



AFGHANISTAN AGRICULTURE AND ECONOMIC GROWTH FACT SHEET

BACKGROUND

According to the United Nations (UN), 97 percent of Afghans live in poverty, over 28 million need humanitarian assistance to survive, and six million are on the verge of famine. Since the August 2021 Taliban takeover, access to commercial credit has become virtually non-existent, many businesses have been forced to close, and more and more Afghans have been left without a sustainable source of income, especially women. This has had an enormous impact on the economy, and disproportionately affects women who bear the brunt of the Taliban's repression. The UN reports that the Taliban's move to restrict women from the workforce is estimated to cost the Afghan economy up to \$1 billion. With most people living on the brink of survival, any additional shocks, such as droughts, on top of the economic fall-out threaten people's ability to provide for their families and communities. Farmers are especially vulnerable.

OUR PRIORITIES AND IMPACT

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) places Afghan women and girls at the heart of our entire development portfolio, including in our agriculture and economic growth programs. In Afghanistan, where agriculture is the backbone of the economy, we improve food security and nutrition, increase domestic production, help families improve their financial standing, and give farmers the knowledge, training, and tools to sustainably feed their communities. We help increase cultivation and production of crops such as wheat, beans, fruits,

and vegetables. We also help make the livestock and dairy sectors more efficient and profitable for farmers by providing resources such as animal feed and seeds. USAID reaches even more Afghans by sustaining and strengthening livelihoods beyond agriculture. We promote economic growth in the carpet, cashmere, saffron, and jewelry industries, sectors that typically employ and hire more women than men. We provide capital to Afghan businesses to help keep their doors open, attract skilled workers, and pay their staff. We also connect businesses with workers, particularly women, so more Afghans can earn an income.

Agriculture

USAID is helping to improve food security and nutrition and avert a deeper humanitarian crisis by giving farmers and their families—including women-headed households, herders, and smallholder farmers—training, tools, and knowledge to withstand economic downturns so they can provide for their families. With USAID assistance, Afghan farmers are planting orchards, attending farmer field schools, and building greenhouses that extend the growing season long into the freezing winter months. Building resilience to climate change, USAID funds the rehabilitation of dams, irrigation systems, and thousands of meters of new canals to quench farmers' fields. With new seeds and fertilizers, Afghan farmers are increasingly growing more nutritious crops such as spinach, onions, and turnips and increasing their incomes. Seeds and fertilizers distributed to women farmers in 2022 are expected to yield up to 12,000 metric tons of nutritious vegetables.

Economic Growth

USAID is helping Afghan businesses find the skilled labor they need, improving access to much-needed lines of credit, and creating opportunities for women to find meaningful work and earn a livelihood. We help facilitate apprenticeships in the carpet, jewelry, cashmere, and saffron industries across the country, helping businesses find the skilled labor they need while expanding workers' marketable skills. USAID also connects Afghan businesses, producers, and processors to sign trade deals and forge long-lasting partnerships to spur the economy.

KEY RESULTS

- USAID facilitated \$1.9 million in working capital advances for Afghan businesses in 2022, staving off some of the negative impacts of ongoing liquidity challenges.
- USAID assistance to carpet and jewelry businesses since 2019 has helped create nearly 19,000 jobs for Afghan women, both in the workplace and at home.
- Last year, USAID funded the distribution of 52 metric tons of drought-resistant soy seed to Afghan farmers. That's the weight of about eight African elephants.
- Thanks to USAID's food-for-work effort, 10,000 Afghans across the country have received baskets of food for their work to rehabilitate irrigation systems as of March 2023.
- USAID surpassed its goal of placing 20,000 Afghans in apprenticeships, placing a cumulative 20,185 Afghans at 222 businesses since April 2022.