

AWATT Afghanistan Summary Trip Report

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The Afghanistan Water, Agriculture and Technology Transfer (AWATT) Project is being implemented by New Mexico State University (NMSU) in cooperation with Colorado State University (CSU), Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC), and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC)..

This draft summary report represents the integrated draft reports of the following AWATT team members:

Dr. John Groninger, Dr. Oval Myers, Dr. Charles Ruffner, and Dr. Alan Walters. Drs. Groninger and Ruffner are from the Department of Forestry and Drs. Myers and Walters are from the Department of Plant, Soil and Agricultural Systems at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

Travel Schedule:

9 August	Depart Carbondale
10 August	Arrive Delhi
11 August	Arrive Kabul
13 August	Arrive Mazar-e-Sharif
20 August	Return to Kabul
26 August	Depart Kabul
27 August	Arrive Carbondale

The SIUC team departed Carbondale for St. Louis airport by ground transportation early 9 August. We flew from St. Louis to Newark and on to Delhi arriving in early evening 10 August. We flew from Delhi to Kabul early morning 11 August. We were met at the airport by COP Abdul Qayyum Khan and taken directly to the AWATT project house for briefing concerning our visitation schedule and objectives while in country. We checked into the Safi Landmark Hotel about mid-day.

We wish to thank the AWATT field team of Dr. Qayyum, Mr. Nassery, and Mr. Agha Jabarkhil together with drivers Ahmed Shah and Babrak for their assistance throughout the trip.

Our return to Illinois began on the early morning of 26 August when we departed Kabul for Delhi. Ruffner volunteered to watch the luggage for our long layover and the rest of us took a driver to see some of the sights of Delhi, which included a good Indian restaurant lunch. Upon our return to the airport we went through a very thorough luggage search since we had come from Kabul. A very long 14 hour flight to Newark followed by the connecting flight to St. Louis. A 2 ½ van drive returned us to Carbondale about 1100 and a reunion with our families.

Kabul Meetings 11-12 August

In the afternoon 11 August we went to the USAID compound and held discussions with CTO Michael Satin. This was a very informative two hour meeting in which the AWATT project objectives and goals were discussed.

The 12 August meetings began in the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) with Deputy Minister for Irrigation Per Azizi and several colleagues including the Deputy was a very informative for us to better understand the irrigation situation in the country and also the forest and range situation. This information was useful to us in later meetings with others and in our discussions and observations while visiting in Mazar-e-Sharif and Balkh Province.

Our next stop was at Noor Bros. where we discussed the Durukhshan Agricultural and Social Association. The network of Ag Depots was discussed and the general lack of soil analysis capability and plant protection information was identified as lacking and, therefore, an important need.

We also visited with Greg Cullen of the EU Perennial Horticulture Development Project concerning their work and discussed possible collaborative activities in Balkh Province.

Mazar-e-Sharif Meetings 14-19 August

We met with Mark Henning, JDA international, who has been working in the Balkh province for several years, both on horticultural and agronomic crops as well as on adoption of small machinery. JDA is a potential collaborator in conducting demonstration trials of traditional and potential new crops.

Dean Ansari, Faculty of Agriculture, Balkh University took us to his home village area where we observed irrigation and cropping practices and visited with representative farmers concerning their problems of production. As anticipated water, pests, markets, and lack of credit were cited. The effects of this year's water shortage was evident, particularly on their onion harvest.

On Friday Dean Ansari went with us to Hairatan where we observed the desertification problem of that area. The ASAP Mazar Food project will be located near Mazar-e-Sharif and some collaboration on horticulture production may be possible. Upon our return we visited the new campus of Balkh University. The Faculty of Agriculture has land there for a small demonstration

and teaching farm. This may be an area where AWATT and the A4 project can collaborate in work with Balkh University.

On 16 August we met with the Provincial Director of Agriculture, the Director of Extension, and the Heads of Forestry and Plant Protection. Among problems identified were lack of soil analysis labs and pest identification labs. Also visited with IAK in the afternoon and were taken to two farmer fields, mostly fruit orchards were the effects of a cold winter, summer drought and disease had drastically reduced production. However, good alfalfa production was noted. Forages should be considered more of a cash crop as demand is high. Returns may be higher than some other crops if diseases aren't controlled.

On 17 August we visited Usiyo Humkerlich Trading, LTD, which is involved in a dried tomato project and is developing a farm machinery repair facility. This private company was assisting the surrounding community by employing women in the processing stage. We also visited the JDA research and demonstration farm, which may be used for collaborative activities. Promising new varieties of orange-fleshed watermelon, strawberries, and the introduction of pecans are interventions. We visited Mohammad ZIA, USAID assistant to discuss the interaction with the Balkh PRT.

