



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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Tajikistan Modernizes Irrigation Systems at National and Local Levels

Located in Central Asia, Tajikistan is a small, landlocked country with an arid climate and dry soils. These conditions mean Tajik farmers are heavily dependent on irrigation for agriculture: eighty-four percent of Tajikistan's arable land is serviced by a network of irrigation and drainage systems.

Developed during the Soviet era, these irrigation systems have fallen into disrepair over more than 20 years, and rural farmers are suffering the consequences. Small-scale private farmers as well as families, who raise their own crops and livestock, have seen their harvests decrease while undernutrition rates have climbed.

Years of irrigation system neglect continue to cause deterioration of soil quality from salinization and shrinking irrigated areas. At the same time, most former Soviet collective and state farms have been redistributed to farmers, giving them more production independence, but leaving local irrigation management in a vacuum.

The urgency and breadth of this problem demand significant irrigation sector policy reforms, and the Government of Tajikistan is doing just that. With support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) under Feed the Future as well as the World Bank, the Government of Tajikistan is working with farming communities to promote local irrigation system management and integrated watershed management.

In November 2013, the President of Tajikistan issued a Decree on Water Sector Reform, modernizing the Tajik Ministry of Energy and Water Resources by separating the role of policy creation and regulation from irrigation water delivery management and operations, which is now provided by a separate Government of Tajikistan agency.

While national-level reforms take hold, USAID is also supporting a local solution to irrigation management: the creation of water users associations. These community-based associations are planning needed repairs to the old systems and planning water delivery schedules that make efficient use of irrigation water.

To date, Feed the Future has helped farmers in Tajikistan establish and legally register 46 water user associations, which have repaired or installed 164 water-control gates and cleaned 14,700 meters of irrigation canals, improving and rehabilitating more than 13,000 hectares of farmland. About 90,000 households are benefiting from a more reliable irrigation water supply.

This model has been so effective that it is being replicated through other development efforts in Tajikistan. With a \$45.9 million grant from the World Bank-managed [Global Agriculture and Food Security Program](#) (GAFSP), the Government of Tajikistan is supporting local NGOs to adopt many of the best practices learned from USAID over ten years of leadership on community-led irrigation management and repair. These groups are now creating additional farmer-run water users associations to manage water delivery, improve water access and quality, and rebuild and maintain their irrigation systems. This cooperation between USAID and the World Bank greatly expands the area of Tajikistan that will have well-trained water user associations, and revitalized infrastructure.

"Participatory irrigation management is key to a sustainable system," says Nargiz Yuldasheva of the GASFP-supported NGO, Source of Life. "Recognizing the importance and role of [water users associations], farmers are becoming more active and willing to become involved."

To help connect high-level policy reforms with community-level water management, USAID is supporting the Government of Tajikistan on transferring some local infrastructure to water users associations, fostering good governance and developing specific legal and regulatory reforms to enhance the sustainability of the associations. In addition to improving irrigation management, these reforms have generated greater sense of ownership among farmers of Tajikistan's irrigation system and enhanced their ability to collect revenues for operational costs.

Under Feed the Future, USAID continues to work closely with smallholder farmers, the Government of Tajikistan and the World Bank to ensure that improvements in irrigation and drainage systems are sustained for the benefit of the next generation of Tajik families and businesses.