

AGRICULTURAL LINKAGES PLUS PROJECT (ALP UZBEKISTAN)

QUARTERLY REPORT (Q1 FY 2014)

OCTOBER 2013 – DECEMBER 2013

JANUARY 2014

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AGRICULTURAL LINKAGES PLUS PROJECT

(ALP)

Q1 FY 2014 QUARTERLY REPORT

OCTOBER 2014 – DECEMBER 2014

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U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

RAISE Plus IQC

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ACRONYMS

ALP	Agricultural Linkages Plus project
ADB	Asian Development Bank
BDS	Business Development Services
BEO	Bureau Environmental Officer
BFU	Business Forum of Uzbekistan
CAR	Central Asian Republics
CCI	Chamber of Commerce and Industry
CE	Categorical Exclusion
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CNFA	Citizens Network for Foreign Affairs
COP	Chief of Party
CPS	Crop Protection Services
DAI	Development Alternative Inc.
Dekhan	backyard farm
DPP	Dynamic Planning Process
EU	European Union
FFP	Food For Progress
FtF	Farmer to Farmer
FY	Fiscal Year
G&A	General and Administrative
GOU	Government of Uzbekistan
GSB	Growing Sustainable Businesses Initiative (UNDP)
ha	hectare (10,000 square meters, 100 meters by 100 meters, 2.47 acres)
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points
HO	Home Office
HPLC	High Performance Liquid Chromatograph
IEE	Initial Environmental Examination
IER	Initial Environmental Review
IKS	Islohotkonsaltsevis, Ltd. (local consulting firm)
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JSC	Joint Stock Company
Kholhoz	collective farm (during Soviet era)
LLC	Limited Liability Company
LOP	Life of Project
LSP	Local Service Provider
MASHAV	Agency for International Development Cooperation (Israel)
MAWR	Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources of Uzbekistan
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MERIT	Ministry of External Economic Relations, Investment and Trade of Uzbekistan

MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NDC	Negative Determination with Conditions
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODC	Other Direct Costs
OH	Overhead
PD	Positive Determination
PERSUAP	Pesticide Evaluation Report and Safe Use Action Plan
Pudrats	Family-based agricultural production units
RBS	Royal Bank of Scotland
SABIT	Special American Business Internship Training
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SEAF	Small Enterprise Assistance Fund
Shirkat	production cooperative (Uzbek)
SISF	Social Initiative Support Fund
SME	Small and Medium size Enterprises
Sovhoz	state farm enterprise (during Soviet era)
TA	Technical Assistance
TCN	Third Country National
TIKA	Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency
TQSA	Temporary Quarters Subsistence Allowance
TCCTC	Tashkent City Center for Testing and Certification
Tuman	rayon (district) in Uzbek
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USG	United States Government
USAID	US Agency for International Development
UzKDB	Uzbek-Korean Development Bank
VAT	Value Added Tax
Viloyat	Oblast (province) in Uzbek
WFLO	World Food Logistics Organization
WUA	Water User's Association
WUASP	Water User's Association Support Project

This report covers the first quarter (October-November-December 2013) activities of the AgLinks Plus (ALP) Project in Uzbekistan in fiscal year (FY) 2014.

A. BACKGROUND

A.1 Project goals and objectives

The purpose of the Agricultural Linkages Plus Project is to increase employment and incomes through improved competitiveness of selected agriculture value-chains in Uzbekistan. The project consists of four components aimed at addressing project objectives: improving farm level productivity, public and private sector service support, agro-processing, training and human resource development. ALP seeks to improve competitiveness in the value chains related to grape, stone and pome fruits, subtropical fruits and nuts.

A.2 Project Components

The project consists of four components aimed at addressing project objectives:

- Component 1: Improving Farm Level Productivity
- Component 2: Public and Private Sector Service Support
- Component 3: Agro-Processing
- Component 4: Training and Human Resource Development

A.3. Geographic and commodity focus

In early calendar 2013 ALP, having received MAWR and USAID authorization in December 2012, expanded activities from the original 6 districts to 26 districts. ALP now operates in 6 provinces: Namangan, Ferghana and Samarkand, Andijan, Bukhara and Tashkent and 26 districts within these provinces.

