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REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM-SOUTH (RADP-S)

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MONTHLY REPORT: February 2015



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DISCLAIMER

The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

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Cover photo: Wheat Value Chain Specialist conducts a training on wheat IPM for farmers in Nahre Saraj, Helmand province. Photo credit USAID/RADP-S.

ACRONYMS

ACCI	Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries
ADA	Afghan Development Association
AISA	Afghanistan Investment Support Agency
CARD-F	Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development-Facility
CBCMP	Capacity Building and Change Management Program
CCPP	Contagious caprine pleuropneumonia
CDC	Community Development Council
CHA	Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
CHAMP	Commercial Horticulture and Agricultural Marketing Program
DAIL	Directorate of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock
DCA	Dutch Committee for Afghanistan
DDA	District Development Assembly
DDAIL	District Directorate of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock
DOWA	Department of Women's Affairs
EEU	Enabling Environment Unit
FEG	Farmer Extension Group
FMD	Foot and Mouth Disease
HVC	High Value Crop
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
KIP	Key Implementing Partner
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
PDC	Provincial Development Council
PHDP	Perennial Horticulture Development Project
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PPR	Peste des petits ruminants
PSA	Public Short Announcement
RADP-S	Regional Agricultural Development Program-South
TNA	Training Needs Assessment
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VCFU	Value Chain Facilitation Unit
VFU	Veterinary Field Unit
WFP	World Food Program

SECTION I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Program Description

The purpose of the Regional Agriculture Development Program-South (RADP-S) is to improve food and economic security for rural Afghans in the provinces of Kandahar, Helmand, Zabul, and Uruzgan. To accomplish this goal, RADP-S focuses on improving the productivity and profitability of the wheat, high value crops, and livestock value chains, while addressing policy, legal and regulatory constraints affecting value chain development. This agricultural development program supports the consolidation of licit economies to fuel sustainable long term economic growth, including providing alternatives to poppy cultivation.

The implementation approach of RADP-S dovetails with Afghan and U.S. government strategies in its focus on advancing food security, regenerating agribusiness, and increasing agriculture sector jobs and incomes. RADP-S aims to strengthen the capacity of producers, associations, traders, and agribusinesses to respond to market demands; facilitate lasting market linkages between value chain actors; and support an enabling environment that allows the private sector to thrive. The program places the Afghan private sector at the forefront of implementation and addresses key crosscutting issues of women's empowerment, agribusiness value chain facilitation, and alternative development in all facets of the program. Embodying USAID's vision for sustainable Afghan-led development, RADP-S lays the foundation for greater and more socially inclusive growth in the agricultural economy.

February 2015 Program Highlights

In February, RADP-S master trainers provided classroom and demonstration trainings for farmers in 15 targeted districts of Kandahar, Helmand, Uruzgan, and Zabul province. A total of 6,710 farmers were trained in wheat and high value crop cultivation. Trainings focused on new methods and technologies for wheat seed cultivation in order to increase production. The design and layout of 9 demonstration farms in Qalat and Shah Joy in Zabul province were completed and winter wheat planted.



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Demonstration of wheat cultivation in Qalat, Zabul.

RADP-S's Enabling Environment Unit surveyed farmers' associations, farmers' cooperatives and agribusinesses in Kandahar, Helmand, Uruzgan, and Zabul. The purpose of this survey was to identify public and private stakeholders involved in agriculture and gauge the potential of building their public private partnership capacity.

During the reporting period, 40 women in Helmand province participated in nutrition training led by RADP-S key implementing partner (KIP) Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (CHA). The RADP-S Gender Team followed up with participants who emphasized that the training improved their ability to handle food properly and the value of maintaining a healthy diet. In addition, participants stated that they felt more empowered to improve overall family nutrition. In the coming months, the Gender Team will continue to coordinate nutrition trainings in collaboration with Department of Women's Affairs (DOWA) officials, community elders, Community Development Councils (CDCs), and women shuras.

RADP-S participated in the Kandahar Provincial Development Council (PDC) meeting to brief the governor and other government officials on RADP-S's progress and successes, as well as future planned activities. RADP-S team members also participated in the sectorial meeting of Directorates of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock to share programming objectives in the four southern provinces. RADP-S anticipates continued coordination with the provincial government in order to ensure information sharing and the alignment of development goals.

