



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/sustainable-composting-provides-valuable-soil-improvements-and-household-income-women>

Sustainable Composting Provides Valuable Soil Improvements and Household Income for Women Farmers in Tajikistan



USAID

Backyard composting at the household level requires only suitable organic waste, space to construct the heap, technical training and time to carry out the work.

Tajikistan is a small, land-locked country in Central Asia. Although only about seven percent of the country's land surface is arable, agriculture employs 75 percent of the labor force and contributes to 23 percent of the country's gross domestic product. However, the country's mountainous terrain and farmers' limited access to productive inputs and services have hampered the country's agriculture sector from reaching its full potential.

Solutions to improve food and income security among rural populations can often come from using cheap and locally available resources, which is why a Feed the Future farmer advisory services project in Tajikistan has introduced composting as an accessible, cost-effective approach for soil and water conservation to help improve degraded land and boost agricultural yields.

Compost - a mix of decayed organic materials that would otherwise likely be treated as waste - can be used to enhance soil health. According to research from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, composted manure improves soil health, increases fruit and vegetable yields and reduces crop diseases.

In addition to improving agricultural productivity, composting confers a number of environmental benefits such as improved soil biodiversity and moisture retention. Furthermore, use of manure for compost means less waste that could otherwise make its way into irrigation water supplies that households often use. A large number of Tajikistan households own livestock, so most have access to manure for composting.

Farmers using compost and improved vegetable seed with support from Feed the Future have increased yields 15-20 percent during their first year of composting. Aziza, one of many women farmers participating in the program, has learned firsthand how compost can improve the productivity of her land and help boost her family income.

"After seeing the results of project demonstration plots in the village, we definitely plan to continue making and using compost," Aziza says. "The compost also provides important long-term benefits with our poor soils."