

**MID-TERM EVALUATION of**

**“SUPPORT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
AGRICULTURE PRIVATE SECTOR:  
PERENNIAL HORTICULTURE”**

**DCI-ASIE/2013/335-321 (Europe Aid/133-872/L/ACT/AF)**

**FINAL REPORT**

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the time of project design, the project aims and objectives were entirely relevant as these were fully in line with the European Union's Country Strategy Paper 2007 -2013, with the priorities of the Afghan Government as indicated in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and, responded well to the needs of the intended target groups. The EC's Agriculture Support Programme was building on a twofold approach: (i) continue to assist the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) in its efforts to develop institutional capacity at the ... the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) to regulate and further develop key agricultural sub-sectors; and (ii) contribute to strengthening public-private partnerships. Following its approach consequent, the EC identified appropriate support actions for both the transition of the horticulture public services to the MAIL and for strengthening the horticulture private sector aiming at the same time for functioning public-private partnership. Hence, the EU-Transition Project was initiated with the aim of assisting the transfer of public services, yet provided by EU-funded projects to the MAIL directly or through MAIL, to semi-private or private entities. Time wise in parallel, the HPS was initiated apparently with the aim to provide financial and technical assistance (TA) to selected private target institutions for strengthening their institutional/ managerial and technical capacities and enhancing their leading roles in the horticulture sector. At the time of mid-term evaluation, the project aims continue to fully support the EU development and cooperation strategies for Afghanistan and continue being in line with the governmental policies that did not change since the project start. In addition, the project continues to meet the needs of the direct beneficiaries and, with its aim to strengthen the private sector organisations able to drive the Afghan perennial horticulture development forward, the project objectives remain highly relevant.

Concerning the quality of the project design, a logical framework is attached to the Contract Document. It is designed in a cascading way with one Overall Objective, no Project Purpose formulated but four so-called Specific Objectives, each for one project component. The four components are closely interlinked with each other and consequently, the project design is in general terms meaningful and logic. Nevertheless, the logical framework has several weaknesses that do not allow using it as efficient management tool. A major shortcoming is the lack of a formulated single purpose for the whole project. Accordingly, indicators for the Project Purpose level are also missing. Based on the interviews during the evaluation mission and the ongoing activities and documents, the Project Purpose (PP) goes apparently into the direction of *"providing financial and technical assistance (TA) to selected private target institutions for strengthening their institutional/ managerial and technical capacities and enhancing their leading roles in the horticulture sector"*.

In addition to the pronounced project aims and the formulated SOs, the project was planned with an underlying agenda reflected in the Contract but without explicit pronouncement anywhere in the documents. This concerns the aim of providing support to ANHDO for its capacity building in project management but also for further promoting ANHDO's role as interlocutor between the public sector and the private organisations in the horticulture sector. Neither any related crosscutting component is planned nor, do the formulations of the Results and Activities give explicit hints on the special but two-fold role of ANHDO, on one side, as project implementing contractor and, on the other side, as key actor in the horticulture sector and proclaimed interlocutor between the public and the private entities.

Other design shortcomings are as follows: i) missing Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVIs) for the level of Specific Objectives; ii) several OVIs at the result-level do not meet the SMART<sup>1</sup> criteria, e.g. formulated like results, not relevant, not measurable; iii) an interrupted vertical intervention logic, iv) almost no assumption qualifies as assumption; v) under SO1 the project does not set targets that it can/has to achieve by own means but obliges wrongly a project partner to achieve project results;

To mention is also the HVP project, implemented by ANHDO as contractor with the aim to complement some actions of the HPS but using the identical logframe as the HPS with the exception of having a fifth component, namely SO5 Capacity building of ANHDO. Once the planned and implemented actions are complementary, the logframes should clearly reflect this, and be complementary too but not identical.

Some of these design shortcomings were already recognized by the project management. Hence, the logframe needs a substantial revision, jointly with the relevant partners.

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<sup>1</sup> SMART- Specific, Measurable, Available/ Appropriate, Relevant, Time-bound

The management of the HPS project is adequate but requires some improvements and a speedier implementation. Concerning the project inputs and resources, the availability of funds, inputs and human resources are adequately managed and these are made available in time. By 30 June 2015, when 37% of implementation time elapsed, 21% of the total budget was disbursed. The lowest spending appeared under budget line 3. *Equipment & Supplies*, where several inputs for laboratories, for storage and packaging activities with fruit producers are currently outstanding. The low spending figure indicates the need for a speedier implementation and for going into support of adequate additional activities as possibly identified during the revision of the project plan (logframe) jointly with the project partners.

The project management team consists of the TL, the Deputy TL, the PHDP adviser and, the four managers of the four components under the SOs. A Coordination Committee (CC) has been established as internal management tool and, meets regularly, so far 15 times. In addition, a Steering Committee (SC) meets on a 6-monthly basis for the purpose of approving work plans and budget, discussing strategic issues and solving problems that are beyond implementation level. In the 3rd SC meeting, the project contractor ANHDO was advised to follow the current procurement rules and agreed division of tasks and for the Board of Directors not to interfere in the day-to-day management of the two projects. At the time of the evaluation mission, this situation had not visibly improved, instead more issues were reported that point at a currently unstable management capability of ANHDO, apparently due to an internal struggle for power and authority over spending of funds by the Board of Directors. This situation requires close monitoring and interaction with the ANHDO Board of Directors from RI side, the PHDP TA adviser and the donors, EU and AFD for ensuring full adherence to EU and AFD procedures as laid down in the two Grant Contracts. Further, the project reporting leaves much room for improvement. The reporting is done in line with the stipulated plans in form of Annual Reports and Quarterly Reports. However, some project reports are too bulky (390 pages for latest Quarterly Report) and all are unstructured (no table of content), making adequate comprehension difficult. Moreover, the reports do not provide sufficient account over the project management, the outputs delivered and the results achieved, including delays and shortcomings.

During the past 20 months of implementation time, the project teams have produced several tangible outputs, some on their own, some in close conjunction with the project partners or with the HVP and, others rather through financial assistance from HPS. There is, however, scope for improvement, especially for more flexibility in identifying and implementing meaningful additional activities, for a more pro-active approach from the HPS staff without patronizing the partners and, for speeding up the implementation of activities. Certainly, the design flaws in the logframe add to the sluggish implementation speed. It is difficult to detect under the blurred formulations in the project plans the foreseen tangible outputs. In this respect, the only clear thing is the list in the Contract of proposed publications to be prepared by the project or with financial support from the project

At the time of project mid-term evaluation, progress in achieving the planned Results was evident. Good progress can be reported under the component SO1 as the cooperation with ANNGO has improved, the by-laws were successfully revised and led to a new membership regulation that allows also commercial nurseries to enter. However, the application of this new regulation still, needs to be seen. Not yet adequately considered is support to ANNGO for linking it with similar associations in Europe or Asia through the "*International Co-operative Alliance*" that is the apex organisation for co-operatives worldwide. This is essential for the capacity development of ANNGO, for its communication and possible co-operation with similar NGOs. Altogether, without tackling some identified shortcomings and focussing more on managerial advice from the HPS side, the achievement of the planned results will remain a difficult challenge.

The only horticulture research conducted in Afghanistan is the one carried out in the PHD Centres of the MAIL farms, currently supported technically and financially by the HPS. Therefore, each result achieved under component SO2 either, in adaptive research or the breeding programme is of precious value for the horticulture sector. Such results are, for instance the Almond Register, the completed but not yet published Apricot Register or the 10 late-flowering almond breeding lines, selected in 2014 for further demo trials and screening in farmers' fields. Nevertheless, the still outstanding outputs are numerous and the amount of work is substantial. Apparently, the SO2 team will require additional expert support for achieving the set targets in time. Even more so, since the international germplasm expert has suddenly passed away and finding an adequate replacement will take time.

Under component SO3, positive achievements can also be reported, like formation of 11 groups (531 members) of fruit producers and processors. These groups receive relevant training and input kits for improving the quality of their products. Another important achievement is the linkage of the producer groups with traders. This was done through the conclusion of so far, 4 Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) between traders and producer groups, with the HPS countersigning as witness. These agreements resulted in bulk purchases from the groups and even in cherry exported to Dubai. Only the cooperation with AAIDO, identifying to what extent meaningful and if at all, is outstanding. Meanwhile, the SO3 team should go ahead in seeking cooperation with other relevant potential partners, like Samangan.

To date, not many achievements can be reported under component SO4 but progress is apparent and expected to bear visible results in the next year. However, several important preparatory actions were implemented or supported by the HPS.

Given the progress in achievement of the planned Results to date, it is highly likely that the four Specific Objectives will be achieved to a major extent. For the time being, in particular the technical aspects planned under the various Results have a high probability of achievement. However, more attention needs to be given to the institutional capacity development (managerial, financial, structural) of the main project partners and, to enhancing Public-Private-Partnership. This concern foremost ANNGO but also the newly established fruit producer/ processor groups under SO3, the Citrus Promotion Group and the Citrus Producer Group under formation.

The impact prospects for the project Results to contribute to the Overall Objective are positive, in particular for all technical aspects.

The potential sustainability of the project results or of deriving benefits from project actions is generally positive, especially as some actions in this direction are already undertaken or part of the project plan. Moreover, some considerations for sustainability were already foreseen in the Project Contract. However, when it comes to ownership over results, the recent structural changes that took place inside ANHDO are a matter of concern and need to be taken serious for the sake of ANHDO's institutional sustainability. Over the past years, ANHDO has developed a good reputation and became a recognized player in the horticulture sector. Although, it can rely on a pool of highly motivated and technically well-qualified and experienced staff, not one of these is a member of ANHDO but all are employed. Hence, they are likely to be dismissed when the projects are over. The 35 ANHDO members are fruit producers/ traders and exporters and none of these is working in either the HPS or HVP. This is a challenge that requires serious considerations and action. For the time being, two possible scenarios appear: Either, ANHDO proposes membership to the technical experts and also, 2-3 positions in the Board of Directors, or the technical experts could join hands on the basis of their common interest and form their own NGO aiming at provision of technical consultancy services to donor-funded projects, NGOs and MAIL in the horticulture sector.

## 2. ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS

<b>ADB</b>	<b>Asian Development Bank</b>
<b>AFD</b>	<b>Agence Francaise de Developpement</b>
<b>AHDP</b>	<b>Animal Health Development Project</b>
<b>ANSA</b>	<b>Afghanistan National Standards Authority</b>
<b>AIMP</b>	<b>Agriculture Market Infrastructure Project</b>
<b>AKF</b>	<b>Aga Khan Foundation</b>
<b>ANHDO</b>	<b>Afghanistan National Horticulture Development Organization</b>
<b>ANNGO</b>	<b>Afghanistan National Nursery Growers' Organisation</b>
<b>AAIDO</b>	<b>Afghanistan Almond Industry Development Organisation</b>
<b>BoD</b>	<b>Board of Directors</b>
<b>CPG</b>	<b>Citrus Promotion Group</b>
<b>CTV</b>	<b>Citrus Tristeza Virus</b>
<b>DAIL</b>	<b>Directorate for Agriculture, Irrigation &amp; Livestock (Provincial and District level)</b>
<b>DFID</b>	<b>British Cooperation</b>
<b>EC</b>	<b>European Commission</b>
<b>EU</b>	<b>European Union</b>
<b>FAO</b>	<b>Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations</b>
<b>FH</b>	<b>Field Horticulturist</b>
<b>GoA</b>	<b>Government of Afghanistan</b>
<b>HPS</b>	<b>Horticulture Private Sector Development Project</b>
<b>HVP</b>	<b>Horticulture Value Chain Project (AFD funded, ANHDO implemented)</b>
<b>MAIL</b>	<b>Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock</b>
<b>MOEW</b>	<b>Ministry of Energy and Water</b>
<b>MoU</b>	<b>Memorandum of Understanding</b>
<b>MSN</b>	<b>Mother Stock Nursery</b>
<b>NC</b>	<b>National Collection</b>
<b>NGA</b>	<b>Nursery Growers Association</b>
<b>NGO</b>	<b>Non-Governmental Organisation</b>
<b>NHLP</b>	<b>National Horticulture and Livestock Project (World Bank funded)</b>
<b>NUHDA</b>	<b>National Union for Horticulture Development</b>
<b>NVAC</b>	<b>Nangarhar Valley Agricultural Company (ex-NVDA)</b>
<b>NVDA</b>	<b>Nangarhar Valley Development Association</b>
<b>OVI</b>	<b>Objectively Verifiable Indicators</b>
<b>PBTL</b>	<b>Plant Biotechnology Laboratory</b>
<b>PHDP II</b>	<b>Perennial Horticulture Development Project, second phase</b>
<b>PHDC</b>	<b>Perennial Horticulture Development Centre</b>
<b>RI</b>	<b>Relief International</b>
<b>ROM</b>	<b>Result-oriented monitoring</b>
<b>SO</b>	<b>Specific Objective</b>
<b>TA</b>	<b>Technical Assistance</b>
<b>TL</b>	<b>Team Leader</b>
<b>ToR</b>	<b>Terms of Reference</b>
<b>ToT</b>	<b>Training of trainers</b>
<b>Transition Project</b>	<b>Support to capacitate MAIL in Transition for sustainable Public Services Delivery, 2013-2016, (EuropeAid/133-537/C/SER/AF)</b>
<b>USAID</b>	<b>United States Agency for International Development</b>
<b>VC</b>	<b>Value chain</b>
<b>WB</b>	<b>World Bank</b>

### 3. INTRODUCTION

#### 3.1 BACKGROUND

##### 3.1.1 Country and Sector Background

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is a landlocked country with an approximate population of 31 million people. Its territory covers 652,000 km<sup>2</sup>, making it slightly bigger than France<sup>2</sup>. The Afghan economy has always been agricultural, despite the fact that only 12% - 16%<sup>3</sup> of its total land is arable, mostly in scattered valleys, and about 6% is currently cultivated. To date, Afghanistan remains a major supplier in the international drug trade. It continues producing significant quantities of hashish and of opium. In northern Afghanistan large natural gas deposits exist and were exploited until the 90ies and, large reserves of oil were found but these remain so far unexploited, primarily because of war. Reports after the United States Geological Survey (USGS) in 2006 and others indicate that the country has huge amounts of lithium, copper, gold, coal, iron ore, other minerals and rare earth elements. However, due to the conflicts and lack of investments, most resources are not yet exploited and, for the time being, the country remains among the least developed ones in the world, ranking 175th on the United Nations' Human Development Index.

