

MEDA Tajikistan Project Profile

Project Name

Pro-Poor Agricultural Development in Northern Tajikistan

Project Location

Sogd Oblast, Tajikistan

Project Value and Funding Agency

US\$4.5 million over four years (2004-2008), funded by Canadian International Development Agency or CIDA.



Photo: Carl Hiebert

Project Description

The project's goal is to support the fruit and vegetable production sub-sector in the northern Tajikistan oblast of Sogd. Since 2004, MEDA has contributed to the economic development of farm families in four districts of Sogd through technical assistance and training, rural credit, and the establishment of small and medium-sized businesses to process and market agricultural products.

This is a multi-faceted program designed to implement innovative programs that will help thousands of smallholder farmers adapt to and grow in a market economy. The project is providing financing and technical assistance including extension services and the introduction of the latest technological advancements such as affordable micro-irrigation. The project is also supporting initiatives that strengthen the ability of farmers to work together by organizing themselves into associations that promote their needs in the new economic and political environment.

Rural Credit

At the producer level, MEDA's primary partner is the National Association of Business Women of Tajikistan (NABWT). NABWT is an efficient, competent microfinance, business development and advocacy organization that has achieved considerable success in lending to microentrepreneurs, 75 percent of them women. Through this project, NABWT aims to expand into rural credit, providing innovative credit products to an under-served rural population.

Processors

At the processor level, MEDA continues to promote small and medium enterprises to process and market the agricultural output of Sogd's rural population. This fills an important gap between traditional farm-based processing that meets the needs of local markets and the inefficient mega-processing facilities that remain from the Soviet era.

Key project outputs:

- Mobilization of community and industry driven development with the formation of farmers groups and SME processor industry development working groups. Over sixty farmers groups are now active and receive regular training (26 are women's groups)
- Design and implementation of a rural credit program with an initial loan fund of \$900,000, in partnership with local MFI "IMON." To date, three new agricultural loan products are in place; rural credit officers have been trained in four regions, and over \$500,000 has been distributed to more than 1,700 clients. A new pilot is underway for a new loan product for improving the storage capabilities of farmers.
- Three agricultural trainers are training 13 agricultural advisors and three new trainers. These trainers and agribusiness consultants are supporting over 1000 farmers on improved methods, inputs and technologies.
- Adaptation and implementation of a productive chain monitoring system to be used in four districts
- Specialized assistance to the SME agribusiness sector in business development (including market access and linkages), technical assistance and technology transfer, association forming and microfinance.
- Financing and matching grant programs to SME processors will disburse \$550,000 in loans through the local partner Sohibcorbank, as well as \$300,000 in matching funds for marketing activities and equipment upgrades. Seven loans have been disbursed and 12 more are in process.
- Professional development for processors including exchanges, training, business advice, marketing strategies and technology transfer. Exchange trips to Turkey, Russia and Canada have been realized.
- Research and development of new markets and expansion of existing markets for processed fruit and vegetables (domestic, regional and international)
- Implementation of program-wide crosscutting themes: gender, environment, and monitoring and evaluation.



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