Provinces	Samarkand	Namangan	Ferghana	Tashkent	Andijan	Bukhara	Totals
Districts	Tayloq	Pop	Quvasoy	Ohangaron	Andijan	Jondor	
	Payarik	Turakurgon	Ferghana	Bustonlik	Bulokboshi		
	Samarkand	Uychi	Quva	Zangiota	Hujaobad		
	Urgut	Konsonov	Oltarik	Parkent	Marhamat		
	Bulungur	Chortok		Kibray	Jalakuduk		
		Yangikurgan					
AgLinks (old)	3	2	1	0	0	0	6
ALP (new)	2	4	3	5	5	1	20
Sub-totals	5	6	4	5	5	1	
Total	26						26
Other	plus Tashkent City						

Table #1 : List of ALP districts and provinces

The targeted commodities under ALP are the following:

- Stone fruits - peaches, nectarines, cherries, apricots and plums
- Pome fruits - apples, pears and quince
- Sub-tropicals - pomegranate and walnuts
- Vineyards - table grapes

A4. Administrative

Two major administrative actions were successfully completed in this quarter. First, the DAI Resident Representation to Uzbekistan was re-registered by the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, Investment and Trade (MFERIT) authorizing DAI to continue working in-country. With company registration achieved, the DAI Resident Representative (ALP COP) applied and received accreditation to reside and work in Uzbekistan for the next 12 months. Accreditation allows application for a long-term, multiple entry visa which was also obtained this quarter. By the end of the quarter all the necessary company and personnel registrations were accomplished to assure an uninterrupted continuation of project activities through late November 2014.

The second major administrative activity this quarter was adapting and adjusting project activities to the reduced funding environment that was announced via the official USAID “go-slow” order of early October 2013. Project staff, building upon a similar experience in 2009 under the predecessor AgLinks project, developed plans to reallocate resources to assure progress towards technical objectives can continue to be met under the reduced funding scenario. Newly hired staff, added in spring 2013 in response to the December 2012 authorization to expand project activities from 6 to 26 districts, were assured the project can continue to be effective in this financial environment.

ALP site visits by donor and partner delegations organized this quarter included a joint State/USAID visit to project sites in Samarkand (29 October). ALP staff also accompanied a preliminary design team from the World Bank’s planned horticultural project at their request. Site visits and interviews were organized by ALP for the Bank’s staff in two districts of Samarkand Province (10th November). It was clear from discussions with the design team members that ALP activities would directly complement the Bank’s planned program. Similarly, a two-person project design team from IFAD visited the ALP Tashkent offices to obtain information on project activities to complement their upcoming project in Syrkandarya Province (10th October).

Plans and approvals obtained prior to the “go-slow” directive restricting international travel allowed ALP’s Marketing Expert and Cold Storage consultant to participate in the 3rd Central Asian Trade Forum hosted in Almaty by USAID’s REC project (9-10th October). Similarly, an ALP staff member and consultant attended the 6th European Short Course on Fresh-cut Produce held in Antalya, Turkey (23-25th October) which trained trainers for quality assurance and extension activities related to fresh produce quality, safety and marketability.

New DAI Home Office project backstop staff were announced this quarter; Kat Cooley as new Project Manager (replacing Meg Karchner) and Dan Rathbun as new Economic Growth Team Director for Asia (replacing Cheryl Doty). Revisions were made to the FY14 work plan, based upon USAID input, and the annual report for FY13 was completed and submitted to USAID. Both documents were approved by the end of the quarter after revisions were made to meet USAID concerns and to adapt the FY14 Work Plan to the reduced funding scenario that was captured in a special Supplemental Annex (mid-December). ALP also prepared and submitted the quarterly report to the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources (MAWR)(4th October) covering project activities and finances for the third quarter of calendar year 2013.

B. PROJECT ACTIVITIES UNDER COMPONENTS

B.1. Component 1: Improving Farm Level Productivity: The central objective of this activity is to increase incomes through improved competitiveness of selected agriculture value-chains. This is done by addressing the causes of low productivity in the production of grapes and other fruits. The project improves productivity through addressing the following farm level constraints:

a. Improving On-farm Water Management.

Water is a critical agricultural input in Uzbekistan as 90% of farms are irrigated. This quarter ALP local consultants continued to provide training programs to Water Consumer Association (WCA) staff and members with the main focus on preparation of the irrigation and drainage networks for the upcoming winter season. National Exchange Program (NEP-10) was conducted for WCA technical staff (see Section B4 for details) to introduce winterization procedures. ALP's approach is to avail the institutional capacity and real-life examples demonstrated by 8 WCAs which had received support under USAID's Water Users Association Support Project (WUASP, 2004-09) to demonstrate to 24 "new" WCAs that the latter are capable of organizing intra-farm water delivery in a sustainable, timely and equitable manner. The 24 "new" WCAs were the result of the authorized expansion of ALP activities in FY13.

The total number of WCAs working with ALP is now 32 and they represent 8,600 farmers working 90,000 hectares and impacting an estimated 650,000 rural inhabitants. A WCA rating system was developed to provide specific and targeted technical assistance in 2014. Planned specific intra-farm irrigation and drainage rehabilitations were cancelled due to the reduced budget (see Section D).

b. Improving Plant Material.

