

III. MOST PROMISING CROPS FOR INTERNAL AND EXPORT INCOME GENERATION

The current state of production practices, post-harvest handling, and marketing activities limit immediate export opportunities to less perishable products and a few high-value fresh products. On the other hand, there exists the need to increase production of traditional fresh fruits and vegetables in order to meet the rise in domestic demand and compete successfully on a regional basis.

Export Market

By evaluating the operational feasibility and income potential of various products (Appendix B), and confirming this data with current international traders (Appendices B & C), we can identify crops with short and long term opportunities in the international market.

Short term Opportunities for Export

- Dried Apricots
- Cumin
- Pine nuts
- Pomegranate
- Raisins

Long term Opportunities for Export

- Dried Figs
- Grapes
- Melons

These crops coincide largely with the exports that historically led the Afghan market (see Appendix A). Back in 1976, raisins by far led horticultural exports, accounting for 90% of the value of total dry fruit exports and 31% of the value of total agricultural exports. The other leading export products were grapes, pomegranates, melons, almonds and pistachios. Afghanistan's absence in the international market and the increased presence of key producing nations have made almonds and pistachios less competitive globally.

The increasing global demand for quality products and unique attributes acts as a double-edge sword for Afghan horticulture. While on the one hand it opens the door to potential markets, on the other hand it severely punishes its lack of quality due to poor production practices and post-harvest handling. Most traders, both exporters and importers, agree that given proper product processing, Afghan crops such as raisins and dried apricots possess sufficient differentiation in their inherent attributes to attract new markets and draw premium prices (see Appendix C).

Domestic Market

Afghanistan is not yet self-sufficient in food. Although, the variety of crops produced generally satisfies the market needs, there is unmet domestic demand for the volume of basic vegetable commodities such as potatoes, onions, carrots and tomatoes. Undoubtedly, increased production of these crops will help satisfy this demand. However, we cannot

ignore the fact that this is aggravated by the lack of post-harvest and storage facilities. This leads to market inefficiencies, poor distribution and the need to import (often re-import domestically grown products) in order to meet off-season demand.