



SUCCESS STORY

Building Resilience of Agricultural Businesses

USAID supports Tajik agri-businesses to find new markets for their produce



USAID Agribusiness Competitiveness Activity in Tajikistan

Abdugaffor distributes strawberries to sellers in Almaty's local market.

"When I decided to diversify into strawberry production, no one believed it would work as it is very hot in the summer and not suitable for growing strawberries. I was not discouraged, and started with just 0.30 hectares. Now, I have expanded to 3 hectares. I received great support from USAID projects to organize my production and to market my produce in the regional market for the first time. This is huge for a small business, and we are very grateful."

- Abdugaffor Kurbonov, a strawberry farmer from southwestern Tajikistan

Shahnoza, LLC is a small-scale agri-enterprise based in Jayhun district in southwest Tajikistan. The company was started by Abdugaffor Kurbonov in 1999 and, over time, has diversified its agricultural activities from lemon production and a range of home-produced value-added products to introducing strawberry production for the first time in 2017. With his wife and four children, Abdugaffor worked hard to enlarge his production area to three hectares, but faced challenges with marketing the produce, in particular the strawberries, as both he and his hired labor lacked the skills to sort, grade, and pack the strawberries to meet the requirements of higher-value markets.

To provide the required skills and knowledge to better prepare agricultural produce for sale, the USAID Agribusiness Competitiveness Activity in Tajikistan trained Abdugaffor's workers how to pick and sort strawberries by size and introduced better quality packaging. This professionalized marketing initially resulted in Abdugaffor supplying strawberries to larger Dushanbe supermarkets for the first time. The activity then assisted Abdugaffor with a small pilot air freight shipment of strawberries to Almaty, Kazakhstan. This assistance included support in preparing export documents following certification and customs requirements, overcoming logistical issues, and identifying buyers in Almaty. The trial shipment provided both valuable lessons on the export process and new business linkages with local Kazak traders.

Shahnoza is typical of emerging commercial enterprises in Khatlon district, which rely on diversifying their activities to build resilience in a challenging trading environment. Following his visit to Almaty, Abdugaffor made good use of the contacts made. Two additional exports were organized – one for 18 tons of onions and another for 21 tons of plums – both to traders he met while in Almaty. Abdugaffor sourced this produce from local farmers to supply these export orders.

Feeling confident with his new expertise and his new customers both local and regional, Abdugaffor is now more confident to expand his strawberry enterprise and to further engage in exporting horticultural produce in the upcoming agricultural season.

The USAID Agribusiness Competitiveness Activity in Tajikistan runs from 2018 to 2023.