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AFGHANISTAN

SNAPSHOT

Alfalfa Sprouts Afghan Agribusiness

USAID is helping more than 800 farmers to plant more than 300 hectares of the important fodder crop on their farmland.



Photo: USAID/ASAP

A farmer examines his crop of alfalfa grown with the support of USAID.

“I have already harvested my alfalfa field six to eight times this year”

Livestock, both for traction and for sustenance, are crucial to the development of a country’s agriculture. Afghanistan suffers from a shortage of fodder crops that are preventing the country’s farmers from realizing their full potential. The solution may lie in the production of alfalfa which is widely recognized as an important crop for its resilience, yield, and use as high-protein and high-fiber feed for farm animals.

In various provinces throughout Afghanistan, USAID is implementing a fodder program to increase production of alfalfa and to create agribusiness opportunities in the crop. Farmers are beginning to reap the benefits.

“I have already harvested my alfalfa field six to eight times this year, and it is still growing so I hope to have three more harvests as well,” noted Said Shah, a farmer from Charkh District of Logar Province in eastern Afghanistan.

Shah is just one of the more than 800 beneficiaries of the project. In close coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, USAID is providing all of the farmers participating in the program with certified alfalfa seed and training on commercial alfalfa production. They are trained on proper seedbed establishment, fertilization, irrigation, harvest, and post-harvest handling and processing.

The Agency also provides the farmers with vouchers that allow them to purchase items like fertilizer through their local AgDepots (USAID-supported farm stores) at a reduced price. In return, they are expected to keep their plots open for visiting group members to encourage others to grow the valuable crop. Farmers will also be provided with access to equipment and machinery that will allow them to open up agribusinesses with their alfalfa crops.

“The farmers of Logar are very happy with the assistance,” Shah said. “We hope to get more assistance and training so we can continue with development of our agriculture.”

USAID provides strategic support to public and private sectors nationwide with the overarching goals of improving agricultural production, increasing sales and exports, generating new jobs, and introducing modern agricultural technologies.