Davlatdiyor Shohrahimov lives with his large extended family of 18 in the village of Rudaki, located in the Qumsangir district of southern Tajikistan. The farmland there is irrigated by a Soviet-era irrigation canal which, until recently, was in severe disrepair, without adequate maintenance for the last 12 years. The poor state of the canal limited the availability of water, preventing Davlatdiyor, 66, and his neighbors from harnessing the full potential of their land. As a result, farmers in Davlatdiyor’s village could only plant a single harvest’s worth of cotton and wheat during the year instead of sowing a second harvest or a variety of other crops for home consumption or sale in the district market.

USAID directly addresses the shortage of water in Tajikistan’s rural areas by organizing local water user associations and involving the groups in irrigation water management and providing engineering advice and a grant so they can make irrigation infrastructure improvements. Davlatdiyor and his neighbors established a new association in May 2013—the Bahoriston-2013 Water User Association. With USAID funding, the association cleaned 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) of canal and installed 34 new water control gates and an irrigation pump. The repairs improved the availability of irrigation water in Davlatdiyor’s village, and farmers at the end of the canal are now receiving an adequate supply of water. An additional 100 hectares (247.1 acres) of land in Davlatdiyor’s village are now under irrigation for the first time in over 20 years.

In 2014, with more water available to him, Davlatdiyor planted a wider variety of crops, with several successful harvests on the same plot. After harvesting onions late in spring, he planted and harvested corn and sesame, followed by a crop of carrots.

“With sufficient irrigation water, I was able to plant three harvests this year on the same plot. The higher yield generated additional income, helping me improve my family’s standard of living,” he said. His income is about $3,000 more this year compared to the last year.

The USAID Family Farming Program runs from September 2010 to February 2015. USAID directly supports the U.S. Government’s Feed the Future initiative, aiming to reduce poverty through improved nutrition and inclusive agricultural growth in twelve target districts in the Khatlon province of Tajikistan. The program works with water user associations to improve their ability to manage irrigation water resources, as well as supports irrigation water management policy reform. Earlier components of the project focused on improving household nutrition and economics and increasing agriculture and livestock productivity. To date, 148,396 households have benefited from the program’s activities.