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**UZBEKISTAN**

## SUCCESS STORY

# Farmers Prune “the American Style”

### New Techniques Increase Fruit Orchard Productivity in Uzbek farms



Odiljon Rakhimberdiev (far right) and his workers learn pruning at his farm in the Ferghana Province.

Photo: Shuhrat Abrorov

*USAID training encouraged Ferghana Valley’s plum and peach growers to adopt a new fruit-tree pruning technique that farmers have nicknamed the “American Method”.*

When Odiljon Rakhimberdiev entered a bet with his brother as to who will grow a larger fruit harvest, little did he know that he was paving a way to some real changes on his farm. Because of the bet and his limited knowledge of fruit production, he joined USAID’s Ag-Links project that overhauled the way peaches and plums are pruned in their community.

Rakhimberdiev and his four brothers share a 70-hectare farm in Quvasoy District of Ferghana Province, southern Uzbekistan. In early 2009, Rakhimberdiev’s younger brother Emin challenged him to see who could produce the most fruit. Emin, a fruit producer, was certain he would win because Odiljon specialized in wheat and cotton. However, Odiljon had a strategy to prove his brother wrong.

Odiljon volunteered 0.8 hectares of fruit trees for the AgLinks demonstration program. The USAID project had asked farmers to host trainings in their plum and peach orchards in return for expert consultations and equipment. The two-day practical training was based on the University of California-Davis techniques and covered orchard establishment, pruning, thinning, and frost control. Twenty-three farmers attended the training at Rakhimberdiev’s orchard.

“The American Method,” as the pruning technique came to be known in the community, “allows trees to bear fruit two years earlier than the traditional approaches,” said Rakhimberdiev. “It also ensures that sunlight can reach the leaves and fruit throughout the tree.”

The harvest time showcased the full benefits of the new technique. While Emin harvested 0.6 tons of peaches from a four-hectare orchard, Odiljon’s 0.8 hectares yielded three tons. Odiljon didn’t even have to bear the cost of delivering his crop to market, as Russian buyers purchased the entire crop right from his orchard for \$1,085. Because of the pruning, “customers like it because they can see the quality of the fruit immediately,” the farmer said.

Rakhimberdiev has since trained all his orchard workers on the new approach and intends to implement this pruning on his entire orchard of three-year-old trees. “I regret I didn’t prune more trees last year,” Rakhimberdiev said.

Rakhimberdiev’s success has even convinced his brother Emin to switch to the “American Method” of pruning.