



FAO AFGHANISTAN

Quarterly Newsletter

2018 June - Issue#13



Dry spell assessment finds widespread animal and crop distress

In the last days of March, FAO released its' Rapid Assessment of the 2018 Winter Dry Spell in Afghanistan, available online at <http://fscluster.org/afghanistan>. This assessment was done in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigations (MAIL), and with coordinating assistance from the World Food Programme, iMMAP and other .Food Security Cluster of Afghanistan (FSAC) members

In Afghanistan, the winter wet season is critical for successful agriculture and food production throughout the year. This is because the planting season for Afghanistan's main crop, wheat, starts when autumn rainfall allows farmers to sow seeds. The cold winter snows insulate the seeds, and the meltwater from the snow fuels the rivers and irrigation systems



IN THIS ISSUE:

- Dry spell assessment finds widespread animal and crop distress
1
- FAO and Japan saving lives and building peace through water management
3
- GEF promotes clean cookstoves to reduce GHG emissions and cook safely and affordably
4
- FAO staff member gets certificate of appreciation for developing online finance system
4
- FAO Irrigation Restoration and Development project holds gender coordination meeting
5
- Letter of agreement on Foot-and-Mouth Disease signed with dairy unions
6
- FAO supports the government on SDG planning through a series of regional workshops
7
- FAO builds regional peace, fights animal disease through science diplomacy
8

that feed the wheat throughout the spring growing season.

When there is a decrease in precipitation during this period, the effects can be cascading and devastating: no wheat means no food for livestock, decreased dairy production, lower incomes for farming families, expensive inputs for all farmers, increased food insecurity, and ultimately, a lowering of Afghanistan's GDP.

FAO's assessment investigated 20 of the most heavily drought-impacted provinces (shown in brown on the previous map) through a combination of satellite data from FEWSnet, ground-level precipitation data from MAIL hydromet stations, and in-person surveys with farmers groups. The surveys confirmed what all of the physical data suggested - winter wheat harvests were down, ground water levels were lower, and farmers in almost all of the provinces were already feeling the effects of the drought.

The responses to the effects of drought were varied. Many farmers reported distress coping techniques, such as selling off livestock at low prices in order to avoid having to feed them, or leaving arable land fallow.

Others reported that they were borrowing money from wealthier family members or neighbors to feed their families and livestock, and more had reported that they would leave their homes to find work in cities or in the mountains. Such movement results in

internally displaced persons (IDPs), which can over-stress the provinces where they relocate to, exacerbating any existing social tensions.

The government has since declared a drought, and is aware that many provinces are facing an impending food security crisis. They have asked for help from the international community to help farmers, especially pastoralists, deal with the lack of animal feed and farm inputs.

Abdul Majid, FAO FSAC coordinator, was quoted in a TOLO news report, noting that farmers were watching as their seeds died out and animals ate pasture to the roots. The article further goes on to note that the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which is working with FAO on this impending crisis, found that as many as 21,000 people were forced to leave their homes in western Badghis and Ghor because of the drought.

The underlying cause of the low precipitation was likely the mild La Niña conditions that much of the globe was experiencing this year. La Niña, and her troublesome brother El Niño are hydro-meteorological phenomena caused by a warming of sea surface temperatures in a particular region of the equatorial Pacific Ocean. When sea surface temperatures in this region are lower than average during the winter/spring, it causes atmospheric disturbances (La Niña); for Afghanistan La Niña typically means widespread drought.

Climate and historical records show that these conditions have been occurring for thousands of years. Many of the same records suggest that the frequency and severity of these events is increasing, quite possibly due to climate change - though, how climate impacts these atmospheric siblings is still a matter of debate. Regardless, what we do know is that the frequency and severity of droughts have been increasing in recent decades, which spells trouble for a country so dependent on its' agriculture for food, rural livelihoods and the national economy.

As FAO notes in its' assessment, everyone needs to be ready to respond to the upcoming food crisis, while also preparing Afghanistan for a future in which climate change is predicted to bring ever more droughts. With some studies suggesting that droughts will occur every year as soon as 2030, the country needs to be preparing for the impacts of climate change, whether droughts or floods, as any oncoming changes will have impacts across all sectors of agriculture. Preparation for such disasters will preserve development gains, and save money for every person and every organization who is investing in Afghanistan's future.



