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FAO contributes to reach self-sufficiency in wheat



HIGHLIGHTS

FAO has completed the autumn 2002 seed distribution campaign, supplying around **3 800 tonnes of improved varieties of wheat seed** (2 900 tonnes adapted for irrigated land and 900 tonnes for rainfed land) and over 6 000 tonnes of fertilizer to half a million people in almost all provinces in Afghanistan.

This emergency programme was funded by Germany, Italy, Kuwait, Norway, Switzerland and the United Nations Development Programme with around **US\$5.3 million**.

The seeds were distributed to vulnerable farming families that were severely stricken by conflict and more than three years of drought.

FAO estimates that the production of distributed seeds will amount to around 120 000 tonnes of wheat.

It represents an additional quantity of about 60 000 metric tonnes compared with local varieties production. The additional value is estimated to 9 million dollars, at US\$150 per metric tonne. The average yield of local varieties is estimated at 1.5 metric tonne by hectare in comparison with the 3.5 metric tonnes by hectare for the improved varieties.

Kits of seeds and fertilizers were distributed to around **80 000 poor farming families** who could not buy new agricultural inputs. The distribution was carried out by 26 local and international NGOs in 31 provinces and 200 districts (out of a total of 32 provinces and 350 districts).

All seeds were purchased from local suppliers participating in the FAO Seed Multiplication Programme. FAO contracted several thousand farmers last year for multiplication of high quality wheat seeds suitable for irrigation and rainfed agriculture.

The seeds and fertilizers kit?

Two types of kits were distributed to the farmers:

- Irrigated land: composed of 50 kg of wheat seed, 50 kg of DAP fertilizer and 50 kg of urea fertilizer. It allows an intensive production cultivation of 2 *jeribs*, with an estimated harvest of 1 500 to 2 000 kg.
- Rainfed land: composed of 50 kg of wheat seed and 25 kg of DAP fertilizer. It allows an extensive production cultivation of 3 *jeribs*, with an estimated harvest of 700 to 1 000 kg of wheat grain.

An average size family in Afghanistan has six to seven members. With an annual consumption *per capita* of around 140 kg, the total annual need of a family would be about 1 000 kg. The kits are an important contribution to help the farming families restart food production and become self-sufficient in wheat. They might even be able to sell some in the market.



DAP: Di-Ammonium Phosphate. Used before sowing, Ensures better plant development and fructification.

Urea: Rich in nitrogen (46% of N). Applied during sowing and before flowering stages. Boosts healthier vegetative growth.

Jerib: Afghan land measure equals to 0.2 hectare.

How are the beneficiaries selected?

The project targeted the poorest farmers. The criteria developed by FAO are commonly followed by all implementing partners involved in the distribution.

The criteria to select the beneficiaries are:

- Farmers who do not have the capacity to resume normal farming activities due to the loss of all assets;
- Farmers who lack the seed and/or fertilizer and cannot afford to purchase them;
- Farmers who do not have the means to put into cultivation a sufficient piece of land because they do not possess or do not have the capacity to procure the basic inputs;
- Farmers who do not have animals or tractors and cannot afford hiring them.

The farmers will repay for the kits in cash or in kind (wheat)

