Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock

4th Annual National Extension Conference
February 20-22, 2016
“Rebuilding Momentum”

Conference Report

March 3, 2016
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Executive Summary

Afghanistan’s economy is based on agriculture and it employs the largest number of Afghans of any economic sector in the country. However, Afghanistan is a net importer of agricultural and livestock products. The National Unity Government has committed to strengthen this sector and convert Afghanistan into a net exporter. The President and Ministry with assistance from partners have developed or are developing specific and long-term strategies to be implemented step by step; however, this task faces significant challenges.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) as well as the Directorates of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock with facilitation of the Afghanistan Agricultural Extension Project II (AAEP II) and financial support of USAID organized the 4th Annual National Extension Conference under the theme of *Rebuilding Momentum*. (This theme referred to restructuring and reinvigorating a previously more successful agricultural sector.) The conference was held in Kabul from February 20-22, 2016 and was attended by 480 diverse participants from government, the private and NGO sectors as well as farm families.

The objectives of the conference were:

- to introduce the National Agriculture Extension Policy and the Extension Service Model;
- to identify challenges in transfer of knowledge and skills to farmers;
- to introduce provincial and district projects and strengthen coordination among them;
- to identify and facilitate the role of private sector in implementing MAIL’s long-term plans; and
- to strengthen farmer and private sector linkages.

A significant portion of the meeting was spent in small group sessions in which conference participants were asked to identify the top three obstacles to transferring knowledge and skills from the provincial model teaching farms’ (PMTF) training of extension workers to the farmers at the FFS level. Stated another way, the conference sought to identify what impediments stand in the way when newly trained extension workers seek to transfer their new knowledge and skillsets to farm families. The small groups then grappled with the question of what would be the best solutions to address these obstacles. These obstacles and solutions to each of these problems were identified in a consultative and democratic way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obstacle</th>
<th>Solution</th>
<th>Solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-1 Lack of required necessities</td>
<td>Allocating adequate funds for office construction, purchasing of office equipment, provision of transport services, communication tools, field benefits, increased salaries, preparation of mobile credits cards for extension workers, and establishment of demonstration plots for enhancing of capacity of extension workers</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2 Lack of security in most of the areas</td>
<td>Create job opportunities through adding value to products from production to final consumers</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Obstacle -3  Low confidence of farmers in extension workers because of their low qualifications and experience

| Solution | Assigning budget to establish research, extension and training farms in different areas to enable farmers to see practically the result of activities and build their confidence in extension workers |

In addition, expectations of private sector with regard to MAIL and DAIL were identified. As a second question, private sector participants were asked to identify challenges that they would anticipate in working more closely with MAIL and the DAILs. Both of these questions were discussed at length during the last day of the conference.

Through the conference, MAIL was able to provide important information on extension programs to farmers and the DAILs.

Background
Afghanistan’s economy is based on agriculture and it employs the largest number of Afghans of any economic sector in the country. However, Afghanistan is a net importer of agriculture and livestock products. The National Unity Government has committed to strengthen this sector and convert Afghanistan into a net exporter. The President and the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) with assistance from partners have developed or are developing specific and long-term strategies to be implemented step by step; however, the task faces significant challenges.

As His Excellency President Ashraf Ghani said in the inaugural speech of the conference: “Only two thirds of the area under cultivation in the seventies is currently under cultivation.” Afghan farmers produce far less per hectare of land than neighboring countries. Linkages between the markets and producers are also poor.” The discussions during the conference were aimed at finding causes and solutions to some of the issues raised by the President and exploring ways to rebuild momentum in the agricultural sector.

Part of the solution to Afghanistan’s agricultural dilemma lies in enabling Afghan farmers to deploy modern and more effective cultivation methods and to improve farmer access and success in agricultural markets. USAID is helping the Afghan Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) in this specific area through a three year project, the Afghanistan Agriculture Extension Program II (AAEP II).

The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) as well as the Directorates of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAILs), in collaboration with USAID and AAEP II organized the 4th Annual National Extension Conference held at the Intercontinental Hotel on February 20th, 21st and 22nd. The theme of the conference this year focused on enhancing the sustainability of the innovations and technologies being introduced through the AAEP II model of agricultural extension and on “rebuilding momentum” in Afghanistan’s agricultural sector. The conference also explored reasons that project impacts all too often stop at the end of a project rather than being carried on within the collaborating host country agency.
Objectives of the Conference
The Conference was conducted with the following objectives:

- to introduce the National Agriculture Extension Policy and the Extension Service Model;
- to identify challenges in transfer of knowledge and skills to farmers;
- to introduce provincial and district projects and strengthen coordination among them;
- to identify and facilitate the role of the private sector in implementing MAIL long term plans;
- to strengthen farmer and private sector linkages.