©FAO/M.Sahibzada

Farmers group in Khawalak Village, Daykundi, discussing the winter 2018 drought with FAO staff.

FAO and Japan building peace and saving lives through water management

Behsoud, Nangarhar: On April 23rd, an opening ceremony for a training center and related accommodations was held near the Miran Intake in the Behsoud district of Nangarhar province. The ceremony was sponsored by MAIL, FAO and Peace Medical Service (PMS), a Japanese NGO. The event was attended by the Provincial Governor, His Excellency Mohammad Gulab Mangal, the Nangarhar Provincial Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (PAIL) Director, the Nangarhar Valley

canal systems, sediment ponds, canal gates, and other structures that conserve water are the focus of this approach, so that stable water supplies can be maintained, even during droughts.

Using the PMS approach, PMS has already converted more than 15,000 ha of desert land into green fields in Nangarhar. Having reliable access to water has not only improved the health of local residents, but it has also led to pros-

community members, government officials and the Government of Japan for the support. He added "I am very pleased with the achievements made on disseminating the PMS method. Community ownership of development is important because it not only lets them control their own food security, but it makes the project sustainable in the longer term."

After the inaugural speeches, the handover notes were signed by the Pro-



Mr. Gulab Mangal, former Governor of Nangarhar, Mr. Tomio Shichiri, and Dr. Nakamura (Government of Japan) at the opening ceremony.

Development Authority (NVDA) Director, provincial council members, representatives of government departments, the Behsoud District Governor, and several local community elders.

The buildings were constructed by PMS and funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) under an FAO project aimed at improving agriculture production through better irrigation systems and related institutional capacity. The buildings will be used to train community members on the PMS approach, a community-based approach that puts users at the center of all stages of irrigation development.

Such a technique means that local end-users are directly involved in designing and building new irrigation and water use structures. Irrigation facilities such as river water intakes,

perity in the region and contributed to harmonious co-existence and peace-building in an area that has not always been peaceful.

Speaking on the occasion, HE the Provincial Governor said, "I really don't have enough words of appreciation with which to thank Dr. Nakamura, the Government of Japan, and FAO for all that they have done for Nangarhar. As you can see, the Gamberi area - which was once a desert - is now an area filled with greenery. Dr. Nakamura has truly earned a place in the hearts of the people of Nangarhar and I give him my full support." The Nangarhar PAIL Director also thanked JICA, FAO and PMS for the buildings, and noted that they will be very useful for training water stakeholders across the nation.

Mr. Tomio Shichiri, the FAO Representative in Afghanistan, thanked all com-

vincial Governor and representatives from FAO, PAIL, NVDA and PMS. The representatives then officially cut the ribbon and entered the classroom, where and Dr. Nakamura delivered an introductory presentation on the PMS Approach to trainees from local authorities, NGOs and the FAO. Once a cadre of PMS Approach trainers are developed, they should be able to spread this holistic approach to irrigation and community cooperation to all drought-prone parts of Afghanistan.

GEF promotes clean cookstoves to reduce GHG emissions and cook safely and affordably



Clean cookstove distribution in Darai Nur district, Nangarhar province.

Nangarhar Province: FAO, through their Global Environmental Facilities (GEF)-funded project, is working to reduce the adverse environmental and health effects of household energy use by promoting the clean, affordable and efficient cookstoves. The project, "Reducing GHG emission through Community Forestry and Sustainable Biomass Energy System" is helping communities adopt alternative fuels and use affordable stoves that require less fuel and minimize greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. It is being implemented in two districts of Nangarhar.

FAO is providing financial support for community members who want to purchase locally-manufactured thermally-efficient cookstoves, bukharies and solar cookers. Kabul University has been testing the efficiency of these devices, and has found that these cook stoves have consume wood 51 percent more efficiently, and have significantly reduced GHG emissions in comparison to traditional cookstoves.

