

Afghanistan-Pakistan Activities
Quarterly Report XVIII
(January – February – March 2007)
Sustainable Development of Drylands Project
IALC-UIUC

Principal Accomplishments this Period and Plans for the Next Quarter:

1. Discussions with Chemonics International relative to our involvement in the “Accelerating Sustainable Agriculture Program” (ASAP), were held at Chemonics headquarters in Washington, D.C. on January 30, and led to one area that may have considerable potential. This is the possibility of expanding soybean production as an alternative crop, given the need to replace poppy production with substitute high value crops. We were pleased to inform Chemonics representatives that the Illinois team, together with the UIUC-based National Soybean Research Center, had prepared a National Soybean Development Plan for Afghanistan and submitted that plan to the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) in Kabul about one year ago. This plan was prepared at the request of Deputy Minister Sharif. A copy of this document was left with Chemonics’ Director of Asia Region Programs. It is being reviewed at their Washington headquarters and by leadership of the ASAP Field Team in Kabul. We have no specific response/reaction from them yet. Given that ASAP is charged with helping the MAIL implement its “Agricultural Sector Development Strategy,” which is a 400-page master plan, we will continue looking for areas where we can make a contribution to the objectives of this relatively new project.

2. January 31 meetings in Washington with the Afghanistan Reconstruction Team, which operates within USDA/FAS/ICD, gave us the opportunity to discuss our mutual objective and interest in strengthening the MAIL. The USDA Team will continue to insist that proceeds from future shipments of monetized commodities (donated by USDA) be used for capacity building within the MAIL Extension Department. The USDA Team is especially pleased that arrangements were made by the MAIL to invest their proceeds from monetized commodities in the M.Sc. training of ten Extension Department staff. The MAIL Extension Director General, Dr. Fazel, was largely responsible for the decision to make this investment in M.Sc. training. The USDA Team supports Dr. Fazel and has confidence in his judgment. The fact that our Field Office Director (Dr. Qayyum) maintains a close and productive working relationship with Dr. Fazel, gives reason to believe that we may be asked to provide additional training services that will support the MAIL capacity building efforts. Dr. Fazel will make a mid-May visit to Pakistan and the NWFPAU to monitor progress of the M.Sc. students and to discuss continued collaboration. He will be accompanied by the Dean of Agriculture from Kabul University, Professor Mohsini. Their visit will also

include participation in the 7th National Weed Science Conference, to be held in Lahore May 17 to 19. Our Field Office is making these arrangements.

3. Our Senior Advisor (Dr. Myers) will visit Pakistan and Afghanistan in April. The primary reason for his travel is to close out the Balkh University Faculty of Agriculture project. In addition to that, he and Dr. Qayyum will make a series of stops and calls that are related to the IALC Cooperative Agreement. Tentatively included in these visits will be a meeting with the Peshawar-based representative of USAID-Islamabad, to assess the level of interest in using our institutional resources to implement agricultural development programs in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The possibility of FATA-based projects, along with the project-related possibilities mentioned in items 1 and 2 above, are specifically mentioned in the FY07 Scope of Work that was attached to our report for the third quarter of 2006. Contact with the Pakistan Mission relative to development projects in the FATA was suggested by Asia-Near East (ANE) administration in USAID-Washington.
4. We are pleased to report that the ten M.Sc. students from the MAIL Extension Department are enrolled for a full load of coursework and are successfully progressing through their first semester of graduate study. A list of these students and their fields of study was attached to the previous quarterly report. A slight change was made in study locations since that report. Nine students are now enrolled at the NWFPAU because solid academic programs could be arranged there. One student is enrolled at the University of Agriculture - Faisalabad to take advantage of their strong Agribusiness program.
5. Our final two technical short courses will be delivered during the May 1-31 period at the NWFPAU. The topics that have been selected for these courses are: Animal Health and Integrated Weed Management. These courses have already been announced and groups of 20 participants are being selected for each course. Funding for these courses (which will become numbers 22 and 23 in our series) will come from carryover core funds that have accumulated during the five-year life of the Cooperative Agreement.
6. The Afghanistan-Pakistan Training (APT) group met at UIUC on January 24. The agenda which guided discussions during that meeting is attached.
7. The Component Manager was in Washington, D.C. to brief representatives of USAID's Asia-Near East (ANE) Bureau on February 27 and the IALC Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) on February 28. The briefing presentation is on our component's section of the project website.
8. Dr. Qayyum was not able to make the annual visit to Illinois in FY06. Because it is important for him to work with backstopping personnel on campus at this stage in the life of our Cooperative Agreement, we are making plans for Dr. Qayyum's visit during the first half of June.

9. We will continue searching for ways the National Soybean Development Plan can be used to expand our presence in Afghanistan. The USDA Team sees value in this plan and may work with us on accessing MAIL funds from monetized commodities to implement this plan at a level appropriate to Afghanistan's capacity for soybean production and consumption.

AGENDA

Afghanistan-Pakistan Training (APT) Group Meeting
Wednesday, January 24, 2007
Spitze Room, ACES Library

1. Comments/questions on September 2006 field visit by Myers, Russin and Santas.
2. Comments/questions on scope of work for FY/CY 2007.
3. Comments/questions on websites constructed by UIUC and IALC:
<http://global.aces.uiuc.edu/afghanistan/> and <http://cals.arizona.edu/oals/susdev/>
4. Update on ALO/HED Balkh University Faculty of Agriculture Project.
 - A. Proposal submitted to HED (with Alcorn University) in April 2006 in response to IDEAS Partnership Program RFA was not funded.
 - B. Awaiting response from USAID-Kabul's Education Office to request for additional funding submitted October 27, 2006.
 - C. Received HED approval of no-cost extension through June 30, 2007.
5. Comments/questions on quarterly reports for July-December 2006.
6. Update on support from Gov't. of Pakistan's Higher Education Commission (HEC) for continuing linkages and exchanges with the NWFP AU.
7. FY07 technical short courses using re-programmed carryover core funds.
8. Possible joint SIUC/Kabul University M.S. program delivered in Afghanistan.
9. Preview of Myers/Santas January 30-31 Washington, D.C. trip.
10. APT input to February 28 meeting of IALC Technical Advisory Committee.
11. Other agenda items contributed by APT members.