SECTION II: PRODUCTIVITY AND PRODUCTION

Components 1 & 2: Wheat & High Value Crops (HVCs)

Farmer Trainings

During the reporting period, RADP-S master trainers conducted classroom and field demonstration trainings on wheat Integrated Pest Management (IPM), orchard maintenance, greenhouse vegetable harvest and post-harvest techniques, and vineyard maintenance. Wheat trainings emphasized researching, diagnosing, and controlling for common pests and diseases specific to Afghanistan. The wheat IPM training included instruction on mechanically, culturally, biologically, and chemically controlling for pests in an easy and safe manner for farmers to utilize on a regular basis.



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Technical trainings on wheat IPM in Panjwai, Kandahar.

High Value Crop (HVC) trainings focused on orchard and vineyard maintenance specifically with regard to tree pruning, thinning, stem liming, intercropping and mulching. In total, RADP-S trained 6,710 farmers in wheat and HVC topics. RADP-S wheat and HVC experts collaborated with District Directorate of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (DDAIL) and District Development Assembly (DDA) members to organize farmer participation.

Demonstration Farm Activities

In February, RADP-S master trainers led capacity building trainings for lead farmers on techniques to increase productivity. Master trainers applied sulfur powder to orchards, vineyards, and greenhouses to lower soil pH levels at all 78 demonstration farms. In addition, the master trainers and lead farmers dug pits and marked for planting seven varieties of saplings, including almond, apricot, peach, fig, plum, pomegranate, and grapes. KIP HVC specialists also provided refresher trainings to master trainers and lead farmers on HVC land preparation, sapling placements, and proper pit digging.



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A lead farmer with the contents of his toolkit in Arghandab, Kandahar.

Throughout February, RADP-S provided lead farmers with toolkits in order to carry out orchard and vineyard maintenance and field demonstrations. These toolkits were distributed at ceremonies attended by DDAIL, DDA, CDC representatives, and KIP senior management. The toolkits included items such as shovels, sweep nets, hand seed spreaders, planting pegs, wheelbarrows, and planting boards.

Amtex Trainings

KIP Wheat and HVC Specialists participated in technical trainings at the Amtex Demonstration Farm. These technical trainings prepare the KIP specialists to provide district lead farmers with the most relevant information for land and crop care during the current season.

Zabul Wheat Crop Cultivation

RADP-S master trainers provided training on wheat cultivation to more than 100 farmers in Shah Joy and Qalat districts of Zabul province. Due to the cold winter weather in certain areas of Zabul, wheat seed cultivation was delayed until February. In February, wheat was sown by lead farmers at the 9 Zabul demonstration farms along with the application of DAP and urea fertilizer to improve soil quality and crop yield.

Component 3: Livestock

Farmer Extension Groups Training

During the reporting period, 451 men and 668 women were trained through RADP-S key implementing partner Dutch Committee for Afghanistan's (DCA) male and female-led farmer extension groups (FEGs). The extension trainings focused on sheep and goat pox diseases, foot and mouth disease vaccination, and pest des petites disease ruminant (PPR) disease. In addition, DCA supported the delivery of veterinary services, specifically medicating and vaccinating animals against common diseases such as enterotoxaemia, anthrax, and hemorrhagic septicemia, to 19 Veterinary Field Units (VFUs). A Training Needs Assessment (TNA) was also conducted for all VFUs to identify knowledge gaps that will inform the development of a training curriculum. As a result of the TNA, a para-vet refresher course will take place in March at the DCA Kandahar Training Center.

Livestock animal health

Various veterinary services were carried out by the DCA supported VFUs. In February, a total of 26,671 animals were medicated and 42,036 animals were vaccinated against seven common diseases: Enterotoxaemia, Anthrax, Contagious caprine pleuropneumonia (CCPP), hemorrhagic septicemia, Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), sheep and goat pox, New Castle disease, and pest des petites ruminants (PPR) disease.



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A para-vet treats a cow in Qalat, Zabul

SECTION III: ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Public Private Partnership Policy

In February, a Public Private Partnership (PPP) Advisor joined the RADP-S Enabling Environment Unit (EEU) as a short term consultant to review PPP policies and regulations and to establish opportunities for linkages between the private and public sector. The PPP consultant has reviewed the practices of various ministries to identify possible points of entry to encourage and establish public private partnerships. The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) in particular has implemented PPP projects related to hospital establishment and the delivery of vaccinations and immunizations. The PPP consultant will continue to work with MoPH to identify existing practices and challenges. In addition, the PPP consultant has also coordinated with the Afghanistan Investment Support Agency (AISA), Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI), and the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL) to identify potential private sector partners. Research and review of existing PPP policies and regulations are ongoing. Furthermore, in coordination with MAIL, RADP-S will be hosting a PPP Workshop in March to increase awareness among policymakers on PPPs, identify challenges for establishing PPPs in Afghanistan, and targeted areas for cooperation among public and private stakeholders.