The US procurement of the equipment and materials for the tissue culture lab was completed and the shipment prepared and stored with the shipping agent this quarter. These materials will be shipped once duty-free entry status is clarified with the Uzbek authorities. Local vendors for the delivery of the lab furniture and heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system were selected after competitive bidding processes. Contracts will be signed and work begun next quarter. The fire alarm system was locally procured and installed at the premises refurbished by Mirzaev (formerly Shreder) Horticultural Research Institute as their initial contribution to establish the lab.

c. Improving Agronomic Practices.

Pruning. Winter is the season for pruning fruit trees to assure optimal harvest in the spring and summer. This quarter the project continued to provide



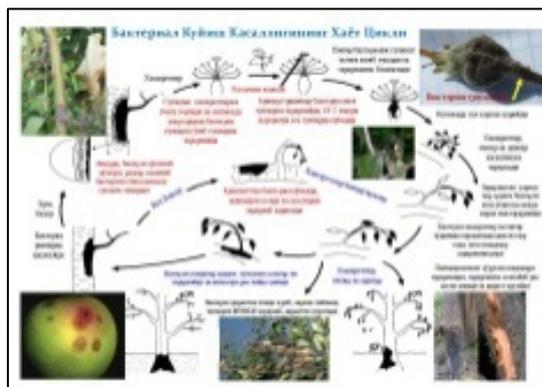
Pruners training in Samarkand

pruning trainings, focusing on both stone and pome fruit trees. The largest private intensive orchard company in Uzbekistan “Oxalick oltin bogi mevasi” requested ALP to train their pruners in best apple pruning techniques. This firm cultivates almost 3,000 hectares of pome, stone and nut fruits.

From December 18 to 20, AgLinks Plus staff conducted pruning trainings in 4 locations in Samarkand Province. Trainings were held at three separate locations within the “Oxalick oltin bogi mevasi” company’s orchards and one location at the biggest intensive orchard owner in Tayloq District, “Siyob-sahovati,” known locally for its Tony Green brand of products. “Siyob-sahovati” has 93 hectares of both stone and pome fruit orchards. A total of 33 pruners from Samarkand, Okdaryo, Tayloq and Jomboy districts of Samarkand Province were taught and immediately started pruning intensive apple and peach orchards at their respective orchards using the ALP introduced “American” method. To complete the required pruning during the winter months an additional 17 ALP-trained pruners from Namangan Province were hired by “Oxalick oltin bogi mevasi” company to prune their apple orchards in Jomboy District. At present ALP has over 70 pruners trained organized in 8 “pruning groups” in 4 different provinces.

d. Pest and Disease Management.

Fire blight has becoming a major issue in intensive orchards. To address this wind-borne bacterial disease that especially impacts pome fruits, ALP developed a one-pager that contains information on disease biology, identification photos and recommendations on best control methods & materials. These materials are distributed in both regular and specific trainings for orchardists.



e. Marketing Support.

Apple Variety Contest. The annual Apple Variety Contest was held in Tayloq District, Samarkand Province on 3rd October and brought together 35 apple producers from Bukhara (5), Namangan (1) and Samarkand (29) provinces. The 2013 overall winner was a new variety introduced to Uzbekistan, Ida Red. Local representatives from agricultural input suppliers, such as agrochemicals and fertilizers, also displayed their wares at the contest. A special session on the identification, impacts and control measures for fire blight (see sub-section d. above) was presented and lively discussed by the participants.

Linking Suppliers to Buyers. During Q1 ALP’s marketing and export specialist provided a number of one-on-one consultations with cooperating cold stores and

orchardists to link them with local buyers. The results from this quarter's efforts are presented in Table #2 below.

Province	District	Type of organization	Product	Price, UZS per kg	Volume, kg	Total cost of the deal, UZS	Market
Ferghana	Altyaryk	Cold store	Grape Khusayni	9,000	3,500	31,500,000	Local supermarket
Tashkent	Parkent	Cold store	Grape Rizamat, sweet pepper	4,600 - 8,000	250	1,000,000	Local supermarket
	Kibray	Farm Enterprise	Apple	4,000 - 5,500	8,000	40,000,000	Local supermarket chain, local bazaar
	Bustonlik	Farm Enterprise	Apple	5,000	6,350	31,750,000	Local supermarket
		Farm Enterprise	Apple	4,000	1,500	6,000,000	Local supermarket
Total					19,600	110,250,000	49,662 USD

Table #2 : Local sales linkages in Q1 FY2014

f. Post-Harvest Storage and Losses.