Although receiving less attention than security and political challenges, the economic challenges are perhaps the most acute. In the short- to medium-term, economic growth will depend principally on the agriculture sector, including the horticulture. Facilitating private sector led growth and resulting job creation will be key to both tackling the problems stemming from un-employment and the need for increasing domestic revenue generation. In the longer term, there is the potential to generate considerable resources and jobs from mining. However, the adequate framework needs to be in place, ensuring the appropriate oversight and avoiding mining exploitation becomes a driver for conflict.

Important agricultural crops, mainly for domestic consumption, are wheat, followed by barley, corn, and rice. Cotton is another important and widely cultivated crop. Only the production is constrained by an almost total dependence on erratic winter snows and spring rains for water. At least two-thirds of the farmland requires irrigation but the irrigation infrastructure has degraded after over 30 years of conflict. In 1987, about 26,600 sq km (10,300 sq mi)<sup>4</sup> of farmland were irrigated. Unleashing the agricultural and horticultural sector growth potential implies tackling the sub-optimal productivity that affects farmers and orchard owners and further promoting the entrepreneurial capacity of better-off farmers and fruit producers driven by growing regional and national markets.

The horticulture industry in Afghanistan has a very long history, based on favourable climatic zones for the growing of fruits and nuts and particularly for the drying of fruits. This long development of the Afghan horticulture industry is intertwined with the cultivation and adaptation of a large range of species and varieties of fruits and nuts. Exports of dried fruits and nuts from Afghanistan in the 1970s were significant contributors to world trade, before 30 years of wars and civil conflicts caused untold damage to the underlying infrastructure of the horticulture industry, like the irrigation systems, an almost complete loss of technical skills compounded by a lack of horticultural education at all levels.

When it comes to exports, fruit and nuts are among Afghanistan's most important export products. Afghanistan is known for producing some of the finest fruits (fresh and dried) and nuts, such as pomegranates, apricots, grapes, raisins and mulberries. Several provinces in the north of the country are famous for pistachio cultivation and varieties of the rare soft-shell almond are indigenous to Afghanistan. Other important fruits are citrus, cherries, figs but also peaches, plums, also dried or pine kernels are traded in local markets. As of 2007, the country's fruit and nut exports were at \$113 million per year, but according to an estimate could grow to more than \$800 million per year in 10 years given sufficient attention to the horticulture sector in form of political support, skilled human resources plus investment. The legacy of many years of war is still a handicap for recovery and adequate development of the sector, like lack of infrastructure, lack of adequate regulations and regulatory institutions, lack of technically and managerially qualified and experienced personnel and finally lack of investment.

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<sup>2</sup> Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org), Afghanistan

<sup>3</sup> Different sources state varying percentages

<sup>4</sup> Source: [www.afghanistans.com](http://www.afghanistans.com)



While it is clear that there are substantial export opportunities for fresh and dried fruit and nuts from Afghanistan, there are also increasing opportunities for import substitution as the open trading system and increasing disposable income create a huge influx of fruit and nut products, even in product areas such as almonds and raisins where Afghanistan is a net exporter. Besides fruits like bananas, mangoes, lychees and kiwis that are not adapted to grow in Afghanistan, a quick glance at the Kabul fruit shops shows that the country imports large quantities of other products that could well be produced in Afghanistan. These are, for instance, apples from China, Pakistan and Iran, pears from China, mandarins from Pakistan, oranges from Egypt, early season peaches from Pakistan, late season grapes from Tajikistan, early season grapes from India and, off-season apples from Chile.

### 3.1.2 Project Background

Since 2003, The European Union (EU) continues its support to the creation of the required institutional and organizational frameworks for enabling the agriculture sector to play the expected role as an engine of growth and for the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) to provide support to and facilitate the private sector development. The main aim of the EU has been to foster a quick recovery of private sector capacity to deliver to all the Afghan farmers, quality inputs and services in the seed industry, animal health, and horticulture sector. In this respect, several sub-sector programmes were developed and implemented, like the "Afghanistan Variety and Seed Industry Development Programme" (AVSIDP), the "Animal Health Development Programme" (AHDP), the "Perennial Horticulture Development Programme" (PHDP) and the "Strengthening of the Agricultural Economics, Market Information and Statistics Services" programme (SEAMISS). In addition, support was provided to a number of NGOs with the specific objective to stimulate the development of the private sector at the sub-national level.

The Action "Support to the Development of Agriculture Private Sector: Perennial Horticulture - HPS" (DCI-ASIE/2013/335-321) was awarded on 19/12/2013 and is implemented by a consortium composed of Afghanistan National Horticulture Development Organization (ANHDO, Leader) and Relief International (RI, Co-Applicant). ANHDO is broadly contributing the technical expertise, while RI is mainly contributing the managerial expertise. Implementation of activities is under the technical coordination and supervision of the EU Technical Assistance Team, namely PHDP TA.

ANHDO is an Afghan non-governmental, non-profit organization registered with the Ministry of Economy and established with World Bank support in 2009 but support ceased already 2010. At that stage, the EU Delegation regarded further support of ANHDO worthwhile and, included it into the work plan of PHDP II for the provision of capacity building support. Since then, ANHDO has developed into an important institution for horticulture development by comprising some 35 fruit growers, processors and fruit traders. ANHDO's development is part of the EU and Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) long-term strategy for the development of the horticulture sector in Afghanistan.

Relief International INGO is a humanitarian, non-profit, non-sectarian agency, registered in Great Britain which provides emergency relief, rehabilitation, and development interventions throughout the world. Since 1990, RI's programmes link immediate emergency assistance with long-term economic and livelihood development through innovative programming at the grassroots level.

The project under mid-term evaluation was planned as successive support to some actions formerly implemented by the PHDP II or to organisations formerly assisted by the PHDP II. Hence, the HPS design has the advantage of building on the experience and outcomes in horticulture development made by the PHDP and PHDP II projects. In this respect, the project design as planned is based on either pilot efforts or actions initiated under preceding projects.

The areas of action and main target institutions selected 2013 for support through the HPS were:

- i) the certification scheme implemented in the nursery industry by ANNGO (Afghanistan National Nursery Growers' Organisation),
- ii) the horticulture research programme,
- iii) the fruit & nut value chain, AAIDO (Afghanistan Almond Industry Development Organisation) and
- iv) the citrus industry represented through the CPG (Citrus Promotion Group)

i) At the time of outlining the project design for the HPS, the nursery industry in Afghanistan had started to organise around the ANNGO regulatory system promoted by the EU-funded PHDP. In 2013, nearly 1000 nursery growers in 22 provinces were organised in 29 Nursery Growers Associations (NGA) represented nationally by ANNGO. In 2012, the first ANNGO certified saplings were sold in the market with success and reached the production of 0.9 Million in 2013. At that time, the field officers, usually one per each NGA, who provide technical advice and supervision to NGA members were financed and managed by two consortia of EU-funded NGOs. It was however, assumed that by summer/ end of 2013, ANNGO might have the managerial and institutional capacity to take over the field officers but this assumption did not hold true. Another weakness was that several large commercial nurseries had been left at the margin of the process and there was some resistance to ensure their full membership and revise the ANNGO by-law accordingly. Apparently, the ANNGO management was not providing motivated and business oriented leadership and, with the additional risk of proliferation of other labels in the nursery market, the organization and its objectives could weaken. Therefore, bringing the best commercial nursery growers inside ANNGO was to strengthen a business-oriented leadership, to diversify business opportunities, to cooperate effectively with MAIL and achieve the target of over 3.5 Million certified saplings by 2015. If the ANNGO board members were not in agreement with this process, a new National organisation for representing adequately the 29 NGAs in 22 provinces was required.

ii). The only horticulture research conducted in Afghanistan was the one started by PHDP in the 6 so called PHD Centres in MAIL farms of Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif, Kunduz, Herat, Kandahar and Jalalabad. In 2013, almost 80% of the Afghan perennial varieties gathered through the PHDP and maintained in the National Collection were described according to international standards for the first time. A programme of adaptive research for selected varieties and accessions was available and gradually implemented. For this reason, four pomology laboratories were equipped and started operating. Trials of rootstocks and high-density orchards were ongoing. In addition, a limited breeding programme was ongoing with trials for reaching late flowering almond varieties (that escape frosts) and apricot varieties with better commercial qualities. The expected outputs of these programmes had a high potential for stimulating progress of the horticulture industry. Also, efforts were made for involving the horticulture directorate and research directorate of the MAIL into the programmes. A good partnership with universities was established and several students and graduates were exposed to this work.

iii) Concerning the fruit & nut value chain, ANHDO had already identified the bottlenecks that made it difficult for the Afghan traders to access the markets that required higher standards. The main bottlenecks were: lack of traceability, low or missing quality and hygiene control, improper packaging, missing laboratory capacities for microbiological and chemical tests (ochratoxin and aflatoxin) and able to issue internationally accepted certificates for exports. Another bottleneck was the general absence of HACCP<sup>5</sup> concepts throughout the value chain and particularly in the processing, storage and packaging stages. ANHDO was planning to introduce gradually, and on pilot basis, the concepts of hygiene and propose simple measures for improvement of quality standards in order to add value to the products. In 2013, ANHDO was already positioned with a selected group of private partners and had plans to establish pilot value chains for ensuring the traceability from the production to the market, with quality and hygiene control, proper packaging and possibly a brand name. ANHDO and its private partners envisaged such market initiatives for a fresh fruit value chain for high value domestic market to Kabul and other main cities.

iv) In 2011, the PHDP/II project gathered all stakeholders of the Citrus industry to form the Citrus Promotion Group (CPG), an informal stakeholders group for coordinating all the initiatives related to Citrus. In 2013, the CPG was composed of 12 organizations, including the Biotechnology Laboratory (PBT), USAID projects, NGOs, farmers organizations, DAIL and MAIL Directorates. Through the CPG, two successful campaigns for monitoring the CTV (Citrus Tristeza Virus) in orchards were conducted in partnership with the biotechnology laboratory of Kabul. Moreover, rootstocks tolerant to CTV were introduced and their multiplication and dissemination was ongoing. In November 2012 ANHDO, supported by the PHDP organized the first Citrus Workshop in Jalalabad, which identified great opportunities and also various constraints including lack of commercial orchards due to a small size of farms, lack of a governmental strategy, need for standardized production, good packaging and grading, a functioning distribution network, regulations, border agreements, etc. ANHDO, supported by PHDP, was striving to gather the best citrus producers in the area including the NVDA for improving the quality control, packaging, traceability, and establishing a brand name. In addition, partnership with ANNGO and the MAIL were envisaged.

