



Investing in rural people

Tajikistan

Reducing rural poverty,
enhancing food security



The Community-based Agricultural Support Project (CASP) is building on the significant achievements of the earlier Livestock and Pasture Development Project to stimulate inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction in rural Tajikistan. Since 2018, the CASP has provided benefits to more than 51,000 households in 177 rural villages in Khatlon Oblast, Soghd and Republican Subordination Regions. Its activities are helping communities and dehkan (smallholder) farmers access productive infrastructure and services, leading to sustainable agricultural production, equitable income-generating opportunities and improved living standards.

The CASP works with Village Organizations (VOs) to develop community-driven action plans that define their own improvement initiatives. Village-level participation in decision making is critical to the success of these plans and helps establish a sense of community ownership and cohesion.

Since 2008, IFAD has invested US\$80 million in Tajikistan in four projects directly benefiting 128,000 vulnerable households. Working in partnership with the Government of Tajikistan, the IFAD-supported projects have helped rural communities strengthen their grassroots organizations and manage their natural resources. These communities are developing the rural infrastructure they need to sustain agricultural production and stimulate inclusive economic growth. With IFAD's support, rural people across Tajikistan are creating diversified income-generating activities, in particular for women-headed households and youth, thus reducing rural poverty and enhancing food security.





Mirzoahmad Saidov, Abdurashid Doroev and Siyarov Khairullo

take a mid-morning break from working in their irrigated melon field. Before the CASP constructed an irrigation supply line and pump station in 2021, the dehkan farmers of Ayni Village, located in the arid borderlands of southwestern Tajikistan, lacked water to irrigate their 200 hectares of fields.

Agricultural productivity in villages like Ayni had been decreasing for decades because of deteriorating infrastructure and the lack of modern farming equipment. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and subsequent years of civil war, farmers no longer had the resources they needed to maintain their irrigation canals and agricultural machinery.

Members of the Ayni Village Organization (VO) agreed that acquiring tractors and other agricultural equipment should be their top priority. With the irrigation water freely flowing again, the CASP provided the VO with machinery that has enabled the farmers to maintain their village infrastructure and cultivate their fields. Onion and carrot crops are flourishing. And the melons have never been sweeter.





“We use the agricultural equipment effectively and to the benefit of our community. Living standards are increasing as poverty levels decrease. Our men have new opportunities to work here and earn a good income, thus decreasing out-migration.”

Fakhriddin Khodzhaev,
Head of Ayni Village
Organization

Karim Haidarov is a dehkan farmer and the Chairman of the Shahrinav Village Organization (VO). His village's farmlands, located in a rugged, arid corner of southwestern Tajikistan are enjoying an agricultural renaissance. With access to irrigation water newly restored, grain, cotton and vegetable fields are once again yielding bumper crops. Improved quality wheat seed and fertilizer provided by the CASP in 2020 resulted in a 50 per cent crop yield increase. Now using second-generation seed, Karim expects another good harvest.

Until the VO was established in 2020, though, farmers had abandoned about 60 per cent of their fields because they could no longer irrigate their crops, or because the soil had become contaminated by the rising saltwater table.

Restoring access to irrigation water was a key priority for the VO. They also needed machinery to maintain drainage ditches and irrigation canals, and to cultivate their crops. The CASP constructed two pump stations and water supply lines, and provided the VO with tractors, plows and other machinery. By May 2022, the VO had used the excavator and other heavy equipment received from the project to restore drainage ditches protecting more than 500 hectares of agricultural lands from salinization, and to clean irrigation canals to ensure good water flow.

“Thanks to IFAD and the CASP, we are benefitting from the full potential of our agricultural lands again.”

Karim Haidarov









The ‘star of the show’ in Safedmun Village is the Kapali Village Organization’s (VO) new GS575 Palesse grain harvesting combine. The co-star is **Gabibullo Davlatov**. When the VO received the combine and placed an announcement looking for a qualified machine operator, Gabibullo proposed his candidacy. He was employed by the VO after winning a competitive process and no longer needs to migrate in search of seasonal jobs away from his family.

When the CASP offered the VO the opportunity to acquire agricultural machinery, its members prioritized a combine harvester.

Farmers have always grown wheat in Safedmun Village, but cultivation had decreased in recent years due to a lack of agricultural machinery. Service providers from outside the village were expensive, often missed the peak harvest because of competing obligations, and used old machinery that did not properly separate chaff from grain. The farmers lost about 30 per cent of their wheat crop each season. With the new machinery provided by the project, farmers have doubled their cultivation with no harvest losses.

“Our members did not believe we would ever get such a big piece of machinery. But when it happened, they felt a proud sense of ownership and became convinced of the project’s credibility. It galvanized their trust in our organization and our long-term sustainability.”

Vahobov Mustaon,
Head of Kapali Village Organization

Traditionally, rural women in Tajikistan have limited access to economic opportunities and decision-making. The CASP is ensuring that they have a voice in their village organizations. Based on priorities defined by their women members, village organizations have established diverse income-generating groups, such as poultry production, beekeeping and food processing. This not only helps women increase their household income, but it also promotes better nutrition and ensures food security for their families.

