



ROOTS of PEACE



Embargoed until Wednesday, March 03, 2021 (9 am Kabul time)

New Agriculture Project Empowers Afghan Farmers to Grow Alternative Crops to Poppy

Kabul, Afghanistan, Wednesday, March 03, 2021— The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL); the United States Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL); and UN Development Programme in Afghanistan have partnered to expand the Community-Based Agriculture and Rural Development (CBARD) programme to new areas. The new CBARD project, Access to Licit Livelihoods (CBARD-ALL), supports farmers in provinces with abundant poppy production to transition to growing alternative high-value crops, such as fruit and vegetables, and will be implemented by UNDP through Roots of Peace (ROP).

With US\$30 million funding from the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), the project will provide an alternative to poppy production and aims to reduce poverty in western Badghis and Farah, northern Balkh, southern Kandahar, and eastern Laghman and Nangarhar provinces over the next five years.

Following the agreement between INL and UNDP Headquarters, Mr. Abdallah Al Dardari, UNDP Resident Representative for Afghanistan, signed the project document with Dr. Anwarul Haq Ahadi, Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock as well as signed the project's implementation agreement with Roots of Peace.

"Our rural economy relies on farmers producing higher yields and earning higher incomes, which won't happen without equipping the farmers with new skills and resources," said Dr. Anwarul Haq Ahadi, Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock. "We are certain that CBARD-ALL will introduce high-value crops and help farmers learn and apply new techniques that will shape a more robust rural economy."

CBARD-ALL will establish 10,000 new fruit orchards with intercropped vegetables and will trellis 406 hectares of vineyards to increase the production of grapes. The project will also work with 4,000 farmers in 200 communities with existing orchards, training them in new planting, harvest, and post-harvest techniques, which will help boost their yields and improve their access to market.

"Poppy cultivation contributes to instability and poverty," said Abdallah Al Dardari, UNDP Afghanistan Resident Representative. "The solutions and alternative agricultural crops to poppy being implemented will support Afghanistan's pivot towards an inclusive and sustainable economy— one that is centered on peace and prosperity."

UNDP supports the Government of Afghanistan to create livelihood opportunities and reduce poverty, especially among the most vulnerable groups. UNDP work with businesses to create jobs and economic growth, and with the government to build infrastructure, link rural areas to markets and develop new forms of employment, including in the sustainable mining sector.

"For the past two decades, Roots of Peace has been inspired to work in the most difficult areas with the vision of restoring Afghanistan as the 'Garden of Central Asia' and by fulfilling the hopes of the Afghan people of achieving Peace through Agriculture," stated Ms. Heidi Kuhn, Founder and CEO, Roots of Peace. "We'll draw upon our experience to help farmers under this new project to stop relying on poppy production and transition to growing fruit and vegetables that can bring them higher incomes. This project will help Afghan farmers prosper with modern agricultural techniques and access to new markets."

CBARD-ALL places special focus on training the Ministry of Agriculture extension workers who work closely with, and instruct, farmers throughout Afghanistan. These efforts will allow farmers to build on their skills and adopt new practices such as proper sorting, grading, packing and labeling that can help them upgrade the quality of their products to satisfy regional and international market requirements.

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Note to the editors

The CBARD programme started in Afghanistan in 2017. The programme has so far constructed more than 1,125 commercial and micro greenhouses covering over 20 hectares of land for former opium poppy growers in 12 districts of Farah, Badghis and Nangarhar provinces.

Along with this, the project has planted more than 1,121 hectares of fruit orchards for more than 4,100 beneficiaries in the aforementioned provinces. The orchards produce a variety of fruits such as apples, pomegranates, grapes, sweet oranges, lemons, peaches, plums, pears, walnuts and persimmons.

The programme has also built cold storage facilities and raisin houses for farmers as well as rehabilitated irrigation and water management structures like irrigation canals, protection walls, water dividers, siphons, water intakes, etc. These structures have prevented the loss of over 4,600 hectares of vital agricultural land to floods and water wastage and transformed hundreds of hectares of land lying idle in target districts. In addition, the programme has facilitated the export of over 6,000 metric tons of agricultural products with a value of over US\$ 7.5 million to the regional markets.

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