



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Foreign
Agricultural
Service

FACT SHEET

USDA at Work for Agriculture in Afghanistan July 2009

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, rebuild agricultural markets, and improve management of natural resources.

USDA Representation. USDA will place a Foreign Service Office in the U.S. Embassy in Kabul in the near future. USDA currently 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 short- or long-term assignments and provided roughly \$208 million in monetized food aid.

Trilateral Working Groups. In May, 2009, the United States, Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed to establish three working groups on food security, trade corridors and water management. Each country will name 6 to 8 members to the working groups to address these issues. The working groups are expected to begin by summer 2009.

Provincial Reconstruction Teams. USDA has deployed 37 individuals from 10 different USDA agencies to serve as experts on PRTs. In Afghanistan, PRTs are led by the U.S. Department of Defense and are typically composed of about 50-100 military personnel (both force protection and civil affairs personnel) and a few civilians. The PRT agricultural expert 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 field program officers.

Currently, USDA has 13 agricultural experts and one PRT liaison officer, each serving a 1-year assignment in Afghanistan. These new experts arrived in country in spring 2009. Currently, USDA is planning to more than triple the number of agriculture staff in Afghanistan by the end of 2009. All people selected, trained, and deployed for these assignments do 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 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 3-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 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, produced 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, with the goal of 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, 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. USDA technical specialists from the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Forest Service have also provided training on improving the management of tree nurseries and on improving seed collection and storage, as well as soil and water conservation.

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. In 2008, the CFP hosted eight agricultural extension agents from Afghanistan. Since initiating CFP training activities for Afghanistan in 2004, two Afghan men participated in animal disease diagnosis and 14 Afghan women participated in a training program on the role of women in small agricultural enterprise development.

The Norman E. Borlaug International Agricultural Science and Technology Fellows Program (Borlaug Program) provides 6- to 8-week collaborative research training for entry-level scientists and policymakers from developing and middle-income countries. Since 2006, 11 Afghans have 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 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 two participants each year from Kabul University for a total of six to date. It is anticipated that an additional two people will participate in 2009. The participants have been teachers of 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. 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.

In May 2009, USDA allocated 10,600 metric tons of vegetable oil through a government-to-government FFPr grant with Afghanistan. The vegetable oil will be sold to local agribusinesses and the proceeds from the sale will be used to implement agricultural and rural development projects. 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. In 2007, USDA signed an FFPr 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 FFPr agreements with the government and four FFPr programs with U.S. private voluntary organizations. Mercy Corps is conducting agricultural development projects under the FFPr program and World Vision implemented a McGovern-Dole school feeding program. The value of food aid given since 2003 is roughly \$208 million.

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