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SUCCESS STORY

A New Market for Mulberries Proves Prosperous for Farmers

For many farmers in the Panjshir valley, mulberries offer a new source of income and opportunity.



Mirza Rahim, has ten mulberry trees on his farm in the Safid Shir district of Panjshir.

FAIDA helped 655 families to sell mulberries for the first time, as part of its market research project. The project is using mulberries as a test produce in order to identify and develop sustainable cash markets for Panjshir fruit.

Mirza Rahim has had mulberry trees on his land in Afghanistan's Panjshir Valley for thirty years. This year, for the first time, he was able to sell his mulberries to a local juice producer. *"It is a source of quick income, so people like me can afford our children's education and other expenses,"* Rahim says.

USAID's Financial Access for Investing in the Development of Afghanistan (FAIDA) Program enabled 655 Panjshir Valley farmers to access a new source of income for their families. In previous years, mulberries rotted in the orchards or were used as forage for farm animals, as there was little demand for the fruit. This year, with the help of FAIDA, nearly 80 tons of mulberries were sold.

FAIDA negotiated the mulberry purchase price and provided refrigerated trucks to transport the produce to the processing plant in Kabul. When the last collection was sold to distributors, Panjshir farmers had been paid nearly \$40,000.

Mulberries are the test produce for developing an effective system for the collection, transport, and marketing of other Afghan fruit. Omaid Bahar, a local fruit processing company, tested the international market for mulberry juice by identifying interested buyers. The ultimate goal is to place mulberry juice on supermarket shelves around the world.

Omaid Bahar's Vice President, Abdul Rahman says, *"We will reduce imports from countries such as Pakistan and Iran by producing juice in our own country. We are also supporting the people of Panjshir and generating income and employment in the region"*. By creating market linkages, FAIDA is able to increase the income of small farmers in Panjshir Valley by connecting them to a larger market.