



ICARDA News

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High-Level Afghan Delegation Visits ICARDA Plans Set for Laboratories, Training

Aleppo, Syria (22 May): Plans for training 25 agriculturists and establishing six seed laboratories were set when a senior Afghan delegation visited the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) headquarters on 9-16 May.

In a meeting with the Center's Director General Prof. Dr Adel El-Beltagy and senior management staff, the delegation leader, H.E. Mr Mohammad Sharif, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, expressed appreciation for the work of ICARDA, which he said has had an ongoing, productive relationship with Afghanistan, despite years of war and instability in the country. ICARDA now leads the Future Harvest Consortium to Rebuild Agriculture in Afghanistan, which organized the delivery of improved wheat seed to 65,000 Afghan farmers in April, with financial support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The Deputy Minister also praised the on-going efforts of the Consortium to procure and deliver 10,000 tonnes of high-quality wheat seed for autumn planting, and to establish an efficient seed production system, improve livestock nutrition and health, restore soil and water management; and reintroduce the country's native fruit and vegetable crops.

While the need in Afghanistan is urgent, and the help of the donor community is vital, "we don't plan to be dependent forever," said Sharif in expressing optimism over the long-term prospects for his country. He assured El-Beltagy of his Ministry's full support in addressing the Consortium's plan of work.

El-Beltagy briefed the delegation on ICARDA's role in the Consortium. USAID is currently the principal donor to the Consortium. Other agencies, including the International Development Research Centre, Canada, have also made commitments for funding, and still more donors are being sought. The Future Harvest centers are supported by the Consultative Group on



The elite seed grown in this field at ICARDA will be supplied to Afghanistan for further multiplication and distribution to farmers.

International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

The Afghan delegation included Mr Nasarullah Bakhtari, Agronomist; Dr Abdul Qader Raoufi, General Director of Veterinary Department; Mr M. Tauos, General Director of Planning; Mr Sayed Nooruddin, General Director of Soils Department; Mr Sayed Lal Shah Talibi, General Director of Documentation; and Mr Faizullah, Deputy Director, Improved Seed Enterprise. Mr Abdul Rahman Manan, ICARDA Program Advisor, based in ICARDA Kabul Office, accompanied the delegation.

The delegation visited ICARDA's laboratories and field trials and discussed the problems of agriculture, particularly drought, in Afghanistan with the Center's researchers. Using new tools of science, such as remote sensing, geographic information systems and biotechnology, ICARDA has developed improved crop production and natural resource management technologies that are of direct relevance to Afghanistan. The delegation identified several key areas of collaborative research



The Afghan delegation tours ICARDA's gene bank. The Center holds in trust about 127,000 accessions of dryland crops and their wild relatives. Some 2217 accessions in the gene bank were collected in Afghanistan. Useful accessions are being multiplied to be sent back to Afghanistan for evaluation and further use.



The Deputy Minister Mr Sharif (left) and the Deputy Director, Improved Seed Enterprise, Mr Faizullah (center), from Afghanistan, inspect with Dr Sam Kugbei, Seed Economist, ICARDA, a wheat crop being grown at ICARDA for producing elite seed for Afghanistan.



The delegation is briefed by ICARDA scientists on seed production, processing and storage techniques.

with ICARDA, as well as technologies that are ready to be adopted by farmers in Afghanistan.

Toward the close of their mission, the delegates toured ICARDA's farmer-participatory trials in El-Bab village, about 80 km from ICARDA, where they had a chance to talk with farmers. In El-Bab, the delegation saw on-farm research trials of barley, vetch, and livestock; and techniques for vetch production and sheep flock management. The delegates said they

would like to send Afghan farmers to ICARDA to share experiences with their Syrian counterparts.

In a wrap-up meeting with the Director General and senior management of ICARDA, Sharif expressed great appreciation for the timely and active role of ICARDA in helping to rebuild agriculture in Afghanistan. "ICARDA has taken the lead amongst the member-centers of the Consortium to start implementing the planned activities on the ground in cooperation with the interim Afghanistan government. Our visit to the Center has been highly educational, and we return home convinced that we have a strong and sincere partner in ICARDA to help us in rebuilding agriculture in our country." It was agreed to have 25 Afghan agriculturists trained at ICARDA in seed production technology, including seed health, storage, and marketing. ICARDA has already started work on the establishment of six seed-technology and three seed-health testing laboratories in key locations in Afghanistan. The personnel trained at ICARDA will take charge of the operation of these laboratories.

Sharif carried home with him a draft agreement of cooperation between ICARDA and Afghanistan for further review in the Ministry of Agriculture. Some 470 publications on dry-land agriculture, donated by ICARDA, are being shipped to supplement the Ministry's library. The delegation also requested help from ICARDA to strengthen the Ministry's communication, information and documentation systems.

A meeting on the "Code of Conduct" for seed production was organized by the Consortium members in collaboration with the government of Afghanistan on 21-23 May in Kabul, to develop regulations for the import of seed of important crops and plant quarantine measures. The Code will provide the first science-based, market-oriented regulations for Afghanistan. Sharif said he plans to announce it as official policy soon. The meeting brought together over 80 participants from the Afghanistan Ministry of Agriculture, CGIAR Centers, USAID, International Fertilizer Development Center, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and U.S. universities.

ICARDA (www.icarda.cgiar.org) serves the entire developing world for the improvement of lentil, barley and faba bean; all dry-area developing countries for the improvement of on-farm water-use efficiency, rangeland, and small-ruminant production; and the Central and West Asia and North Africa region for the improvement of bread and durum wheats, chickpea, and farming systems. ICARDA's research provides global benefits of poverty alleviation through productivity improvements integrated with sustainable natural-resource management practices. ICARDA meets this challenge through research, training, and dissemination of information in partnership with the national agricultural research and development systems. ICARDA's mission is to improve the welfare of people and alleviate poverty in dry areas of the developing world by increasing production, productivity, and nutritional quality of food, while preserving and enhancing the natural resource base. ICARDA is a Future Harvest Center supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

Future Harvest www.futureharvest.org <<http://www.futureharvest.org>> is a global nonprofit organization that builds awareness and support for food and environmental research for a world with less poverty, a healthier human family, well-nourished children, and a better environment. Future Harvest supports research, promotes partnerships, and sponsors projects that bring the results of research to rural communities, farmers, and families in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Future Harvest supports the 16 food and environmental research centers that are primarily funded through the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research www.cgiar.org <<http://www.cgiar.org>>

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