

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Potato Production in Afghanistan

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Potatoes and Potato Products

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Report Highlights:

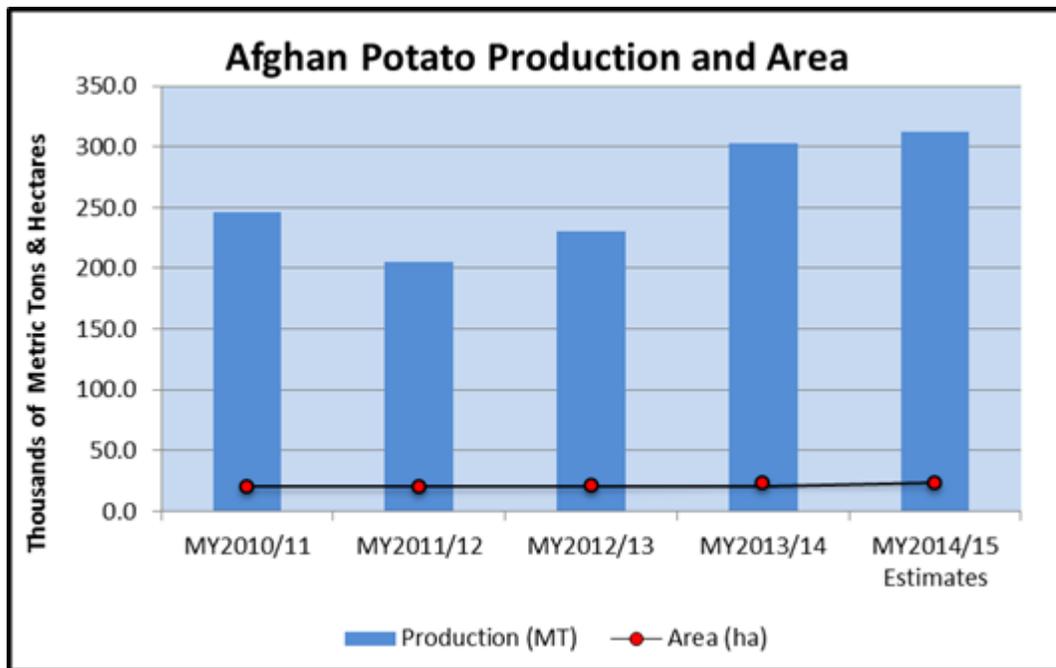
Potatoes are a significant commodity for Afghanistan, with a strong domestic market and a seasonally fluctuating import and export market. Seventy percent of potatoes in Afghanistan are grown in Bamyan province. Support from the international community has improved the storage capabilities for potatoes, which is a major source of loss in the potato market.

Production:

The agro-climatic conditions of Afghanistan are ideally suitable for good quality potato production. Production is concentrated in nine provinces: Bamyan, Nangarhar Panjsher, Parwan, Samangan, Sarepul, Takhar, Uruzgan and Wardak, although more than 70 percent of production comes from Bamyan province alone.

The most popular potato varieties grown in Afghanistan are *Safed gul*, *Be gul*, *Sabz gul*, *Sorkh gul (Lavkar)*, *Chandramukhi*, *Cardinal* and *Desiree*. *Chandramukhi*, *Lavkar*, *Cardinal* and *Desiree* are exotic varieties imported from India and Pakistan in 2002. In 2003 the International Potato Center (CIP) also introduced three new potato varieties - *Kufri Jyoti*, *Kufri Badshah* and *Diamond* in Nangarhar province.

Due to favorable conditions and the successful control of crop diseases, potato production in Afghanistan is estimated to increase by three percent, or 312,000 metric tons (MT), in MY2014/15 (April/March). Potato production increased by 32 percent in MY2013/14 compared to MY2012/13. Area for potato cultivation in Afghanistan is estimated at nearly 23,500 ha with an average yield of 13.5 MT/ha in MY 2014/15. Bamyan and Nangarhar provinces typically have the highest yield at approximately 20-22 MT/ha.



Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock

Potatoes are mostly grown during spring in high mountain valleys and during fall in the plains on irrigated lands. Seed potatoes are obtained from the spring mountain potatoes and retained for both the fall planting and the following spring. Seed potatoes are stored primarily in hand-dug underground storage areas. There is little to no refrigerated storage in the country. However, in recent years the international community has provided training in proper seed production and storage techniques, and some private companies have established seed storages in Afghanistan.

International Support for Potato Production:

In 2002, the International Potato Center (CIP) began a project to improve the quality of seed potatoes for increased production in Afghanistan. The project trained farmers and extension staff of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) and NGOs on improved techniques for good quality seed potato production and imported good quality seed of high yielding varieties from neighboring countries.

In 2008, the European Union funded a project which was implemented by FAO in partnership with MAIL. This project had activities in nine provinces, including Bamyan province, and focused on producing certified seeds to be distributed and used by farmers nationwide. The project is in the process of establishing the Modern Potato Storage Prototype and Tissue Culture Laboratory Complex.

In 2012, the Asian Development Bank funded the *Enhancement Agriculture Value Chain for Sustainable Livelihoods* (EAVS) project and the **Rural Business Support Project** (RBSP), which provided services in marketing and value chain development and established 1,200 storage facilities with 50 percent equity contributions from farmers for potatoes particularly in Bamyan province. In addition, the Peace Foundation, Agha Khan Foundation, USAID and Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) have provided services to improve the production and quality of potatoes in Afghanistan.

Consumption:

Potatoes are a popular food in Afghanistan. Afghanistan domestic consumption is estimated at 5.5-6 MT/year with per capita consumption estimated at 20 kg/year. In addition to potatoes being included in meat and rice dishes, French fries are hugely popular in Afghanistan.



French fries at a shop in Shar-e-Naw, Kabul. (Photo from Afghan Culture Unveiled.)

Prices:

The average retail price of potatoes in the country in MY 2013/14 is Afs 35/kg (approximately

USD\$0.61/kg at the current exchange rate). According to MAIL's Statistics and Marketing Information Office, prices go up to around Afs 40-50/kg (approximately USD\$0.80/kg) in the months farthest removed from harvest. The wide fluctuations in price reflect the inadequate storage in Afghanistan.

Trade:

Import and export data is lacking in the potato market even more so than for other commodities. However, we know that most exported Afghan potatoes go to Pakistan, and potatoes are exported to Kazakhstan, Russia, India and Turkmenistan as well. Afghanistan imports potatoes from Pakistan, Iran, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. Most importing of potatoes happens during the lean season, reflecting the fact that Afghanistan does not have adequate facilities to store potatoes long after the harvest.