Support for MAIL Agricultural Policies

The Director General of MAIL highlighted a need for a broad, over-arching agricultural policy as a result of conversations with President Ghani. Accordingly, the EEU has paused the preparation of draft scopes

of work for shared policy priorities (related to wheat, horticulture, and livestock policy) until MAIL priorities and directives are more clearly defined. Recent meetings with MAIL suggest revisiting an overall agricultural strategy for the ministry.

Throughout February, the EEU conducted a national PPP survey at the request of MAIL, and completed 37 surveys of private sector organizations and 11 surveys of public sector stakeholders in the four southern provinces. The survey collected information from farmers' associations, farmers' cooperatives, agribusiness, and agricultural organizations in the southern provinces to gauge their interest in PPP and identify potential capacity building opportunities. In addition to survey work, the EEU also conducted interviews with Directorate of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (DAIL) and DDAIL representatives regarding the potential for PPP establishment.

SECTION IV: VALUE CHAIN FACILITATION

During the reporting period, the RADP-S Value Chain Facilitation Unit (VCFU) held follow up meetings with 16 agribusinesses that responded to the VCFU's request for concept notes. These businesses are Kandahar-based and are input and seed suppliers, slaughterhouses, dairy and poultry providers, and fruit and vegetable processing companies. The VCFU team advised each company on logistics, business development, and strategic planning for activities proposed in their concept note. Budgeting input was also provided to ensure proper allocation for all activity costs.

In addition to technical input, the VCFU conducted due diligence visits at all 16 agribusinesses in February. As part of the due diligence visit, VCFU team members inspected and documented the physical space and machinery of each company, reviewed financial records for proper accounting, and conducted interviews with senior management. These visits ensure that concept notes accurately reflect the company's capacity.

Coordination with Enabling Environment Unit

As a part of the VCFU due diligence visit, business constraints were identified with each company. The most common constraints were related to high taxes on raw materials and restrictions on importing new and improved seeds. The VCFU shared these constraints with the RADP-S Enabling Environment Unit to be incorporated into policy recommendations.

SECTION V: GENDER

Basic Nutrition Training

In February, RADP-S key implementing partner CHA conducted workshops on basic nutrition for 40 women beneficiaries in Nahre Saraj and Lashkargah districts of Helmand province. The RADP-S Gender Team coordinated with DOWA, community elders, and CDC members to encourage women to attend the workshop. Topics discussed included the importance of nutritiously balanced meals, safe food handling, and healthy cooking techniques.



USAID/RADP-S
RADP-S Gender Specialist conducts nutrition training in Lashkargah, Helmand.

Nutrition Training Survey

The RADP-S Gender Team developed and conducted a survey on the impact of the project's basic nutrition trainings for women. The survey was conducted by RADP-S key implementing partners Afghan Development Association (ADA) and CHA. The survey questions asked women to identify whether they applied lessons from the training in their own lives,

why they participated in the training, and the most useful information they were provided in the training. Survey responses were overwhelmingly positive, with women pointing to the importance of vegetables and cereals in maintaining a healthy diet.

Survey Responses from Nutrition Training

“The very best thing we have learned during this training session is how to prepare good food as well as understanding nutritional benefits... which makes our bodies powerful and energetic.”

“It (RADP-S nutrition training) has a very vital role in our daily life, because now we know how to make a proper timetable for cooking food in order to avoid cooking the same food over and over again. Prior to the training, we thought that meat consumption, on a daily basis, was healthy. However, in the training we have learned that vegetables and cereals are also perfectly healthy food... We are happy to share this training with our colleagues.”

“We participated because we wanted to know the proper time and way of cooking food. We wanted to know which nutrition should be taken when. Knowing all these, we will be able to prepare a good nutritional plan for the whole family, including children.”