ALP activities to reduce post-harvest storage losses this quarter focused on ethylene reduction methods in the seasonally available apple and persimmon harvests. These two fruits have high levels of ethylene production which accelerates the ripening process for fresh produce, thereby shortening shelf-life, quality and sales period. When stored in closed cold store rooms these fruits emit large amounts of ethylene gas that can concentrate if not vented.

ALP local consultants visited cooperating cold stores in all 6 targeted provinces and advised 2 main ethylene reduction methods: (1) industrial (sophisticated and more expensive); (2) alternative via the defrost tubes using a vacuum cleaner (simple and low cost). The implementation of project recommendations slowed produce ripening and moisture loss by 30%. By the end of the storage period the cold store owner/operators reported their produce as having more marketable features than their competitors.

#	Name	Province	District	Industrial ethylene vent	Alternate vent system (tube & vacuum cleaner)
1	Azamjon Sultanov	Andijan	Hujaobod	1	
2	Talat Bababekov		Andijan		
3	Abdurahman	Namangan	Uchkurgan	1	
4	Nodirbek Ashurov	Ferghana	Ferghana	1	
5	Qahramon Baltabayev		Ferghana		1
6	Rovshan Nasirov	Andijan	Buloqboshi		1
7	Aslan Rahimov	Bukhara	Jondor		1
8	Olim Mahmudov		Jondor		1
9	Isoqjon Boymatov		Altyaryk		1
10	Sohibjon	Ferghana	Ferghana		1
11	Akmal		Altyaryk		1
12	Erkin Shorahimov		Altyaryk		1
13	Abdugaffor Khaknazarov	Namangan	Turkurgan		1
14	Golib Fayziev	Samarkand	Samarkand		1
15	Alam Mahmudov		Samarkand		
TOTAL				5	10

Table #3 : Cold stores installing ethylene venting in Q1 FY2014

B.2. Component 2: Public and Private Sector Service Support:

AgroFood 2013. ALP's cold chain expert made a presentation on "Development of the cold industry and chain in Uzbekistan" at the AgroFood-2013 conference and exhibition in Tashkent organized by the Uzbek Chamber of Commerce and Industry. At the organizers' request ALP donated 200 copies of each of the two beekeeping manuals

(Bee Best Practices and Bee Diseases) for distribution to conference participants. Most of the produce on display at the expo, grapes and apples, were from ALP clients that had been mobilized from Ferghana, Namangan and Tashkent (particularly Parkent cold stores) provinces.

B.3. Component 3: Agro-Processing and Exports:

Solar Dryers. Farm enterprises are challenged with how to preserve fruits beyond the harvest season for use throughout the winter months, subsequent market sales and to minimize spoilage losses. One method of fruit preservation particularly suited for Uzbekistan, given the number of sunny days in the year and low humidity, is solar drying. In the 2013 agricultural season ALP introduced 2 types of dryers that were tested in all project agroclimatic zones and subsequently modified to suit local weather conditions. During Q1 of FY 2014 the ALP staff member for Andijan Province along with Dr. Umid Akromov, professor at Tashkent Agrarian University, identified fruit types and varieties in Tashkent Province which are best for drying. Local sources of the most appropriate varieties were also identified along with potential processors, consolidators, and traders.

Additional activities planned for 2014 in collaboration with Dr. Akromov include a formal assessment of the ALP fruit drying experience and development of a fruit drying manual for larger dissemination. ALP’s staff also visited “Bulokboshi Agrosanoat” agrofirma in Andijan Province to present the design specifications for the Solar Stack Dryer as well as discuss this agrifirma’s intention to produce 70 dryers in 2014 based upon the success of the 2013 prototypes.



Dilbarhon Badalova demonstrating products she preserved for winter, Andijan Province

Export. ALP’s marketing and export specialist, and Tashkent Regional Area Manager, provided a number of consultations to cooperating cold stores and farm enterprises and linked them to exporters. Table #4 presents results of these efforts in Q1.

Province	District	Type of organization	Product	Price, UZS per kg	Volume, kg	Market
Tashkent	Parkent	Cold store	Apple	not yet available	not yet available	Turkmenistan
			Perssimon			Russia
		Cold store	Grape Toyfi	4,000	10,000	Turkmenistan
			Grape Kishmish	5,500	5,000	Russia
		Farm Enterprise	Raisins	5,750	5,000	Kazakhstan
Farm Enterprise	Raisins	5,750	3,200	Kazakhstan		
TOTAL					23,200	

Table #4 : Exports from ALP Tashkent partners in Q1 FY2014

B.4. Component 4: Training and Human Resource Development (HRD):

Horticultural Exchange Program (HEP). The HEP09 selection process for participants was finalized in December. A total of 21 initial applicants were reduced by

the 3-party selection committee, consisting of USAID, MAWR and ALP representatives, to 10 participants representing both the private (8 horticulturalists) and public (2 MAWR representatives) sectors. The main theme for HEP09 is “Integrated Orchard Management” and the program will take place in February 2014. All logistics have been organized for the trip.

