

### **Opium production in Afghanistan shows increase, prices set to rise**

11 October 2011. Kabul/Vienna – Opium poppy-crop cultivation in Afghanistan reached 131,000 hectares in 2011, 7 per cent higher than in 2010, due to insecurity and high prices, said the *2011 Afghan Opium Survey* released today by the Ministry of Counter Narcotics (MCN) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

“The Afghan Opium Survey 2011 sends a strong message that we cannot afford to be lethargic in the face of this problem. A strong commitment from both national and international partners is needed,” said the Executive Director of UNODC, Yury Fedotov.

Farmers responding to the Survey cited economic hardship and lucrative prices as the main reasons for opium cultivation. In 2011, 78 per cent of cultivation was concentrated in Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan, Day Kundi and Zabul provinces in the south, and 17 per cent in Farrah, Badghis, Nimroz provinces in the west, which include the most insecure provinces in the country. This confirms the link between insecurity and opium cultivation observed since 2007.

#### **Push-and-pull factors**

In 2010, opium yields fell sharply due to a poppy blight, which was a major factor behind the price rise. In 2011, however, yields were back to around 45 kg per hectare, potentially raising opium production to 5,800 tons – up 61 per cent from 3600 tons produced in 2010. Buoyed by higher speculative prices arising from volatile security conditions, the farm-gate income of opium farmers rose markedly. With dry opium costing 43 per cent more today than in 2010, the total farm gate value of opium production is set to increase by 133 per cent: from \$605 million to \$1,407 million in 2011.

“We cannot afford to ignore the record profits for non-farmers, such as traders and insurgents, which in turn fuel corruption, criminality and instability. This is a distressing situation.”, said the UNODC Country Office Representative Mr. Jean-Luc Lemahieu. “On the positive side, there was an increase in crop eradication, significant seizures over recent months and the leadership demonstrated by the Ministry for Counter-Narcotics.”

#### **Shared responsibility**

While still the largest opium poppy grower accounting for about half of the country’s cultivation, Helmand province saw a fall in farming thanks to a combination of strong political will exerted by the Governor and targeted international aid. This year cultivation decreased by 3 per cent. In contrast, cultivation in neighboring Kandahar went up 5 per cent.

“Within the Helmand Food Zone, an even sharper reduction occurred because of a promising comprehensive counter-narcotics approach,” stressed Mr. Lemahieu. “National and international development agencies cannot stay on the sidelines any longer. The gains achieved by money they invest with the best of intentions are being undermined by the negative consequences that criminality and corruption are having on Afghan society. We need genuine commitment to implement integrated strategies that address every sector of society.”

Integrated strategies imply that counter-narcotics forces are strengthened and fully integrated into the police capacity building program; that poverty alleviation programmes are directed towards farmers in danger of losing their primary source of income; and that investments in the health sector include the prevention and treatment of drug abuse for lasting results.

Mr Lemahieu insisted on the principle of shared international responsibility, “Besides a genuine national effort involving the widest range of stakeholders, more robust regional and global cooperation is essential. Our responses

should not be limited to Afghanistan alone, or even to the region”, he stated. “This is a wake-up call. The international community should view the Transition process with the aim of creating a secure and prosperous Afghanistan – counter-narcotics strategies are central to achieving that.”

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