

CRS Afghanistan

Collaborator: CIAT Learning Alliance for Agroenterprise

Agroenterprise Support Program

Western Afghanistan Action Research Project

Funded by DfID/RALF

Managed by ICARDA

CRS Strategic Approach

- CRS' purpose is to uphold human dignity, and promote the rights and abilities of the least privileged.

- CRS strategic framework:

Integral Human Development (IHD)

- Based the Sustainable Livelihood Framework
- Reflects CRS focus on social justice

CRS in Western Afghanistan

- ASP through RALF, RAMP, and CRS funds
- Livelihood Support
- Watershed Development Programme
- Accelerated Learning

CRS Strategic Approach and Purpose of the ASP Action Research Project

- Helping communities to improve risk management through agricultural development
 - Creating buffers against natural and man-made disasters
 - Asset creation
- Working to understand factors that positively enhance livelihood outcomes

Geographic Coverage

- RAMP

- Injil and Guzara districts of Herat Province – Currently working in 96 villages of which 80 per cent are irrigated

- RALF

- Pashtun Zargon District (Herat Province)
Currently covering 12 villages
Both rainfed and irrigated areas
- Sharak District of Ghor Province
Qualitative assessments on-going (team of 6 in field)



RALF Purpose

- Develop and promote innovative alternative livelihood options for rural Afghans currently economically dependent on opium production

CRS Working Assumption:

While poppy cultivation can be lucrative and there are several factors favoring its role within the livelihood portfolio of rural households, there are risks particular to poppy that create space for introducing and promoting alternatives

The role of Poppy in rural enterprise

Poppy is an economically attractive crop:

- Requires minimal water input
- Large returns from small areas
- Low post harvest costs including storage, packaging and transport
- Increased access to credit
- In lower elevations, poppy is a winter crop growing during periods of reliable precipitation and does not interfere with food crop cycles
- Demand is stable
- Supply chain seems to function very well

Risks of opium production

- Social, moral and religious pressure
- Market instabilities
- Threat of eradication—different across districts and economic/social classes
- Dependence on financing and pre-sale increases farmer vulnerability
- Relatively high input costs

Project activities

- Identify new or existing crops or agro-enterprises with high potential, but little current investment
- Assess these crops or enterprises through feasibility studies, sub-sector analyses, focus group discussions, secondary research, trials
- Explore and promote interest in international markets and facilitate linkages
- Promote alternatives through demonstration plots, extension, training, and working with BDS providers to support to viable enterprises, for example through credit or grants.



Methodology: The Territory Approach

- CRS' approach to agroenterprise is based on a CIAT model called:

