

**DUTCH COMMITTEE FOR AFGHANISTAN –
LIVESTOCK PROGRAMS**

**STRATEGIC PLAN
2025-2029**

Enable Afghan farmers and pastoralists to thrive

Introduction:

The Dutch Committee for Afghanistan (DCA) foundation was established promoting animal health and the objective 'to provide aid to the Afghan people in particular by improving the state of health of the local livestock herd'. In later years, this was extended to improving animal production, welfare, and the development of value-chains for livestock products.

This Dutch Committee for Afghanistan Livestock Programs (DCA-LP) Strategic Plan (SP) is describing a period of 5 years and is based on the background of the organisation as well as on our vision of the future. Across Afghanistan, DCA-LP is successfully executing animal health and production programmes, based on the presence of an extended network of Veterinary Field Units (VFUs) and the work of Veterinary Paraprofessionals (VPPs) trained by DCA-LP. These animal health and production programs are economically sustainable as farmers do pay for the VPPs services.

In recent years, there is demand from donors and beneficiaries to broaden activities towards other disciplines, particularly agricultural (arable, horticulture) production. In addition, given the current situation in Afghanistan, donor agencies are broadening their focus to include sustainable and climate-friendly food production (animal origin and crops), food safety and building resilience of the Afghan rural population.

Given DCA-LP's professional standing and reputation, DCA-LP wants to broaden its scope of work into agriculture with prudence. DCA-LP considers it appropriate to further develop experience in the field of crop production, pasture management, horticulture and to conduct relevant pilot initiatives. These initiatives will allow time to understand appropriate agricultural approaches and to develop strategies in line with DCA-LP's vision and mission.

In the forthcoming 5 years, DCA-LP is going to orientate itself in the agricultural field by carrying out pilots and projects, as is reflected in the strategic goals. The approach is aimed at consultation and cooperation with NGOs that already have a track record in sustainable agriculture. During this process, amongst other criteria, it will be evaluated if and how the integration of veterinary, livestock and agricultural services is affecting the core business of VPPs.

Purpose of the DCA-LP strategy plan:

The purpose of this SP is to provide direction for the activities and development of DCA-LP to realize its vision and mission. The SP describes the high-level objectives (strategic goals), which are annually detailed in the Annual Workplan and Budget (AWPB). The SP is written and determined by the DCA-LP board in consultation with the Decision-Making Team (DMT) and is advised on by the Advisory Council (AC). The AWPBs are written by the DMT, advised on by the AC and determined by the board.

Structure:

DCA-LP is a project-based organisation that depends on donors to implement its activities and pursue its overall program. Although projects have their own specific project objectives and deliverables, the DCA-LP strategic goals¹ described in this SP aim beyond and above the project goals. It is anticipated

¹ In this Strategic Plan, the term 'strategic goals' is used throughout. The reason for using 'strategic goals' is to make it clearer that these goals refer to the DCA-LP as organization and over-arch the goals that are agreed for separate projects.

that project objectives (including objectives of internal projects financed from the Reserve Fund) contribute direct or indirect to DCA-LP's strategic goals. At the time of developing the AWPB, the contribution of project objectives and deliverables to the strategic goals defined in this SP 2025-2029 is elaborated.

By intention, this SP 2025-2029 is kept relatively short with an introduction of DCA-LP's overall program, the current situation in Afghanistan the organisational situation of DCA-LP (organogram, working principles). In the second part, the vision, mission, core values will be described followed by the strategic goals.

Preparation:

The strategic plan was written by the board, based on discussions with and input from the DMT. It contains the mission and vision of DCA-LP as well as strategic goals related to these. Mission, vision and strategic goals were discussed during the visit of board representatives to Kabul in January and May 2024 and further elaborated during on-line sessions by the Executive Director (ED) and members of the board. Finally, it was presented and discussed with DMT, board and AC during the visit of the Kabul team to the Netherlands in September 2024.

Background and context

Livelihoods

Afghanistan's rural population primarily comprises of sedentary farmers and pastoralists. Agriculture and livestock are central to their livelihoods, with over 70% of the population relying on these activities for subsistence and income. Sedentary farmers often combine livestock with cereal crops like wheat, while pastoralists, particularly in arid regions, depend on livestock such as sheep, goats, and cattle for meat, milk, wool, and trade. The pastoral economy is intricately linked with seasonal migrations (transhumance), facing increasing pressures from political instability and environmental degradation.

Livestock production and health

Afghanistan's livestock population is substantial, with an estimated 3.7 million head of cattle and 16 million sheep and goats (FAO, 2024 <https://www.fao.org/afghanistan/news/detail-events/en/c/1731357>) supporting food security and income. However, production levels are low due to poor feed availability, outdated practices, and suboptimal veterinary services. The lack of a government veterinary infrastructure, limited access to quality veterinary medicinal products including vaccines, and professional veterinary networks make the situation worse, leaving herds vulnerable to disease epidemics and environmental shocks.

