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“Development on the margin”

Dairy Cooperatives Development in Eastern Afghanistan – Minimal Technological Equipment for Sustainable Functionality of Milk Collection Centers

PAVEL BURIAN, MARTIN HEJRAL, VLADIMIR KREPL

Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Institute of Tropics and Subtropics, Czech Republic

Abstract

The Logar province in Eastern Afghanistan is location of deployment of Czech Provincial Reconstruction Team of Czech Republic (CZE PRT) – double headed Civilian/military unit, dedicated to assist Afghans in reconstruction of their region. Agriculture experts of PRT systematically map ways of efficient assistance delivery to vulnerable farmers. Identification and ability to reach repeated contact with target groups in unstable environment is the key issue for all PRT driven reconstruction activities. Since 2009, authors have been cooperating on construction of 6 milk collection and processing centres (MCCs), which were supposed to help increase the self-sufficiency of the province in dairy production, moreover to encourage them in building of free market.

The main topic of this paper is the description of technological equipment selected for typical centre constructed and its real impact on cooperative economy after first year of MCC use. The data collected are compared with data from unequipped centres to measure real financial impact of such development project.

Obtained data were combined with information about cost of such minimal low-tech equipment (allowing cooperative's full incorporation in local dairy value chain), defined time horizon for economical viability of such investment (in case of other cooperative self-investments into MCC), as well as possibilities for future development and widening of the value chain, i.e. product portfolio which means also opening to new markets.

The result confirmed expectations about dramatic income increase for equipped cooperatives, but the income generation of cooperatives without equipment stays far below the modernisation investment needs. The solution can be seen in long term loans or government-assisted linkages to important markets.

Keywords: Afghanistan, agriculture, dairy, economy, equipment, reconstruction, sustainability, technology