Conference Participants
The conference included participants rich in both quantity and diversity. The conference was attended by 480 participants. Key categories of participants were:

- Farmers from Kabul and provinces;
- Prominent exporters of Afghanistan;
- Leadership and members of the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (AACI);
- University professors, especially from agriculture and livestock related departments, from Kabul and other Provinces;
- From Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock/DAILs;
  - MAIL leadership
  - Provincial leadership
  - Extension personnel
  - Farm personnel
  - Agriculture services personnel
  - Home Economics personnel
  - Private Sector
  - Members/Directors of Directorates
- AAEP II personnel from Kabul and field;
- Participating provinces were: Nangarhar, Kunar, Laghman, Jawzjan, Ghor, Farah, Herat, Balkh, Badakhshan, Samangan, Bamyam, Panjshir, Parwan, Kapisa and Kabul;
- Members of Fresh and Dried Fruit Associations
- Other Government Partners: Ministry of Counter Narcotics, Kabul Provincial Governor
- UN organizations-FAO and UNODC

For further information please see Annex 02: List of Participants.

Keynote Speeches
The conference was inaugurated at the Presidential Palace. Key points by the speaker are summarized below.

H.E. Assadullah Zamir, Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock

His Excellency Minister Zamir outlined the objectives of the conference (please see above). Earlier, the Ministry had a fragmented extension model. Currently, it has developed a comprehensive and coherent model that works at three levels: 1) village, 2) district and 3) province. It outlines Project...
Coordination Committees (for balanced development), cooperatives, Farmer Learning and Resource Centers (FLRCs), Model Teaching Farms on district and provincial levels. The policy also envisions mechanisms through which information sharing on markets is made possible between rural and urban areas (read consumers and farmers).

MAIL will address the challenges of extension workers in the following ways. They will be provided fuel for bikes so they can go to farmers. District offices will be equipped. Educational videos have been prepared and will be disseminated. An on-line Knowledge Bank has been established. Further, Farmer Call Centers have been established, where information on weather, market and fighting diseases can be obtained. We are here today to discuss why the knowledge and skill of extension workers is not sufficiently transferred to farmers and to explore ways to address this shortfall.

**Lead Farmer, Mohammad Naeem**

Mohammad Naeem identified the lack of irrigation water as the major challenge faced by farmers. Lack of access to quality fertilizer, markets, cold storage and energy are other challenges.

He outlined solutions to problems faced by farmers: water management, construction of dams, construction of roads to villages, establishment of cold storage units, food processing factories and livestock clinics. He further mentioned sending experienced doctors to villages and provision of loans, improved seeds and fertilizers to farmers, and purchase of wheat at higher rates from farmers by government and selling it to consumers at subsidized prices.

At a minimum, Afghanistan should produce its own juices and tomato paste. Earlier Afghanistan had a number of enterprises working in Agriculture processing that should be made functional again.

**Haji Assadullah, Representative of Tabasum Raisin Processing**

Tabasum Raisin has been functional for 20 years and exports 8 to 10 thousand tons of raisins/year. Mr. Assadullah reported that he believed that the foundation of a quality product is the farmers. If they are able to cultivate and harvest well, factories can produce quality product for national and international markets.

The challenges are many. Most notable is the fact that farmers do not know their provincial extension workers and often lack information on grape cultivation, irrigation, collection, and raisin uses.

The solutions according to Mr. Assadullah are to give farmers exposure visits to other countries, support the Ministry of Commerce and Industries in establishing quality control and certification labs and provide assistance in getting visas and facilities in ports. An example of challenges faced by exporters at ports is that rail cars at Sheberghan Port return from Afghanistan empty and we transport our goods on the border at the Amu/Oxus River on boats, which increases costs.