In close cooperation with MAIL, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, the Ministry of Energy and Water and the National Environmental Protection Agency, FAO has already distributed 220 clean cookstoves to households in two districts. The project aims to distribute another 880 clean cookstoves, 900 fuel-efficient bukharies, 300 tandoors and 20 solar cookers in the two target districts. The promotion of such fuel ef-

ficient thermal devices at the household level will help the communities improve their health, reduce their GHG emissions, empower women by reducing their labor time, and increase the household income by reducing the fuel consumption costs.

FAO staff member gets certificate of recognition for developing online finance system



FAO staff, Noorullah Rasooli, with his award from MAIL.

Mr. Noorullah Rasooli, longtime FAO staff member, received a certificate of recognition from the Irrigation Directorate of MAIL for the excellent work he did in co-developing the Financial Management Information System (FMIS). The FMIS, available at <http://fmis.ancid.gov.af/> is an online tool that lets users keep track of multiple sources of funding on multiple projects at the same time. While the general con-

cept of such a system isn't new, MAIL wanted a program customized to their needs, such as sending automated messages to project financial stakeholders, and easy payment tracking.

The FMIS is currently being used for managing the finances of MAIL's "On Farm Water Management" project, however, MAIL plans to expand it Ministry-wide after an initial trial period.

FAO Irrigation Restoration and Development Project holds gender coordination meeting



Ms. Saeeda Sharifi, FAO Gender Focal Point, presenting on gender mainstreaming in the IRDP project.

Kabul, Afghanistan: Each month, the World Bank (WB) supports a monthly Gender Coordination Meeting at a Kabul venue. This meeting gives the gender specialists from WB-funded projects a chance to discuss project issues related to gender, and set coordinated gender-based implementation targets. It also serves as a training ground for those new to the gender sector.

In May, this meeting was organized by the FAO Irrigation Restoration and Development (IRDP) project and held at the Project Coordination Unit conference hall in the Ministry of Energy and Water (MEW). Participants included not only gender specialists from other WB projects, but also regional Social Inclusion and Gender Assistants (SIGAs) from IRDPs' six regions, as well as a gender officer from MEW's Gender Unit.

Presentations focused on gender mainstreaming within IRDP, such as through environmental and social management plans, and social safeguards like grievance redress mechanisms. The representative from MEW's Gender Unit also made a brief presentation outlining the Ministry's views and approaches to gender. She expressed appreciation for IRDP's sup-

port to the Gender Unit.

Subsequent to the presentations, there was a lively discussion about the development of environmental and social management plans, related compensation issues, and how those experiences differed between IRDP and the Afghanistan Rural Access Project, also funded by WB.

IRDP's SIGAs shared success stories about their grievance redress mechanism. The SIGA from Herat discussed how she used this mechanism to resolve a long-running water rights dispute between two villages in Herat: she first spoke with female community members and encouraged them to discuss the dispute with their male family members. Then she called men from both villages to the IRDP office, spoke to them frankly about the causes and effects of the dispute on both genders, and was able to convince them to mediate the issue peacefully.

The SIGA from Mazar shared another good example: in her case a family lost trees they owned along a canal. The removal of the trees had been discussed and agreed upon with the husband, but not with the wife. When the wife saw that the trees were about to be cut, she objected and stopped

the work from proceeding. Eventually, mediated discussion with both the husband and wife resolved the issue. This case was a notable example of how important it is to consult with both women and men in the planning and implementation stages of projects. In this case, the SIGA learned it is also important to document meetings so that implementing staff would be aware of agreed-upon social structures.

The importance of an effective grievance redress mechanism and raising awareness of it among women as well as men was also discussed. The need for systematic outreach to women as part of community mobilization was stressed. Ensuring women are part of the process from the beginning not only brings about gender parity at the community level, but helps ensure that projects can proceed without confusion and interruption.

Letter of agreement for Foot-and-Mouth Disease vaccinations signed with dairy unions

The title of the “Building resilience and self-reliance of livestock keepers by improving control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) and other Transboundary Animal Diseases (TADs)” may be quite a mouthful, but the results are leading to another type of full mouth - those that are replete with food.

The TAD project is supporting Afghanistan to move along the progressive control pathway for Foot-and-Mouth disease (PCP-FMD). Each step of the pathway, as defined by the World Animal Health Organization, means that a country is one step closer to having the disease under control, and therefore one step closer to being able to export their cattle and dairy products.

