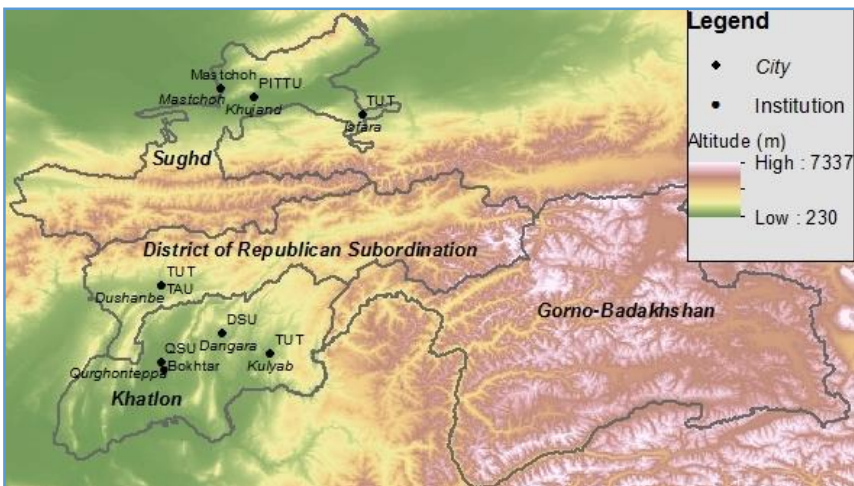


# Tajikistan Fact Sheet

## Background

Agriculture in Tajikistan has gone through major transitions since independence from the former Soviet Union. The population of Tajikistan (8 million) is largely rural (75%) and agriculture remains the single largest employment sector (45-60%) in the country, but the economic performance and impact of agriculture has decreased over the past two decades.<sup>1</sup> Post-Soviet restructuring of the economy, as well as land reforms, have shifted agricultural production patterns away from large-scale cotton farms toward small-scale, diversified farms. Several agricultural value chains, including fresh and extended season fruits and vegetables, have been identified and targeted as having the potential for both domestic trade and export growth.<sup>2</sup>



Map of agricultural higher education institutions and colleges in Tajikistan

## Present Status of AET in Tajikistan

The agriculture education and training (AET) system in Tajikistan includes primary and lower secondary school (grades 1-9), upper secondary school (grades 10-11) or primary vocational education (also grades 10-11), technical college (three-year degree) and higher education institutions. There is currently one agricultural university (Tajik Agrarian University) that offers bachelors, masters and Ph.D. degrees, as well as two agricultural technical colleges. Several other universities and colleges offer agricultural degrees, focusing mostly on food processing and marketing at the universities, and mechanical technical skills at the colleges. There are roughly 150,000 students in the higher education system overall.<sup>3</sup> Based on innovATE scoping estimates, about 10,000 of those students are studying in agricultural disciplines (about 7% of the university population). Employment opportunities in emerging agricultural value chains require a range of skills that have not historically been taught within the AET system, due to the segmentation and specialization that characterized the Soviet education system. All actors in agricultural value chains, from farmers and farm workers to input dealers, food processors and those in marketing and export need enhanced skills and new types of training.

<sup>1</sup> World Bank. (2014). *The World Bank Group-Tajikistan partnership program snapshot*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank

<sup>2</sup> Feed the Future. (2012). *Tajikistan: FY 2011-2015 multi-year strategy*. Washington, D.C.: United States Agency for International Development.

<sup>3</sup> World Bank. (2014). *Republic of Tajikistan: Higher education sector study*. Report no. ACS 10383. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.

## Opportunities and Challenges for AET in Tajikistan

There are high levels of human capacity in the AET system because of the strength and ongoing presence of individuals with Soviet-era training. Knowledge is dated but there is interest from individuals in updating their knowledge and teaching. However, the material base of the AET system is extremely low, and the institutional and political capacity for change is hampered by centralized government control of both the educational and agricultural systems. There is much interest from international donors in developing human capacity for the agricultural system in Tajikistan, and there is a large amount of support committed to reforming educational institutions and structures. Most of these investments are focused in only one sector, and few target the AET system in particular.

The current generation of students being trained in the AET system does not have the adequate and necessary skills being demanded by farmers and agricultural employers. Graduates' training is highly technical and lacks real-world experience. The emphasis on specialization limits their ability to work in the diversified agricultural and market systems that are emerging in Tajikistan. The USAID Feed the Future country strategy<sup>2</sup> notes the need for practical skills' training to support smallholder farmers, since household and family plots are the main source of food and nutrition security in the country, and diversified family farms provide sources of employment and income for rural households. Agricultural employers are also demanding both diverse and interdisciplinary skills, and the ability to link technical training to real-world problem-solving. It is therefore important to invest in skills and training for an agricultural workforce that can serve and support smallholder agriculture in Tajikistan, as well as to identify investments in the AET system that could help address skills gaps and strengthen the agricultural workforce across the value chain.



### Next Steps

The AET system in Tajikistan is not currently able to absorb large amounts of institutional or infrastructure investment due to the structural limitations of the education sector. However, there are many opportunities for small investments in human capacity and the material base of the AET system institutions that can support workforce development for students. Short-term investments in human capacity development can also prepare the AET system to capitalize on upcoming donor emphasis on institutional reforms in the education sector.

Recommendations for investments in the AET system include funding a semi-independent training center within an existing institution to build human capacity and lay the foundation for institutional capacity development. Other, smaller investments could also be made in publishing updated teaching materials in the Tajik language. Stipends could be provided for students to do their practicums with field-based NGOs that might not have the funds to cover their expenses. Small applied research grants could be made to university faculty to conduct research relevant to smallholder farmers, with the condition that results must be published in formats suitable for students and farmers. Other investments in the short-term that would support capacity development include updating technologies and expanding practice facilities for various universities and agricultural colleges.