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<sup>5</sup>Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point

## 3.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

The aim of the assignment was, in line with the Terms of Reference (Annex 4) to conduct a mid-term evaluation of the HPS project at a time when over 40% of its implementation time elapsed. This was regarded the appropriate timing for sound reasons. Some framework conditions affecting the project implementation have changed since the project was designed three years ago. The institutional situation of a major project partner, namely ANNGO has stabilised and improved. Another planned project partner, AAIDO shifted its activity focus from almond production and trade to trading and processing fresh fruit. Besides, after the first year of project implementation, the project management recognised that few planned actions turned obsolete while some new activities appeared relevant and appropriate. Therefore, the project management envisages a review of the project plan as laid-out in the logical framework, followed by a necessary amendment to the contract until the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> project year. The current mid-term review is expected to contribute with recommendations to the possible adjustments that might be required. Hence, the specific questions formulated by the project management for this mid-term evaluation reflect the anticipated need for changes:

1. Is the project making satisfactory progress in timely achievement of project results (as per logframe) and related delivery of outputs?
2. Are the planned project activities adequate to realize the objectives?
3. In what ways can the project implementation be improved to better meet the project objectives? (Management of implementation, use of resources)
4. How can the overall design of the project be improved to better achieve the set targets?

## 3.3 APPLIED METHODOLOGY

The HPS management, in agreement with the European Union Delegation in Afghanistan provided the Terms of Reference (TOR) that called for the mid-term evaluation and approved a mixed evaluation team that consisted of one international evaluation expert, Ms Astrid Wuseni and one Afghan evaluation expert, Mr Sayed Samiullah Hakimi. The TOR stipulated that the approach and used methodology should adhere to Europe Aid's 'Guidelines for Project and Programme Evaluations of the European Union's External Assistance' (see Annex 3). Hence, the main criteria for assessment during the evaluation mission are the Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Impact and Sustainability of the project intervention as described in the TOR. (see Annex 4) It has to be noted that for a mid-term evaluation the focus of assessment is lying on the first three criteria, while under criterion 4 the Impact Prospects and under criterion 5 the Potential Sustainability are assessed.

The methodology used followed the known four phases as commonly applied for project evaluations of EU-funded projects: 1. desk phase, 2. field phase, 3. synthesis phase, 4. dissemination phase.

### Desk phase

The desk phase was used for collecting and checking the basic official documents, like project programming documents, progress and technical reports, EC documents setting the policy framework in which the project operates and, Government strategy documents. Other relevant documents were gathered during the field phase, e.g. Financial Report, Presentation/ overview reports from managers of the single components.

The evaluation team reviewed preliminary the logical framework matrix as set up originally in the Contract.

### Field phase

At the beginning of the field phase, a briefing meeting was conducted by the evaluation team at the EU Delegation in Kabul with the task manager and the project management team (TL, Deputy TL, PHDP TL), where method, interview schedule and main questions were discussed.

During the field phase, the evaluation team relied upon a mix of tools and of interviewees with the aim to crosschecking information facts and sources. The tools ranged from data collection over documentary analyses, single interviews, and focus group interviews to field visits.

The evaluation team conducted interviews with experts who were involved in the project design, with the project management team, key actors in adaptive research, PH Centres, ARIA, the fruit processing industry, with other stakeholders, like the MAIL, the CPG (see Annex 1).

After a first review of received information, at the last day of the field phase in Kabul, the evaluation team displayed a power point presentation with preliminary main findings, main obstacles that occurred and preliminary recommendations to an audience of some 25 project key people and stakeholders. There was a vivid interest in the preliminary findings, followed by discussions. This event was also attended by representatives from ARIA and from the Transition Project. Afterwards, a de-briefing was conducted in the EU Delegation, however not with the task manager who was out of the country at that time.

#### Synthesis phase

The evaluation team is drawing up its draft mid-term report, which includes the findings per each criteria as well as conclusions and recommendations. The Draft Report is subject to comments from the EUD task manager and the project management. The evaluation team attends to these comments as necessary, e.g. corrects factual data where required, incorporates or neglects comments concerning the substance and conclusions in order to maintain the independence of the evaluation team's opinion. Afterwards, the final version of the final report will be submitted to the task manager and to the project management.

#### Dissemination phase

The project management attends to the production of hard copies of the Final Report and to its dissemination to stakeholders as indicated in the TOR for this mission. The EUD task manager attends to uploading the report into the EC's relevant database.

During the field phase a number of **limiting factors** were noticed, which affected the information collection to some degree and, shall be kept in mind. However, none of the factors was detrimental for the compilation of project outputs, management efficiency and other aspects. The factors that might have limited the information gathering were as follows:

- Limited access to regions, due to the security situation and to time limits of the field mission (nevertheless, visited Jalalabad PHD Centre and NC and producer groups near Kabul)
- Interviews with relevant actors, like board members of ANHDO, field managers and with project beneficiaries, e.g. board members of ANNGO had to be held through an interpreter (per se limits information)
- Certain bias of interviewees was observed for protecting their own targets, e.g. lobbying for new funds from the EU
- The Deputy Minister of the MAIL was out of the city during field mission
- The prevailing logical project framework could hardly be used as baseline for comparison of progress (partly for historical reasons) since a major review is planned and this evaluation should contribute to it
- Project progress reports are too bulky (390 pages of latest Quarterly Report) and unstructured for transparent comprehension

## 4.1 RELEVANCE & DESIGN

### 4.1.1 Relevance of the project objectives to governmental and EU policies and to the needs of the intended beneficiaries

With its Overall Objective, the project is aiming „to contribute to the uplifting of horticulture (yields, quality standards, market value) and enhancement of capabilities of the private sector, through specific pilot actions in target areas“. A single Project Purpose is not defined and therefore missing. Instead, four Specific Objectives (SO) are formulated, each standing for a separate project component. Hence, the assumption is that the achievement of the four SOs (see Annexes 5&6) for the four components will contribute to the planned OO. The focus of **SO1** is on support to the Afghan private sector nursery industry through its main organization, namely ANNGO. **SO2** focuses on the continuation of the horticulture adaptive research programme, while **SO3** plans to enhance post-harvest management and market-driven value chains for key horticulture crops. **SO4** plans to develop a sound and profitable citrus industry in Eastern Afghanistan.

At the time of project design, the project aims and objectives were entirely relevant as these were fully in line with the European Union's Country Strategy Paper 2007 -2013, with the priorities of the Afghan Government as indicated in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and, responded well to the needs of the intended target groups. The EC's Agriculture Support Programme was building on a twofold approach: (i) continue to assist the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) in its efforts to develop institutional capacity at the Ministry of Energy and Water (MoEW) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) to regulate and further develop key agricultural sub-sectors; and (ii) contribute to strengthening public-private partnerships. The EC was consistent in its approach to the horticulture sector and financed over a long period projects, like PHDP, AFIDs and PHDP II for developing and strengthening both the public and the private horticulture sectors.

At the Tokyo Conference in July 2012, the 'Afghan Government committed a series of political and economic reforms in return for international pledges of continued exceptional levels of funding and increased aid effectiveness through a transition period. It was agreed that donors would increase the share of incentive funding to 10 percent by 2014 and to 20 percent by the end of the 'transformation decade (2024). The international community reconfirmed its commitment to align 80 percent of its aid with the NPPs and to channelling at least 50 percent of its development assistance through the national budget of the Afghan Government.'<sup>6</sup> The EU is fulfilling its commitments by providing about EUR 1 billion for the period 2014-2020. Following its approach consequent, the EC identified appropriate support actions for both the transition of the horticulture public services to the MAIL and for strengthening the horticulture private sector aiming at the same time for functioning public-private partnership. Hence, the EU-Transition Project (TrPr) was initiated and started in 2014 for a three-year period with the aim of assisting the transfer of public services, yet provided by EU-funded projects, to the MAIL directly or through MAIL to semi-private or private entities. Time wise in parallel, the HPS was initiated apparently with the aim to provide financial and technical assistance (TA) to selected private target institutions for strengthening their institutional/ managerial and technical capacities and enhancing their leading roles in the horticulture sector. It is evident that the private sector will remain essential for the development of the horticulture sector and provide the ultimate impetus for the sector growth.

When it comes to the needs of the intended target groups/ direct beneficiaries, these were identified in the contractor's Application document, as the Afghan nursery industry and its associate organizations such as NGAs, processors, traders, input suppliers in the perennial horticulture industry and the MAIL. Direct beneficiaries are groups or institutions that benefit directly from project interventions, like training, events or from technical advice or physical inputs. The defined wider development targets were to strengthen existing private institutions as well as build new institutions for a widened range of horticultural development activities. Further, enhancement of human capacity in the private sector both in technical and in management terms is regarded essential for leading to sustainable long-term improvements in the horticultural sector.

The nursery industry of Afghanistan had started organising around the Afghanistan National Nursery Growers' Organisation in 29 NGAs with about 1000 nursery owners as members. At the stage of project planning, ANNGO was in need of qualified support in capacity building in order to meet its mandate of producing increased numbers of virus-free and true-to-type fruit tree saplings and

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<sup>6</sup> Multi-annual Indicative Programme 2014- 2020

multiplication material. This concerned not only weaknesses and misunderstandings among the members of the board of directors but also, the need for reviewing the by-laws and accepting an opening of the organisation for new members, including the bigger players in the horticulture industry, like the NVDA. If the ANNGO board members were not in agreement with this process, a new National organisation for representing adequately the 29 NGAs was required. To date, the latter point is no longer a risk as the situation has improved and ANNGO has revised its by-law and is now open for new members. Nevertheless, further capacity building is still required, in particular of the board members.

The needs of the Citrus Promotion Group (CPG) at the project planning stage included institutional development but also formalization of the organization and increased coordination with other actors. The Afghanistan Almond Industry Development Organisation (AAIDO) required broadening of their produce base to ensure growth of the organisation. The Plant Biotechnology Laboratory and the Pomology laboratories needed further fund for procurement of materials but also technical support and training of staff. The MAIL was not yet in the position to manage the National Collections and to continue the adaptive research programme. The fruit producers, processors and traders were in need of high quality inputs, like certified saplings as well as strategic support and marketing support to meet needs of domestic and regional/international markets. There was also need for developing stronger links between the single groups involved at different stages of the vertical production line of selected fruits/ nuts for arriving at a value chain. The consumers demanded higher quality affordable and suitable domestic horticultural products and reduction of lower quality imports. This however, was constrained by lack of sufficient quantities of high quality domestic horticultural production due to low-level orchard management and, again, insufficient numbers of high quality horticulture plant material available in the market. The project as designed was aiming to meet the above stated needs and deal with the constraints of the stakeholders and target groups for ensuring improved horticultural production in Afghanistan.

At the time of mid-term evaluation, the project aims continue to fully support the EU development and cooperation strategies for Afghanistan and continue being in line with the governmental policies that did not change since the project start. In addition, the project continues to meet the needs of the direct beneficiaries as outlined above and with its aim to strengthen the private sector organisations able to drive the Afghan perennial horticulture development forward, the project objectives remain highly relevant.

#### **4.1.2 Appropriateness of the project design**

The logical framework of the project was provided in the Application Document and in the Contract. It is designed in a cascading way with one Overall Objective, no Project Purpose formulated but four so-called Specific Objectives, each for one project component. The cascading structure is fully appropriate and provides the logical connection among the four components. Each of the components concentrates assistance on one particular area and, at the same time, on support to the leading private organisation in this area. SO1 component envisages support to the nursery industry represented through ANNGO; SO2 on the continuation of the adaptive research programme, SO3 component on development of value chains and post-harvest systems for key perennial horticulture crops, like almonds and hence on AAIDO. The SO4 component plans support to the citrus industry in Eastern Afghanistan and therefore, includes support to the Citrus Promotion Group and the formation of new citrus producer groups. These four components are closely interlinked with each other and consequently, the project design is in general terms meaningful and logic.

Nevertheless, the logical framework has several weaknesses that do not allow using it as efficient management tool. In fact, some of the management teams for the single components do not regard the logframe a feasible management tool but use their own work plans for managing and monitoring the activities. A major shortcoming is the lack of a formulated single purpose of the whole project. Accordingly, indicators for the Project Purpose that should define the level of achievement for the entire project are also missing. Without these, an adequate judgement of the Effectiveness of the HPS project is hardly possible. Still, based on the interviews during the evaluation mission and the ongoing activities and documents, the Project Purpose (PP) goes apparently into the direction of providing financial and technical assistance (TA) to selected private target institutions for strengthening their institutional/ managerial and technical capacities and enhancing their leading roles in the horticulture sector. This however, is not an agreed PP among key players and not written down or backed up by indicators in any document but the understanding of the evaluators.

