

## **On Socio-Ecological Aspects**

The Agriculture Commercialization Project (Project) has been developed in recent years with a grant from the International Development Association (IDA) and the World Bank support to assist the Government of Tajikistan's development goals and improve the well-being of the population.

The objective of the Project is to develop agriculture and improve the living conditions of the rural population through the development and increase of commercialization of agricultural products and agribusiness, as part of business development for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (new activities), the proposed loans and matching grants within Additional Financing.

The direct beneficiaries of the Project are:

- i. Production associations, agro-industrial and farming enterprises whose activities are aimed at commercialization;
- ii. Participating Financial Institutions operating under the Project;
- iii. Public, scientific and educational institutions;
- iv. Individual entrepreneurs and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as dehqan farms, agricultural production, food processing, small production, services, trade and transport.

In its turn, the Project will serve as a basis for further funding and investment in the comprehensive implementation of the newly developed Agrarian Reform Program of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and donors. Additional Financing will be provided to expand access to affordable credit products (mixed with grants) and consulting services to support investment in rural areas, develop micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, increase production and create new jobs.

The project has two goals: to reduce poverty and to support the joint development of partners through:

- i. Facilitating short-term and long-term poverty reduction by increasing farm incomes and creating jobs directly during project implementation;

- ii. Development of a system (ie improvement of technological capabilities in the field of agricultural production and processing, establishment of a market information system, new financial instruments) that, as expected, will benefit new beneficiaries after the completion of the Project;
- iii. Support the rural population of the districts living in poverty by creating broad opportunities in agriculture, trade and employment, which will be achieved by increasing the level of agricultural commercialization, income and poverty reduction;

Project Implementation Unit “Access to Green and Rural Development Finance” under the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Tajikistan provides Additional Financing for the Credit Line and the Matching Grant Program to project beneficiaries through Participating Financial Institutions. It will also help to finance the establishment of new enterprises and new jobs (self-employment) for target groups: start-ups for young people (up to 30 years old), women and people with disabilities under the Matching Grant Program.

One of the important directions and issues of the Project implementation is to support the protection of the environment and aspects of social issues. The World Bank provides financing for ongoing programs, including credit programs, matching grants, value added chains, and etc., considers it necessary to ensure social and environmental safety, which is aimed at identifying, minimizing and mitigating the negative environmental and social impact of the following projects.

The main activities aimed in this direction are:

- Socio-environmental assessment of subprojects under credit programs, matching grants, startups and business incubators;
- Development of Environmental Management Plan for all category “B” of the subprojects;
- Trainings - educational consultations on observance of ecological and social safety measures;
- Social and environmental monitoring;

- Consideration of complaints.
- On ways to prevent COVID-19 pandemic

➤ Socio-environmental assessment - is the assessment of a specific sub-project, taking into account the environmental management plan, which is consistent with the standards of socio-environmental management. This assessment will coordinate and approve measures to manage environmental and social threats and mitigate/eliminate their consequences during the implementation of the Project programs.

➤ Meetings, talks and consultations with the project beneficiaries will be held in the Trainings - educational consultations on observance of ecological and social safety measures. In particular, assessments of acceleration, soil erosion, salinization, runoff into canals and reservoirs, rising groundwater levels, land swamping, losses during transportation of fertilizers and pesticides by vehicles have caused pollution of the environment, especially water and soil, have a major impact on human health. They cause various diseases. At the same time, they are reminded that, taking into account the pollution of soil and water and the environment, farmers need to reduce the use of mineral fertilizers, pesticides, use biological methods of plant protection, biological preparations, organic fertilizers, as well as regular transition to organic farming.

➤ In the process of social and environmental monitoring, the Project's responsible consultants will travel to the regions to get acquainted with the activities of beneficiaries. Supervise the use of funds, compliance with social and environmental requirements in the production, processing, storage and sale of agricultural products, and provide recommendations and advice.

➤ In order to organize communication and ensure transparency of the Project's ongoing programs and interactions between its beneficiaries, the Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) is implemented by the SI "Access to Green and Rural development Finance".

In the framework of the implemented GRM at the Project Implementation Unit under the Ministry of the Republic of Tajikistan, the Project has developed forms for receiving applications and proposals from beneficiaries. It provides brief information about the Project, contact telephone numbers, and e-mail address.

Distribution of leaflets to the beneficiaries is as follows:

- Through the Participating Financial Institutions operating under the Project: MDO “HUMO”, MDO “Arvand” and MDO “IMON INTERNATIONAL”. Bank loan specialists provided the beneficiaries of the Project with GRM information leaflets;
- Business Development Agencies: PO “Latif”, PO “Peshsaf” and PO “Agro Service Consulting”, which work with individuals to develop their business;
- Consultants on social and environmental safeguards during business trips, meetings in the regions of the country;

The Project also developed a “Grievance Redress Mechanism” brochure to better understand the procedures for reviewing complaints and suggestions, which will be distributed to beneficiaries (leaflets and brochures are attached).

➤ In order to prevent the COVID-19 pandemic, in the process of implementing its programs, the Project conducts explanatory and informational work to protect the health of beneficiaries and society as a whole. With this aim, the Project will develop an informational booklet, posters with pictures to prevent the spread of the disease and distribute them to beneficiaries (will be attached). A training module is also developed to conduct mini seminars during the meetings with the beneficiaries.