National Exchange Program (NEP). All participants in the international exchange programs, whether horticultural or cold storage related, are required to share their knowledge with others upon their return to Uzbekistan. This process has been codified by ALP through a series of national exchange programs (NEP).

The 9th NEP - “Cold Chain”. A round table meeting in Tashkent for 46 cold chain owner/operators, representing a total capacity of 32,000 mt, discussed and shared sub-sector 2013 achievements, obstacles and ways to improve the cold chain industry in Uzbekistan. Presenters included other horticultural value chain participants from production to processing to retail outlets with each providing their review of the 2013 season and their respective interactions with the cold chain. The purpose of the event was to allow cold chain actors and other ALP partners to reflect and share on the horticultural value chain achievements for 2013 and make recommendations for improvements in 2014.



Cold Chain NEP Participants Review Packaging Options

ALP clients, rather than ALP staff, presented their perspectives on what was successful and areas for improvement. Emphasis was on problems identified and how they were overcome, the role of the project in assisting the sector and suggestions for advancement. Representatives of three local input supply companies agreed to present their products: Namuna Service, a supplier of agrichemicals, presented disinfectants to reduce mold; Daewoo Pack presented their line of packaging materials for fruits and vegetables; and Cold Industry informed participants of their company’s product line for the cold store industry, including compressors and insulated “sandwich” panels.

At the end of the day ALP organized a site visit for all participants to the biggest cold store facility in Uzbekistan (“Sergeli Agro Fresh”-16,000 mt) in suburban Tashkent. The management of this facility provided a tour with descriptions of their company’s activities and best management practices. Sergeli staff were previously part of ALP exchange visits to the US focused on cold chain management. They presented information to the group on optimal and varied storage conditions for fresh produce (temperature & humidity by produce stored), refrigeration system management and maintenance as well as packaging, stacking and racking of produce to maintain proper air flow in the cold rooms to assure the longest shelf life.

The 10th NEP – WCA Governance. The 10th NEP was held on the 11th of December in Namangan Province, and focused on Improved Internal Governance Capacity for Water Consumers Associations (WCAs). A total of 29 hydro-technicians, engineers and managers, representing 32 WCAs from 6 different provinces, converged on Namangan

to discuss management, financial and technical best practices for their organizations to better deliver water on time and in the appropriate amounts to orchards and fields.

During the morning theoretical sessions participants discussed topics such as “Planning technical works”, “Land and water use productivity improvement”, “Use of engineering tools” and “Maintenance and operation of irrigation and drainage networks”, etc. with the previously supported WCA (formerly WUA) representatives sharing their best practices. With the warming of the afternoon, practical sessions were held in the field with participants divided into 4 smaller groups, each led by WUASP trained experts and WCA staff. At the end of the day the groups met again to summarize the major lessons learned. Besides the improved technical skills the participants noted from the NEP that the WUASP supported organizations had separated executive and control bodies within their WCAs while the non-WUASP had not followed this separation of internal responsibility.



Participants Learn How to Use Survey Equipment

Trainings. A number of other non-NEP trainings were organized during the quarter, as summarized in Table #5. Of special note are those highlighted below.

Province	Trainings Held in Q1 FY2014								Total
	Preparation of IDS system for winter season		Winter practices for grapes		Household processing		Best intensive orchard practices & pruning		
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	
Samarkand	3	61	3	76			0	33	176
Ferghana	0	27					0	29	56
Namangan	8	46			125	0	2	22	203
Andijan	7	50	0	42			0	45	144
Tashkent	5	65					2	91	163
Bukhara	0	43	3	15					61
Totals	23	292	6	133	125	0	4	220	803
Total - 803 (158 Female- 20%, 645 Male)									

Table #5 : Non-NEP Trainings in Q1 FY2014

“Best Intensive Orchard Practices”. UNDP’s Aid-4-Trade Project and the Uzbek Chamber of Commerce requested ALP to conduct a training on intensive orchard best practices on 21 October. The project organized and held a one-day workshop in Namangan consisting of both theoretical and practical sessions with UNDP and the Chamber sponsoring the event and ALP experts providing training materials, trainers and addressing the many issues involved in intensive orchard management.