Coordination with the Farm Demonstration Unit

The RADP-S Gender Team and the Farm Demonstration Unit coordinated activities for the upcoming Department of Women’s Affairs Demonstration Farm. The DOWA Demonstration Farm will provide important resources for women in Kandahar, including livelihood opportunities, nutrition workshops, training on vegetable cultivation, and business development counseling. The Farm Demonstration Unit provided input on crop selection, orchard layout, and technical trainings.

SECTION VI: COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

Live Call-In Radio Broadcasts and Public Short Announcements

During the reporting period, the RADP-S Communications and Outreach Team continued to conduct the weekly call-in radio series titled “Better Farm, Better Livestock.” The radio topics covered during February were livestock and Enterotoxaemia, wheat and IPM, orchard maintenance, and winter vegetable harvest and post-harvest management.

RADP-S airs Public Short Announcements (PSAs) at select radio stations in the four target provinces. During the reporting period, a total of eight PSAs were aired 28 times on topics such as: orchard variety selection, tomato market preparation, orchard layout, the effect of potassium on wheat, livestock foot and mouth disease, and proper irrigation methodologies.

Radio Program Surveys

In February, the radio program surveys were completed and ready for analysis. The purpose of the survey was to elicit listeners’ feedback on the live radio programs. The survey was conducted in two target and two non-targeted districts, with 50 farmers interviewed per district. The results from the survey will inform RADP-S’s communications strategy moving forward.

Communications Training for Key Implementing Partners

The RADP-S Communications and Outreach team conducted a success story and report writing training with RADP-S key implementing partners in February. The training was attended by KIP provincial directors, project managers, and reporting team members. The training focused on the selection and structure of success stories and reporting requirements.

SECTION VII: MONITORING & EVALUATION

During the reporting period, the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Team coordinated with the project’s key implementing partners to collect beneficiary intake forms, attendance sheets,

photographs of activities, and other training documents to confirm the timeliness of demonstration farm activities. In addition, the team visited beneficiary farmers in Dand, Daman, and Arghandab districts in Kandahar and Trin Kowt and Chora districts in Uruzgan. These on-farm verification visits confirm that attendees are adopting the methods taught at the demonstration farms. In addition to its on-farm data confirmation and adoption data collection effort, the Monitoring and Evaluation Team is working with the Value Chain Facilitation Unit and Productivity and Production Team to develop data collection tools for the upcoming value chain grants and subcontract activities.

Listening Circles Facilitators Training

On February 16, the RADP-S Monitoring and Evaluation Team trained 18 Listening Circle Facilitators (LCFs) at ADA's Kandahar office. The training familiarized them with M&E tools and data collection templates that they will use when collecting data from the listening circles. Listening Circles are open forums that allow farmers to discuss and ask questions related to RADP-S's radio programming. The M&E Team provided pre- and post-tests and course evaluations to the LCFs. The M&E Team will continue to work closely with Equal Access Afghanistan to provide guidance and coordinate data collection for listening circle activities.



M&E training for LCFs USAID/RADP-S

SECTION VIII: PARTNER & STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Kandahar

During the reporting period, the RADP-S Productivity and Production Unit attended a coordination meeting at the Kandahar DAIL office with the representatives of six projects and organizations, CARD-F, CHAMP, UN, WFP, PHTDP, and CBCMP, to coordinate agricultural activities and inform DAIL on project successes. The meeting ensured that project implementation was harmonized and the organizations' efforts and objectives were in alignment with DAIL priorities.

Zabul

The ADA Zabul provincial staff held a meeting with the DAIL director in February to share the objectives of the Public Private Partnership survey. The DAIL director provided important insight on the possibilities of PPPs in Zabul province, which will help guide the drafting of PPP policy.

Helmand

In February, the CHA Provincial Project Manager and CHA Wheat and High Value Crop specialists conducted coordination meetings with DDA and CDC representatives. The CHA Provincial Project Manager provided information on the RADP-S demonstration trainings and encouraged community elders to mobilize farmers to attend the trainings to increase the project's outreach.

Uruzgan

The RADP-S provincial coordinator in Uruzgan attended the provincial development council meeting and delivered a detailed briefing on project activities as well as solicited support and collaboration from local stakeholders for the demonstration farms and future activities. Attendees of the meeting included representatives from DAIL and the provincial veterinary department.

SECTION IX: Implementation Challenges

Heightened security concerns during the month of February presented challenges specifically for RADP-S M&E staff. Restricted travel outside of Kandahar province during the second half of the month delayed M&E data verification trips to the districts of Helmand, Uruzgan, and Zabul.