



STRENGTHENING THE POTATO VALUE CHAIN IN THE KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ

Locations Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Dates 01/07/2021 - 30/11/2025

Summary

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq's (KRI) favourable climate and soil fertility offer ideal conditions for potato production, while cultivation and post-harvest activities provide important sources of employment and income in rural areas. Land and labour are also in abundance so there is the potential to significantly increase production.

However, due to a lack of investment in the value chain and the limited training received by trainers and extension workers, these factors are underutilised. Although progress has been made in potato production and productivity, the full agricultural and economical potential of this crop is not being realised. Through the intervention of a public-private partnership, this project aims to strengthen the potato value chain in KRI through improved production and processing, access to markets, training and employment opportunities for internally displaced people (IDP) and refugees, and the capacity building of farmers and other stakeholders.

The problem

Insufficient investment in KRI's agricultural sector has resulted in a growing dependency on imported food of low quality being offered at low prices to consumers. Smallholder farmers, therefore, find it difficult to compete against imported goods which results in small profit margins and an unwillingness to invest in technology and increased production. Post-harvest losses are also substantial due to poor infrastructure, a lack of suitable storage facilities and the absence of processing facilities. Consequently, agriculture in KRI remains a 'low input/low output' system.

Potato farmers face considerable production challenges. For example, there is a shortage of quality and affordable potato seed and a lack of access to improved seed varieties, while pest management is not consistent with good agricultural practice requirements. In addition, access to knowledge, which could help to overcome these, is hampered by the absence of investment in research and diagnostic services. The poor links between research and extension adds further problems which lead to unsustainable crop production. Extension services are also under-resourced. Limited training and site visits result in extension agents having less ability to provide farmers with good advice on production and post-harvest handling.

What we are doing

This CABI-led five-year project is being implemented in the Duhok Province of KRI through a public-private partnership.

The goal is to meet demand for locally-produced and processed potato products through further development and completion of the Potato Value Chain. The project aims to achieve an increased and more resilient income for farmers and a sustainable, locally-sourced value chain that supplies the regional market and contributes to local economic development.

The project involves two main areas of activity: building the capacity of target groups through the training of trainers and provision of information resources; and establishing post-harvest services, a potato processing plant and cold storage through infrastructure investment and training.

Project Area 1:

Build capacity of target groups through training of trainers and provision of information resources, leading to:

- Increased awareness and knowledge of best practices
- Increased access to high-quality inputs
- Adoption of new production methods by farmers
- Increased production and productivity, including increased production area

Project Area 2:

Establish post-harvest services and a potato processing plant through infrastructure and training, leading to:

- Local production of French fries using local potatoes
- Employment of trained IDPs, refugees or other vulnerable groups (women, youth)
- Increased access to processing facilities for locally-produced potatoes

Through these activities, the project will promote sustainable economic growth in the potato production and processing sector. This growth will help to reinvigorate the agricultural services sectors, improve the competitiveness of smallholder farmers and create job opportunities for some of KRI's most vulnerable groups of people.

Results so far

The inception phase finished in 2021 which included setting up systems, agreements and carrying out a baseline survey.

Expected outcomes and outputs of the project:

- 8000 farmers directly reached through capacity building activities on good agricultural practices and with access to high-quality seed potatoes
- One potato processing facility (the first to be established in Iraq) with the capacity to process 6000 tonnes of french fries per year
- One cold storage unit built with a capacity of 1750 tonnes
- 800 farmers guaranteed access to market of french fries factory
- 10,000 workers provided with job opportunities in potato farming
- 160 jobs created and skills developed in potato processing
- 8000 farmers with increased income/productivity and more resilient to income shocks

Donors

The Netherlands Enterprise Agency, on behalf of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, KH

Partners

Ministry of Agriculture & Water Resources in Kurdistan Region, University of Duhok, KH, HZPC

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