Training of Trainers (TOT). ALP expanded its TOT series to new topics by targeting the best participants from previous trainings to deepen both theoretical and practical knowledge of future trainers to disseminate new and improved techniques of fruit cultivation. For example, a two-day TOT in Namangan Province on “Apple pruning and training physiology” & “Fruit tree physiology” was held during October 23-24. Agronomists, orchardists, farmers and pruning group members from Samarkand, Fergana, Tashkent and Namangan provinces attended the workshop.

After the morning classroom session participants visited two intensive pome and stone fruit orchards in Chortoq District of Namangan Province for hands-on practical work in pruning and tree training techniques. The second day introduced attendees to new and innovative “bark grafting” of peach trees which allows farmers to change variety in one year to shorten response time to market demand. “Bark grafting” orchardists save 4 years by implementing the technique in place of the traditional replanting and growing a new tree. As a result of TOT training sessions 4 new pruners groups were established in Tashkent (3) and Namangan (1) provinces while the number of existing pruner group members in Namangan and Ferghana provinces doubled. Total number of pruners who can correctly prune intensive orchards grew from 24 to 70.

C. ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

C.1. Monitoring.

The list of activities completed during the first quarter of 2014 is provided below. All mitigation measures envisioned were implemented with no adverse environmental effects from project activities recorded. All of the following activities were classified as Category 2 – with “no significant risk of negative environmental impact.”

1. Training: Household processing (Namangan Province) – Clean, food safety and hygiene practices were addressed during the training program.
2. TOT: Trainings of Trainers on Intensive orchards was conducted in Fergana, Andijan and Samarkand provinces. Only good environmental practices were recommended during the training. All pruning groups were instructed on good environmental practices.
3. ALP-79: HEP-9. Group of 10 Uzbek horticulturalists visited California to learn best grape production practices. Participants were exposed only to best environmental practices.
4. Training: Intensive orchard practices training was conducted in Andijan, Samarkand and Bukhara provinces with consultant Tim Mitchell. Proper disinfection of tools and loppers was addressed at the training besides other agro-technical aspects of orchard management.
5. National Exchange Program (NEP-9): Round table meeting of cold storage facility owner/managers was held in Tashkent to discuss and share achievements, problems and ways to improve the cold chain in Uzbekistan.
6. National Exchange Program (NEP-10): workshop for WUA engineers was conducted in Namangan Province on land leveling techniques.
7. Training: Calculation of Irrigation Service Fee, Operation and Maintenance of Irrigation and Drainage systems during winter and Sustainability of Irrigation and Drainage System in Tashkent Province. Environmental problems associated with these activities were addressed during the training program.

C.2. Mitigation.

AgLinks Plus promotes environmentally friendly agrotechnologies and techniques to mitigate possible adverse impact of agricultural activities. The proper use of agrochemicals for pest and disease control is always on the project agenda. The project pest and disease control manual used in these trainings is fully PERSUAP consistent. This manual was produced in cooperation with the National Plant Protection Institute and is the basis of dissemination of information on the potential negative environmental impact of agrochemical use. All ALP pest and disease control trainings include a special session on safe use of agrochemicals. All ALP trainers highlight this key aspect of horticultural best practices and pest & disease control will be the first information migrated from the physical manuals ALP produces to the MEVA mobile app platform. New project activities, such as using pheromone traps for optimal scheduling of chemical application further mitigate undesirable environmental impact. Orchardists are instructed to apply appropriate chemicals and in the correct amount instead of using them blindly.

C.3. Issue(s). No major issues were identified during this quarter.

ANNEX A

- Monthly Report for October 2013
- Monthly Report for November 2013

USAID AgLinks Plus Project
Monthly Report #17 – October 2013

Contract # EDH-I-00-05-00004-00
TO # AID-176-TO-11-00002-00

ADMINISTRATION. ALP prepared and submitted the quarterly report to the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources (MAWR)(4th). A two-person project design team from IFAD visited to obtain information on ALP activities for their upcoming project in Syrkindarya Province (10th). ALP Marketing Expert and Cold Storage consultant participated in the 3rd Central Asian Trade Forum hosted in Almaty by USAID's REC project (9-10th). ALP staff member and consultant attended the 6th European Short Course on Fresh-cut Produce held in Antalya, Turkey (23-25th) which trained trainers for quality assurance and extension activities related to fresh produce quality, safety and marketability. ALP hosted a joint State (Phil Kosnett) and USAID (Nate Park) one-day visit to project sites in Samarkand (29th). New DAI Home Office project backstop staff were announced; Kat Cooley as new Project Manager (replacing Meg Karchner) and Dan Rathbun as new EG Team Director for Asia (replacing Cheryl Doty).