**Khan Jan Alkozai, Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries**

Agriculture and livestock comprise the infrastructure of the private sector. Agriculture is the backbone of economy and, therefore, it has to become larger in quantity and higher in quality. We have a shared mission of reducing imports and increasing exports, currently the trade imbalance is a disaster.
Last year, we had significant gains in exports: 16% increase in fresh fruits, 18% increase in potatoes and onions. We had $433 million worth of agriculture exports in 9 months of last year.

He thanked the President for allocating 30% of his time to the private sector.

We need to have a joint conference of private sector and line ministries. We need to have the private sector establish processing factories.

Municipality taxes are a challenge and should be either reduced or eliminated altogether. Certification is a major challenge for exports. For example, 180 tons of pine nuts are stuck in China for lack of certification.

Seasonal taxes need to be levied on imports. Cold storage must be built and markets must be developed.

Upon closure of the conference, the Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) submitted a formal letter to MAIL, requesting MAIL and partner Ministries to take action on a set of recommendations which deal mostly with unfair tariff and trade practices. ACCI has requested MAIL to bring their grievances and the proposed solutions to the attention of the President (A summary of ACCI’s copy of ACCI’s letter and attachments, all in Dari, can be provided upon request. Further, a summary of this document is also provided as Annex 09: Key Points of ACCI Letter Submitted to MAIL on this report).

His Excellency Mohd Ashraf Ghani, the President

His Excellency thanked farmers for feeding the country. Mines will bring prosperity; however, stability comes from farmers because they prevent poverty.

The National Unity Government is committed to Agriculture as one of its top priorities. The President has conducted 16 meetings on wheat alone. Each agriculture item will be given special attention. The outcomes of this conference will be shared with the Cabinet and the High Economic Council. From the Jawza (June 2016), we will begin exporting 600 tons of fresh fruit annually through Kabul airport.

The President has studied the 3,000 year old history of Afghanistan. Agriculture has 5 elements; water, land, seeds, tools and cultivation. As mentioned by Mohammad Naeem, poor water management is our big challenge. We lose one billion USD every year because of floods. Currently water is cause of injustice. This is unacceptable as Afghans were among the inventors of water management systems. MAIL and the Ministry of Energy and Water will work together on water management. Work on 21 dams will start this year. This will maximize water utilization and add a few hundred thousand hectares of land to cultivation. Currently we are cultivating only two thirds of the land which was under cultivation in 70s (Daud Khan Era). NSP has to solve farmers’ problems and make sure water reaches their land.

Land has fundamental challenges; usurpation is among the top. Land owners have to be sure that his/her land is safe. Improved seeds and tools have to be accessible to farmers.

The most important element, however, is the farmers themselves; currently farmers’ sons don’t want to be farmers, they want to work in cities for economic reasons. The answers to the question, “For what products do you want extension?” should come from the farmer. Agriculture should change from a tradition into a profession.
The private sector has performed better than our extension program. We have two simple yardsticks; production per hectare compared to that of neighbors. And how much money reaches the farmers’ pockets.

We have two fundamental problems; our trade balance is in bad shape and the linkages between our urban and rural areas are weak.

You have the job of identifying your needs in this conference and let me know of them. I will do my best to address them.

Farmers’ Key Challenges and their Solutions

Year one of AAEP II demonstrated that the major challenge identified in extension is that knowledge and skills are not being transferred from extension workers to farmers at the FFS level at the rate at which they must to create the agriculture system that is needed in Afghanistan.

Day 1 (afternoon of February 20, 2016) focused on identifying and prioritizing obstacles to transferring knowledge and skills from the provincial model teaching farms (PMTF) training of extension workers to farmers at the FFS level in a consultative and democratic way.

Identifying and Prioritizing Obstacles

Methodology

The key information sources for this exercise were farmers and extension workers, who interacted face-to-face and were guided by the conference’s facilitators. Other members of conference also actively participated. The process was as follows:

1. 400 of the conference participants were divided into 20 groups of 20 participants each;
2. Each group was assigned a facilitator, who explained the purpose and methodology and facilitated the group through it;
3. Each participant listed obstacles for five minutes by him-/herself;
4. Each group voted for top three obstacles in the group;
5. Two groups were brought together to form a single group, then having a total of six top obstacles;
6. Members of the two groups voted to select top 2 from their collective six obstacles. As a result the top 20 obstacles were identified by 10 groups;
7. The twenty obstacles were brought to plenary session and shown and explained on screen;
8. The plenary session consolidated the top twenty obstacles and as a result, all the content was consolidated into thirteen obstacles; and
9. The plenary session of 400 participants each had the right to cast 3 votes. They voted to identify the top 3 obstacles.