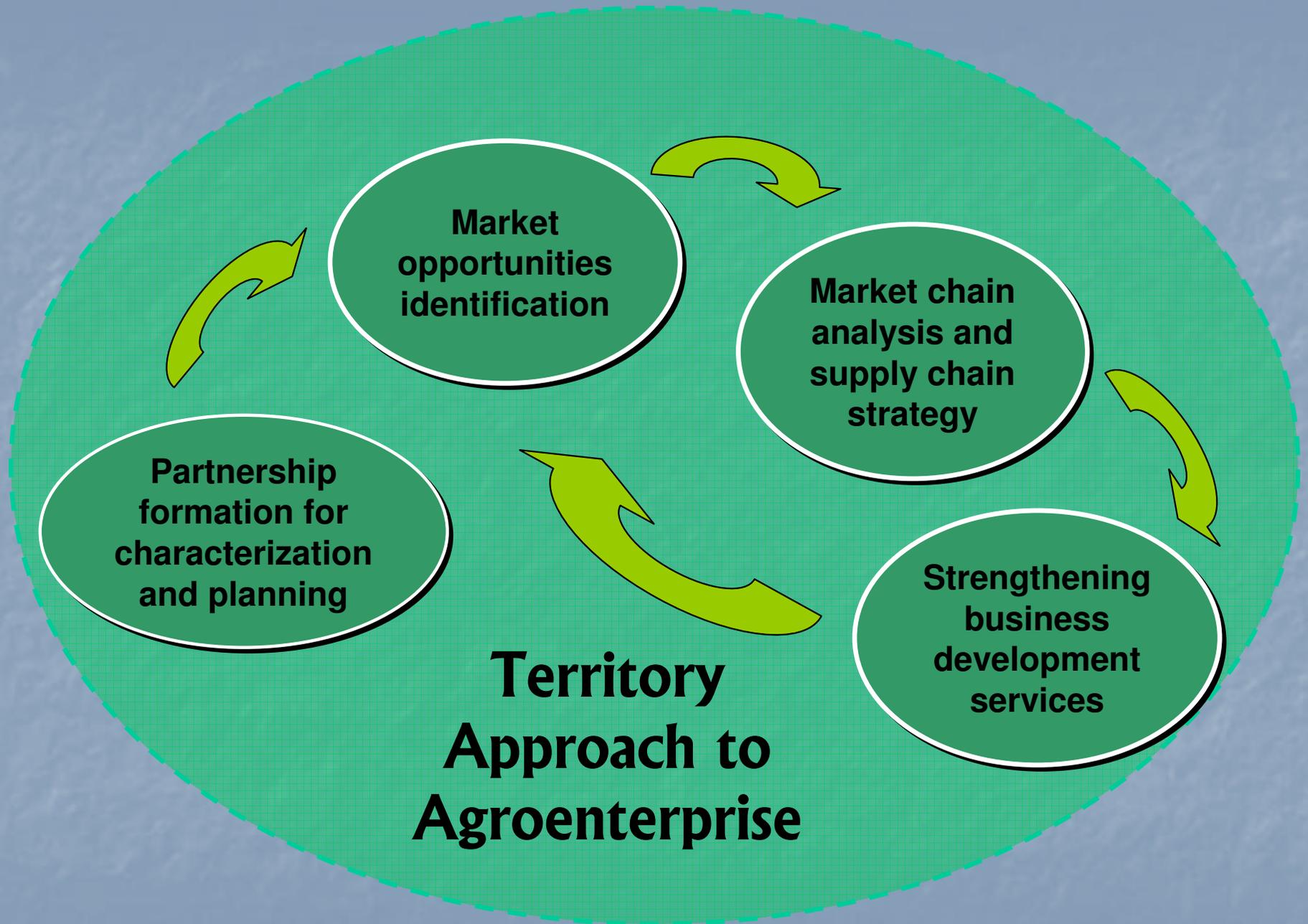
Territory Approach to Agroenterprise

- Market oriented
- Participatory decision making with farmers and other agricultural market actors
- Focus on smallholder farmers and rural poor

Methodology:

The Territory Approach

- Formation of stakeholder groups
- Identification and development of market opportunities
- Participatory market analysis, consensus building with diverse actors along the chain and shared supply chain strategy
- Promotion of appropriate and sustainable business development services (BDS) and markets



New opportunities identified

- Initial proposal:

Saffron, Cumin and Tomatoes

- Several other crops and enterprises have emerged through surveys and action research in Pashtun Zargun and Sharak



Alternative 1. Cumin

(Pashtun Zargun)

- Already an estimated 16,000 MT/year produced in Herat Province
- Easily stored for long periods
- Winter crop coinciding with poppy, but not interfering with food crops
- Creates some labor demand
(@20 man days/jerib, 200-400AFA/day)
- Opportunities for adding value through cleaning/packaging
- Premium prices for high grade product

Current Cumin activities

- 27 demonstration/trial plots (1 jerib/plot)
- Working with a cooperative (227 farmers, 6000 jeribs of land) to improve marketing, cleaning and access to inputs (applying to CNFA for matching grant)
- Investigation of environmental impacts
- US based consultant working to identify international buyers
- Working with small traders and buyers to improve bargaining power relative to large traders

Alternative 2. Saffron

- Primarily focused on women farmers
- Saffron is well suited to local growing conditions
- High value with little processing
- Easy shipping
- Creates employment for women
- Easy to grow, low water demand
- Incentive to improve value adding and marketing high through Western markets

Current Saffron activities

- US based consultant has identified buyer
 - Buyer has expressed interest to buy whatever can be produced
 - Will pay premium over the Iranian market
- Samples have been sent to end-buyers for assessment
- School of Packaging at MSU is doing color strength and microbial load testing (reported high e-coli contamination)
- Based on test results and buyer requirements (including packaging) new training modules will be prepared for pre and post-harvest
- Are taking advantage of the “Women of Afghanistan” aspect of this crop to create branding options



Challenges for Saffron

- Demonstrating quickly a higher paying market for saffron to farmers investing in the crop
- Meeting packaging requirements, potential for buyers to insist on packing in their own brand
- Increasing production to sustainable marketable volumes
- Improvements in food safety practices among producers (high e-coli contamination will prevent export to western markets in the near-term)

Alternative 3. Peas and Chickpeas (Pashtun Zargun)

- Winter crop—coinciding with poppy production
- Relatively high net return
- Easy transport
- Provide fodder when required most
- Soil builder

Activities

- 14 demonstration plots (14 jeribs)
- Possibility of green peas

Alternative 4: Vegetables

(Herat and Pashtun Zargun)

- Vegetables can provide a competitive price relative to poppy
- Greenhouse production can coincide with poppy production and create import substitution effects (Learning from activities funded by RAMP)
- Working with RAMP on cold storage in Herat
- Challenges faced are many
 - Perishability
 - Appropriate, timely transport
 - Infrastructure and supply chain development

Alternative 5: Orchards/Nurseries

- Many farmers have expressed interest in nursery cultivation and orchard development or rehabilitation
- CRS is initiating grafting training, selection and identification of buds, pest management, etc
- Requires further research on improved varieties, market opportunities, and overall economic impact for remote rural areas

Alternative 6: Grapes

- Many varieties available for different end use
- Processing techniques are known and in use
- It has good marketing opportunity in neighboring countries
- Requires research specifically in western Afghanistan

Initiatives in small scale processing

■ Juice and jam making

- Engaging women in a value adding activity that utilizes fruits and vegetables that are not fit for the fresh market; processing, bottling, labeling, and marketing
- Currently conducting TOT in Herat Province with a local NGO partner (Welfare Development Organization)
- WDO's feasibility analysis indicates juice and jam can be made in the home for a competitive price
- Initial market assessment in Herat bazaar and restaurants indicate the small scale processors are capable of meeting quality expectations and vendors and consumers are interested in buying locally-made products

Initiatives in small scale processing, continued

- Pickle making to support vegetable production and reduce losses through rotting, handling and transport
- Herat based pickle maker wants to expand his business
 - Promoting expanded vegetable production in Pashtun Zargon
 - Working with women on home based pickle making to be marketed through the Herati vendors

Other areas to explore

- Livestock

Obvious potential which has been raised in rural surveys in all districts we work.

Currently, we have a lack of expertise internally.

For anyone looking for work in Herat and Ghor?

Email recruitment@crs.org

Other enterprises to explore

- Currently 6 staff in Sharak (Ghor), including 2 international researchers, three local agronomists, and a CRS field officer
- Conducting a Territorial Characterization in eight villages to identify current livelihood strategies as first step toward determining potential areas of intervention