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TAJIKISTAN

SUCCESS STORY

Food Diversity Yields Dividends

Tajikistan Stability Enhancement Program (TSEP) trains community members on canning and greenhouse construction to improve



Photo: Mercy Corps

Sayonat stands with her oldest daughter above their greenhouse frame, with fruit trees and wheat in the background.

“The trainings were very useful, my family’s quality of life has improved, and I am planning to build a second greenhouse next year.”

Standing above her greenhouse, Sayonat Hakimnova exudes pride as she shows off her onions, cilantro and dill. In her family’s first greenhouse, she was able to plant these greens two months earlier than usual this year. Sayonat is a 36-year old mother of four and a canning and greenhouse trainee of the Tajikistan Stability Enhancement Program (TSEP) funded by USAID in southern Khatlon since 2009.

Sayonat is the head of her household; her husband is a labor migrant in Russia for eight months out of each year, but remittances come only when requested. Sayonat’s family of five lives on approximately \$100 per month.

Her family grows their primary food sources of wheat, potatoes, beans, tomatoes, beats and turnips. With a small orchard of fruit trees, the summer is bountiful in comparison to winter when food diversity is limited to non-perishable goods.

Sayonat explains “I don’t have the income to purchase preserved food at the market. What we preserve in the summer and fall is what we eat during the winter. This year we had beats, turnips, apricots and tomatoes.” In previous years, Sayonat only canned tomatoes.

After experiencing the benefits of diversified canning this winter, Sayonat intends to increase the variety of canned goods she preserves for next winter by trading produce with her neighbors. She shares, “I want to increase the number and types of canned goods I have for my family next winter. I want to can apricots, cherries, onions and jam too.”

At the end of winter, Sayonat’s family worked together to construct a greenhouse with supplies provided by TSEP. The design Sayonat learned during the trainings has worked well in the region’s windy conditions, and community members have expressed their intention to replicate the design. “The trainings were very useful, my family’s quality of life has improved, and I am planning to build a second greenhouse next year,” explained Sayonat.

Her family’s food security situation has also been impacted by TSEP’s transformer installation project. Before the new transformer started working, the electricity at Sayonat’s house was so weak she could not boil water or turn on the TV. She affirms that, “The electricity supply has improved 100 percent!”

The impact of TSEP on Sayonat’s life is visible daily. With her new skills, Sayonat is a model in her community, demonstrating that a little knowledge can go a long way.