For further information on methodology please read Annex 3 - Small Group Discussion Instructions.
Consolidated Thirteen Obstacles Including the Top Three Obstacles

The following table shows the thirteen obstacles identified by the process. They are ranked as per the number of votes they received.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Obstacles</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lack of required resources for extension workers - deficiency of budget</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and field benefits for extension workers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lack of security in most of the areas</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Low confidence of farmers on extension workers because of their low</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>qualification and experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lack of implementation, transport facilities and low capacity of extension</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>workers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Extension workers’ achievements are not evaluated</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lack of transportation, low salary of personnel and implementers</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lack of coordination among extension workers</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Conducting trainings in the village and district level as opposed to areas</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>easily accessible to farmers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Lack of transportation, repairing and lubrication facilities</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Low numbers of technical and professional personnel</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Lack office building and office equipment</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Lack of transportation and other resources for extension workers</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Lack of new localized information</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Day 2 (morning of February 21, 2016) focused on identifying and prioritizing solutions to the obstacles to transferring knowledge and skills from the provincial model teaching farms (PMTF) training of extension workers to farmers at the FFS level in a consultative and democratic way.

Identifying and Prioritizing Solutions for the Top Three Obstacles

Methodology

The same groups (those who previously identified and prioritized the obstacles) worked to identify and prioritize solutions for top three obstacles. The following methodology was followed:

1. Participants went to their earlier groups and in each group a facilitator directed the process;
2. Each group was divided into three sub-groups where each sub-group was assigned one obstacle to identify solutions for;
3. Each participant listed solutions for five minutes by him-/herself;
4. Each sub-group voted to identify the top solution among the solutions it had identified. As a result each group had one top solution for each of the three obstacles;
5. Two groups were brought together to form a single group, having total top six solutions, two for each obstacle;
6. Members of the two groups voted to select top 1 solution for each of the obstacle. As a result 30 solutions were prioritized, ten for each obstacle;
7. The thirty solutions were brought to plenary session and projected on screen;
8. The plenary session consolidated the top thirty solutions, 10 under each obstacle. As a result there were 2 solutions for Obstacle 1, 6 solutions for Obstacle 2 and 5 solutions were identified for Obstacle 3;
9. Plenary session voted for the top solution under each obstacle.

For further information on methodology please read Annex 3 - Small Group Discussion Instructions.

Outcome

The top solution under each obstacle was identified as a result of consultation and voting. The following table lists the top three obstacles and ranks the solutions identified in order of the number of votes received.

| Obstacle -1 Lack of required necessities (office equipment, office, transport, budget, communication tools and field benefits) for extension workers |
|---|---|
| Solutions | Votes |
| 1 | Allocating enough budget for office construction, purchasing of office equipment, preparing of transport services, communication tools, field benefits, increasing of salary, preparing of mobile credits cards for extension workers, and establishment of demonstration plots for enhancing of capacity of extension workers. | 188 |
| 2 | Equipping of extension units with all financial and technical and modern equipment in the central and district levels in a continuous way. | 35 |

| Obstacles -2 Lack of security in most of the areas |
|---|---|
| Solutions | |
| 1 | Create job opportunities through adding value to products from production to final consumers | 90 |
| 2 | The objectives of the DAIL workers should be made clear through religious leaders, Shuras and media for people, elders of tribes and opposition so that prospective beneficiaries understand that their work is separate from politics and security, and they should create security committees. | 78 |
| 3 | Stabilization of constitution. | 19 |
Create balanced development opportunities in the provinces, districts and villages, respect ideas of farmers and foster a national psychology.

Conduct training classes in safe areas close to the fields.

Insurance of extension workers by the government and coordination with government and communities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obstacle</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low confidence of farmers in extension workers because of their low qualifications and experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Assign budget for establishing research, extension and training farms in different areas to enable farmers to see and experience the result of extension activities in order to build their confidence in extension workers.

2. Employ professional, technical and experienced people if possible from the local areas and enhance the knowledge and skills and professional of extension workers through training.

3. Ensure that the extension workers deliver high quality and sufficient agricultural services to farmers on time.

4. Collect real problems and find solutions through research and academic centers and solve problems of farmers logically and practically.