In addition to the pronounced project aims and the formulated SOs, the project was planned with an underlying agenda reflected in the Contract but without explicit pronouncement anywhere in the documents. This concerns the aim of providing support to ANHDO for its capacity building in project management but also for further promoting ANHDO's role as interlocutor between the public sector and the private organisations in the horticulture sector. As leading contractor in this consortium, the ANHDO staff was to gain experience in administrative and financial management of donor-funded projects. In the project plan/ logframe no provision was made for the project management in form of a separate, crosscutting component, although several activities need to be regularly implemented under this task, e.g. Coordination Committee meetings, Steering Committee meetings, Report preparation. This lack might also be the reason why the project reports do not inform about project management progress and shortcomings. However, this is handled in EU-funded projects in both ways in line with the contractor's preference, some project plans treat 'Project management' as crosscutting Component or Result, and others have no mentioning of it.

The 'added value' of ANHDO in this project consortium was its pool of professional technical experts with sound experience in all four directions/components of the project, like adaptive research, the pomology laboratories, including citrus and value chain development. In addition, ANHDO had already established an institutional link with ANNGO. The development of ANHDO is part of the long-term strategies for the development of the horticulture sector of both the EU and the MAIL. Hence, the award of this contract to the consortium ANHDO/ RI is a consequent step in pursuing the long-term strategy for developing the horticulture sector in Afghanistan. At the time of project design, ANHDO's mission was described as follows: i) to support the development of horticulture, ii) to link the public and the private sector by acting as bridge between the MAIL and the private sector in horticulture, iii) act as catalyst for other organisations in the horticulture sector and, iv) to provide services in the post-harvest value chains. Because of this intention for strengthening ANHDO's role in the horticulture sector further, it appears illogical that this aim is not reflected in the logframe at all. Neither any crosscutting component is planned for it nor do the formulations of the Results and Activities give explicit hints on the special but two-fold role of ANHDO, on one side, as project implementing contractor and, on the other side, as key actor in the horticulture sector and proclaimed interlocutor between the public and the private entities.

Another shortcoming of the design is that objectively verifiable indicators (OVIs) for each of the four Specific Objectives are also missing. OVIs were formulated only for the Result-level. These however, do frequently not qualify as OVIs but are rather formulated like results and are hardly measurable. One of the numerous examples is OVI 1.4 under Result 1 of the SO3: *Domestic and exports initiatives supported and quantities traded with innovative & rational packages*. Another example is the OVI 3.1.A *A permanent coordination between stakeholders is assured* under SO4 Result3. An OVI should be SMART, meaning specific (S), measurable (M), appropriate (A), relevant (R) and possibly time-bound (T). In addition, the activities are not crisp and specific but rather blurred, like Activities 2.4 *The current Citrus Promotion Group is supported and long term organizational arrangements made* or 3.1 *Coordination of public and private stakeholders* under the Results 2 and 3 of SO4. A consequence of this design flaw is an interrupted vertical intervention logic, while observing the vertical logic is in fact very simple. The principle is, when the clearly formulated activities are implemented as planned, the indicators that define the level of achievement of the related Result are mainly met and thus, the Result is achieved. When all Results are achieved, the OVIs defining the level of achievement of the PP are met and thus, the actual Project Purpose is achieved.

Adding to this interrupted logic of design is an apparent misunderstanding about the role of assumptions. It is unclear which logic the stated assumptions follow, e.g. "*The feasibility of establishing brand names is studied*", or "*Support facilities for soil and leaf analyses in laboratories are needed but outside the ToR of this project*." Assumptions are factors outside the control of the project management that are required for successful implementation and may affect the achievement level of the related objective/ result if they do not hold true. For the design of this project, apparently for the Project Purpose level, few important assumptions can be found in the MIP 2014-2020, like "*MAIL continues to support the public-private partnership scheme in the horticulture sector*", or "*MAIL continues progressing in the fulfilment of the commitments made in policy documents and relevant MoUs*". Also, assumptions are made only for the Project Purpose and the Results levels, not for the OO level and exceptionally for the Activity level.

Another unacceptable design shortcoming is the wrong perception concerning SO1. Under SO1, in the logframe all Results and OVIs oblige ANNGO, the NGAs and the nursery industry to achieve

targets set by the project. In reality, the HPS project can only plan results that it can achieve adequately on its own or with assistance/ in co-operation with some partner. ANNGO is a direct project partner and thus, not obliged to achieve Results planned by the HPS management. In this case, the HPS can only do things like for instance, *'assisting ANNGO to review its by-law to a required standard'* or *'second 25 field managers for enabling ANNGO to supervise its 25 NGAs at technical standard level'*.

These design shortcomings need to be addressed soonest. However, this need has already been recognised and the project management plans to revise the logical framework of the project in October 2015 and, therefore requested this evaluation to contribute.

Altogether, there are sound reasons for this series of design shortcomings. One is of historical nature, as this project was planned and designed in a short time by individual people without sufficient time for consulting the main project partners and reaching their agreement. Also, it was found necessary to keep a high level of flexibility for the project actions since some framework conditions were unstable. In particular, the future of ANNGO was somehow uncertain at the project design stage. Now, almost one and a half year of project implementation, the situation has changed. ANNGO as organisation has stabilised. The executive committee is functioning well although, the members of the board are still interfering into daily activities and have a wrong perception about their role. Therefore, ANNGO, in particular the board members still require substantial managerial assistance and training.

Interestingly, the project plan as outlined in the Concept Note, provided by the EUD for the preparation of the Application Documents, is of much better quality than the logical framework. The objectives, results and activities proposed there are more precise formulated and do not oblige project partners to achieve results instead of the project itself. They follow the vertical intervention logic except that also here a single Project Purpose is missing. It is unclear why this project plan from the Concept Note was not used as the bases for preparing the logical framework.

A sound argument among the project planners is that at the planning stage it was ultimately required to maintain flexibility for project actions since some framework conditions were unstable. To date, the possible and needed actions for supporting the private horticulture organisations are fairly clear and can be clearly formulated in the logical framework. Still, there has to be room for flexibility in the project plans and this is possible to inbuilt. For instance, room can be made for additional activities under a special action stating something like: *Additional activities as identified and agreed upon with the project partner(s)*.

Also, to mention under this section is the HVP project, funded by the AFD (Agence Française de Développement) and implemented by ANHDO since 2014. The HVP was initiated in agreement with the EU and with PHDP/II support as very complementary action to the HPS with the aim of reaching synergic effects. Indeed, the HVP implements complementary to HPS activities under all four components, like SO1 supporting the formation of two new NGAs and one MSN in provinces that are not covered by the HPS support to ANNGO. Also, the HVP implements and thus finances all activities related to the CTV detection and strain characterisation under SO4. However, the HVP is using the identical logframe as the HPS with the exception of having a fifth component, namely *SO5 Capacity building of ANHDO*. Once the planned and implemented actions are complementary, the logframes should clearly reflect this, and be complementary too but not identical. Actually, the planned SO5 of the HVP *"Increased awareness and management capability of ANHDO and its partners lead to enhanced ownership, self-confidence, governance and sustainability"* also requires a close review and assessment in order to check if the planned activities are relevant, appropriate and sufficient to meet all the anticipated targets. Still, the aim of strengthening ANHDO's role as interlocutor between the public and the private sector can only be adequately addressed under the SOs of the HPS.

Another point, not sufficiently reflected in the logframe is the needed partnership with the MAIL. For instance, component SO2 is designed as top-up support to MAIL in continuing the adaptive research programme, including the further description of the National Collection as started years ago under PHDP/ ANHDO. This includes support to MAIL for publication of the Registers of the National Collection and capacity building. Consequently, results achieved by HPS /SO2 in these topics should be shared results, achieved in partnership with MAIL. Also, the components SO3 and SO4 will need the cooperation with the MAIL and/ or the achievement of public-private partnership agreements where appropriate.



The latter two points concern the need for project partners to adequately understanding the project design in order to support the implementation of relevant activities and achievement of results that rely on their partnership action. For the HPS the main project partners are certainly ANNGO, ARIA, the HVP, the Citrus Promotion Group but also official representatives of ANHDO.

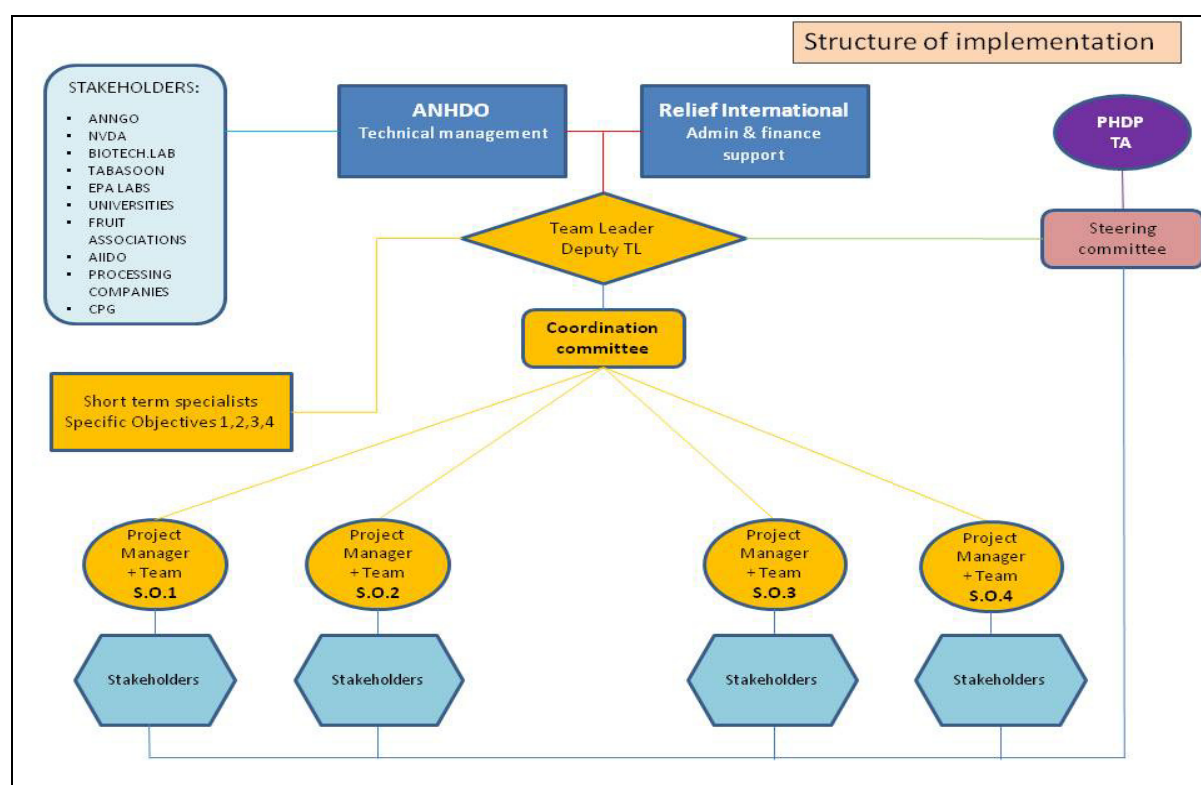
## 4.2 EFFICIENCY TO DATE

### 4.2.1 Availability of means, management of project implementation

The project is financed through a direct centralized grant with the European Commission, represented by the Delegation of the European Union being the Contracting and Financing Authority. The Project is implemented by a consortium composed of ANHDO, the consortium leader and “Relief International” as co-applicant. The Team Leader is provided from RI while the Deputy TL is from ANHDO. The two co-applicants of the Consortium complement and complete each other. ANHDO brings most of the technical expertise, knowledge of the territory, and local network of partners and RI brings most of the administrative and financial management capacity.

The total operational budget for the action is EUR 7,306,840 while the 95% contracted by the EC contribution make EUR 6,969,998. The EC contribution is equally divided and handled by the two consortium partners but with the TL from RI holding the overall responsibility for adequate and transparent management of resources. By 30 June 2015, when 37% of implementation time elapsed, 21% of the total budget was disbursed. The lowest spending appeared under budget line 3. *Equipment & Supplies* where several inputs for laboratories, for storage and packaging activities with fruit producers are currently outstanding. Generally, the project funds are adequately managed and planned inputs and human resources are made available in time. Only recently, a gap opened when the international key expert for guiding the characterisation of varieties in the pomology labs suddenly passed away. This gap has to be filled urgently by another international expert, possibly even by two experts (One senior & one junior) in order to make up for the accumulated drawback and to boost the achievement of related results under SO2 and SO3 components. Altogether, the low spending figure indicates the need for a speedier implementation and for going into support of adequate additional activities as possibly identified during the revision of the project plan (logfarme) jointly with the project partners.

The project management arrangements are foreseen as indicated in the following flow chart:



Each of the four components is implemented by a corresponding team led by a Project Manager while the Team Leader provides management, support services to all teams and facilitates coordination. As other organizations and private entities take also part in the implementation, a mechanism was established for coordination of the multidisciplinary and multi-stakeholder task in teamwork. A Coordination Committee (CC) was established as an internal management tool composed by: Team

Leader (chairman), Deputy TL, the 4 Project Managers, Observers (ANHDO GM, PHDP II advisers); other observers and advisers as found necessary. The Coordination Committee meetings were held regularly, mainly on monthly basis (15 so far) and with the stipulated participants. Very appropriately, the Project Coordinator of the HVP project became also a member of the CC meetings.

