

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INVESTMENT

The recommendations presented provide a strategic direction for horticultural production in Afghanistan as well as identifying specific investments that would facilitate its sustainable growth. The investments recommended do not necessarily take into account the time frame and/or budget constraints of potential implementation projects.

The following crops have been identified as having the most potential and are recommended for farmers to produce and exporters to trade:

- Cumin
- Dried Apricots
- Dried Figs
- Grapes
- Melons
- Pine nuts
- Pomegranate
- Raisins

The production and commercialization of these crops alone do not guarantee socio-economic success and must be accompanied with other market developments to assure long term growth and sustainability. It is key to work with locally formed organizations – cooperatives, village councils, etc – in the implementation of these recommendations.

1. Develop research capabilities. Afghanistan needs to develop research capability to support agriculture. Re-developing research farm facilities at Kabul University would initiate this process. The facilities would be used to test, adapt, and develop technologies for application to Afghan production systems. It also would be a gateway to integration of applied education to university agriculture education. extension, training.
2. Provide extension services. Extension personnel lack the skills and confidence to effectively diagnose plant problems in the field, and back up resources for consultation or support are non-existent. A coordinated effort to develop in service training capacity for individuals involved in agricultural outreach (extension, NGOs) is needed. This effort could be coordinated with the Faculty of Agriculture at Kabul University to build the long-term institutional capacity for agriculture sector training.
3. Establish production and marketing centers. Establishment of *food production and marketing centers* would provide a focal point for technical assistance ranging from production technologies, to enterprise management, to marketing. Coordinated with university education programs and extension activities, such centers could be developed into institutions that would facilitate improved production in the short term while providing technical support services (production technology, plant diagnostics, management and marketing) in the longer term. Such centers would

increase production and income, while helping producers build capacity for higher quality.

4. Create marketing organizations. The creation of marketing organizations will facilitate the education and training of farmers on quality issues, disseminate relevant market information, and allow for a collective approach to international markets. Local producer organizations could be developed to assist producers. Working with the Ministry of Agriculture and NGOS, institutions can be established to support the marketing system, such as sorting and grading procedures, storage, processing, credit, cross border customs facilities and so on.
5. Build infrastructure. The construction of cold storage facilities, packing and processing centers in major production and trade centers will improve the quality of Afghan products as well as strengthen its marketing capabilities. A new range of perishables previously unavailable to international markets as well as proper grading and presentation of products as a whole will significantly increase the competitiveness of Afghan horticultural products.