5. Raise awareness of farmers to government possibilities and opportunities as well as balance farmers’ expectations with these government possibilities and opportunities.

Private Sector Involvement in Afghanistan’s Extension System

Coordination between private sector and farmers has been poor. Both groups have worked as if they were independent of each other. However, the private sector is the bridge through which farmers’ products, both agriculture and livestock, get to the consumers.

The private sector (traders and industrialists) often complain that farmers’ agriculture and livestock products do not match market demand. For example, one year there is a shortage of a given product and the farmers that have produced it sell their product for good prices. Too often it is seen in the following year that there are a disproportionate number of farmers who produce the same product and hope to sell it at a good price. In practice, or in many instances, this creates excess product. The supply then exceeds demand and it can then only be either sold at a low price or wasted.

There are other kinds of mismatches too. The product may not be of the quality required to be marketed. The product may not be harvested and/or sorted to match the demand of the market. For instance, Khan Jan Alkozai, Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries, cited an example where 180 tons of pine nuts are currently being held in China for not having the right certification.
Of course the private sector cites a number of other challenges that it faces, including lack of land and electricity, taxes and certain certifications. The scope of this conference did not cover these challenges. Instead, the discussion during the conference highlighted the necessity of viewing problems holistically and the need of public and private sector entities to collaborate in order to effectively address the issues.

Farmers complain about the fact that private sector is not purchasing their products but rather all too often the private sector prefers to import products.

The biggest problem farmers appear to face is not having access to markets for their products. For example, 45% of grapes are wasted in Afghanistan. An increase in grape production is not going to help because markets need to be first developed for them. The gateway to market is the private sector.

Coordination and dialogue can certainly address these challenges. However, we must be realistic - not all these challenges can be completely addressed through dialogue, but starting the conversation can go a long way in assisting these obstacles.

**Purpose of the Session: Private Sector Involvement in Afghanistan’s Extension System**

*To conduct dialogue to enhance the collaborative role and potential of Afghanistan’s private sector and identify challenges and opportunities in relation to this collaboration.*

**Additional Participants**

On the final day of the conference, members of Fresh and Dried Fruit Associations from 10 provinces came for this session. The participating provinces were selected based upon levels of fruit production.

**Methodology**

Private sector representatives, farmers and DAIL personnel from 10 provinces were randomly assigned into 10 groups. Three questions were posed:

1. What expectations does the private sector have for the extension services being delivered by MAIL and DAILs to Afghanistan’s farmers?
2. What expectations do MAIL, DAILs and farmers have regarding the private sector?
3. Identify and prioritize the challenges the private sector faces in working with MAIL, DAILs and farmers with regard to extension services?

**The process**

- Each group was facilitated by a facilitator
- Each member of each small group generated ideas silently
- One answer from each participant for each question was recorded using the round robin approach where each small group member reported one answer at a time. The facilitator went around the table and recorded the answer.
- Ideas were clarified and consolidated in each group
- The ideas were reported to plenary session

For further information on methodology please read *Annex 3 - Small Group Discussion Instructions.*
Outcomes

1. What expectations does the private sector have for the extension services being delivered by MAIL and DAILs to Afghanistan’s farmers?
   a. Provision of appropriate place for dry fruit processing.
   b. Assistance in obtaining ISO certification.
   c. Domestic products are not standard; therefore, not appropriate for export.
   d. Provision of improved seeds and establishment of model farms, cold storage facilities and irrigation systems for increased production.
   e. Production of fruits, vegetables and other agriculture products as per national and international standards. Reduced or no taxes on agriculture products. Need a marketing database so start and end dates of agriculture projects can be identified.
   f. Improved coordination for decision making and production between farmers and private sector through associations.
   g. Prevent import of similar products from abroad to support domestic production.
   h. Provision of agriculture land to private sector to produce better and more agricultural products.

2. What expectations do MAIL, DAILs and farmers have regarding the private sector?
   a. Importing quality improved seeds, fertilizers and agricultural chemicals and equipment.
   b. Providing quality services to farmers and developing markets for farmers’ products.
   c. Investing in cold storage and factories to add value to farmers’ products.
   d. Assisting with marketing education and guidance for better decision making.
   e. Using domestic products for export.
   f. Equipping and functionalizing better DAILs at the provincial and district levels to provide modern agricultural services.
   g. Standardizing agriculture, livestock, industrial products and services to provide better national and international services.
   h. Creating necessary coordination, providing enough awareness and information on start and end dates of agriculture and livestock projects and establishing an accurate database for this purpose.

