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Karakalpak farmers exposed to international experience in vegetable farming and water management

On 7-9 November, 2012, 20 farmers and dekhkans (small farmers) from the most vulnerable regions of Karakalpakstan such as Muynak, Shumanay and Kanlikul completed an intensive 3-day course on "Vegetable farming in greenhouse and water management". The course was organized within the framework of the UN Joint Programme "Sustaining livelihoods affected by the Aral Sea disaster" in cooperation with Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation (MASHAV) supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel. The course was led by agriculture experts from Israel Moshe Broner and Raphael Krieger, assigned by MASHAV. Karakalpakstan is located in the driest part of Uzbekistan, and its districts Muynak, Shumanay and Kanlikul have been experiencing severe consequences of the Aral Sea environmental crisis, specifically water shortage problem. [Karakalpakstan branch of Central Asian Institute of Irrigation \(SANIIRI\)](#) states that in Karakalpakstan the irrigated area decreased by half because of water shortage, thus heavily affecting the agricultural sector, and in the long-term economic and food security of the rural population. There have been several initiatives implemented in the past to address water shortage issue such as Governmental program and medium to long-term water resource management projects. There has also been a substantial support of UNICEF, the World Bank, UNDP, as well as ADB's "Uzbekistan Rural Water Supply Project". Currently, apart from larger water supply and conservation initiatives, it is crucial to support local farmers and dekhkans in sustaining their farms and help them in adopting new approaches in agriculture and vegetable farming given the conditions of water shortage. Therefore, agriculture experts from Israel were invited to share the experience of their country, which has been facing great water shortages, and over the years has accumulated its unique capacity and knowledge and developed specific approaches to sustainable agriculture and water management. "We will introduce advanced methods of growing vegetables and water management in extreme conditions" - says expert Moshe Broner, "such as water shortage, poor water quality, problematic features of soil and others". Over the course of 3 days the farmers studied the experience of Israel in vegetable farming in greenhouses and received specific recommendations in terms of replication of such practices in Karakalpakstan and particularly in the context of Muynak, Shumanay and Kanlikul areas. The participants were also introduced to modern irrigation and water management technologies, as well as Israel's experience in the use of irrigation water. Upon the completion of the course, the farmers and dekhkans will further disseminate their knowledge in their communities and provide support to their peers in effective water management. This training course was initiated by UN Joint Programme together with MASHAV within the framework of effort to improve income generating opportunities and economic security of rural population of Aral Sea shore. Within this initiative, UN Joint Programme has been introducing best practices in sustainable agriculture, land and pasture management, as well as created a group of 25 agriculture extension agents who will be providing agro-consulting services to rural population and managing demonstration plots.

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