

AFGHANISTAN

Development of Integrated Dairy Schemes in Afghanistan

Synopsis

This project demonstrates how farmers in Afghanistan were motivated to participate in the development of dairy schemes in the country, and to successfully respond to the domestic demand for milk and milk products through improved knowledge, appropriate farmer-friendly tools, market linkages and formation of producer and processor groups.

Objectives

The goal of this project is to improve food security in Afghanistan by raising the productive capacity of the national dairy sector through the development of integrated model dairy schemes, with the following objectives:

- Increase the consumable and saleable products from cattle production;
- Develop processing and marketing structures for milk and dairy products;
- Develop cooperative organizational structures for the management of the three dairy schemes in Kabul, Mazar and Kunduz;
- Assist in the development of policies and strategies for the dairy sector.

Brief Description

Afghanistan is a land-locked, medium sized country in southwestern Asia. It is a land of arid deserts and inaccessible mountain valleys, subject to extreme weather conditions ranging from sweltering heat to intense cold. Eighty-five percent of Afghanistan's population depend on the income derived from agriculture and livestock production. Livestock products, particularly meat, milk and poultry, are important sources of food and, together with animal fibres, represent cash income for communities. The on-going civil war has severely disrupted all aspects of social and economic activity in the country. In the past, production and processing of milk and dairy products was mainly restricted to the utilization of milk from a few government farms, run by the Ministry of Agriculture, and to several efforts to develop milk collection schemes in the North of Afghanistan. However, these initiatives were interrupted by political developments in the late 1970s.

The development of a successful dairy scheme project is a complex process involving various technical aspects of milk production, processing and marketing as well as a variety of organizational issues. The general attitude towards dairy products, purchasing power of the population and the influence of imported dairy products are also important factors. Dairy products play an important role in the diet of Afghans, and all village families try to maintain at least one cow to obtain milk for the family. In the past, the sale of dairy products had only regional importance, mainly around the bigger cities and in Northern Afghanistan. However, the growing urban population of Afghanistan, without their own capability for milk production, has increased the demand for milk and dairy products, resulting in the import of dairy products from neighbouring countries. Several constraints have hindered the development of the dairy sector in Afghanistan, including the small sizes of its herds, cattle of low production potential, poor feeding with low quality feedstuff during part of the year, and an insufficient animal health service.

Key Elements of the Project

Commencing in April 2005, this project targeted approximately 2,000 village families in the provinces of Kabul, Logar, Wardak, Balkh and Kunduz in Afghanistan. The project was designed to assist the coordination of different dairy development activities, including the recently commenced dairy programme by USAID and the promotion of intensive dairy production, while at the same time focusing on smaller farmers and the production of various dairy products in processing units with a capacity up to 10 MT/day. The project also focused on establishing cooperative management and ownership structures while promoting private ownership of processing plants by individual entrepreneurs. All activities were coordinated with the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock.

The key components of the project include: raising the quality of available fodder and promoting the use of concentrates and minerals; improving the knowledge on animal health issues amongst dairy farmers, with an emphasis on improved

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management and hygiene; facilitating breed improvement through Artificial Insemination; assisting in the formation of milk producer groups and improving access to markets for milk and milk products.

Outcomes and Impact

The major outcomes of this project include increased access to a regular and dependable raw milk market in the project area; increased participation of women in livestock production activities; increased household income from livestock production and the increased level of employment at grassroots level. In addition, about 95 percent of Foot and Mouth Disease, tick born diseases, together with zoonotic diseases and mastitis have been controlled in the project area. More than 45 percent of the selected farmers have improved their breed of cattle and more than 70 percent of the selected farmers have cultivated improved fodder crops. It is also estimated that the surplus milk obtained by each farmer from each cow has increased from 1.11 to 5.03 liters, during the last three years.

Challenges

Some of the key challenges faced by the project included the inadequacy of the processing facilities in terms of size of the schemes and the technology in processing centres; lack of adequate qualified staff, insufficient financial resources; Inadequate profit margins to maintain the schemes; competition from dairy imports including those produced locally from milk powder and the deteriorating security situation due to presence of Al-qaida and Taliban, mostly in the rural areas.

Lessons Learned

This project has successfully demonstrated the possibility of local farmers to effectively respond to the domestic demand for milk and milk products through improved knowledge, appropriate farmer-friendly tools, market linkages and formation of producer and processor groups. The initiatives taken by the project can also be recommended to other countries whose geographical and socio economical status is similar to those in Afghanistan. These initiatives are mentioned below:

- The participatory and bottom-up approach of the project encouraged community participation that led to the setting up of cooperatives and unions by the communities themselves;
- The close coordination of activities with the relevant departments of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL);
- Use of efficient and easy technology, in terms of machinery and processing such as milk processing and animal food processing;
- Creation of the Milk Collecting Centers (MCCs) was a key facility to encourage beneficiaries to bring milk on a daily basis that resulted in the daily production and processing of dairy products;
- Hiring dedicated and committed staff at the managerial and professional levels acted as an efficient factor for the success of the project.

Replicability

This project's approach for dairy sector development has been included in the 'National Agricultural Master Plan' in Afghanistan which reflects the potential for nationalization of the project model. Based on the successful achievements and outputs of the project, in 2006, the Government of Italy had provided USD 2 million to replicate a similar project with FAO, and initiated a three year project in Herat Province entitled Integrated Dairy Development Schemes in Herat.

Project Information

Duration: April, 2005 to March, 2008

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Partners: Kabul Dairy Union, Balkh Livestock Development Union and Kunduz Dairy Union.

Implementing Agency: FAO Afghanistan

Budget: €1,500,000 (1.00 € = 1.42 US\$)

Project website: <http://www.fao.org>