When the TAD project began, the country was in stage 1 of the pathway; it is now beginning to approach stage 2. Being officially recognized as a stage 2 country means that the country is implementing targeted TAD control activities in sectors which are considered essential for the growth of the national economy. In Afghanistan, the dairy sector has been identified as a key sector because economic losses due to FMD can be rather significant. For example, milk production in lactating animals will drop to zero if the animal is affected by FMD. The project is minimizing such losses by doing a mass vaccination campaign for FMD with dairy farmers who are part of local dairy unions.

In May, the TAD project signed Letters of Agreement (LOAs) with six dairy unions who will be responsible for implementing this vaccine campaign during the summer. The LOA ceremony was attended by representatives from Herat, Balkh, Nangarhar, Kunduz, Kabul, and Kandahar dairy unions, and FAO staff.

Between the six provinces, a total of almost 224,000 animals will be vaccinated against FMD. After completion, not only will cattle be vaccinated, but livestock keepers will be taught about the signs, symptoms and treatments for animal diseases so that they can keep their animals healthy and productive in the future.

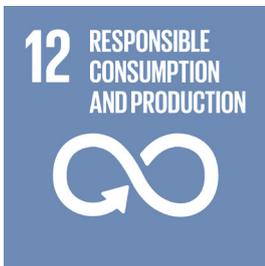
Unfortunately, one vaccination is not

enough: booster vaccinations are needed every six months. However, given the project funding and timeline, these boosters will be possible, and will help Afghanistan to move from stage 1 to stage 2. This means that one day, hopefully soon, Afghanistan will be able to export its dairy products abroad bolstering its' agricultural GDP, and bringing improved finances and food security to all citizens.



©FAO/J.Jadin

FAO supports the government on SDG planning with a series of regional workshops



From April to June, FAO, along with MAIL, supported six Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) workshops across the country. The workshops were held to raise awareness about the SDGs, as well as to work with stakeholders to map out financial and development gaps for selected goals and indicators.

The SDGs are a set of 17 goals defined in 2015. These goals, proposed by the UN, were made official when more than 190 world leaders committed to the goals, with the end goal of ending extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and stopping climate change, all by 2030. The SDGs apply to all countries worldwide, and every year, countries are asked to prepare reports on how they are meeting these goals.

FAO is the UN custodian agency for 21 SDG indicators across SDGs 2, 5, 6, 12, 14, and 15, and a contributing UN Agency for six more indicators. As such, FAO has worked with MAIL to adopt an integrated approach to addressing multiple SDGs for the agricultural sector. To mainstream the SDG agenda into national/sub-national plans, four themes were highlighted in the Afghanistan Reference Guidelines on Agriculture and Natural Resources Management:

- Using multi-stakeholder approaches;
- Raising public awareness;
- Tailoring for national to local contexts;
- Monitoring, reporting, accountability.

Central to the legitimacy and quality of a society-wide agenda is multi-stakeholder, transparent policy development and implementation. Transparency encourages partnerships between the government and various civil society institutions. Likewise, community participation begets community ownership, and ensures that poor, indigenous, disabled, and displaced persons and children are not forgotten, even though they may not be participating in the decision-making processes. Finally, given that the SDGs are a global agenda meant to have local impact, national audiences must link the SDGs to local concerns to ensure sustainable public support and meaningful progress.

While FAOs' work cross-cuts the SDGs, in Afghanistan, particular focus has

been given to SDG 2-Zero Hunger, which includes ending hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture. However, both MAIL and FAO have jointly worked on other goals including SDG 12 and 15.

Just a few examples of some of the targets that were covered under the workshops analyses included: ending hunger and ensuring access by all people to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round; ensuring sustainable food production systems and implementing climate-resilient agricultural practices; and halving per capita global food waste at the retail, consumer, production and post-harvest levels...all by 2030

The first of the six nationwide workshops was held in Herat. Mr. Muhaidin Noori, Herat's Deputy Governor noted that "to achieve these goals, it is absolutely necessary that we have close cooperation among all relevant actors, and if we want policies to be successful, we must consider local priorities."

