CATALYZING AFGHAN AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION

MAY 2018 – MAY 2023

OVERVIEW

USAID/Afghanistan is partnering with Virginia Tech to implement the $8 million, five-year Catalyzing Afghan Agricultural Innovation (CAAI) activity. This activity will support Afghan-led innovation in agriculture by training a highly-skilled, modern agricultural workforce, strengthening the capacity of research and extension actors to deploy innovative solutions to the practical challenges of Afghan farmers and agribusinesses, and institutionalizing coordination among agricultural value chain stakeholders.

Building upon past U.S. Government investments in agricultural capacity building, CAAI represents USAID’s shift towards private-sector, agriculture-led economic growth through training of the next generation of agricultural workers to be successful participants in Afghanistan’s modern value chains. The activity will use the Positive Youth Development approach and experiential learning to reach approximately 8,400 Afghan youth/students, 20% of whom are women, providing them with the skills necessary for success in the workforce and to start their own businesses, including using precision, or ‘smart’, agricultural technologies to increase yields and profitability. The program will focus on locally-important value chains in five provinces to ensure that graduates are prepared for and linked with relevant private and public sector employment opportunities.

CAAI will also build agricultural stakeholder relationships between university researchers, extension workers, government stakeholders, agricultural technical schools, and agribusinesses, resulting in collaborative applied research projects focused on locally important value chains. To maximize the impact of project-supported agricultural innovations, CAAI will develop improved extension communication using conventional methods and appropriate distance communication technologies, including establishing pathways for uptake of new technology training into course content at all levels of the agricultural education system.

ACTIVITIES
• Improve instructor knowledge of modern agricultural practices and technologies associated with key provincial value chains through enhanced course content and curriculum;
• Advance the capacity of agricultural faculty in effective teaching techniques including experiential learning and entrepreneurial thinking;
• Increase the participation and success of young women in agricultural technical schools;
• Heighten student awareness of importance of the agricultural value chains and meaningful employment opportunities throughout the value chains;
• Catalyze demand-driven applied research and extension services relevant to key provincial value chains through increased collaboration and relationships between agricultural technical schools, government, university faculty, extension workers, and value chain stakeholders; and
• Improve extension communication between research project results and modify course content and curriculum based on applied research results.

ANTICIPATED IMPACTS & OUTCOMES

• 8,400 agriculture students throughout Afghanistan reached with experiential and hands-on training in agribusiness, entrepreneurship, leadership, merit-based scholarships, and improved instruction.
• Over 600 highly-skilled graduates employed in key provincial agricultural value chains throughout Afghanistan.
• Over 200 faculty members trained in improved methods of instruction including experiential and distance learning, 40% of whom will be women.
• Up to 35% increase in the total number of highly qualified extension workers, including a doubling of the number of highly qualified female extension agents.
• Dozens of applied research projects designed and implemented collaboratively by agricultural professionals and value chain stakeholders to solve problems identified in locally important provincial agricultural value chains.

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