Impact of the current political situation

The Taliban's return to power in 2021 seems to have improved the local safety situation. It has, however, exacerbated Afghanistan's economic and humanitarian crises, including the position of women. International sanctions, withdrawal of foreign aid, and economic isolation have disrupted supply chains and reduced access to agricultural inputs. The rural population is disproportionately affected by these challenges, intensifying food insecurity and poverty.

Climate change impacts

Climate change poses a severe threat to Afghanistan's fragile agricultural and pastoral systems. The country is highly vulnerable to:

- Droughts, that occur more frequent and are prolonged, minimizing crop size and grazing lands, forcing pastoralists to overgraze remaining areas;
- Floods and erratic water, with unpredictable precipitation patterns disrupting planting and harvesting cycles;
- Rising temperatures with accelerating snowmelt in the Hindu Kush mountains that reduces crucial water availability for irrigation in summer.

International support, despite political complexities, remains critical to prevent further deterioration of rural livelihoods, and avert a deeper humanitarian crisis.

Current Afghan situation and consequences for DCA-LP

The efforts to strengthen public-private partnerships were hindered due to the lack of international recognition of the Taliban government. DCA-LP, however, maintains communication and coordination links with the De-facto Authorities (DfA) and local authorities to ensure needs-based practices with the official commencement of new projects and the continuation of existing projects.

Community driven development

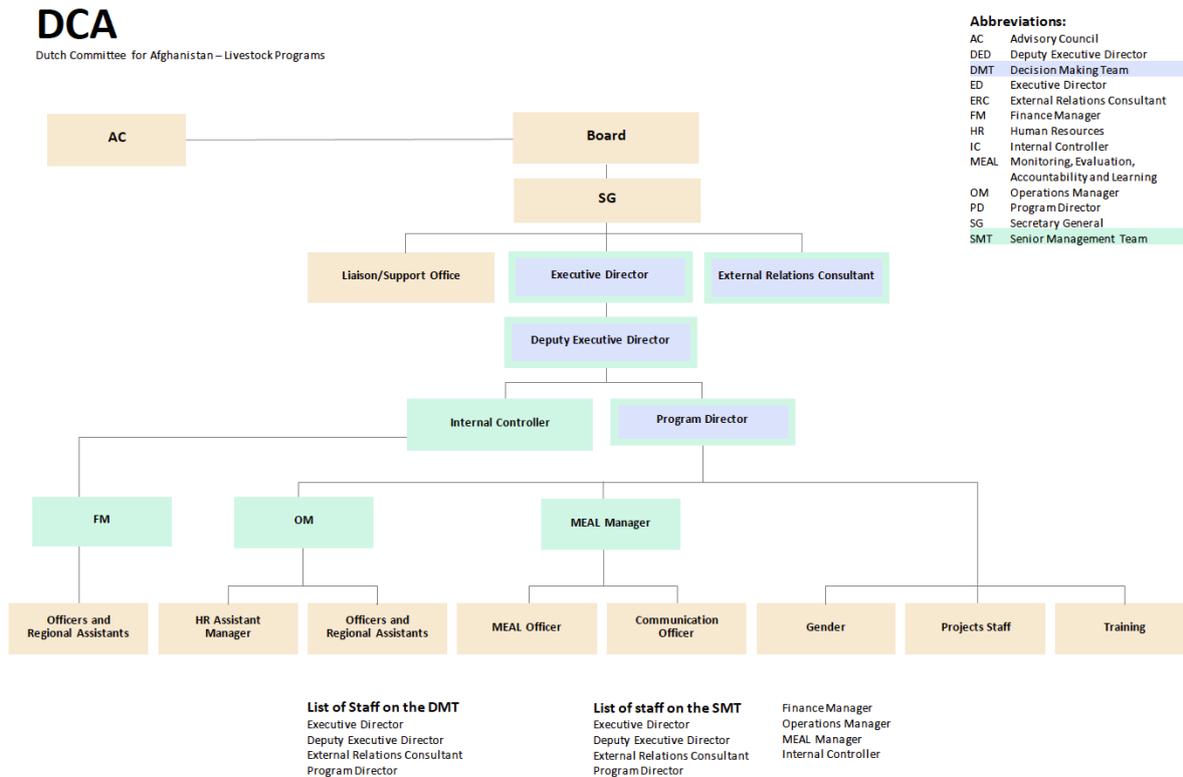
DCA-LP is at the forefront of community-driven development across Afghanistan, with a focus on food security, livelihoods, and resilience. Through partnerships with IFAD, USAID, EU, and others, DCA-LP aims to make a grassroots impact. It commenced with establishing and supporting the VFUs that are now starting points for driving community development. Community engagement is established through elders, shura, and customary leaders and it has proven to create ownership and build resilience, thus resulting in project effectiveness and sustainability. For example, establishing feed banks proved an important approach by offering guaranteed quality feed supply among the pastoralist and local communities particularly during the harsh winter season. DCA-LP uses the Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes (ECHO) model that aims to empower women through digital technology. This approach, combined with youth empowerment, encouraged active community participation in shaping sustainable outcomes and enhancing the socio-economy of Afghanistan. Farmers' group formation, linkages and networking between herders, service providers, and traders were the main components of value chain/value addition activities to strengthen the sustainability of Afghanistan's agriculture economy.

