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## Business skills for farmers

**On 26-28 November, 2012, 19 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 business principals and approaches in agriculture. 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 Aviv Zisman and Ami Hamzani, assigned by MASHAV.** InUzbekistan, small businesses and farming have played a vital role in sustaining the country's high rates of economic growth. In order to promote further growth of farming and small business in vulnerable areas of Karakalpakstan and thus assist the creation of new employment opportunities, the UN Joint Programme in cooperation with MASHAV initiated a series of capacity-building activities aimed at enriching farmers and dekhkans from the most vulnerable regions of Karakalpakstan with up to date knowledge of business processes and enhancing their skills. The “Business skills for farmers” course was primarily focused on improving the business management skills of farmers related to planning and execution of business activities, and improving their understanding of business processes. The farmers learned the best practices in facts and figures on agricultural sector performance inIsrael, and also obtained in-depth information on some key financial concepts, including time value of money, ways to forecast inflation, types of interest rates, etc. The instructors also explained the importance of marketing strategies, and covered marketing management concepts, value of information in marketing, consumer behavior, marketing analysis, international marketing, and demonstrated some successful results of marketing strategies. A specific attention was paid to practical assignments and group work. The farmers worked on case studies in groups and made presentations of their work. In addition, the instructors explained the big picture and role of business skills in growth of farms which helped the farmers and dekhkans to enlarge their horizon related to planning of the agricultural farm and making right business decisions. The participants of the course will practice and further utilize their knowledge and skills among their peers in their communities, and within the future initiatives of UN Joint Programme. It is expected that the participants will develop business plans for their farms as a result of the course, and manage demonstration plots in their communities to promote the improved agricultural practices.

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