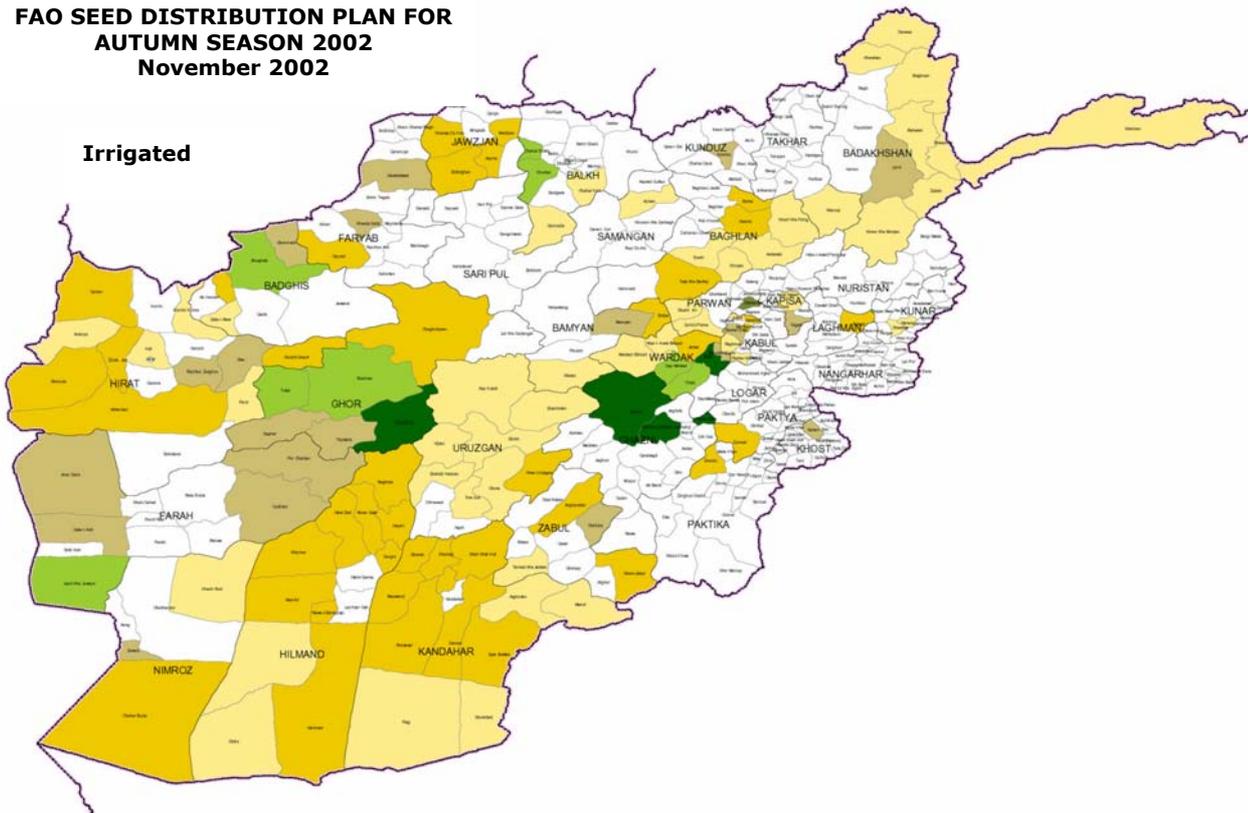
Following the guiding principles of the code of conduct on seed issued in June 2002, the kits are not distributed free. At harvest time, the farmers reimburse the cost of the kit which has been calculated on a commercial basis. The communities will use the reimbursement for development projects.

Nevertheless, as the beneficiaries are the most vulnerable farmers, a certain flexibility is left to the implementing partners in the re-imbursement modality. The village council – *shura* - is in charge to collect the refunds with the assistance of the NGOs. The *shura* has the final decision on re-imbursement and on the utilization of the refunds. The allocation of the collected funds is decided on a participatory basis for community development projects. FAO does not recommend the redistribution of the collected wheat as seed because they might not fulfil the seed quality criteria.