In addition, a Steering Committee (SC) was established for the purpose of approving work plans and budget, discussing strategic issues and solving problems that are beyond implementation level. The Application documents<sup>7</sup> stipulated that the SC is to be chaired by a MAIL representative or by the TL of PHDP II (or a person delegated) and should comprise: Team Leader & Deputy TL (secretary), ANHDO GM, 1 ANHDO board member, ANNGO GM, 1 ANNGO board member, 1 representative of RI, 1 MAIL representative and one PHDP II adviser. Meanwhile, the applied practice arrived at five voting members (TL of PHDP II; PHDP II adviser, ANHDO GM, one ANHDO board member, the RI country director) and three non-voting members (TL of HPS, EU Delegation representative, one MAIL representative). In addition, the project managers of the components and other observers regularly joint the SC meetings bringing the total number of participants to about 20.

The SC meetings were held as stipulated, every six months, with the 3<sup>rd</sup> one on 02/03/2015 and the 4<sup>th</sup> one planned for November 2015. Quite appropriately, in reaction to the parallel implemented HVP project, the 3<sup>rd</sup> SC meeting decided to adjust the composition of the permanent SC members in order to adequately oversee both projects, the HPS and the HVP. Therefore, the list of voting members was extended by the EUD representative and the AFD representative and, the list of non-voting members by the TL of the HVP. These changes are fully justified and proof the flexibility of the project management except that the importance of ANNGO's engagement and cooperation are disregarded. Hence, the next SC meeting in November needs to re-consider the latest proposed composition of permanent SC membership and find adequate positions for both the ANNGO GM and one ANNGO board member in order to pave the way for project success of component SO1.

The special role of the PHDP II TL or TA adviser is outlined in the project Contract as follows: *"for continuing its role of coaching ANNGO and ANHDO, it is important that the project management plans all the activities in synergy with the PHDP II TA and interacts with the PHDP II TA in all the important phases of the planning and implementation process"*. This advisory function of the PHDP TA not only to ANNGO and ANHDO but also to the HPS project management originates from the fact that the HPS components built mainly on the achievements of the PHDP projects. It is a continuation of support for further strengthening the nursery industry, the adaptive research, fruit value chains and the citrus industry.

Generally, such advisory position to a project management team is rather an exception in a management structure. In this case, besides the general statement in the Contract cited above, no other document or terms describe the role of the TA adviser with responsibilities and duties. Hence, the role as interlocutor between the management team and some partners is rather blurred, especially for the project partners. Nevertheless, this advisory position was very adequate and proofed as efficient management backing-up instrument, particularly during the initial project period. Currently, the future of this position is uncertain as the PHDP II project ends in December 2015 and so far, no provision has been made to continue this advisory role with a planned number of man/days allocated under the Transition Project for the next two years. Still, this appears sensible and meaningful, moreover when considering recent structural changes inside ANHDO and the eventual consequences. However, the future position of such TA adviser requires outlined Terms of Reference, including likewise to render professional advice to the Board of Directors of ANHDO and of ANNGO for institutional and managerial capacity building but also, enhancing public-private partnership agreements with the MAIL.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> SC meeting, among others, issues concerning ANHDO and its management capacity were discussed, like the ANHDO internal division of tasks and applied procurement rules. Mutually agreed, a recommendation was directed to the chairperson, advising ANHDO to follow the current procurement rules and agreed division of tasks and for the Board of Directors not to interfere in the day-to-day management of the two projects. At the time of the evaluation mission, this situation had not visibly improved, instead more issues were reported that point at a currently unstable management situation of ANHDO, apparently due to an internal struggle for power and authority over spending of funds by the Board of Directors.

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<sup>7</sup> Grant Contract, Annex I, p.25

For instance, the Board of Directors was recently extended from 5 to 7 members and several other positions were created without clearly stipulated functions and needs when the current organisation comprises of 35 members. The members of the Board decided to fix in the by-laws that only people with minimum of 3-years experience as board member can become ANHDO board members and, have thus secured their positions forever. Contrary, the rule for such NGO organisation foresees that members of the board need to rotate, possibly every three years and the composition of the board needs to represent the composition of the members of the organisation. The recent changes in the ANDO by-laws violate these rules. In addition, the newly created position of the elected overall General Manager of ANHDO is unclear and unspecified. He claims to be the Executive Director when that position is not an electoral one but a job position to be filled through announcement and screening of the professional qualifications of the candidates. An ultimate skill requirement for any ANHDO Executive Director is certainly a good command of the English language for the sake of negotiating and communicating with donor organisations. The former Executive Director and ANHDO contact person for the HPS Contract was assigned the role of a financial manager in the executive committee. Altogether, so far, ANHDO cannot provide a clear organization chart of its own management structure without mixing up with the implemented projects. This indicates that also roles and responsibilities of the various positions are unclear.

In addition, ANHDO, and RI are still in dispute over a project car stolen some months ago but ANHDO, mainly the board, is demanding the RI to finance a new car of the same size. This issue requires an urgent solution, possible with the relevant advice from the financial department of the EUD.

The project reporting is done regularly in line with the stipulated plans in form of Annual Reports and Quarterly Reports. However, some project reports are too bulky (latest Quarterly Report 39 pp main part plus 351pp Annexes) and all are unstructured, without a table of contents, insufficiently structured sections and no list of annexes. This hampers the reading and makes an adequate comprehension difficult. The reports do not provide any transparent overview over the latest progress; do not give sufficient account over the project management, the outputs delivered and the results achieved. In addition, the recommendations made in the reports should correspond to the challenges identified and arrive at pragmatic actions to be taken by the project. Frequently, the methodologies of applied activities, like for a workshop or a survey are explained in much detail but less the tangible outputs and even little about the progress in achieving planned results. At times, no clear distinction is made between the outputs produced by project partners with either financial or TA support from HPS and those solely produced by the HPS.

In summary, the management of the HPS project is adequate but requires some improvements and a speedier implementation. Positive is the improved coordination with the main project partner ANNGO but still leaves room for closer cooperation of action, in particular in regard to the management of the field managers. Also, less demand from the HPS management for following strict bureaucratic procedures for movement in the day-to-day activities would be welcome by the project staff and enhance needed ad-hoc meetings between project staff and project partners. Foremost important are the recent structural changes and power game inside the consortium partner ANHDO. This requires close monitoring and interaction with the ANHDO Board of Directors from RI side, from the PHDP TA adviser and the donors, EU and AFD for ensuring full adherence to EU and AFD procedures as laid down in the two Grant Contracts.

#### **4.2.2 Major outputs delivered**

During the past 20 months of implementation time, the project teams have produced several tangible outputs, some on their own, some in close conjunction with the project partners or with the HVP and, others rather through financial assistance from HPS. There is, however, scope for improvement, especially for more flexibility in identifying and implementing meaningful additional activities, for a more pro-active approach from the HPS staff without patronizing the partners and, for speeding up the implementation of activities. Certainly, the design flaws in the logframe add to the sluggish implementation speed. It is difficult to detect under the blurred formulations in the project plans the foreseen tangible outputs. In this respect, the only clear thing is the list in the Contract of proposed publications to be prepared by the project or with financial support from the project (see below).

The main outputs identified under the four project components are as follows:

#### **Component SO1 – Support to ANNGO**

- Continuous capacity building in financial management and report writing of ANNGO executive staff took place
- Regular training (7 sessions) for all 25 HPS paid field managers conducted jointly with ANNGO
- In several meetings between the TA team and the legal adviser of ANNGO, the ANNGO by-laws were revised
- In a 2-days workshop with HPS support these by-laws were reviewed and accepted by the General Assembly, however, the application of these new by-laws is still expected (e.g. new members)
- International short-term expert on ornamentals conducted missions in 2014 and 2015, 2 pilot actions on ornamentals are ongoing (with 1 private company and 1 NGA), planned support of ANNGO to Bagh Babur Garden is still pending a contract to be concluded but currently awaiting the appointment of a new mayor of the city

#### **Component SO2 – Adaptive research and breeding**

- A research programme with various trials was developed already in 2008 and, till August 2015, 30 trials were implemented
- Currently 16 trials on adaptive research and 2 breeding programmes (1 on almonds, 1 on apricots) continue being implemented in accordance with the longer-term research programme
- Research experts work already since 2009 under different projects and are currently financed by the HPS
- Results of their trials enter into the annual ANNGO Catalogue
- Have completed 2014 the Almond Register
- Have completed 2015 the characterisation of Apricot varieties, printing of the Apricot Register is now in process (financed by HPS)
- Work currently on characterisation and registration of pomegranate varieties, of cherry and plum varieties' characterisation for next Registers,

#### **Component SO3 – Pilot demos on post-harvest management and value chain development for key crops**

- Surveys conducted 2014 on grape, raisins, almonds and on AAIDO; 2015 on fresh fruits, like apricot and cherry (Int. consultant)
- Group formation of medium- and bigger-size orchard owners/ fruit producers is progressing
- 11 groups with some 531 producers are formed and supported with training, advice and inputs for harvesting, drying, packaging (against certain contribution from producers), e.g. 4 grape groups consist of 190 producers and 3 raisin groups consist of 150 members, 1 group of sweet cherry producers with 36 members, 1 group of dried apricot producers with 13 members, 1 group of apple producers with 82 members;
- SO3 is working with 60 prune producers, providing training and inputs with 25% of processors contribution, also training of 20 women involved in prune processing conducted
- 11 MoUs signed on tripartite basis (4 between a group, a trader, HPS; other between a group, DAIL offices, HPS) making linkages with traders, like Finest Super Store, Samsur ban, Amii Sadri
- For the first time exporter purchased cherry in Paghman and exported to Dubai market; For the first time Finest the best high value super market purchased cherry from group
- Quality control officer of Tabasom raisin processing factory was trained in Italy; ARFVEPA-Consultancy for the ISO 9001 is ongoing;

- On pilot basis: 1 Kishmishkhana under construction, a contract for a second Kishmishkhana nearly ready, 1 mobile sulphur treatment device tested
- stakeholder analysis indicated that other organizations are more active in the sector than AAIDO, like Samangan dried fruit and almond association, Kunduz dried fruit and Almond cooperatives and Kabul dried fruit exporter and processor association,
- Crosscutting activities with SO2: Support the 6 pomology laboratories in the 6 PHDCs to work on characterization of varieties: Scientific protocols for the complete characterization of commercial fruits varieties is completed for: Grape, Apricots, Cherry. Pomegranates and Citrus while Apples are now under revision. More than 60 commercial varieties have been identified; 5 Cherry varieties and 1 apricots have been fully characterized. Protocols and varieties have been selected for the September /October trials (Pomegranates, Citrus and Grape); Post-Harvest Manual for Raisin, Grape. Plum, Dried Apricots under preparation,

#### **Component SO 4 – Support Citrus Industry in Eastern Afghanistan**

- In December 2014, a baseline survey was conducted of almost all citrus growers; including 4 NVDA farms in the valley, (1036 citrus producers were surveyed).
- 66 varieties of citrus are in the NC in Jalalabad and the screening of these continues, in particular the physiochemical analyses; ongoing under adaptive research: shelf-life assessment, application of edible wax coating, identification of suitable storage environment
- Started developing a database for the physiochemical characteristics of varieties, work is ongoing
- In spring 2014, 10 citrus varieties (2 mandarins, 3 sweet orange varieties) were recommended for multiplication and planting but the screening of these varieties continues
- In spring 2015, an Information Centre was established in the market place in Jalalabad and operated during the planting season (some two months); it reached some 1200 visitors with advice on nursery and orchard management techniques and a video clip on planting techniques
- Another 200-300 people visited the PHD Centre only on citrus issues during the season, 2 articles in a magazine published, interviews given to regional TV channel
- Gathering citrus producers with more than 2 ha orchards and traders to form a Citrus Grower Group; currently 15 members (10 producers, 5 producers/ traders)
- Advised some citrus producers to top-graft their sour orange trees; also connected producers of sour orange to a processing/ juice company in Kabul
- The NVDA is assisted with establishing a demo nursery, currently still in the planning stage but training of NVDA staff for nursery management is already planned
- Important complementary activity carried out by the HVP: detection of CTV, characterisation of CTV strains

In the Contract for the project, also a list of proposed publications to be prepared, either by the project or with financial support of the HPS is outlined as follows:

#### **Proposed publication for the Specific Objective 1**

- Manual of Procedures for ANNGO regulatory system (attachment to seed & planting material regulations)
- Revised ANNGO by-laws
- ANNGO annual catalogue of certified fruit trees species and varieties
- Technical notes on specific issues
- ANNGO bulletin (as and when appropriate)
- Training manual for NGAs

#### **Proposed publication for the Specific Objective 2**

- National register of varieties
- List of varieties eligible for certification

- Characterisation results (phonotypical methods & molecular methods)
- Research trials results

#### **Proposed publication for the Specific Objective 3**

- Lab procedures for quality control in fruit value chain (haccp)
- Manual of basic hygiene measures for raisin & almond processing
- Description of Almond, Raisin, Stone fruit value chain in Afghanistan.
- Basic harvest & storage techniques and indexes in Afghanistan.