3. Identify and prioritize the challenges the private sector faces in working with MAIL, DAILs and farmers with regard to extension services?
   a. Lack of communication among private sector, farmers, MAIL and DAILs.
   b. Lack of sustainable market for agriculture products of the country.
   c. Weak coordination among stakeholders including private sector.
   d. Lack of quality control labs.
   e. Low capacity and awareness among farmers regarding open marketing and today’s commerce practices.
   f. Shortage of cold storage for keeping fruit and vegetables.
   g. Natural disasters and diseases.
   h. Importing low quality pesticides, seeds, fertilizers without coordination with MAIL.
   i. Weak marketing efforts in selling agriculture products.
   j. Low prices of agriculture products at the time of harvest.
Presentations

One of the purposes of the conference was to introduce provincial and district projects and strengthen coordination among them. Therefore, during the afternoon on the 2nd day of the conference five presentations were given. All of the presentations are available in the report Annexes 04 to 08. After each presentation questions were taken from the conference participants. Following is a summary of each presentation and the Question and Answer session.

National Horticulture and Livestock Project (NHLP): Additional Financing

The objective of NHLP project is to promote adoption of improved production practices by target farmers, with the gradual rollout of farmer-centric agricultural services systems and investment support. The project end date has recently been extended from 2018 to 2020. The project is planned to cover all of Afghanistan. It emphasizes the need to use CDCs as entry point for introducing technology transfer programs, provide demand-driven investment support packages and support Farmer Learning and Resource Centers (FLRC). For further information please see Annex XX: National Horticulture and Livestock Project (NHLP): Additional Financing.

Questions and Answers:

Q1: Pistachio saplings need 90 days for germination in cold weather. You have just provided them (the winter is almost over). Won’t this create problems?

Answer by one of the participants: By utilizing the stratification process, this problem can be overcome. The lead farmers in FRCs can help in this area.

Answer by the presenter: Our technical person is not here now but we will relay our response to you later.

Q2: (By an extension worker): Your department doesn’t have coordination with us at the provincial level. We aren’t aware of your expenses, your budget, and further, your personnel don’t report to us.

Answer: All project expenses are approved by the DAIL Director and we have shared our plans with them. Therefore, such information is available on a provincial level. However, we can conduct a meeting with you to see how we can improve coordination.

Q3: You mentioned 3 components in your project. Could you please tell me which one is your priority? And can you give us some information about the results you have obtained so far?

Answer: This project started its work in Nangarhar province in 2013. Veterinary services were there earlier than the start of this project. This project is in its pilot stage at this time. FARM project has a component of capacity building for extension workers. We are providing services together with GIZ through FLRCs. The other important component is helping the farmers in getting their products to market, which includes linking farmers with the private sector. In this area, NHLP is working together with GIZ. In the long run, NHLP will be able to take over all the responsibilities for the program.

Q3: The main reason that extension work is not successful is that there are two parallel structures, one is the core staff of MAIL and DAIL. However, for new projects, personnel come from the project.
If the core staff lacks the capacity, why are they hired? If they have capacity, then why are new personnel hired?

Answer: Thank you very much. We are FRCs and we have established demo farms where we work together to make sure we have the capacity. The next presentation will answer your question too, where long term projects are explained.

**On-Farm Water Management Project (OFWMP)**

The project goals are to improve agricultural productivity in project areas by enhancing the efficiency of water used and to provide farmers with improved, reliable, and equitable distribution of irrigation water to increase agricultural productivity. It is a long term program of 15 years. Phase one is from 2010 to 2015 and Phase two is from 2016 to 2019. The program has 3 components.

- Irrigation Rehabilitation and Management
- Support for Enhancing Productivity
- Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building of the MAIL

For further information please see *Annex 05: On-Farm Water Management Project (OFWMP)*.

**Question and Answers:**

Question 1: I have studied the documents of the project, and CDCs are mentioned in them. We have already established Irrigation Associations (IAs) of very similar structure. We need to implement irrigation projects through IAs, so we can fulfill the promises that we have made to them.

