

**USAID AgLinks Plus Project**  
Monthly Report #20 – February 2014

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

**ADMINISTRATION.** In early February the DAI Managing Director for Asia (Jennifer Baker) departed Tashkent for Almaty after a week monitoring ALP activities and meeting partners in Bukhara, Samarkand and Tashkent provinces. By mid-February the project met the new USAID Uzbekistan Country Officer (John Riordan) along with other USAID partners with Mr. Riordan visiting the project office a week later. At month's end the ALP project director (Charles May) was interviewed by the Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Uzbekistan (Tatyana Bystrushkina) regarding project activities and impacts for their biannual publication (scheduled to appear in June 2014).



*Demonstrating V-trellis use in intensive apple orchards - California*

**TECHNICAL.** February highlights include HEP09, genetic testing of cherry variety pollinating compatibility, winter pruning and preparations for the 2014 cold storage season.

*Horticultural Exchange Program (HEP).* The 9<sup>th</sup> group of Uzbek horticulturalists returned from California on 24 February after completing the 3-week exchange visit focused on “Integrated Orchard Management.” A total of 9 participants (7 orchardists and 2 representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources) visited fruit tree nurseries, orchards, research institutes and processing plants including 10 stone fruit growers, 2 grape growers and 2 University of California (UC) Cooperative Extension Farm Advisors. Six (6) UC faculty lectured on the most recent scientific and technological findings for stone fruits, post harvest physiology and soil science and were complemented by visits to the Mondavi Institute for Food and Wine, Wolfskill Experimental Orchard and the USDA Conal Germplasm Repository.

According to the California hosts the Uzbek delegates “were inquisitive, well motivated, asked excellent questions and totally involved in the program ....individually and collectively an outstanding group” with “all involved in some aspect of integrated orchard management.” “They were very polite and most appreciative of the time spent with the individuals from the various academic venues, farms and organizations with whom they met.” By visit end the Uzbek group had a thorough understanding of how academia, government and industry all work together to enhance the fruit value chain.

*Cold Chain.* The following activities were completed with project partners involved in fresh fruit cold storage :

- ALP assisted 9 cold store owners to obtain visas for an exchange visit to India to examine best industry practices, particularly for grapes. This Public-Private Partnership combined expertise and financial resources of an Indian private sector company (Grapage), the Uzbek participants themselves and USAID’s ALP project. Grapage handled the Indian logistics, while ALP provided an exchange visit facilitator with the requisite technical and translation skills. USAID’s financial participation was 10% of total and covered only the costs of the facilitator/translator. Grapage is an ALP partner providing sulphur dioxide pads to the Uzbek post-harvest storage industry who witnessed enormous scaling of their sales from 2012 to 2013 (60,000 to 1 million units sold) by partnering with the project to provide field training and support to cold store owner/operators. The India exchange visit will run from 03-11 March.

- ALP procured an ethylene meter to objectively measure this natural byproduct of the fruit ripening process within cold stores. Ethylene must be vented from cold rooms because it acts as a plant hormone that accelerates ripening. Thermometers were also procured for monitoring both stationary and transit cooling systems with project partners during the 2014 post-harvest season for fresh fruits.
- ALP's cold chain expert visited cooperating cold stores in Samarkand, Tashkent and Bukhara provinces to provide specific recommendations and collect end-of-season (2013) domestic and export sales data. Preparations were also made for the National Exchange Program focused on opportunities presented by the cold storage industry scheduled for late March in Bukhara.



*Cherry budwood samples at collection – Ferghana, Uzbekistan*

*Training Programs.* Winter pruning trainings were held for both intensive orchards (38 farmers in Andijan Province) and traditional orchards (18 farmers in Namangan Province). ALP's water management consultants continued assisting WUAs with their annual General Assembly meetings.

*S-allele test.* 100 sample cherry buds from 15 cherry varieties in 9 orchards in 4 districts were collected, marked and shipped to Corvinus University in Budapest to determine the appropriate genetic match between pollinator and producer varieties. Cherry is not self-pollinating and requires the appropriate genetic match with another variety to assure fruit set. Known as s-allele testing, this process uses polymerase chain reaction (PCR) technology to scale the plant DNA contained in the sampled buds. Once results are available in a month's time ALP will begin a grafting program with the correct cherry pollinators that will more than double cherry yields within 3 to 4 years. Uzbek cherries command a 50% price premium on the Russian market over their competitors.

**ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE.** No new activities were conducted during the month requiring Environmental Assessment or Initial Environmental Reviews. The project anticipates and awaits a mid-March visit from the USAID/CAR Mission Environmental Officer (Nina Kavetskaya).

**NEXT MONTH.** The following major activities are scheduled for March 2014:

- 1<sup>st</sup> week – Exchange visit to India “Best Grape Storage Practices” for cold store owner/operators
- 2<sup>nd</sup> week – Trellis installation (Andijan, Samarkand and Bukhara provinces)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> week – Training on IPM practices in orchards (Andijan); visit of Nina Kavetskaya (USAID/CAR)
- 4<sup>th</sup> week – National Exchange Program #11 “New Opportunities for the Uzbek Cold Chain” (Bukhara)