#### **Proposed publication for the Specific Objective 4**

- Description of Citrus varieties in Afghanistan
- Technical notes on citrus orchard management

From this list, so far, under Component SO1, the Manual of Procedures for ANNGO regulatory system is available, the ANNGO by-laws were revised in 2015 and the publication of the annual ANNGO Catalogue 2014/2015 was financed. The catalogue for the season 2014-2015, prepared in English and Dari by ANNGO with PHDP technical support, has twice the volume of the 2012 catalogue and contains descriptions of varieties and clones from almond, apple, apricot, cherry, citrus, plum, grape, peach and pomegranate but also, few ornamental flowers. However, it was published with marked delay, already during the planting season but needs to be available well before the planting time. Under Component SO2, the Register of Almonds was published and the Register of Apricots is in the process of publication. Other publications are not yet completed and hence, a speeding up of the relevant activities are much required.

## 4.3 EFFECTIVENESS TO DATE

### 4.3.1 Results, deriving from project interventions

In the logical framework a range of indicators is formulated, however not for the important level of the four Specific Objectives that are to define the achievement degree of the four project components. Only for the Result level, indicators are available in great number but some are not relevant, few others difficult to measure and few others, are not specific. Not relevant are those OVIs that are entirely to be achieved by the project partners but not by the HPS. Not specific are, for instance following indicators, under SO3, 4.2 *Capacity building actions undertaken...*, 4.6 *Capability of pomology Lab enhanced*, 4.8 *Partnership with selected group ... established*.

Again, the Concept Note in the Tender Document (see Project Synopsis, Annex 5) provides a list of meaningful and adequately formulated Results that are used here as assessment baseline for the current evaluation purpose.

#### **Component SO1**

**Result 1.1** ANNGO capacity & industry representation improved

**Result 1.2** Technical capacity of nursery industry increased

**Result 1.3** ANNGO can meet increased demand for certification/registration

Under this component, the so far most important output is the adequate revision of the ANNGO by-laws that was achieved with the legal and TA support from the HPS and addressed the former limitations for ANNGO membership, especially for large commercial nurseries. Before this adjustment, the risk was high for the commercial nurseries to develop their own certification-like system and start printing own labels for sale of saplings. Any parallel certification-like scheme was to create confusion among the customers but also among the already existing NGAs and their members. For the time being, this risk has been mitigated and big entities, as the NVDA in Jalalabad has become an ANNGO member. However, the members of the Board of Directors still show certain reluctance in applying the new membership regulations as stipulated in the new by-laws.

The latest Quarterly Report indicates that some ANNGO officials were supported to participate in events and workshops, what certainly assisted the general capacity building. Further, a monitoring system on nurseries implemented by field managers was established. This permits the HPS team to propose suitable actions to ANNGO for supporting the NGAs in raising the technical standards in the nurseries.

Concerning the strengthening of ANNGO's institutional and managerial capacities, more efforts are required and appropriate activities need to be identified for equipping the staff of the Executive Committee and the board members with relevant information without taking a patronizing role. This could be, for instance, information provision on managerial, technical and financial aspects of NGOs with similar profile in form of training for the members of the Board, workshops for discussing roles and responsibilities of each position resulting possibly in reviewing and revising the ANNGO structure for the benefit of more technical staff and less administrative staff on the payroll. Very important is the support to ANNGO for linking its organisation with similar ones in Europe or Asia through the "*International Co-operative Alliance*" that is the apex organisation for co-operatives worldwide. This is essential for the capacity development of ANNGO, for its communication and possible co-operation with similar NGOs.

During the planting season 2015, the HPS financed ANNGO's radio announcements nationwide for informing the public about the availability of certified saplings. As was reported, this showed positive effects and enhanced the sales from the NGAs.

A continuous task under SO1 for the HPS is the training and management of the 25 field managers who are pro-forma seconded to ANNGO but in practice managed by the HPS. Each of these field managers acts as supervisor and technical adviser to one NGA. Their monthly reports are scanned and sent in parallel to the HPS manager and to ANNGO for further recording. The regular training sessions of the field managers are conducted jointly by ANNGO and the HPS SO1 team. The HPS recruited a Plant Protection Specialist for developing awareness among field managers and some ANNGO staff on common pests/ diseases and for better identification of occurring issues in the nurseries. This was achieved through relevant training sessions. Although important, the focus of the



training programme is so far on technical aspects of the nursery management while organisational management, including hygiene, financial calculations for the nursery operations or contractual regulations (conclude a contract with a customer) are not yet considered, but these aspects were identified as knowledge gaps among nursery growers.

The joint management of the 25 field managers for the 25 ANNGO NGAs is not yet sufficiently well arranged between the HPS and ANNGO. According to interviews with the various key players, the field managers feel responsible to the HPS since they are on the payroll of the HPS. Therefore, their motivations for enforcing the technical requirements of ANNGO in the supervised nurseries are occasionally sub-optimal. The ANNGO management has currently no leverage instrument for increasing the motivation of the field managers. Further down the line, the field managers in their turn have also no leverage instrument for motivating the nursery owners to follow their technical recommendations. Adding to a strained situation between the field managers and the nursery owners is the recently introduced demand that the NGAs are to pay for the stationary and mobile communication input of the field managers. However, the nursery owners and therefore, also the NGAs lack funds due to the much delayed payment for saplings by the biggest customer, the NHLP. No initial payment is made by the NHLP, when the saplings are collected from the nurseries and only after some eight months, the prices are paid. This leaves the NGAs without funds for running costs and more importantly, deprives the nursery growers to purchase fertilizers and pesticides for quality maintenance of the next sapling generation. Consequently, this system as currently implemented is not efficiently functioning and adequate additional arrangements between the HPS and ANNGO need to be made for tackling the mentioned shortcomings. In this connection, ANNGO might consider to provide some service to their nursery growers in form of pesticides or fertilizer at reduced price and let the field managers handle these inputs. It is common practise in cooperatives that the organisation purchases certain inputs in bulk and sells it to the members without profit or on credit.

Another issue that is important but currently unclear is the extent to which a regular communication and exchange of experience among the NGAs is functioning.

Altogether, some progress was made under the SO1 component but without tackling the mentioned shortcomings and focussing more on managerial advice from the HPS side, the achievement of the planned results will remain a difficult challenge.

## **Component SO2**

**2.1** Adaptive research focused on orchard management continued and strengthened.

**2.2** Almond and apricot pollinators identified; improved varieties of apricot selected; improved late varieties of almond selected.

The only horticulture research being conducted in Afghanistan is the one carried out in the PHD Centres of the MAIL farms in Kabul, Mazar, Kunduz, Herat, Kandahar and Jalalabad. The adaptive research programme and the description of the varieties in the National Collection continue in the PHD Centres with the support of the HPS project team. A horticulture research expert and a germplasm expert were mobilized and supported the SO2 team working in cooperation with the staff of the Transition Project. The Register on Almonds was published and the Draft Register on Apricots has been completed recently and, is ready for publication. The MAIL is responsible for the final proof reading and for preparing with the help of the Transition Project a one-page introduction. This input however, is delayed for over three month and was not yet provided at the time of the evaluation mission. The teams are now working on the preparation of the registers for pomegranate, plums and cherry. This work is of paramount importance as it is the basis for the protection of the Afghan fruit varieties and the certification system already in place. Taking into account the work progress so far, there are serious concerns for the timely completion of the other three registers. In addition, the international germplasm expert has suddenly passed away and it will take time to find an adequate replacement. This will slow down the work speed further. Therefore, it should be considered to possibly mobilize two international experts on this subject, one senior and one junior.

The breeding programme on almond and apricot varieties continues and is promising. 300 selected saplings of late flowering almond varieties will be transplanted in 2016 and can possibly provide the parental material for future breeding. From the apricot breeding lines, the first fruits were assessed this year. It is evident that the breeding programme requires further years of stable and professional work. When the new late flowering almond varieties and new apricot varieties are released this will tremendously enhance the yields and thus, the income of the producers.

A good partnership with universities has been established and several students and fresh graduates are regularly exposed to this work. Interns and students are invited to work for several months up to one year. At the moment, the interns are paid by the Transition Project but trained by the SO2 team. The passing over of this technical knowledge to a new generation contributes well to the multiplication of skills and knowledge and is a valuable contribution to the future of the horticulture development.

### **Component SO3**

**3.1** Grape/raisin value chain improved for export & home markets.

**3.2** Almond value chain enhanced.

**3.3** Pilot fresh fruit value chains established & improved.

**3.4** Quality standards for fresh/dried/processed fruit are raised via quality control; capacity of quality control structures increased.

Under this component, several surveys have been conducted that provided valuable baseline information. This helped to identify detailed shortcomings in the value chains and to form until now 11 groups (531 members) of fruit producers and processors. Four groups are engaged in grape production, 3 groups in raisin processing, 1 group in sweet cherry production, 1 group in processing dried apricots and 1 group in apple production. The groups have been provided with relevant training and kits of basic harvesting tools against contributions and have thus, enhanced the quality of the produce.

An important achievement is the linkage of the producer groups with traders. This was done through the conclusion of so far, 4 MoUs between traders and producer groups, with the HPS countersigning as witness. This is fully appropriate as it ensures the rights of the producers against the trader. The bulk sale gives a group a competitive advantage and, the countersignature of the HPS provides a certain assurance for the two sides of the agreement. In 2015, one exporter purchased, for the first time, 1,8 MT grapes from a group in Farza. Another trader purchased cherry in Paghman and exported these to Dubai. The Finest supermarket purchased cherry from the producer groups. The project further facilitated the participation of a trader (head of Ahmad Tamin) in an exhibition in Moscow for promoting there the Afghan fruit export.

Under the target of developing standards and quality control, one laboratory technician from Tabasom was sent by the project to a laboratory in Triest, Italy for training on the Ochratoxin test. For adequately applying the received knowledge, the project provided also an ELISA kit to Tabasom. Processors received training in best practises for observing health and hygiene standards. Also, a group of 20 women involved in prune processing received relevant training on jam production.

A detailed assessment of the quality control structure revealed that no specific institution exists to perform quality check. Although, ARFVEPA is claiming to issue quality checks but most of the required tests are not performed. Consequently, also the provision of internationally recognized certificates for export is not available in Afghanistan. This limits currently the number of countries for potential export of fresh and dried fruit.

While activities under the planned Results 3.1, 3.3 and 3.4 are progressing, activities concerning the almond value chain are lacking considerably behind. This is connected to the results found in a stakeholder assessment 2014. AAIDO was identified as not competitive partner for almond production as it is much involved in other activities. This was confirmed during the interview of the evaluation team with the AAIDO management. AAIDO is currently rather engaged in trading fresh fruit and in operating a factory for dried fruit where also fresh fruit is sorted and graded. It claims to dominate the market already. Until 2014, AAIDO provided loans from the Agricultural Development Fund at a 6% interest rate to farmers and could provide loans up to 100.000 US\$ to single exporters. Despite such request from the HPS team, AAIDO did not share the data from its almond survey. Moreover, its claimed extension activities to almond farmers need verification. Due to this situation, the SO3 team regards it problematic and risky for sustainability to support AAIDO for the development of almond production. Instead, other potential partners for cooperation have been identified. Still, this change does not have to imply that AAIDO will be left out as cooperation partner but rather a shift of focus to the other more promising partners. This has already been approved with the following decision taken in the last project Steering Committee meeting in March 2015: *“EU Delegation representative will encourage AAIDO to revise its approach and become more field and production oriented and HPS will make an effort to partner with AAIDO without however ignoring other important Almond cooperative/s (like Samangan) identified in the field.”* It remains now to reflect this shift of focus in the revised project plan (logframe) and to identify clearly formulated appropriate activities and, instantly start the

implementation. Under this planned Result 3.2, concentrated efforts from the project side are required to make up for the delay in implementation so far.

