



**USAID**  
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**TAJIKISTAN**

## CASE STUDY

# Apricots Regain Sterling Reputation

### USAID helps restore apricot orchards to their former glory



*Khamzaev Farm owner Abdumukim Mirkarimov appraises the apricot harvest with farm personnel.*

*Photo: Winrock International*

**Expert advice from the USAID program led to a dramatic increase in orchard production and quality, and opened the doors to more profitable foreign markets for Tajik farmers.**

### Challenge

The old Tajik city of Isfara is famous for its apricot orchards. Apricot production is the main source of income for the population of this region, and for years the high productivity allowed exports to countries of the former Soviet Union. But in the last 10 years orchard production declined dramatically, and product quality did not meet market standards. Customers stopped purchasing Tajik apricots.

### Initiative

Abdumukim Mirkarimov, Tajik entrepreneur and the owner of the dehkan farm Khamzaev, contacted the USAID Farmer-to-Farmer Program requesting a specialist in apricot husbandry. The program arranged for professor Wayne Williams to come to Tajikistan. Professor Williams focused his assignment on training the farmers at Khamzaev farm in modern pruning methods, pest control, soil analysis, fertilization, and other agronomic practices. This was the first time many of the farmers had been exposed to modern practices of pest management and pruning. In addition to people working at Khamzaev farm, owners and workers from 20 neighboring farms also attended the training courses. These farmers, each with 5-6 hectares of orchard, invited professor Williams to assess their orchards and provided advice on their care.

### Results

Professor Williams' recommendations were set to practice immediately. Abdumukim Mirkarimov used his capital to obtain the fertilizer, pruning tools, and other inputs and resources suggested by the expert. He also helped his neighbors buy their inputs through futures contracts signed with the farmers. The farmers agreed to supply Mirkarimov with quality produce for export to Russia.

A year and a half after the USAID expert worked with the farms, their production rose by 80%. More importantly, the fruit now meet higher quality standards, and the farmers are able to sell to the Russian Siberian market where the wholesale price for fresh apricots is \$3 per kilogram compared to Tajikistan's \$0.15 per kilogram. Validating their hard work in following the expert advice, Khamzaev farm and its neighbors signed a \$250,000 contract with Russian customers to deliver 80 tons of fresh and 15 tons of dried apricots. This contract is even more impressive when contrasted with \$1,300 sales revenues these farmers used to receive in the local market before they started cooperating with the USAID Farmer to Farmer program. "I thank God for the day when my friend Wayne entered my house," says Abdumukim Mirkarimov.