Answer: We are in coordination with MRRD and around 10 million USD of this project is implemented through them. CDCs are entry points to communities, all the community structures including IAs are linked to CDCs. All our work is going to be implemented through IAs.

Question 2: NGOs, extension workers, MAIL, DAIL, and Agriculture faculties all have a common goal that is to change Afghanistan from an importing country to an exporting country in agricultural products.

All the NGOs working in agriculture and livestock either work in the provincial capital or districts close to it. Both have relatively little land for agricultural activities. Extension workers do serve the remote districts; however, not enough support is provided. Due to this, the common goal will not be achieved, unless extensive work is done in the remote areas.

Answer: Our program is not a project. It is a program for 15 years. We are in the pilot phase at this time. Therefore, we are piloting it in two districts per province. I am not promising, but I believe we will be able to extend to other districts even in the first phase of this program. When extending the program we will come to you and ask your opinion on how to move forward.

However, you too have responsibility here. Your tool is your provincial plan. You need to prepare it well. When NGOs come to you, you also need to be able to convince them through good provincial plans to work in remote districts.
Support to National Program Priority 2 (SNaPP 2)

SNaPP 2's objectives are to improve food security and the economy of rural families; to develop and build capacities of local associations, extension services and private sector; and to increase the income of small farmers and livestock owners through increased productivity and developing infrastructure and marketing. It is based on the achievements and experience of its early phases. SNaPP 2's phase one is for 5 years and covers two districts each in Nangarhar, Balkh and Herat. Program components are institution development and strategic agriculture investment. For further information please Annex 06: Support to National Program Priority 2 (SNaPP 2).

Answers and Questions:

Q1: It is good news that MAIL is responsible for food safety. I have also heard that the Ministry of Public Health is responsible for it. If MAIL is responsible, which it should be; then tell me; where is your food safety stamp as per ISO standards? I can't see it on any food in the market. Preservation of food obviously is a huge problem, I don't see much being done in this area.

Answer: MAIL and Ministry of Public Health are both responsible. Before food is processed, the responsibility falls on MAIL. This is a huge topic, we discuss it in the Ministry every week. We will be happy to talk to you about it later.

Distribution of Wheat Seeds and Fertilizers

Wheat is one the most important agricultural products in the country. We were self-sufficient in wheat production in the 60s and 70s. In the following decades, production was drastically reduced. It improved after 2003 and the average annual growth through 2014 has been 4.5%. The Wheat Sector Development Program is a five year program and is evaluated each year. The purpose of improved seed distribution is to increase wheat production quality and quantity. The objective is to provide access to improved seeds and fertilizers for improved wheat production. The presentation in Annex 07: Distribution of Wheat Seeds and Fertilizers provides more information including statistics.

Questions and Answers:

Q1: We have heard you provide loans to farmers. What is the amount and how many farmers will be covered?

Answer: In the first year, we have only demo plots. In the second year, we will be going for commercialization. We will be specifying loan issues then.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Monitoring and Evaluation Unit under the Extension Directorate was just recently established. The unit is creating a system to follow an effective monitoring and evaluation cycle. The steps are: setting intermediate and long terms goals in a plan, collection of accurate data, analyzing results, taking corrective action, learning from problems and reporting to stakeholders.

The relevant forms and database have been prepared and they will be soon piloted in a number of provinces and then rolled out to all provinces. The team will soon visit provinces to introduce the form and provide training on the system. For further information please Annex 08: Monitoring and Evaluation.
Questions and Answers:

Comment: We fall short of farmers’ expectations mainly because seeds are provided to farmers late. We request your kind attention in this regard.

Response: You are right. In 1394 (2015) we didn’t have an adequate budget in the beginning of the year. We were allocated our budget on Mizan 17th (9/10th month of 2015). This year we won’t have this problem. Therefore, we will make sure farmers get the supplies they need on time.
Annexes

Annex 01: Conference Agenda
Annex 02: List of participants
Annex 03: Small Group Discussion Instructions.docx

Presentation:
Annex 04: National Horticulture and Livestock Project (NHLP): Additional Financing
Annex 05: On-Farm Water Management Project (OFWMP).
Annex 06: Support to National Program Priority 2 (SNaPP 2)
Annex 07: Distribution of Wheat Seeds and Fertilizers
Annex 08: Monitoring and Evaluation

Supplemental Report:
Annex 09: Key Points of the ACCI Letter Submitted to MAIL