearly 50 working group members began to develop detailed action plans in three areas: agricultural trade corridors, food security, and water management and watershed rehabilitation. The countries met again in April to discuss plans related to water management. A meeting of the Secretariats – each country’s leading Trilateral representative – took place in June. Additional meetings will continue throughout 2010.

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