Herat University Dean of Agriculture Visits Purdue

Herat Dean of Agriculture Yousef Jami, Purdue Dean of Agriculture Jay Akridge, and Purdue Professor Kevin McNamara met recently to discuss Purdue’s collaboration with Herat University under the USAID funded USWDP project. Purdue is working with Herat’s Faculty of Agriculture to establish a Food Technology Department that will offer a BS degree in Food Technology. The three discussed university-industry linkages, including how Purdue academic programs establish industry linkage and advisory boards to support curriculum development, student placement, and research funding. The industry-based approach leads to demand driven, relevant curriculum developed that delivers educational programs that match industry needs. The relationships also provide a base for industry-funded research as well as student job placement. Herat’s Food Technology Department, the first such institution in Afghanistan, will supply qualified young Afghans for the Afghan food sector. There are needs for people trained in food technology in both government and industry. Today Afghanistan does not have an educational program that provides student with skills needed in food safety and regulation or in food processing and food analysis. University graduates with these skills are critical for the Afghan economy as it moves to add value to food products for both domestic and export markets.

Dean Jami and Dr. McNamara also met with the Purdue Associate Dean and Director of Cooperative Extension, Jason Henderson. The group discussed the US land-grant system that integrates teaching, research and extension under one university/institution in contrast to the Afghan system that has agriculture education under the Ministry of Higher Education and the agriculture research and extension agencies under the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL). The three discussed possible strategies for linking Afghan agriculture universities to MAIL research and extension programs to strengthen the missions of both ministries by integrating teaching, research, and extension efforts to better meet the needs of Afghanistan’s agricultural economy. In particular, the educational programs in food technology are needed to promote food safety and food security at the household and community levels and to inform processors about safe, efficient, sustainable food processing practices.