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AFGHANISTAN

FIRST PERSON

Creating Jobs for Afghan Women

Dehydrated vegetable factory provides jobs and expands markets



Noria Sedequi supervises 25 women at the Vegetable Dehydrates Factory in Parwan Province, Afghanistan.

“With the money I am making at the factory, I will be able to help my brothers and sisters pay for a university education,” said Noria Sedequi.

Telling Our Story
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Noria Sedequi and her family of 10 lived in exile in Pakistan for eight years during the Taliban regime. They returned to Parwan Province, about 60 kilometers north of Kabul, Afghanistan, in 2001. Jobs were scarce, and Noria knew that jobs for women were even more scarce.

Around the same time Noria’s family returned to Afghanistan, several European countries identified a growing demand for bulk quantities of dehydrated vegetables such as coriander, turnip, cabbage, green beans, cauliflower, spinach, carrot, turnip, and zucchini. In January 2005, USAID opened Afghanistan’s first Vegetable Dehydrates Factory in the fertile Somali Plains of Parwan Province. Noria began working in the factory soon after it opened and was quickly promoted to supervisor, overseeing the work of 25 women.

“I came to the factory earlier than the other workers every morning, and I left later,” Noria explained. “I’m smart and I work hard.” At the factory, Noria knows she has a secure job and a regular monthly salary. She has also learned English, acquired technical skills associated with operating factory machinery, and gained basic business management skills.

Noria’s family is supportive of her work at the factory. She and her father, a guard at a local hospital, provide the family’s only sources of income.

In addition to opening up jobs for women such as Noria, the project provided 1,200 local farmers with vegetable seeds and fertilizer and contracted them to supply the factory with fresh produce. The factory hired 96 laborers to clean, weigh, dice, sort, and test the quality of vegetables, operate drying machinery, and package dehydrated vegetables for export. The factory has quickly gained a good reputation — in fact, importers in the United Kingdom and Germany are now including dehydrated vegetables from Afghanistan’s first dehydrates factory in some of their most popular products.

Photo: USAID/Jeremy Foster