

IFAD Grant 1107

Programme on Improving Livelihoods of Small Farmers and Rural Women through Value-Added Processing and Export of Cashmere, Wool and Mohair

Duration: 1 July 2009-30 September 2013 (4 years)

Background

Small producers of sheep and cashmere and angora goats in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Iran share the problem of poor access to world fiber markets and as a result experience considerable losses of income. This also hurts local processors who add value to fiber – in most cases poor rural women. The women lack access to distant markets where handmade, luxury clothing and handicrafts made of natural fibers are highly valued and thus lose considerable earning opportunities. In addition to poor linkages to markets, cashmere, mohair and wool producers lack scientific, organizational and technical support to improve breeding and fiber quality. In Central Asian countries such as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, centralized, state-run breeding programs that supported sheep and goat production collapsed after the breakdown of the Soviet Union and were never replaced by breeding programs for small, private producers. Neither were the new private farmers trained in proper harvesting, grading and sorting of cashmere and mohair to satisfy market standards. These deficiencies not only affect fiber quality but threaten the long-term competitiveness and sustainability of these sectors and the livelihoods of tens of thousands of families who depend on incomes from fiber production and processing. Many of these families live in poor and often remote agro-ecological regions where the production of small ruminants such as Angora and Cashmere goats represents the only source of livelihood.

This project will focus on the defined needs of these families in order to improve their livelihoods and income putting special emphasis on rural women through improved production, processing and export of value-added fiber in producing areas of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Iran.

The proposed programme will focus on well-identified fiber products with market prospects. It will develop a baseline with identification and understanding of constraints to production and marketing opportunities, and identification of impact assessment indicators that will also serve recently approved IFAD-funded investment projects in the region. In addition, by promoting an intensive south-south and south-north interaction, the programme will offer a high quality expertise and a wealth of information and skills with direct benefit to NARS, development projects and farmers of the region.

The programme will thus contribute to the achievement of IFAD's overarching goal of empowering rural women and men in developing countries to increase their incomes and improve food security at household level.

The proposed programme

The overall goal of the programme is to improve the livelihoods and income of small livestock producers and rural women through improved production, processing and export of value-added fiber in producing areas of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Iran.

The programme will be of a four year duration and will include five main components:

- **Component 1:** *Characterize production systems and improve fiber production of small ruminants in all target sites.*

- **Component 2:** Work on formation and capacity building of women's groups to develop fiber processing and export of value-added fiber and products in all pilot sites. Encourage the development of women-led small businesses.
- **Component 3:** Develop sustainable market chains that link fiber producers and processors with buyers.
- **Component 4:** Research on changes of income of fiber producers and women processors and their effects on livelihoods and gender roles.
- **Component 5:** Linkages (business, scientific and cultural) between the pilot communities and the global communities of producers, processors and consumers of fiber and fiber products.

Expected outputs and benefits

Target groups are small producers of cashmere, mohair and wool and women's processors' groups. The target groups are small producers of cashmere, mohair and wool, in particular women's groups who process these fibers. The grant is designed to help alleviate their poverty through collaboration on improving fiber quality in accordance with market demand and standards, adding value to fiber through improved processing, and providing assistance in finding export markets.

The project outputs will include:

Component 1

Output 1: Specific activities to improve fiber quality according to market needs and local constraints in Southern Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Iran prioritized.

The local system of sheep and goat production will focus on fiber production, processing and marketing. Opportunities and constraints in each project area (except Northern Tajikistan) will be analyzed to prioritize technical interventions.

Output 2: Production of sheep and goats focus on improved fiber quality.

The project will introduce low cost husbandry and community based breeding strategies in the new project sites and continue adapting management interventions in Northern Tajikistan. Farmers will be trained in: a) effective production practices and breeding strategies to improve fiber quality and their overall income; b) in fiber harvesting, sorting, testing and grading and c) in collaborative marketing strategies. Fiber samples will be objectively tested and analyzed.

PhD studies on potentials of community based programmes in sheep and goat breeding to improve fiber quality (at each site) will be developed.

Implementing institutions and personnel include: Livestock Institutes in host countries, ICARDA staff, local collaborators, Principal Investigator, experienced consultant, PhD and Master students.

Component 2

Output 3: Groups of women processors organized and empowered at pilot sites.

The project will organize groups of women processors and strengthen their decision-making role. Participatory strategies will be developed to provide more knowledge and information to women to make appropriate decisions.

The project will build women capacity to produce value-added fiber products for export based on lessons learnt by ICARDA 816 project¹. Formation of new women's groups in all pilot sites will be facilitated and training in fiber harvesting, processing and high-value production for export organised. New production technologies and efficient processing methods will be introduced in accordance with market demand; new products for specific market niches developed. Group leaders will be trained; knowledge and skills shared during local workshops.

