



SUCCESS STORY

Afghan Pomegranates Reach Europe

A leading UK juice company agrees to a landmark export deal with Afghanistan's first juice concentrate facility



Photo: USAID/ASAP

A worker inspects the washing of pomegranates before the fruit is turned into juice concentrate at the Omaid Bahar Fruit Processing Facility in Kabul.

While poppy production and the opium trade remain a serious threat to Afghanistan's future, more farmers are choosing to grow licit crops, such as pomegranates, as opium alternatives.

Consumers in Europe will soon be savoring the sweet taste of Afghanistan. The United Kingdom's leading pomegranate juice company, Pomegreat, recently agreed to a pioneering deal with Afghanistan's first juice concentrate facility. It is the first international company to purchase juice concentrate from Afghanistan, committing to import a minimum of 500 tons of pomegranate concentrate and 500 tons of fresh fruit from Omaid Bahar Fruit Processing Facility, a state-of-the-art facility established with the support of USAID.

The Omaid Bahar Fruit Processing Facility, which opened in October 2009, is using Afghanistan's produce to compete successfully in world markets. It sells processed fruits as juice concentrate that meets international quality standards. It also sorts, grades, and packages fresh produce for export to Asia, Europe, and North America.

"I am proud to have built this factory, and the commitment from Pomegreat gives me great hope for the future," said Mustafa Sadiq, owner of Omaid Bahar Fruit Processing Facility.

In addition to introducing Afghan produce to new markets, Omaid Bahar is improving the livelihoods of farmers and offering increased opportunities for Afghan women. The facility receives fruit from 50,000 farmers from at least seven provinces across the country and provides approximately 200 full-time jobs, with women composing about 35 percent of the staff.

USAID provided technical assistance, equipment, logistical support, and market linkages with farmers and international buyers. USAID also facilitated the initial visit of Pomegreat to the Kabul plant to set the stage for the landmark business deal.

"Being given the chance to source the best pomegranates in the world from their spiritual home is something I couldn't overlook," said Adam Pritchard, chief executive officer of Pomegreat. "The Afghan pomegranate is the best in the world."

In the future, Omaid Bahar hopes to produce juice for local consumers, creating jobs and replacing the import of juice from neighboring countries such as Pakistan and Iran. Omaid Bahar also aims to introduce contract farming to guarantee income for farmers and a sufficient supply of fruit for the plant.