



Weekly Activity Update

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Building Capacity of Female Judges

Twenty female judges received USAID-funded laptop computers at a ceremony held July 26 at the Supreme Court. Chief Justice Shinwari presided and the Chief Administrator and Chief of Personnel were on the dais. In contrast to a desktop, the laptops can be carried between home and court, charged wherever there is power, and used for 2-3 hours during power outages. USAID is also providing computer training classes for the women judges at an off-site USAID-funded computer lab. This is part of a larger USAID effort to increase the capability of Afghanistan's legal professionals.



USAID presented 20 female judges with laptop computers on July 26.

Improvements to Quality of Dried Fruit and Nuts

Before the Soviet invasion, exports of dried fruit and nuts were significant to the agricultural economy in Afghanistan. Today, as Afghan producers re-enter the global market, aflatoxin contamination is one of the primary constraints to meeting export quality standards. Aflatoxins are produced by the molds *Aspergillus flavus* and *A. parasiticus*. The occurrence of these toxins on grains, nuts and other commodities susceptible to mold infestation is influenced by environmental factors such as temperature, humidity and the extent of rainfall during the harvesting periods. Because aflatoxins are considered to be carcinogens, their presence in foods must be minimized by using modern processing techniques.

To meet global market export standards, USAID is funding aflatoxin detection and reduction projects. In January 2005, a training program on aflatoxins and testing procedures for detection was held. Twenty three men and women from the Raisin and Dried Fruit Export Promotion Institute of the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the Faculty of Science of Kabul University participated in the three day, hands-on training in aflatoxin detection and measurement.

In addition to training for key Afghan personnel and ministries, on March 2005, the renovation of the laboratory at the Raisin and Dried Fruit Export Institute was completed. The lab is now capable of detecting and measuring aflatoxin levels in parts per billion using fluorometric equipment. A suitable location for another testing laboratory in Kandahar is being identified by the Export Institute.

In a move to build international confidence in the dried fruits and nuts of Afghanistan, the Ministry of Commerce held a conference in Kabul in June 2005. At the conference, Ministry and industry representatives decided that beginning in August 2005, testing and certification would be required for all exports. The newly renovated laboratories are staffed with trained personnel and ready to facilitate this major step toward Afghanistan's regaining a share of the dried fruit and nut export markets.



USAID's democracy and governance programs aim to increase capability of Afghanistan's legal professionals.



USAID supported aflatoxin training courses in an effort to facilitate Afghanistan's regaining a share of the dried fruit and nut export market.

Increasing Agricultural Productivity and Quality

USAID’s Rebuilding Agricultural Markets Program aims to improve food security, increase cropping productivity and rural employment, and improve family incomes and well-being.

A dedication ceremony was held in late July in Balkh province for the hand over of 100 km of recently constructed farm-to-market roads. Work continues in Ghazni, Nangarhar and Kunduz; four kilometers of road were completed during the last two weeks of July. To date, 362 km of farm to market roads have been rehabilitated.

From July 17 – 31, USAID disbursed 2,649 loans, a 17% increase from the prior two week period. To date,

18,546 loans have been disbursed with approximately 85% of these loans granted to women.

During the last two weeks of July, work began on the construction of a fruit and nut processing building at Mazar-e Sharif and work continued on two facilities with refrigeration units for fruit processing in Kandahar. Also, the construction was completed at the vegetable dehydration factory near Charikar in Parwan province. The vegetable dehydration factory is now employing 80 process workers per shift and securing produce from 1,400 production farmers from the surrounding area. To date, USAID has constructed 145 market centers.

Security Incidents

Number of Hostile Attacks: During this reporting period, July there were nine hostile attacks, resulting in 8 persons killed, 6 injured and two were kidnapped and subsequently released.

Election Related Incidents: There were eight election related incidents, including acts of intimidation and violence against workers and/or candidates.

Recent Incidents: Violence against election workers and candidates continued. In Paktika, three women working for the Joint Election Management Body were advised that they should move house and possibly quit their jobs due to threats to kill them. In Faryab Province, a Provincial Council Candidate was shot, although not seriously wounded. In Helmand, Taliban guerrillas shot and killed a local poll worker while walking home from his office and in Uruzgan, Taliban insurgents killed a parliamentary candidate along with his six bodyguards.

