

ICARDA News
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Future Harvest Coalition to Help Rebuild Agriculture in Afghanistan

Aleppo, Syria (7 February): Representatives of the international community began planning how best to restore food security and rebuild the agricultural sector in Afghanistan at a meeting convened by ICARDA in Tashkent, January 20-21.

The meeting, supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and organized by ICARDA's Regional Office for Central Asia and the Caucasus, brought together 74 participants representing 34 organizations, including 10 of the 16 Future Harvest Centers of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), non-government-

tal organizations (NGOs), United Nations agencies, United States institutions, various international agencies, and donors, including the Department for International Development (DFID), U.K.; the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada; USAID, and others. ICARDA Director General Prof. Dr Adel El-Beltagy and USAID Senior Policy Advisor Dr Raymond Morton inaugurated the meeting.

In December of last year, ICARDA proposed an initiative of the CGIAR to help Afghanistan, particularly to meet the need for emergency seed supplies and to rehabilitate the local seed supply sector. Following discussions with USAID, ICARDA

received a 12-month grant of US\$2.5 million from the Office for Foreign

Disaster Assistance to implement a

- project. The objectives are to:
 - Multiply and deliver quality seed of adapted varieties through effective delivery systems to reach affected farmers in time, and to build, with Afghan partners, an effective regulatory system that enforces standards and promotes the use of
 - high quality seed and varieties.
- Establish a framework and strategy for CGIAR technical assistance, in cooperation with partners, for the development of seed systems and sustainable agricultural production systems in Afghanistan at the central, regional, and local



Seventy-four representatives from 34 organizations gathered recently in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, to help plan the rehabilitation of Afghanistan's agriculture sector. The meeting was organized by ICARDA and supported by the United States Agency for International Development.

levels.

The stakeholders meeting just held was expanded to include potential partners from other organizations. Based on the inputs from the participants, the following conclusions were reached:

- There is a seed crisis in Afghanistan, but it is manageable with the efforts of international organizations, NGOs, and donors. The seed needs of spring 2002 will not be met and, therefore, food aid should continue for another 18 months. There will be sufficient seed to plant in fall 2002.

- There are sufficient known agronomic interventions for irrigated agriculture in 2002/2003, but insufficient information about internally displaced populations and drought.

- For 2002/2003, sufficient interventions are already planned for irrigated areas, but water is lacking and rehabilitation of irrigation systems is needed. In the short term, it is the irrigated sector, rather than the rainfed system, that can be put back into production.

- Based on the Afghani resource people, it is apparent that Afghanistan has resilient farmers who follow good agronomic practices, and they can work collectively and make collective decisions. The market economy can be reinstated since there is already a cash economy.

There is a need to restore an enabling environment through capacity building.

The immediate aim of the meeting was to develop a workplan for a 12-month project on seed systems, and lay a framework for longer-term activities in seeds and crop improvement; soil and water management; livestock, feed, and rangeland improvement; and horticulture.

A recurrent theme in the meeting was the need to involve Afghan partners closely to create ownership, strengthen their capabilities, and ensure that the realities of the Afghan situation are reflected in all efforts.

Next, ICARDA will finalize the workplan for the first year, and start with the coalition partners to implement the project; complete the detailed workplan for the 12-month seed project; make plans for a workshop on seed policy and regulatory issues, to be held within three months, preferably in Afghanistan; while other working groups will develop proposals for needs assessments and other immediate activities. Representatives from some US universities will meet with Afghan representatives to discuss educational needs.

Along with ICARDA, the other Future Harvest Centers represented were: the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT); International Center for Maize and Wheat Improvement (CIMMYT); International Potato Center (CIP); International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-arid Tropics (ICRISAT); International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI); International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI); International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI); International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR); and the International Water Management Institute (IWMI).
