

Gender and the Agricultural Innovation System in Rural Afghanistan: Barriers and Bridges

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Outline

- About APPRO
- About this research
- Findings
- Conclusion / Recommendations
- Discussion

APPRO's Mission

- Independent social research organization with a mandate to promote social and policy learning to benefit development and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, registered in 2008 as a not-for-profit Afghan national NGO
- Facilitate critical dialogue on policy and reconstruction issues by:
 - Measuring development progress against strategic reconstruction objectives, and
 - Training and mentoring
- Address existing and pressing knowledge gaps in the policy making process to advance the learning of researchers, academics, and decision and policy makers at all levels – national and international

Research Approach

Premise:

- Intervention does not occur in a void
- Intended solutions create / identify new and unaccounted for problems
- Focus on interface between new/introduced and pre-existing forms of organization
- Identify and map autochthonous structures and optimal ways in which policy solutions are absorbed by these structures
- Establish what works and why
- Learning: Better policy and other interventions

Research Approach

Methods:

- Historical and Institutional
 - Context Oriented
- Qualitative
 - Intimate and open-ended engagement through Focus Group Discussions and Key informant Interviews
- Quantitative
 - Utilize existing datasets
 - Compile Socio-economic Profiles

Areas of Work

Research:

- Aid Effectiveness
- Governance
- Rights and Development
- Political Economy
- Natural Resource and Environmental Management

Training / Capacity Exchange:

- Policy and Decision Making Analysis
- Logical Framework Development and Analysis
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Introduction to Research Methods

About This Research

Objectives:

- Map and document the agricultural innovation system in the three value chains: Grape/Raisin, Almond, and Saffron.
- Examine gender dynamics to identify the impediments to greater involvement of women in full strata of production from the farm to the market.
- Identify opportunities for systemic intervention / innovation to facilitate increased productivity and gender balance.
- Future research and policy options for gender mainstreaming in agricultural production

Methodology:

- Mainly Qualitative (Literature Review, Interviews, and Focus Group Discussions)
- Institutional and innovation systems based

Findings

Grape/Raisin:

- interventions to develop and strengthen this sector appear to have been seconded to interventions in the more glamorous horticultural value chains
- Still, raisins hold the highest (licit) export value
- Interventions / innovation:
 - Paper or woven mats for drying grape
 - Technology (washing, sorting, packaging)
 - Higher hygiene standards
 - Setting up associations and co-ops
 - Export linkages with international entities, e.g., Fullwell Mill and FLO-CERT (fairtrade)
- Much more could and should be done
- See <http://www.appro.org.af/Publications.html> for more details.

Findings

Almond:

- Researched rather thoroughly
- Core objective: establish basic production systems
- Focus: improving quality of nurseries and products
- Afghan National Nursery Growers' Organization (ANNGO): a network of private nurseries collaborating on spreading true-to-type almond varieties among Afghan orchards
- Afghanistan Almond Industry Development Organization (AAIDO): Basic extension work and guidance on separating bitter almonds for oil extraction, marketing.
- Arghand, (women owned and operated in Kandahar), is successfully marketing almond oil and various types of almond oil based soaps and body oils in North America.
- Mechanized almond shelling process (unsuccessful), packaging (small scale, reasonably successful)
- See <http://www.appro.org.af/Publications.html> for more details.

Findings

Saffron:

- Traditional crop. More recently introduced to Afghanistan through smuggled bulbs from Iran.
- Land area currently under cultivation is est. 212 hectares, involving over 1,000 farmers with potential to produce 50 to 70 tons of saffron.
- As equally well-suited to ecological conditions as opium poppies
- Extremely high quality
- At least 10 times the price of opium (4,000 vs. 400 USD)
- Interventions: DACAAR (since early 1990s), Ministry of Agriculture, and Italian PRT
- A number of women growers' associations
- Value addition avoidance
- Chain governance
- See <http://www.appro.org.af/Publications.html> for more details.

Conclusion / Recommendations

- Raisins, almond, and saffron produced in Afghanistan are likely to continue to be poorly processed and shipped in bulk to other countries for further processing and packaging:
 - Inadequate storage facility, production & processing techniques, transportation, infrastructure
 - Inadequate quality and hygiene standards
 - Lack of direct access to global markets
 - Inadequate regulatory framework, poorly functioning ministries and cross-ministerial bodies, lack of rule of law and security
 - Access to cash is prioritized over maximizing returns through adding more value
 - à Institutionalization of value adding is a longer term prospect
 - à Much room for relatively simpler innovations, e.g., drying, grading, separating, engaging / remunerating women in production

Conclusion / Recommendations

- Interventions such as extension and provision of inputs only the beginning of a long process of change
- Attention needs to be paid to:
 - Security
 - Women's traditional place in society
 - Access to credit
 - Access to information
 - Land ownership
 - Literacy
 - Chain governance
 - Markets and prices
 - Saffron vs. Opium?

Conclusion / Recommendation

Research-Policy linkages:

- Over 6 decades worth of intense discussion on linkages between research and policy
- Research is carried out to inform, not make, policy
- Policy makers to *lead* on exploring policy options based on research, evaluate viability of options, and translate them into practice in consultation and collaboration with researchers, technocrats, politicians, laypersons, and academics
- All policy solutions have intended, unintended, and unaccounted for outcomes – in all cases policy options create additional challenges
- Policy process, including change making in Afghanistan, can have a beginning but no end → ongoing and evolving
- Research as an integral component of policy making and not an afterthought, if intention is to learn and do better in the long-run.