

MEDIA ADVISORY

USDA Satellite Features Feed

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FEATURE – USDA AG EXPERTS IN AFGHANISTAN, Part 1 - OVERVIEW

INTRO: Experts from the U.S. Department of Agriculture are an increasingly important part of the U.S. mission in Afghanistan. The USDA's Patrick O'Leary has more in the first of a 5-part series. (1:59)

AFTER THIRTY YEARS OF CONFLICT, INCLUDING RUSSIAN AND TALIBAN AGGRESSIONS, AFGHANISTAN IS FACING CHALLENGES. REBUILDING THEIR AGRICULTURE SECTOR IS ONE OF THEM, AND THAT'S A FOCUS OF THE U.S. MISSION HERE. PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS, OR P-R-T'S, INCLUDE ADVISORS FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

Tim Powers, USDA Foreign Agricultural Service: Certainly agriculture is very important here. Roughly eighty percent of the population rely upon agriculture in one way or the other to survive. I'm here because I really think that I can make a difference, I think that all of our advisors are making a huge difference.

IN THE ARID PROVINCE OF FARAH (FUH-RAH), USDA IS LEADING EFFORTS TO IMPROVE IRRIGATION CANALS AND FIND NEW WATER SOURCES.

I'll stop you when I get to where I can't see you.

(voice-over) We have villages that need water. They're looking at putting in underground pipelines. I help the engineers with issues like that, since I have experience in that area.

That's about it right there.

Darren Richardson, USDA Ag Expert: Anything we can do as far as the agriculture as far as helping them with seeds, fertilizer, growing techniques, irrigation, all that's needed and it's all very much appreciated out here.

FURTHER NORTH IN THE PANJSHIR VALLEY, THE FOCUS IS ON ESTABLISHING ORCHARDS BY DOUBLE-CROPPING U-S HYBRID FRUIT TREES WITH WHEAT.

Greg Schlenz, USDA Ag Advisor: And this will afford them the opportunity to raise a crop of wheat in the meantime while the trees are starting to get established.

In five years this will be solid orchard. So this is a conversion of wheat to orchards from a low value crop to a very high value crop, this will increase their incomes tremendously.

THE AG ADVISORS AND THEIR TEAMMATES, FROM THE U-S MILITARY, U-S-A-I-D AND U-S DEPARTMENT OF STATE HOPE THE HIGHER STANDARDS OF LIVING WILL LEAD TO MORE SUPPORT FOR THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND LESS SUPPORT FOR THE TALIBAN.

John Mahoney, U.S. Army: I feel we're actually making lives better, of the people. We're bringing them water, we're bringing them food, electricity, making their quality of life better.

FOR THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, I'M PAT O'LEARY.

TAG: For more information on USDA activities in Afghanistan and in Iraq, including openings for agricultural experts, send an email to: prt@fas.usda.gov