



SUCCESS STORY

Supporting greenhouse growers in the Ferghana Valley

Training yields better profits for growers



Family operated greenhouse

AgFin+ helped over 700 greenhouse growers access a total of \$273,000 in loans during 2005. All 383 tomato loans were repaid in full and on schedule. The 333 cucumber loans are still out as the season is still in progress.

AgFin+ is a three-year initiative designed by USAID to increase rural incomes by developing profitable agricultural product value chains in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Greenhouse production has been a profitable activity in the Ferghana Valley for many years. With markets well-developed in Russia, and contacts established with key inputs suppliers, the greenhouse products value chain is relatively well-developed. Despite this, AgFin+ saw opportunities for further strengthening the greenhouse sector in the areas of credit, training in production techniques and greenhouse management, and post-harvest handling.

To facilitate access to short-term credit, AgFin+ financed a revolving loan fund through FV-MARD, an existing micro-finance entity in Andijan, Uzbekistan. The fund targeted greenhouse operators for short-term production loans during 2005 and will continue its focus on the greenhouse sector for 2006.

In the area of training, AgFin+ facilitates cross-border trainings and exchanges between Uzbek and Kyrgyz farmers. In February of 2005, 30 Kyrgyz farmers and agronomists visited members of the Andijan Greenhouse Growers Association (AGGA), and learned how to grow tomato seedlings, prepare and sterilize soil, prepare small plastic sacks for seedlings, and how to produce bio-humus. Over 800 greenhouse growers attended an annual greenhouse seminar in Andijan in May, 2005. Presenters included a leading Russian firm, demonstrating new varieties of tomatoes and cucumbers, and a European firm specializing in drip irrigation equipment. AgFin+ is also offering "General Greenhouse Management" training for 500 greenhouse growers of the region. Farmers have been divided into 25 groups with 20 growers per group. Since August, there have been three trainings.

Lastly, an Agribusiness Consultant worked with the members of AGGA to design a Chill Room for fast cooling of fresh tomatoes and cucumbers to extend the shelf life of these commodities destined for the Russia. The Chill Room activity will be the focus of AgFin+ in Uzbekistan during 2006.