Other workshops were held in Kandahar City, Mazar-i-sharif, Badakhshan, Jalalabad City and Bamyan. The SDG-related challenges discussed in each workshop were wide-ranging, from low water tables, to a lack of electricity, to rapid urbanization of agriculture land due to large numbers of returnees, to poor transportation, and many more.

Ms. Mehnaz Ajmal, FAO Policy Officer, noted that whatever goals Afghanistan aims to achieve under Agenda 2030, requires planning and investment at the provincial, district and village levels" She added that "to achieve SDGs it is important to determine the root causes of food insecurity and poverty in the country and ensure comprehensive approaches addressing economic, environmental and social dimensions."

All in all, these workshops had 220 participants from 22 provinces. Despite whatever specific issues discussed, themes of building public awareness, linking investment plans with the SDGs, supporting the plans with reliable data and information from the local level emerged at nearly all of the events.

FAO builds regional peace, fights animal disease through science diplomacy

Istanbul, Turkey: On June 27-28, veterinary experts from the Governments of Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan met in Istanbul, Turkey for the second multilateral meeting on Transboundary Animal Diseases (TADs). FAO Afghanistan hosted this meeting as part of a series of regional meetings on animal health, all funded by the Government of Japan.

The meeting began with remarks from Mr. Tomio Shichiri, FAO Representative in Afghanistan, acknowledging the Governments of Japan and Turkey for their support, and then speaking briefly about the consequences of animal health problems, from environmental to social. He noted that “livestock health not just about health, but also about our economic well-being. Livestock trade is valuable to our nations, and can be a major contributor to our GDP if we develop the livestock industry in a sustainable, climate-friendly manner.”

Delegates from each of the five nations spent much of the meeting in working groups themed around epidemiology, quarantine, and laboratories. In these groups, government staff from sometimes antagonistic neighboring countries worked face-to-face with each other to find solutions to

TAD challenges. Challenges included poor-quality vaccines, insufficient resources for mass vaccination campaigns, nonexistent expiration dates on imported animal products, meager national budgets for animal health issues, and illegal animal trade. While the issues at times were contentious, the delegates were largely able to propose solutions that were agreeable to all of the parties.

For example, while all countries had strengths and weaknesses, Iran generally had the most capacity around laboratory issues, and therefore offered to serve as a regional reference laboratory and training center. Likewise, Afghanistan offered to share its’ case definitions for priority diseases with its’ neighbors, and Uzbekistan offered to give trainings on establishing and running quarantine stations.

The topics that received the most attention were cross-border animal movement, and regional information sharing. For the former issue, delegates proposed developing bilateral standard operating procedures for cross-border movement, while acknowledging that animal movement will always be hard to control in a region of the world with remote, mountainous border zones traversed by nomadic herders. For the latter issue,

meeting attendees agreed that FAO-AF would set up a Secretariat for regional TAD coordination. This Secretariat will support coordination among animal experts from the five countries. The Secretariat will also develop a concept note for a larger program on TADs to circulate among the attending countries for their comments and later submission to donors.

Mr. Edris Raouf, Head of Delegation for Afghanistan, noted that the animal health world needed to take the same “one world, one health” approach that the human health world uses. “These diseases know no boundaries, so strong cooperation across our human boundaries is the only path to eradicating these diseases.”

A theme oft-repeated throughout the meeting was that cooperation through scientific issues was a path towards increased regional peace. Healthy, happy societies are less likely to turn towards crime or extremism; part of this health comes from having nourishing and reliable sources of food. Similarly, ensuring smallholder farmers have healthy animals provides the poor with stable, decent work. As one participant noted at the end of the meeting “this isn’t just about science, this isn’t just about food security, this is about peace-building.”



Front to back: Dr. Aminuddin Naseri (FAO), Mr. Edris Raouf (MAIL), Mr. Viorel Gutu (FAOSEC Turkey), listening as Mr. Tomio Shichiri (FAO) gives his opening remarks.

©FAO/J.Jadin

For more information contact:

FAO Representation, Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, Jamal Mina, Opposite of Kabul University, Kabul, Afghanistan Tel: +93 (0) 202 510 427 Fax: + 93 (0) 202510428 Email: FAO-AF@fao.org Web: www.fao.org/afghanistan CA0630EN/1/07.18