



## FIRST PERSON

# A Gardener Expands His Business

**Kyrgyz farmer changed his attitude to doing business and became a multi-profile businessman**



Akbarhodzaev in his greenhouse. Photo: IFDC

*“USAID helped me to broaden my horizons about business management and opportunities.”*

- Shahabidin Akbarhodzhaev, a multi-profile businessman in Osh Province.

With support from the USAID Kyrgyzstan Agricultural Enterprise Development Project, farmer Shahabidin Akbarhodzhaev turned his failing greenhouse business into a successful multifaceted enterprise.

Agronomist by education, Akbarhodzhaev first began growing flowers, cucumbers, and tomatoes for sale in his 0.3-hectare greenhouse in Osh Province in the late 1990s. With the constant increase in the heating costs and the growing amounts of illegally imported produce from the neighboring country, profits began to dwindle. Eventually, Akbarhodzhaev's business became unprofitable altogether.

To revitalize his business, in 2003 Akbarhodzhaev joined the Association of Agribusinessmen of Kyrgyzstan "Jer Azygy" formed by the USAID project. He took all the available training courses on greenhouse operations and maintenance, as well as the essentials of business management. One of the first techniques Akbarhodzhaev implemented in his greenhouse was a gravitational system of drip irrigation, purchased with the project's support. He also participated in the USAID-supported Agroexpo Silk Road agricultural exhibitions, where Akbarhodzhaev exhibited flowers and flower saplings from his greenhouse and established business contacts with purchasers and suppliers.

The trainings Akbarhodzhaev took inspired the man to diversify his business. In 2004, he opened a retail farm store in Osh and became agro-inputs dealer. In a further effort to broaden his business, Akbarhodzhaev joined a trade mission to China, which was organized by the USAID project in 2008. During this trip, Akbarhodzhaev learned about ice-cream production and purchased necessary equipment. Within a year's time his business was processing up to 300 liters of milk into ice-cream a day. For now, Akbarhodzhaev buys milk from other farmers, but he is already planning to organize his own dairy farm. To make his businesses more cost effective and waste-free, Akbarhodzhaev plans to use cow manure as organic fertilizer for his flowers. He is also considering to construct biogas system to heat his greenhouse and thus save money on heating.

Since Akbarhdzaev first joined USAID project, his working capital as doubled from \$7,000 to \$14,000, while his enterprise created employment for people. "USAID helped me to broaden my horizons about business management and opportunities," said Akbarhodzhaev. "I also established necessary business contacts. This keeps my business profitable and ensures a better life for my children and grandchildren," said this father of 4 and grandfather of 7.