We visited a urea fertilizer factory on 18 August. We also visited the PHDP farm and discussed possible collaborative activities. This well managed farm would be a good site for a soil analysis lab and plant protection lab and in cooperation with IAK, which has an extensive extension capability, could reach many fruit and nut farmers in the region. A highlight of the return trip to Mazar-e-Sharif was visiting a canal system along the Balkh River. We were surprised at the large size of fields and the extent of cotton production.

Kabul Meetings 21-25 August

We met with Deputy Minister Sharif of Mail on 21 August who discussed the Amu River irrigation development situation. He also discussed the current major plant pest problems locusts, brown mottle, melon fly, and sun pest.

We next met with Tom Brown of ASAP. He gave us a good briefing on the marketing situation, both in country and for export. He supported our idea of considering pecan as a new nut crop and noted germplasm sources in Tajikistan. We also discussed erosion control, laser leveling for improved irrigation, and possible new shrub species for fodder, fuel and agriculture land conservation.

Our meeting with Director Ahmadi of Plant Protection was the last of the morning. He stressed the importance of having identification labs and trained people for the Department. Human capacity building was cited as an urgent need with training to the MS level for most and a few for PHD degrees.

Our afternoon was spent at the Ag Fair. We were pleased at the diversity of value-added products, the number of women's enterprises, and the development of private company operations. We were expecting more machinery displays, but most displays were of hand sprayers, although a milking machine was displayed.

On 23 August we visited Dean Mohsini and Kabul University. After some general historical discussion we toured labs, the ag library, the computer facilities, and the student farm. It is evident that recent physical improvements are enhancing instruction opportunities. About half the classes are in English or have English visuals. We also visited the central library.

We met with Director of Forestry Khawarin. This was a good discussion of the forest situation in the country. We discussed plant species, agroforestry, community forestry, the Afghanistan Conservation Corps, and the Nuristan Conservation Corps. We spent some time discussing possible training interactions and perennial vegetation cropping schemes.

Our last meeting of the morning was with Director of ARIA, Dr. Osmanzai. He outlined the scope of the research activities and stressed the need for a functioning soils lab. The scope of activities requires much more capacity building than exists in the current staff.

On 24 August we met with several individuals working with the Afghanistan Conservation Corps, Engr. M. Nasri from MAIL, Noorullah Malang, M. Ullah, M. Koshani, and Hasman Kasin. This was one of our best meetings to understand the natural resources rehabilitation and village level activities to assist farmers and reduce unemployment. We discussed technical training needs and possible ways our AWATT team might assist. Natural resource conservation is one of the AWATT overall objectives.

On 25 August we met with Steven Kovach of the IFDC and his colleagues. They are implementing a soil fertility and management project called FARMS focusing not only on wheat production and milling, but also on water management and mulching on vegetables. They have an extensive (120) on-farm demonstration network in the areas where AWATT should work and could be useful partners.

We met for a final debriefing meeting with Kimberley Lucas of USAID. We presented the pertinent points of this summary in draft form and discussed our overall impressions of the area we visited.

Upon our return to the Safi Landmark, we interacted with Joern Seigies of the Advancing Afghan Agriculture Alliance (A4) project concerning interaction of AWATT in presenting short or long-term courses at Kabul and the regional universities as part of TDY programs.

General conclusions and recommendations

Our objectives for this TDY were to interact with as many Ministry programs, NGOs, and other organizations both private and public that worked in the broad overall mandate of the AWATT project. Our focus was on agriculture and technology transfer with attention on water use efficiency and new or underutilized technologies and cropping schemes. Among the interaction objectives was to identify possible collaborative partnerships already established with a field presence. AWATT needs to supplement not duplicate existing activities and “fill in the gaps”.

We have identified potential collaborators and identified activity gaps, probably in excess of AWATT resource capabilities. Possible collaborators already working in Mazar-e-Sharif are JDA and PHDP in addition to the university and MAIL. Another possible collaborator is IFDC in Jalalabad and Mazar-e-Sharif, Kabul, and, perhaps other areas. The Afghanistan Conservation Corps is another group needing assistance in training assistance.

Specific areas identified are in soil analysis, pest management, improved crop management and utilization of woody crop –based technologies for soil conservation and income generation. Assistance in providing regional IPM lab facilities and soil analysis capability is very important and may provide the biggest return per investment dollar. There is an opportunity for public-private cooperation in working with the Durukshan Association. Human capacity ability building and technical training was an often cited need by the groups we interacted with on this visit.

The area of agriculture and technology transfer needs a full time or, at least, significant time TDY field persons to carry out these components of the AWATT project. Short term TDYs will be fine for training purposes, but this area needs a continuing field presence.

The challenges are great, the opportunities are many, and the resources limited, but progress can be made in many areas.

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