TECHNICAL. With limited technical activities due to project slowdown instructions, October efforts focused on trainings, an Apple Variety Contest, conclusion of an international exchange visit to California and training of trainers (TOT).

Training programs. The following trainings were conducted by local staff and consultants : Household Processing (5 trainings for 125 women in Namangan Province); Winter Grape Best Practices (5 trainings for 97 farmers in Samarkand Province) and Winter Preparation of Irrigation and Drainage Systems (7 trainings, 105 WCA staff and member-farmers in Namangan and Ferghana provinces).

Apple Variety Contest. The annual Apple Variety Contest was held in Taylak District, Samarkand Province on 3rd October and brought together 35 apple producers from Bukhara (5), Namangan (1) and Samarkand (29) provinces. The 2013 overall winner was a new variety introduced to Uzbekistan, Ida Red. Local representatives from agricultural input suppliers, such as agrochemicals and fertilizers, also displayed their wares at the Contest.



Apples on Display at 2013 Variety Contest

Horticultural Exchange Program (HEP). The 8th HEP group of 10 Uzbek horticulturalists visited California during 19 September to 14 October with a focus on "Best Grape and Raisin Production Practices". HEP08 participants were mostly from the private sector (9) with one MAWR representative. Participants were most impressed with pruning practices and trellis systems used for different grape varieties, as well as the seedless grape varieties. Demo plot owners could see the long-term positive impacts of technologies promoted by the project and returned to Uzbekistan motivated to implement and spread best practices. Jim Thompson (UC-Davis post-harvest technology expert) provided a session on measuring the appropriate sulfur dioxide levels for fumigation at precooling, cooling, and cold storage periods. Attendees learned how to measure the correct proportion of sulfur to use to generate gas for grapes and other crops. The next HEP (#09) will cover Integrated Orchard Management with finalists determined in late November and the program scheduled to begin in mid-January.



HEP08 Participants Visit Farmer's Market in California

“Best Intensive Orchard Practices”. UNDP’s Aid-4-Trade Project and the Uzbek Chamber of Commerce requested ALP to conduct a training on intensive orchard best practices on 21 October. The project organized and held a one-day workshop in Namangan consisting of both theoretical and practical sessions with UNDP and the Chamber sponsoring the event and ALP experts providing training materials, trainers and addressing the many issues involved in intensive orchard management.

Training of Trainers (TOT). ALP technical staff organized a two-day TOT in Namangan Province from 23 to 24 October on “Apple pruning and training physiology” & “Fruit tree physiology.” Agronomists, orchardists, farmers and pruning group members from Samarkand, Fergana, Tashkent and Namangan provinces attended the workshop. After the morning classroom session participants visited two intensive pome and stone fruit orchards in Chortoq District of Namangan Province for hands-on practical work in pruning and tree training techniques. The second day introduced attendees to new and innovative “bark grafting” of peach trees which allows farmers to change variety in one year to shorten response time to market demand. “Bark grafting” orchardists save 4 years by implementing the technique in place of the traditional replanting and growing a new tree. ALP will expand the TOT series to other topics with best students from previous trainings to deepen both theoretical and practical knowledge of future trainers to disseminate new and improved techniques of fruit cultivation.



TOT Participant Learns Proper Pruning Techniques

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE. No activities were conducted during the month of October that required an Environmental Assessment. Initial Environmental Reviews prepared in October include:

Category-2: Categorical Exclusion for

1. Training: Household processing (Namangan Province) – Sterile, sanitized and hygienic food safety practices were addressed during the training program.
2. TOT: Training of Trainers on tree physiology (Namangan Province) – Environmental issues addressed in training with environmentally sound practices recommended to trainees.
3. ALP-79: HEP-8. Group of 10 Uzbek horticulturalists visited California to learn best grape production practices. Participants were exposed to best US environmental practices

NEXT MONTH. The following activities are anticipated for November 2013:

- 1st week – Work on Annual 2014 WP and Annual 2013 Report ; meet with GIZ consultants
- 2nd week – Pest and Disease training (Andijan); accompany IBRD design team to Samarkand
- 3rd week – Present at AgroFood 2013; Cold Store National Exchange Program (Tashkent)
- 4th week – Begin closedown procedures if no new funding provided

ADMINISTRATION.

Re-registration of the DAI Resident Representation to Uzbekistan by the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, Investment and Trade (MFERIT) was received for the next 12 months, authorizing DAI to continue work in-country. With company registration achieved the next step requires accreditation of the DAI designated resident representative and visa issuance which should be completed by mid-December. ALP staff accompanied a preliminary design team from the World Bank’s planned horticultural project at their request. Site visits and interviews were organized by ALP for the Bank’s staff in two districts of Samarkand Province. Still in the initial design phase, the Bank envisions a project with 3 components; technical assistance, a horticultural line of credit and project management. Revisions were made to the FY14 work plan, based upon USAID input, and the annual report for FY13 was completed and submitted to USAID.