#### **Component SO4**

**4.1** Citrus industry production levels & standards are increased.

**4.2** Citrus value chain developed and diversified to meet international standards.

**4.3** Public & private sector partnership for citrus industry strengthened

In the direction of reviving the citrus industry in the eastern region of Afghanistan, so far, several but important preparatory actions were implemented or supported by the HPS. Hence, at this point, not many achievements can be reported but progress is apparent and expected to bear visible results in the next year. The baseline survey on citrus growing in the Nangahar valley (1036 citrus producers were surveyed, including four NVDA farms) that was conducted in 2014, provided very useful information and identified bottlenecks in the citrus industry, like 50% losses occur in nurseries, technologies are not properly applied in the orchards. As a result, the project team SO4 started addressing these during the information campaign 2015, during training of field managers, of nursery owners and citrus growers and reached some 1500 target-people.

One of the measurable indicators under Result 4.1 foresees that 1500 ha of new orchards are planted by 2017, presumably by commercial size producers (not by the HPS). However, the SO4 team found out that the limiting factor for establishing or re-planting such area with citrus orchards is the current rate of producing certified saplings of marketable varieties. Therefore, 500 ha of newly established orchards with commercially valuable (not sour orange) citrus varieties are anticipated as more realistic figure. For mitigating the low multiplication rate of citrus saplings, the SO4 team has established cooperation with the NVDA in Jalalabad and agreed that the NVDA applies for membership to ANNGO and the project assists to establish a nursery for true-to-type and virus free multiplication material of commercially valuable varieties. This could boost the production of certified saplings considerably and thus well enhance the expansion of area under citrus orchards. The preparatory construction work from the NVDA side went overall slow, like digging the well for irrigation and installing the solar system. Still, the preparations of the nursery for transplanting of saplings continue but again, slow. From the project side, the activities were implemented in time but the NVDA staff (Except the Director General) is regarded as not responsive and slow. In addition, the current General Director with whom a good understanding and cooperation have been established, will be replaced soon. This poses a risk for the ongoing activities as it is uncertain to what extend the next DG will be interested in this cooperation with the SO4 team and the PHD Centre in Jalalabad. Even when he shows interest and wishes to continue the nursery establishment, due to the managerial change, all activities can come to a standstill for a shorter or longer transition time thus affecting the timely achievement of results. Therefore, the project team should identify and support soonest additional opportunities that could boost the numbers of multiplied citrus saplings in the region. At the same time, the cooperation with the NVDA needs to continue, as a well-managed NVDA citrus nursery will have a strong demonstration effect among commercial citrus growers but also among the NVDA staff.

Another indicator under the SO4 Results, the OVI 1.1 foresees that 25 new citrus varieties and rootstocks are introduced while OVI 2.1 targets to select and multiply 10 marketable varieties. The selection and multiplication of commercial and marketable citrus varieties is essential for improving the quality standards, meeting the market demands and increasing the economic opportunities in the eastern region. In spring 2014, the SO4 team selected 10 potential breeding lines for further screening and eventual multiplication. These were mainly sweet orange varieties but also two mandarin and two lemon varieties. This was an important achievement and the varieties started being propagated in MSNs. However, a limited number of seasons for assessment and the single locality of growing these in Jalalabad pose a risk for unreliable characteristics. Therefore, the procedure foresees to conduct now large demo trials in PHDCs and some farmers' fields and at the same time, to include it in the NC for proper characterisation. According to the interviewed field managers, only three varieties proofed their potential for further screening in 2015. Consequently, few more seasons will be required until new potential varieties can be released.

A positive achievement is the ongoing formation of Citrus Grower Groups. The institutional capacity of the citrus industry is so far based on the Citrus Promotion Group (CPG) that is a loose forum of stakeholders involved and interested in citrus production, including the PBT laboratory, the NVDA, MAIL-Directorate of Horticulture and MAIL-Directorate of Plant Protection and, NGOs, like ANHDO. The Citrus Promotion Group monitors viruses and diseases, introduces new rootstocks, new species and varieties and promotes a sustainable and profitable Citrus industry in Afghanistan. Therefore, the formation of Citrus Grower Groups aiming to result in a Citrus Growers Association is crucial for the future of the citrus industry development. So far, 15 citrus producers and producer/traders have gathered in one group and the SO4 team supports its institutional formation. In this connection, the

SO4 team should pay more attention to activities that can support better orchard management and modern management techniques in order to assist the citrus growers in achieving higher yields. So far, the development focus is at the nursery industry but the commercial citrus producers need to be prepared for applying improved and modern orchard management techniques.

### **4.3.2 The likelihood of achieving the Project Purpose**

Looking at the still prevailing project logframe, no single Project Purpose for the whole project is formulated. Hence, measurable indicators for the purpose level are also not available. This makes any sound judgement concerning the likely achievement of the Project Purpose rather difficult.

Nevertheless, the readiness of the project management to revise the prevailing project plans/ logframe and, review the currently planned actions and accommodate appropriate new actions is very positive. This is an appreciable step at this point in time and provides the opportunity for the project management to adequately react to the changing project surrounding conditions in order to ensure the achievement of the project Results, of the four Specific Objectives and thus, the success of the entire operation.

Given the progress in achievement of the planned Results to date, it is highly likely that the four Specific Objectives will be achieved to a major extent. For the time being, in particular the technical aspects planned under the various Results have a high probability of achievement. However, more attention needs to be given to the institutional capacity development (managerial, financial, structural) of the main project partners and, to enhancing Public-Private-Partnership with the MAIL. This concerns foremost ANNGO but also the newly established fruit producer/ processor groups under SO3, the Citrus Promotion Group and the Citrus Producer Group under formation.

According to the project planning documents, especially the Application, it is understood that the project is aiming at providing financial and technical assistance (TA) to selected private target institutions for strengthening their institutional/ managerial and technical capacities and enhancing their leading roles in the horticulture sector. An additional project aim is to strengthen the capacity of ANHDO for administrative and managerial project implementation and to enhance ANHDO's role as reliable and respected interlocutor between the public and the private entities/ organisations in the horticulture sector. The latter point requires adequate reflection in the project plan. For instance, where ANHDO should fulfil its role as interlocutor, like between ANNGO and MAIL, or between the Fruit producers and the traders, ANHDO could be explicitly named in an activity as the responsible one for the implementation (e.g. *ANHDO assists ANNGO in negotiating a MoU with the NHLP project that includes an efficient purchasing policy for certified saplings*).

## 4.4 IMPACT PROSPECTS

### 4.4.1 Likely direct effects, deriving from the project results at various levels

This project is building on achievements from a range of activities under PHDP and PHDP II and their related projects and sub-projects. The technical core staffs were involved in the previous projects and are therefore, experienced and skilled in the relevant technical subjects. Thus, to credit all positive effects from this intervention solely to the HPS project and ANHDO would be misleading.

According to its **Overall Objective**, the achievements of this project are “to contribute to the uplifting of horticulture (yields, quality standards, market value) and enhancement of capabilities of the private sector ...”. In the prevailing logframe the following three OVIs are stated against the Overall Objective:

- Increased income from horticulture for targeted nursery growers, farmers, traders
- Improved quality standards and market value of horticultural products within the target groups and in target areas
- Increased service delivery capacity of related public and private structures

Under the SO1 component, the project actions support ANNGO in continuing the production of improved saplings through the NGAs and nursery growers in accordance with the certification system. The revision of the ANNGO by-laws towards an open membership is an essential step for commercial nurseries to become ANNGO members and to follow the outlined technical regulations for the production of healthy plant material. On one side, this can substantially increase the number of produced certified saplings and, on the other side further improve the quality of the plant material due to the higher financial and managerial capacities of commercial nurseries. However, without such bigger commercial nurseries it will be very difficult if not impossible for ANNGO to reach the production output of 3,5 million saplings as planned for the 2015/2016 season. Currently, two more NGAs are in the process of establishing but supported by the HVP project. This however, will also strengthen ANNGO's production capacities and contribute to an increasing number of certified saplings.

The members of ANNGO benefit from the regulatory system as they can offer guaranteed quality to their customers in an environment where quality can rarely be taken for granted. In principle, the certified fruit tree saplings can fetch higher prices in comparison to uncertified ones and this should increase the income of ANNGO's nursery growers. In practise, however the NHLP is currently the biggest customer and pursues a strategy that jeopardises the ANNGO strategy and the sustainability of the nurseries. As reported from the field on several occasions, the NHLP pays only 10 Afs more for certified fruit tree saplings while for citrus saplings the margin is a bit higher. This does not cover the additional expenses and labour input that the nursery growers have to invest for producing certified saplings. Even more risky for the nurseries is the late payment, after some 8 months by the NHLP. This leaves the nursery growers without the required financial resources for purchasing the required inputs, mainly fertilizer and pesticides for the next generation of saplings. This problem needs to be solved and ANNGO will require in the negotiations with the NHLP possible high-level support from other donor organisation, like AFD and the EU. Otherwise, the envisaged scenario of income increase and ANNGO raising the membership fees and becoming self-financing is under threat.

The Adaptive Research Programme under the SO2 component continues being successful with positive effects. The screening and assessment of varieties result not only in a proper description, like in the Registers but also in recommendations of marketable commercial varieties to producers as published through the annual ANNGO catalogue. This work continues and is partly extended into a widening range of technical information about rootstocks, appropriate cultural treatments, pruning and plant management and even into the post harvest management (where it merges into the SO3 component of the project on value chain development). In addition, the breeding programme is working on late-flowering almond varieties and higher quality apricot varieties. Frosts in northern Afghanistan caused periodically severe losses in almonds, which can be avoided when late-flowering varieties are introduced. The SO2 team plans to release the first late-flowering almond varieties in 2017. Breeding of apricots is ongoing for introducing improved productivity into high value Afghan Amiri types from the more productive European and American types. The Afghan Amiri type, while in high demand, is subject to a long period before coming into bearing, and years when fruit set is low. The improvement in this type will lead directly to improved yields by farmers, but also a more consistent availability of a product with a high regional demand both as a fresh and as dried product.

The adaptive research activities in improvement of fruit and nut varieties grown lead directly into the value chain actions foreseen under component SO3. The ongoing work in the pomology laboratories develops much required expertise in developing standard and quality control procedures as part of the value chain development. Positive effects that can be reported under SO3 are the 11 groups of fruit producers that were formed and started improving their production through the advice and the input assistance from the project. Even more visible is the result of linking these groups with traders and exporters. In 2015, one exporter purchased 1,8 MT grapes from a group in Farza, another trader purchased cherry in Paghman and exported these to Dubai. The Finest supermarket purchased cherry from the producer groups.

The impact prospects for the expected results under the component SO4 are positive and promising. The actions ongoing for the citrus industry development are built on the potential of the existing National Collection and on ANNGO's Mother stock Nurseries, and the network of the existing Citrus Promotion Group. In addition, a Citrus Producer Group has been formed and is being organised. The joining of the NVDA as ANNGO member and the operation of the NVDA citrus nursery will be a powerful demonstration and multiplying factor. Moreover, when the NVDA starts establishing new orchards and re-planting existing area with the certified saplings of superior varieties, a high increase in yields and quality is expected. Forecasts predict a production capacity of 20,000 tons/year is at least 1.500 ha new citrus orchards with superior varieties are established. At that stage, the Afghan citrus production will start to make a significant impact in the Afghan market in competition with citrus import and exports of citrus to neighbouring countries will be a realistic goal. In addition, the application of best management practices in the NVDA orchards will have a training effect on other producers and thus, further stimulate the quality production.

## 4.5 POTENTIAL SUSTAINABILITY

### 4.5.1 Likely economic viability of benefits deriving from project results

The potential sustainability of the project results or of deriving benefits from project actions is generally positive, especially as some actions in this direction are already undertaken or part of the project plan. Moreover, some considerations for sustainability were already foreseen in the Project Contract.

Concerning the economic viability of ANNGO and the NGAs with the nursery growers, the present prospects are moderately positive, however under the assumption that ANNGO makes serious efforts towards its financial independence and, that until that time it receives donor funds. Presently, both assumptions are holding true as ANNGO is preparing with project support a business plan and, the EU is ready to finance ANNGO activities with another grant for three years. In its current business plan, ANNGO plans to reach cost/ benefit break-even in 2018 based on raised membership fees and payment for its quality services to its members. One of the assumptions that will influence the viability of the organisation is a realistic calculation for the budget requirements of ANNGO in a free market *without donor support*. Over the past years and currently, the spending for the budget line of 'human resources' was rather high (some €160.000 per year) and, likely influenced by the available donor funds. The spending on equipment & supplies' makes less than 25% of the human resources budget.

