

Afghanistan Update

Wheat and maize occupy 80% of the area sown to annual crops in Afghanistan. How has CIMMYT responded to the desperate need to reinvigorate Afghan agriculture?

Wheat is the number one staple crop in Afghanistan. Maize is number three in importance and the number one summer crop. One of CIMMYT's main objectives in Afghanistan is to make improved, high-quality seed of both crops available to farmers, along with appropriate crop management technologies. Given the many challenges of working in Afghanistan, CIMMYT focuses on community-based approaches in which farmers help identify the varieties and crop management practices that will be most helpful.

To date, CIMMYT has responded to Afghanistan's most urgent needs by:

- Distributing 300 tons of quality seed of locally adapted wheat variety MH-97 to 9,000 farmers in 4 provinces of Afghanistan in time for 2002 fall planting.

- Producing 2.5 tons of breeder's and foundation maize seed and delivering them for planting by Afghan farmers in the 2003 season.
- Planting 35 wheat variety trials at 6 sites, and 24 maize trials at 8 sites, to identify additional materials that are well suited to farmers' needs.
- Training Afghan researchers in-country and at CIMMYT in Mexico. Already 15 researchers have attended courses in Mexico, and more training is planned.

CIMMYT has responded quickly to Afghanistan's needs for seed of locally adapted wheat and maize varieties because it has collaborated with Afghan researchers for over three decades (even during the war, thanks to the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan).

Most wheat varieties grown in Afghanistan are of CIMMYT origin. Several hundred CIMMYT wheat and maize nurseries have been evaluated in different parts of Afghanistan in the past 30 years. Duplicates of these nurseries have also been tested in the region (e.g., Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Iran) and in other parts of the world. This testing has identified wheats with high yield potential and improved disease resistance that are well adapted to Afghanistan. In maize, results of trials conducted in Afghanistan have been analyzed and promising cultivars selected from several populations.



“The maize which was brought by CIMMYT and implemented by Kunduz Rehabilitation Agency is doing wonders.”

*–Ghulam m Aqtash,
Executive Director, KRA*

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