



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
Thursday, 19.April.2009

19 April 2009
Contact M Qarar
0707812444
m.qarar@mail.gov.af

Nearly US\$ 100m and Rising

DONOR PLEDGES FOR AGRICULTURE TO GROW DRAMATICALLY

Kabul – Donor pledges for Afghanistan’s hard-hit agriculture sector are set to rise dramatically this year, already nearing US\$ 100 million and likely to increase “considerably higher still,” said the Hon. Asif Rahimi, the Afghan Minister for Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) .

“Agriculture will determine whether Afghanistan will succeed or fail,” Minister Rahimi told senior Afghan officials and more than 60 enthusiastic representatives of nearly 30 international donor agencies hosted by UNAMA in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 8th April.

Donors from different countries responded positively to Minister Rahimi called for support for “the Iron Triangle of agriculture – natural resource management, agricultural production and productivity, and economic regeneration. Each depends on the other, and all are necessary to generate jobs on and off the farms,” he said.

Police, agriculture, commerce

Donors universally praised MAIL’s achievements during five months of Minister Rahimi’s leadership. These included more than 3.2 million trees planted in 45 days, cooperation with five ministries in supplying 74,000 MT of wheat during the winter emergency, leasing land in Kunduz to American investors, and 2600 MAIL staff plus local volunteers in ten provinces, now spraying locusts before they can fly.

At the meeting, nearly US\$100m in donor funds for agriculture was solidly pledged or suggested, with more expected at a JCMB agriculture task force meeting on 16th April. The National Agriculture Development Framework (the national sector plan) and funding will be formally approved at the full JCMB meeting on 19th April.

“We are not soliciting funds for MAIL alone,” Minister Rahimi explained, “but instead for any institution or ministry working under the national plan for agriculture.”

Minister Rahimi described MAIL’s ten top priorities for donor support, including wheat seed to be bought now and distributed to farmers in September, the efficient leasing of government farmland, accessible credit for farmers, and support for further management improvements at MAIL.



He also requested support for the new Comprehensive Agriculture Rural Development facility (CARD) which will field teams of experts at the district level, “to identify the missing pieces in the development puzzle” boosting productivity and job growth. Starting in three provinces, CARD is a joint effort of MAIL and the Ministry for Rural Reconstruction and Development (MRRD).

Senior UNAMA official Mark Ward hailed the meeting “the best example of donor coordination,” and praised MAIL for its competence and energy.

XXX