¹ currently working with sixteen women-led producer groups in Tajikistan

Implementing institutions and personnel include: ICARDA staff, Principal Investigator from [Terra Institute](#)², local collaborators in all countries, the [Central Asian Craft Support Association](#)³, [SERRV International](#)⁴, local and international trainers including knitters and export countries' buyers of yarn and other products.

Component 3

***Output 4:** Market access for value-added fiber and fiber products improved through sustainable market chains linking fiber producers and processors with buyers.*

The project will: a) facilitate linkages between fiber producers and women's groups in all countries with buyers of value-added fiber and fair-trade yarns and products from Europe and the United States; and b) collaborate with groups to meet buyer's standards, set up marketing infrastructure and deliver products to consumers in order to increase producers' incomes and improve livelihoods of women and their families. A PhD study on fibers and value-added products in domestic and international markets and conditions of market access will support the project.

A market information system to promote producers' access to new markets will be developed: a) information booklets for farmers and women on prices, quality standards and new market outlets will be produced; b) up an information booth at the main market site will be created to allow producers and processors to obtain information and learn how to evaluate and price products; and c) information will be spread to communities to reach all participants to the project.

Samples of products made in Iran, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan would be shown at special side-events organized within the International Year of Natural Fibers (IYNF)⁵.

Implementing institutions and personnel include: ICARDA staff, Principal Investigator, local collaborators in all countries, the Central Asian Craft Support Association⁶ the SERRV International⁷, experienced consultant and the private sector.

Component 4

***Output 5:** Study on income changes and their effects on livelihoods and gender dynamics at pilot sites developed.*

The study will examine how and to what extent do changes in women's earnings affect women's roles, decision-making and status within the family and community.

The implementing institutions and personnel include ICARDA staff and the Principal Investigator.

Component 5

***Output 6:** Information materials on the programme to support business, scientific and cultural exchange between the pilot communities and the global communities of producers, processors and consumers of natural fiber and fiber products developed.*

Websites, documentary and videos to promote public and market awareness of the pilot communities and the production will be developed; exhibits will be organized. Exchanges between Central Asia and Iranian women fiber processors, knitters and

² Terra Institute Ltd., a Wisconsin (USA) based non-profit organization, established in 1974, with core activities focused on issues of land tenure, land policy reform, land administration and management, environmental protection and natural resources management.

³ The Central Asian Crafts Support Association (CACSA) is a non-governmental organization founded in 2000 from the crafts organization network created as a result of the project implemented during 1994-1998 in Central Asia with the support of Aid to Artisans (US-based crafts support organization). CACSA currently unites more than 60 member-organizations, reaching over 7000 artisans from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

⁴ US Fair Trade NGO that works with women's groups worldwide on handicraft production and marketing, including training in product development

⁵ The International Mohair Summit organized by Mohair South Africa, 3-6 November 2009.

⁶ Local NGO experienced in marketing handicrafts in Central Asia and abroad and organizing trade shows and exhibitions.

⁷ US Fair Trade NGO that markets Fair Trade handicrafts made in different parts of the world through their wide distribution network.

consumers/importers in Europe and the United States will be promoted. All communication material will be linked to the Asian regional network "ENRAP".

The programme will produce training material and user friendly documentation to share lessons with other organizations willing to upscale the programme concept. Training manuals will be translated into local languages. At the end of the programme, specific Technical Advisory Notes will be developed to share knowledge with the international community.

The implementing institutions and personnel include ICARDA staff, the Principal Investigator, the Central Asian Craft Support Association, the SERRV International and buyers.

Implementation arrangements

The programme will be managed by ICARDA and implemented in partnership with NARS, NGOs and universities with the support of qualified consultants that will promote linkages between producers/women processors and fiber markets in the pilot regions. ICARDA's regional office in Tashkent and country office in Iran will support the programme in administrative issues.

The pilot sites in the three countries have been selected to represent typical fiber producing and processing areas in the target countries. In each country teams will be built to provide the expertise needed. Key partner institutes (NARS) and organizations have already been selected based on successful collaboration between ICARDA and IFAD projects and Terra Institute's projects in the countries. The programme will use existing offices of participating agencies. In collaboration with NARS, coordinators will be selected at each project site. They will report to the coordinating institutes.

Indicative programme costs and financing

IFAD's proposed contribution is estimated at USD 1.5 million. The matching contribution of the participating NARS will cover salaries of scientists, provision of research facilities, vehicles, already established institutional arrangements with collaborating farmers, etc., and are estimated at USD 0.332 million.