Zavarbi Nozilova is the Head of a group of 14 women that dries and preserves fruits and vegetables. Large apple and pear orchards and vegetable gardens thrive in the cool, mountainous environment that surrounds Nimich Village. But many fruits and vegetables were lost each year due to the lack of storage and processing facilities. With equipment and supplies provided by the project, Zavarbi's group canned more than 1,400 jars of produce during their first year.

“During the COVID-19 lockdown period, we could not go outside the village. But thanks to our women's activities, we had plenty of poultry products, preserved fruits and vegetables, honey and bread.”

Havojuddin Sadikov,
Head of Nimich Village Organization



“The project provided us with food processing equipment and jars. Now that we have the means to preserve it, our produce is no longer wasted. We eat some of our products and sell the rest to earn income for our families.”





Zulfiya Khushvaktova always had free range poultry around her rural home. But the ten improved breed turkeys she received from the CASP are bigger and produce more meat. She was one of 16 low-income women selected by the Shahrinav Village Organization to participate in an income-generating group in 2020. The group has learned how to properly care for their poultry and how to use incubators to benefit commercially – a first for them.

The activity has provided Zulfiya, a 32-year-old mother of four children, with additional household income and better nutrition for her family. Using the two incubators provided by the project, the women select the largest eggs for incubating, saving smaller eggs to eat. During the first year, they hatched 1,050 turkey, 1,350 chicken and 100 duck eggs, selling the young chicks and ducklings at local markets for about 15 somoni (\$1.50) each.

The incubators also serve as a focal point for creating a cohesive community around their activity. While they enjoy their new source of income, the women are also committed to sharing their knowledge and success. In solidarity with other low-income households, Zulfiya and her group have given many young chicks to women and young people in their village.

“Our poultry products are nutritious. Before, we bought meat and eggs at the market when we could afford to. Now, we can eat what we produce ourselves. And we have helped our neighbours start poultry production to improve their household nutrition and income, too.”

Zulfiya Khushvaktova

Marrufa Tavurova and her son, Davlater Sharipova each received two beehives from the CASP. Nestled between high mountain ranges on the fertile plains of the Shooruk River valley in a remote corner of northcentral Tajikistan, their Safedmun Village has plenty of fruit trees and unpolluted mountain meadows that provide an abundance of nectar.

In 2020, the Kapali Village Organization (VO) established beekeeping as an income-generating opportunity for 30 women and men. Each person, of whom 25 are women, received two beehives and equipment needed for beekeeping. The group collected a total of 650 kilograms of honey in 2021, an average of 10.8 kilograms of honey from each bee family. And by early 2022, they had already added 10 new hives.

Marrufa and Davlater collect honey twice each year, which they sell for 60 somoni (\$6) per kilogram. Since starting in 2020, they have added two new bee families. Just as Marrufa's father taught her to respect and benefit from bees, she is pleased that her son has this opportunity to learn the art of beekeeping and to earn a good income, too.

“The first and most important thing is not to be afraid of the bees. Secondly, you must provide good conditions for the bees. My father always kept bees, so I was used to being around them. If you find a good place for them, where there are plenty of flowering plants, the bees will thrive.”

Marrufa Tavurova





During their first general meeting in March 2020, members of the Nimich Village Organization (VO) agreed on their top ten development priorities. Acquiring agricultural and construction machinery were at the top of their list.

Villagers used to lease agricultural machinery services from neighboring villages. But because they didn't have timely access, they missed optimal planting and harvesting times and lost between 30 and 50 per cent of their crops each year.

Avlekul Rahmanov, a 73-year-old retired schoolteacher, and his peers appreciate the new front loader the project provided their village and the good work the VO is doing to develop and maintain village infrastructure, making their lives better.

“These are golden days for our community. Now we have the machinery we need to cultivate our crops, and our members are happy. We harvest our potatoes much more efficiently and with no waste.”

Havojuddin Sadikov, Head of Nimich Village Organization





“I thank IFAD on behalf of our group of elderly people. Thanks to the machinery provided, our living standard has improved very much. During winter, they clear heavy snowfall off the roads leading to the school and to the main road. In the spring, they repair our roads to pastures. We also have plenty of nutritious food to eat. These things are important to us.”

Non is the traditional flatbread served at virtually every meal in Tajikistan. **Gadoeva Shukuriya** and the other women in Nimich Village start the day early to prepare the dough. They use flour made from wheat grown in their own fields and yoghurt produced from locally sourced cow's milk. After kneading and carefully shaping the dough into round loaves on pillows especially made for making bread, they apply intricate designs before baking it in a wood-fired tandoor (clay) oven. The whole process, including adhering the heavy loaves to the hot oven walls is nothing less than art.

Bread is not just a part of daily nutrition; it holds a fundamental place in the country's cultural traditions. There is an old saying in Tajikistan: "If we don't have bread, we don't have food."

With IFAD's support, the Community-based Agricultural Support Project (CASP), just as the Livestock and Pasture Development Project before it, is helping rural communities across Tajikistan strengthen their productivity and livelihoods, to ensure that there will always be an abundance of bread. By enabling them to realize their full agricultural potential and to create equitable employment opportunities, the CASP is empowering rural women and men to find and implement their own long-lasting solutions to reduce poverty and enhance food security. Together, they are unlocking the way to a more resilient future.








There is an old saying in Tajikistan:
“If we don’t have bread, we don’t have food.”

Gadoeva Shukuriya





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