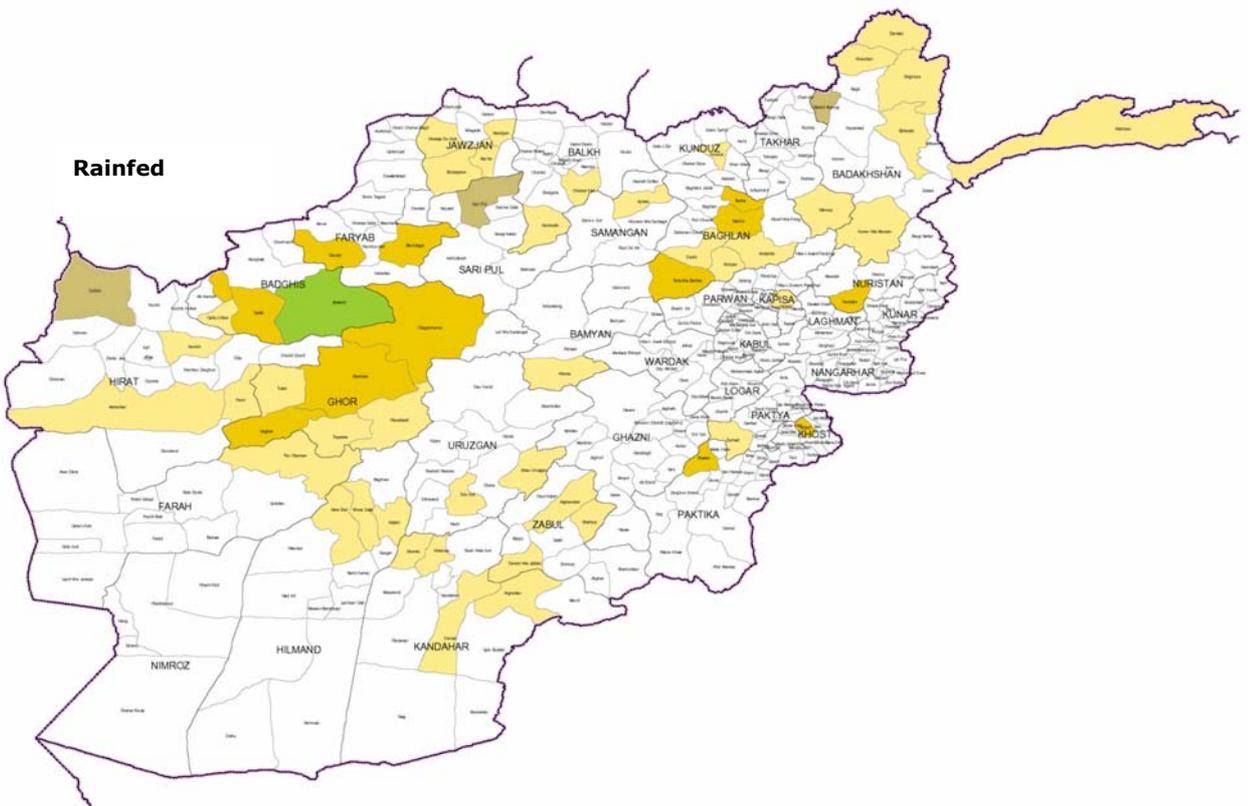
AFGHANISTAN

**FAO SEED DISTRIBUTION PLAN FOR
AUTUMN SEASON 2002
November 2002**

Irrigated



Rainfed



Seed Distribution quantity in tonnes: 0-10 11-20 21-30 31-40 41-50 51-60

What type of seed is distributed?



The seed is of varieties selected out of lines obtained from international research institutes such as CIMMYT or ICARDA, which have undergone two to three years of experimental trials under various Afghan conditions. They are improved varieties adapted to Afghan conditions and do not need of special cropping practices, large amount of fertilizers or use of pesticides. They are known to the Afghan farmers and are intrinsically more resistant to diseases. The use of fertilizer is recommended to allow the varieties to fully express their yielding potential, thus enabling a multiplication of the yield by three to four. Nevertheless, even without fertilizer, the results would still be better than the local varieties. All the seed was produced locally and meet the standards of Quality Declared Seed (QDS). They were purchased from local suppliers participating in the FAO Seed Multiplication Programme. FAO contracted more than 4 000 seed growers last year for the multiplication of high quality wheat seed suitable for irrigated and rain-fed agriculture. Procuring seed directly from farmers

strengthens local production of high quality seed, favours the development of a national seed sector and paves the way towards a sustainable Afghan seed industry.

FAO relief operation has supported the seed growers by supplying 24 seed cleaners, 10 threshers, 12 tractors, 12 trailers, 10 bag stitchers, 120 000 bags and 120 000 tag, thus enhancing their production capacities.

The total annual seed requirements in Afghanistan are estimated to 250 000 metric tonnes. The Afghan seed production sector is capable of producing a significant amount of seed. This year the production has been estimated at 20 000 metric tonnes. The weak points are mainly marketing and processing capacities.

The wide diffusion of good quality seed of improved varieties among remote farmers helps the adoption of these new high yielding varieties enhancing food production and food security.

This seed distribution also contributed reaching a profitability in seed production and is preparing the transition towards the privatization of this sector.

Who contributed to the funding of this operation?

"If we want to help farmers to get out of poverty and produce more food, we need to increase our assistance, extend the seed multiplication programme and improve the marketing and processing of seeds. Currently seed marketing is almost non-existent in Afghanistan. Our aim is to reach sustainability in seed multiplication and prepare the transition towards privatization and better marketing. Donor support is needed to cover these activities," says FAO seed group in Afghanistan.

The FAO Emergency Seed and Fertilizer Distribution Campaign for autumn season was funded by the following donors:

Donors



Web Links

FAO Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division:
<http://www.fao.org/reliefoperations/appeals/2002/afghanistanBRIEF.htm>

FAO Website: www.fao.org