Annex

Project Sites:

Northern Tajikistan: The project will continue the current work in the Sogd oblast of Northern Tajikistan in the Gafurov, Matchinsk and Asht regions. Our pilot sites are located at the foothills of the Matchinsk mountains - arid areas with very sparse vegetation. The rural population in this region relies primarily on the production of Angora goats and sales of mohair fiber as the pastures are too poor to support other livestock. There are around 250,000 Angora goats in the region but the marketing of mohair is poorly developed - the largest share of mohair production is sold to Russia and there is virtually no access to more lucrative global markets that pay higher prices especially for fine mohair. Similarly, rural women who process mohair into yarn lack access to export markets beyond Russia. The project will continue to work with Angora goat producers and groups of women spinners on improving breeding, fiber quality, yarn quality and market access.

Southern Tajikistan: We plan to work in the Gorno-Badakhshan autonomous oblast in the southeastern part of Tajikistan in the Pamir mountains at the border with Afghanistan. This is the center of Cashmere goat production in Tajikistan where Tajik scientists worked on Cashmere goat breeding prior to the civil war. Women in this region harvest and sort cashmere fiber and also knit using wool of local sheep. The project plans to work with cashmere producers and Tajik scientists to re-start the breeding program which was interrupted by the war, improve fiber quality and develop effective marketing infrastructure and market linkages. It also plans to collaborate with women's groups to add value to cashmere and wool and find export markets for their yarns and knitted handicrafts. The project will simultaneously explore the possibility of developing collaborative ties with cashmere producers across the border in Afghanistan. The Tajik project can serve as a model for developing a similar project focused on helping Afghan Cashmere goat farmers.

Iran: The project plans to work near the Baft city in Kerman province in southeastern Iran, 2270 meters above sea level. This area is the center of the Raini Cashmere goat production, with 850,000 heads of cashmere goats produced in the region. The Iranian farmers do not sort cashmere in terms of fineness and color and are not organized to take advantage of collaborative marketing strategies and economies of scale. They sell unsorted cashmere for low prices and lack direct market linkages. Similar to Southern Tajikistan, women in the region work with cashmere and wool but do not have access to export markets. The project's goal will be to work with producers and women processors to improve breeding, fiber quality, marketing infrastructure and market access. It plans to introduce harvesting, sorting and grading methods that were successfully applied by major cashmere producers such as Mongolia. It will also work to develop collaborative ties between Cashmere producers in Southern Tajikistan and Iran and encourage synergistic effects of the two projects.

Kyrgyzstan: In Kyrgyzstan the project plans to work in the Naryn region which is located in the southeastern part of Kyrgyzstan at 1500-2500 meters above sea level. Naryn is one of the poorest regions in Kyrgyzstan, characterized by high unemployment and poverty especially among women. The local population relies primarily on subsistence livestock production for livelihood. The Naryn region is known for its felting tradition – processing the wool of local sheep into felt rugs and other handicrafts. There are several women-led felting groups in the region which were formed in the course of the market transition. These groups are trying to use their ancient skills to produce felt handicrafts for export and develop small businesses but need assistance with equipment, product development and market linkages. The project plans to provide the needed

assistance and work with a group of local women to produce felt handicrafts for export to markets in Europe and the United States. The project also plans to collaborate with sheep farmers who supply wool to the felters to improve fiber quality and support the preservation of semi-fine sheep breeds that were developed during the Soviet period.

Key Partners and Institutes

ICARDA:

Barbara Rischkowsky, small ruminant specialist and project manager

ICARDA regional office:

Nariman Nishanov, administration in Central Asia and professional officer on market research

USA:

Liba Brent, socio-economist and principal investigator, Terra Institute, University of Wisconsin, Madison

SERRV International (Fair Trade Marketing NGO)

Tajikistan:

Dr. Fazzlidin Ikramov, Director Tajik Research Institute of Livestock

Dr. Ma'tazim Askarovich Kosimov, Mohair goat breeder, Tajik Research Institute of Livestock, Sogd Branch

Kyrgyzstan:

Dr. Asanbek Ajibekov, small ruminant breeder, Kyrgyz Institute of Livestock and Rangelands, Bishkek

D. Chuchumbaeva, CACSA, Central Asian Craft Support Association (NGO)

Iran:

Hamid Reza Ansari-Renani, fiber specialist, Animal Science Research Institute, Karaj, Iran

Argentina:

Dr. Joaquin Mueller, community based breeding specialist, INTA (Instituto Nacional de Tecnología Agropecuaria), Bariloche