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CATALYZING AFGHAN AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION

MAY 2018 – MAY 2023

\$8,000,000 BUDGET

OVERVIEW

USAID/Afghanistan is partnering with Virginia Tech to implement the \$8 million, five-year Catalyzing Afghan Agricultural Innovation (CAAI) activity. This activity supports Afghan-led agricultural innovation 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 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 by training the next generation of agricultural workers to be successful participants in Afghanistan's modern value chains. CAAI will use the Positive Youth Development approach and experiential learning to reach approximately 8,400 Afghan youth/students, 20% of whom are women. It will provide them with the vocational skills necessary for success, including starting their own businesses. The activity will also build agricultural stakeholder communications and relationships between university researchers, extension workers, government stakeholders, agricultural technical schools, and agribusiness resulting in collaborative applied research projects. CAAI 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.

ACTIVITIES

- Improve instructor knowledge of modern agricultural practices and technologies associated with key provincial value chains;
- Enhance the capacity of agricultural faculty in effective teaching techniques, such as experiential learning and entrepreneurial thinking;
- Increase the enrollment and success of young women in agricultural technical schools;
- Heighten student awareness of the importance of agricultural value chains and meaningful employment opportunities within those value chains;
- Catalyze demand-driven research and extension services relevant to key agricultural value chains through increased collaboration between agricultural technical schools, government, university faculty, extension workers, and value chain stakeholders; and
- Improve the pathway between agricultural research results and course content, modifying curriculum as new research emerges.

RESULTS TO DATE:

- 1,928 agriculture students (454 females, 1,474 males) in five provinces received experiential and hands-on training in agribusiness, technical skills, communications, career development, English language, computer skills, and leadership.
- 557 faculty members (62 females, 495 males) trained in improved methods of instruction including experiential and distance learning, pedagogy, horticulture, value chains & gender responses, positive youth development, extension research, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and climate smart agriculture.
- Provided improved and conducive practical learning environment, installed three greenhouses in Arghandab AHS, Daman AVI of Kandahar province and Kabul AVI, Kabul province, respectively.
- Developed 40 hands-on training curriculum for Agriculture Technical Institutes' educators.
- Young Innovators in Agriculture Competition (YIAC) 2019, a collaborative activity with another USAID funded project, resulted into creation of 20 innovations. Top five innovations are under adoption process.
- Organized the Second National Agricultural Education, Research, Extension and Economics Conference (NAEREE II). The conference brought together over 60 academics, practitioners, and representatives of national and international organizations to finalize the NAEREE Council ToR and draft a one-year joint action plan.

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