TECHNICAL. November highlighted on-site training, including a national exchange program for cold chain owner/operators.

National Exchange Program (NEP-9) “Cold Chain”. A round table meeting in Tashkent for 46 cold chain owner/operators, representing a total capacity of 32,000 mt, discussed and shared sub-sector 2013 achievements, obstacles and ways to improve the cold chain industry in Uzbekistan. Presenters included other horticultural value chain participants from production to processing to retail outlets with each providing their review of the 2013 season and their respective interactions with the cold chain. The purpose of the event was to allow cold chain actors and other ALP partners to reflect and share on the horticultural value chain achievements for 2013 and make recommendations for improvements in 2014.



Cold Chain NEP Participants Review Packaging Options

ALP clients, rather than ALP staff, presented their perspectives on what was successful and areas for improvement. Emphasis was on problems identified and how they were overcome, the role of the project in assisting the sector and suggestions for advancement. Representatives of three local input supply companies agreed to present their products: Namuna Service, a supplier of agrichemicals, presented disinfectants to reduce mold; Daewoo Pack presented their line of packaging materials for fruits and vegetables; and Cold Industry informed participants of their company’s product line for the cold store industry, including compressors and insulated “sandwich” panels. At the end of the day ALP organized a site visit for the participants to the biggest cold store facility in Uzbekistan (“Sergeli Agro Fresh”-16,000 mt) in suburban Tashkent.

The management of this facility provided a tour with descriptions of their company’s activities and best management practices. Sergeli staff were previously part of ALP exchange visits to the US focused on cold chain management. They presented information to the group on optimal and varied storage conditions for fresh produce (temperature & humidity by produce stored), refrigeration system management and maintenance as well as packaging, stacking and racking of produce to maintain proper air flow in the cold rooms to assure the longest shelf life.



NEP-9 Participants Inspect Fruit at Sergeli Cold Store

AgroFood 2013. ALP's cold chain expert made a presentation on "Development of the cold industry and chain in Uzbekistan" at the AgroFood-2013 conference and exhibition in Tashkent organized by the Uzbek Chamber of Commerce and Industry. At the organizers' request ALP donated 200 copies of each of the two beekeeping manuals (Bee Best Practices and Bee Diseases) for distribution to conference participants. Most of the produce on display at the expo, grapes and apples, were from ALP clients from Ferghana, Namangan and Tashkent (particularly Parkent cold stores) provinces.

Training programs and consultations. Trainings conducted this month include: Winter Pruning for Fruit Trees (3 trainings for 65 farmers in Tashkent Province), Intensive Orchards (1 training for 45 farmers in Andijan Province) and Winterization of Irrigation and Drainage Systems (8 trainings for 123 WCA staff members and farmers in Tashkent Province). ALP's cold chain expert visited 22 cooperating cold stores to provide on-site consultations during the month as the storage season is fully underway.

Horticultural Exchange Program (HEP). The HEP09 selection process for participants was finalized this month. A total of 21 initial applicants were reduced by the 3-party selection committee, consisting of USAID, MAWR and ALP representatives, to 10 participants representing both the private (8 horticulturalists) and public (2 MAWR representatives) sectors. The main theme for HEP09 is "Integrated Orchard Management" and the program will take place in February 2014. Efforts will now focus on obtaining and submitting documents from participants for the US visa process in TrainNet.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE. No activities were conducted during the month of November that required Environmental Assessment. Initial Environmental Reviews prepared in November include:

Category-2: Categorical Exclusion for

1. Training: Intensive orchard practices training conducted in Andijan Province; only environmental best practices were recommended during the training.
2. National Exchange Program: Annual roundtable meeting of cold storage facility owner/operators in Tashkent to discuss and share achievements, problems and ways to improve the cold chain in Uzbekistan. Food safety issues directly discussed.
3. Training: Operation and maintenance of irrigation and drainage systems during winter, expected lifespan of irrigation and drainage systems and calculation of irrigation service fee structures in Tashkent Province. Environmental problems associated with these activities were addressed during the training program.

NEXT MONTH. The following major activities are anticipated for December 2013:

- 1st week – TOT "Advanced Pruning Methods", Andijan Province
- 2nd week – Collection of grape variety cuttings for propagation, Ferghana Valley
- 3rd week – WUA National Exchange Program in Namangan Province
- 4th week – Orchard & nursery assessments in Samarkand & Bukhara provinces