However, a factor currently jeopardizing the intentions for sustainability of the certification system as implemented by ANNGO is the policy of the WB-funded NHLP project for purchasing fruit tree saplings. Since 2014, this project is the biggest single customer of the NGAs; reportedly purchasing up to 60% of production from all ANNGO nursery growers. Despite efforts from ANNGO, it was not possible to agree on a timely ordering system with the NHLP to meet the demand. Instead, their requests for saplings of various species and varieties comes at the planting season. Hence, the NGAs and nursery growers can neither plan nor prepare in time the right material for these demands and, the NHLP purchases more uncertified than certified saplings. Also, in the absence of knowledge about the advantages of certified saplings, the NHLP field staff prefers even to purchase uncertified saplings as these appear more vigorous in growth. Therefore, also the prices negotiated with the NHLP field staff tends to be just 10-20 Afs higher for certified saplings, which does not cover the higher inputs required. However, a detrimental effect on the nurseries and the certification system has the delayed payment, executed by the NHLP, 8-9 months after the purchase. This leaves the nursery growers without the required financial resources for purchasing the required inputs, mainly fertilizer and pesticides for the next generation of saplings. In addition, the NHLP practise of concluding contracts directly with individual nursery growers for the lowest negotiable price leaves ANNGO without the possibility of receiving a percentage of the sale costs.

The adaptive research programme, based on MAIL facilities is not able to raise revenues. Therefore, proposed scenarios for continuing this important programme are to be taken over by the MAIL on budget financed programmes as and when appropriate, or continue with further donor funding.

Under component SO3, it is planned to develop four market channels to increase the dried and fresh fruit produce for sale within Afghanistan, which will increase the financial sustainability of these industries. Ideas for raising money from provision of laboratory service need to be investigated (issuing of quality compliance certificates, laboratory certification and validation fees etc).

Concerning the economic viability of ANHDO, under the HVP/ SO5 provisions are made for assisting the organisation to develop a realistic business plan.

### 4.5.2 Ownership over project results by beneficiaries

ANNGO has assumed responsibility and thus ownership for enforcing the regulatory system that leads to the multiplication and marketing of certified fruit saplings. Nationally, it represents all nurseries that accept and implement the regulatory system. The recent opening of ANNGO's membership to new nursery growers, even to commercial ones, is an important step for extending and sustaining the regulatory system. To date, ANNGO appears reasonably stable as organisation and shows good ownership over the regulatory system by implementing all the elements for ensuring the system. It has gained a prominent role in representing the private nursery industry in the national context and with donor organisations. As reported, ANNGO is currently in the process of preparing a MoU with the

NHLP and is supported by the PHDP TA in this undertaking. However, it remains to be seen if the MoU can incorporate an appropriate purchasing policy and, if the NHLP will adhere to it.

The tree-layer structure of ANNGO with an apex organisation combining associations that consist of nursery grower groups is complex and not easy to handle. So far, no similar organisation for potential cooperation could be found in the region. Still, ANNGO as a whole and the management in particular, lack the practical experience of operating such structure and of avoiding known pitfalls. For the institutional sustainability, it is important to link ANNGO with similar organisations, possibly through the “International Cooperative Alliance” that is the forum for cooperative structures worldwide.

Over the past years, ANHDO has developed a good reputation and became a recognized player in the horticulture sector. It can rely on a pool of highly motivated and technically well qualified and experienced staff, most of which are currently working for the implementation of the two projects, HPS and HVP. These experts are a big asset for a successful project implementation and for achieving valuable results. However, none of these experts working in the projects is a member of ANHDO. The 35 ANHDO members are fruit producers/ traders and exporters and none of these is working in either the HPS or HVP. Consequently, all technically experienced experts are hired but not part-and-parcel of the organisation. This could be one reason, why the Board of Directors tends to assume executive responsibilities down to day-to-day project management and, could be a reason for the latest structural changes that took place. A new elected General Manager claims the position of the Executive Manger while the previous Executive Manager had to assume the role of Financial Manager (see 4.2.1). Such internal struggle for power and authority over funds destabilises the organisation at the moment. These changes took place despite the international TA provided in workshops to ANHDO under the SO5 of the HVP. These workshops were assisting ANHDO to discuss and determine its medium and long-term goals and visions. However, it is doubtful if the members of the ANHDO board are aware of the prevailing tow-fold role of its organisation, one as project implementing body and, another one as interlocutor between the public and the private entities in the horticulture sector. An indication for this is a missing structural chart of ANHDO as organisation without the teams of the currently implemented projects. This is a challenge that needs to be taken serious for the sake of ANHDO's institutional sustainability. For the time being, two possible scenarios appear: Either, ANHDO proposes membership to the technical experts and also, 2-3 positions in the Board of Directors, or the technical experts could join hands on the basis of their common interest and form their own NGO aiming at provision of technical consultancy services to donor-funded projects, NGOs and MAIL in the horticulture sector.

The newly established groups under the SO3 of fruit producers and processors are too young for having developed some ownership over results. Still, sustainability aspects of how these groups could continue to improve their production and their profit from sales after project ending need to be considered.



## 4.6 SPECIFIC ISSUE TO BE ADDRESSED

The specific questions as formulated by the project management for this mid-term evaluation reflect the recognized need for changes. All four questions are anyhow part of the assessment under the five evaluation criteria. The question No 1 is part of the Effectiveness section 4.3 where the progress in achieving of results is assessed. The two questions No2 and No4 (the adequacy of planned activities, how to improve the design) both are treated under sub-section 4.1.2 Appropriateness of design. Question No3 is assessed under the management aspects of sub-section 4.2.1. Consequently, this section is kept short and reference is made to the related sections in the main report.

It has to be noted that the four questions are much interlinked in so far, as only correctly identified and clearly formulated Activities and Results allow a smooth and timely implementation. A transparent project plan, which is understood by all key players and fully supported by the relevant project partners, enhances an efficient project management as well as the achievement of planned results.

### **Special issues to be addressed according to the TOR for this mission:**

#### 1. Is the project making satisfactory progress in timely achievement of project results (as per logframe) and related delivery of outputs?

Progress in the achievement of planned Results can be reported under all four components. Several preparatory steps, like conducting surveys were conducted and provide a sound basis for further targeted action still to come. At the same time, under each component limiting factors and obstacles were identified that slow down the progress. These limiting factors need to be addressed by the project teams and by the management.

In addition, the rather blurred formulations of Results and Activities make it difficult to detect foreseen tangible outputs in the project plan. This design flaw certainly adds to the sluggish implementation speed and progress.

For further information, see section 4.3

#### 2. Are the planned project activities adequate to realize the objectives?

The majority of planned activities appear adequate for reaching the objectives to a good extent. However, some activities have meanwhile turned obsolete, while additional ones should be incorporated after agreeing on these with the related project partners. Also, the activities need to be clearly formulated and transparent for the project partners.

For further information, see sub-section 4.1.2

#### 3. In what ways can the project implementation be improved to better meet the project objectives? (Management of implementation, use of resources?)

The management of the HPS project is generally adequate but requires some improvements and a speedier implementation. Positive is the improved coordination with the main project partner ANNGO but still leaves room for closer cooperation of action, in particular in regard to the management of the field managers. Foremost important are the recent structural changes and power game inside the consortium partner ANHDO. This requires close monitoring and interaction with the ANHDO Board of Directors from RI side, from the PHDP TA adviser and the donors, EU and AFD for ensuring full adherence to EU and AFD procedures as laid down in the two Grant Contracts.

For further information, see sub-section 4.2.1

#### 4. How can the overall design of the project be improved to better achieve the set targets?

The HPS management is advised to conduct a workshop (1-2 days) for a solid revision of the prevailing logframe jointly with the relevant partners, like HVP, ANNGO, ANHDO GM, ARIA, PBTL under the guidance of an outside (neutral) logframe moderator. The HPS needs to address the shortcomings of its current logframe as identified under section 4.1.2. In relevant Results and Activities, like under SO1 or SO4, the role of ANHDO as interlocutor between the public and the private sector should be clearly reflected.

As outcome of the workshop both HPS and the HVP should arrive at two separate logframes where results and activities complement each other in a clear-cut way with precise formulations. (e.g. Assist HVP with TA to implement... Finance HVP's activity to ...)

For further information, see sub-section 4.1.2

## 5. CONCLUSIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The HPS management is advised to conduct a workshop (1-2 days) for a solid revision of the prevailing logframe jointly with the relevant partners, like HVP, ANNGO, ANHDO GM, ARIA, PBTL under the guidance of an outside (neutral) logframe moderator. The HPS needs to address the shortcomings of its current logframe as identified under section 4.1.2. In relevant Results and Activities, like under SO1 or SO4, the role of ANHDO as interlocutor between the public and the private sector should be clearly reflected.

As outcome of the workshop both HPS and the HVP should arrive at two separate logframes where results and activities complement each other in a clear-cut way with precise formulations. (e.g. Assist HVP with TA to implement... Finance HVP's activity to ...)

2. The HPS management needs to improve its reporting to give adequate account of outputs produced solely by HPS or with its support (TA; Finance) and of actual achievements (positive changes). This implies to better structure the reports, provide a list of content, a list of annexes, also, report shortcomings and make recommendation.
3. The gap that the international germplasm expert left, should be filled a.s.a.p., possibly even by two international experts (one senior & one junior) in order to make up for the accumulated drawback in activities and to boost the achievement of results under SO2 and SO3
4. The HPS management should pay more attention to supporting capacity and institutional strengthening of ANNGO concerning management, clarifying roles and responsibilities of all positions, training in profit- loss calculations for ANNGO, for the NGAs and for single nursery owners. In this line, the HPS should consider the possibility to mobilize a financial expert with experience in financial systems of NGOs who can assess the realistic financial potentials of ANNGO and ANHDO and advice both organisations in improving their cost-benefit analyses in realistic terms.
5. The next SC meeting in November needs to re-consider the latest proposed composition of permanent SC membership and find adequate positions for both the ANNGO GM and one ANNGO board member in order to pave the way for project success of component SO1.
6. The HPS management may consider supporting ANNGO with TA, possibly short-term expert in training the nursery growers in best practise management of nurseries, including financial calculations and sanitary aspects
7. The HPS management may consider assisting ANNGO to become a member of the "International Co-operative Alliance", preferably the HPS to assist financially and logistically 2-3 ANNGO representatives to participate in the upcoming bi-annual Conference of the Alliance in Antalya, Turkey in November 2015 (see [Alliance's Global Conference in Antalya, Turkey](#))
8. The financial sustainability of ANNGO operating the certification system could be well enhanced through a donor agreement that sets the purchasing policy for the certified saplings. The EU as the biggest donor could try to come to an agreement on a purchasing policy, in particular with the WB-funded NHLP.
9. HPS/EUD task manager should consider to fully handing over to ANNGO the management, including the salary payment of a selected number of field officers starting from 2016, like 8-10, instead of a gradual contribution of NGAs/ ANNGO to expenses that occur to the field officers during their daily work of supervising and advising the nursery growers. This gives ANNGO the chance to gain experience gradually without a high risk of detrimental effects in case of failure but also the chance to prove its capacity and ability to manage the field officer system adequately and responsible. This would follow a lesson learnt from the PHDPII project: "Handing over of project initiated structures well before the project end increases substantially the prospects for sustainability of results."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Final Evaluation of „Support to Afghan MAIL to contribute to strengthen the Planting Material and Horticulture Industry“, May 2015

10. The position of the TA adviser, currently filled by the PHDP TA team should be continued after December 2015 for continuation of advice to ANHDO and ANNGO, specifically for Board members and for enhancing public-private partnership agreements with the MAIL e.g. assisting ANNGO in preparation of MoU with the NHLP, with the MAIL or other relevant stakeholders
11. The HPS management should continue to pay attention to the development of exit strategies (Post-project scenarios) with the relevant partners (ANNGO, ARIA, PBTL, HVP) for the fruit producer groups (MoU/Contracts with ANHDO?) and, for continuation of the adaptive research and breeding programme;
12. Specific attention needs to be paid to awareness raising about the certification system and quality horticulture. The HPS could identify appropriate media tools, events, like conferences and implement these jointly with the partners, like ANNGO, the Extension Department of the MAIL. Possible actions could be radio interviews by field managers, TV translation of available video clips from Madeira and the PHDP but also, organising a big closing conference of the HPS in 2017.
13. ANHDO management is advised to slim down its organisational structure, in particular the Board of Directors and the administrative staff and to outline a structural chart of the organisation without the currently implemented project actions/ teams.
14. ANHDO management is advised to observe separation of responsibilities between the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors and to ensure compliance with contractual procedures of the donor organisations.
15. The HPS management is advised to more actively involve the board members of ANNGO and respectively of ANHDO in HPS project events, meetings and activities. Even when some do not understand English, they can participate in meetings and get translation. Only by more involvement in measures can the board members get a clearer understanding about the current and future roles of their own NGO in the horticulture sector.

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