At the office in Kabul as well as in the areas where the organization works, the purpose of DCA-LP is to select and employ competent local staff for implementation of projects and realizing the strategic goals of the organization. By ensuring that female staff are in place and not replaced by men, DCA-LP aims for gender diversity, and equal opportunities within the organization.

DCA-LP organization structure and governance

DCA-LP includes a foundation in The Netherlands and an International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO) in Afghanistan. The Dutch foundation is the legal base for the INGO. Final accountability lies with the board of the foundation in The Netherlands. An Advisory Council (AC) is composed by the board, which responsibility solely is to provide advice to the board and the Decision Management Team (DMT). The board has delegated the responsibility for the management and execution of projects to the Executive Director (ED) in Afghanistan via the Secretary General (SG), who is a staff member of the Liaison & Support (L&S) Office in The Netherlands. The ED is supported by the DMT consisting of the Consultant Director External Relations (CDER), Deputy Executive Director (DED) and the Program Director (PD) and the Senior Management Team (DMT plus Finance Manager (FM), Operations

Manager (OM), MEAL Manager and Internal Control (IC). The SG communicates on a daily base with the ED in Afghanistan while the Office Manager of the L&S Office regularly communicates with members of SMT and the HR Manager.



DCA-LP has its Afghan Headquarter in Kabul and currently has activities in 30 out of 34 provinces of Afghanistan. The program is administered through 6 regional offices, 2 training centres and several provincial offices:

1. Central Regional Office in Kabul
2. Western Regional Office in Herat
3. Northern Regional Office in Mazar-i-Sharif
4. Southern Regional Office in Kandahar
5. Eastern Regional Office in Jalalabad
6. Northeastern Regional Office in Takhar/Baghlan
7. Charikar is the location for the central permanent Veterinary Training and Support Centre; while in the Western Region (Herat) trainings are also organised.



Dutch Committee for Afghanistan (DCA) Coverage Area Map

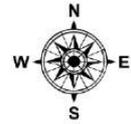


Figure 1. Map of Afghanistan indicating provinces (in green) where DCA-LP has been active in 2024.

Strategy

Vision

Empowered and resilient Afghan farmers and pastoralists, driving sustainable and climate-friendly food production for the People of Afghanistan.

Mission

To reduce poverty and increase food security and safety by creating and protecting the livelihood assets and building resilience for the rural people of Afghanistan.

Pay-off

Enable Afghan farmers and pastoralists to thrive.

Core Values and operational principles

Core Values

- Respect
- Gender equality
- Transparency
- Active learning
- Accountability & commitment

Operational Principles

- Affordable and accessible services
- Private-public coordination
- One Health (animals, humans, environment)
- Accounting for climate effects
- Professionalism

Core values and operational principles are supportive to the strategic goals of DCA-LP.

Strategic Goals

1. High quality veterinary services

Working towards a nationwide network of accountable, accessible, and affordable high-quality veterinary services through:

- **VFU network:** Maintenance and strategic establishment of VFUs that provide veterinary services required for male and female livestock owners and keepers, both sedentary farmers and pastoralists, across Afghanistan;
- **VFU quality assurance:** Working towards a system of monitoring and evaluating the quality of veterinary services provided through the VFU network, with the aim to formalize quality assurance based upon an accreditation program for VPPs;
- **Veterinary medicinal products:** Availability of high-quality veterinary medicinal products including vaccines for VFUs through securing storage and distribution under appropriate cold-chain facilities and conditions, ensuring importation of quality product, and with adequately trained staff in support;
- **Veterinary Training and Support Center:** Guaranteeing high-quality and up-to-date veterinary training and support through practice-oriented basic training for VPPs and continuous refresher courses for VPPs and other veterinary professionals;
- **Basic laboratory diagnostics:** Assessment of options to sustainably develop basic diagnostic laboratory facilities and testing at VFUs.

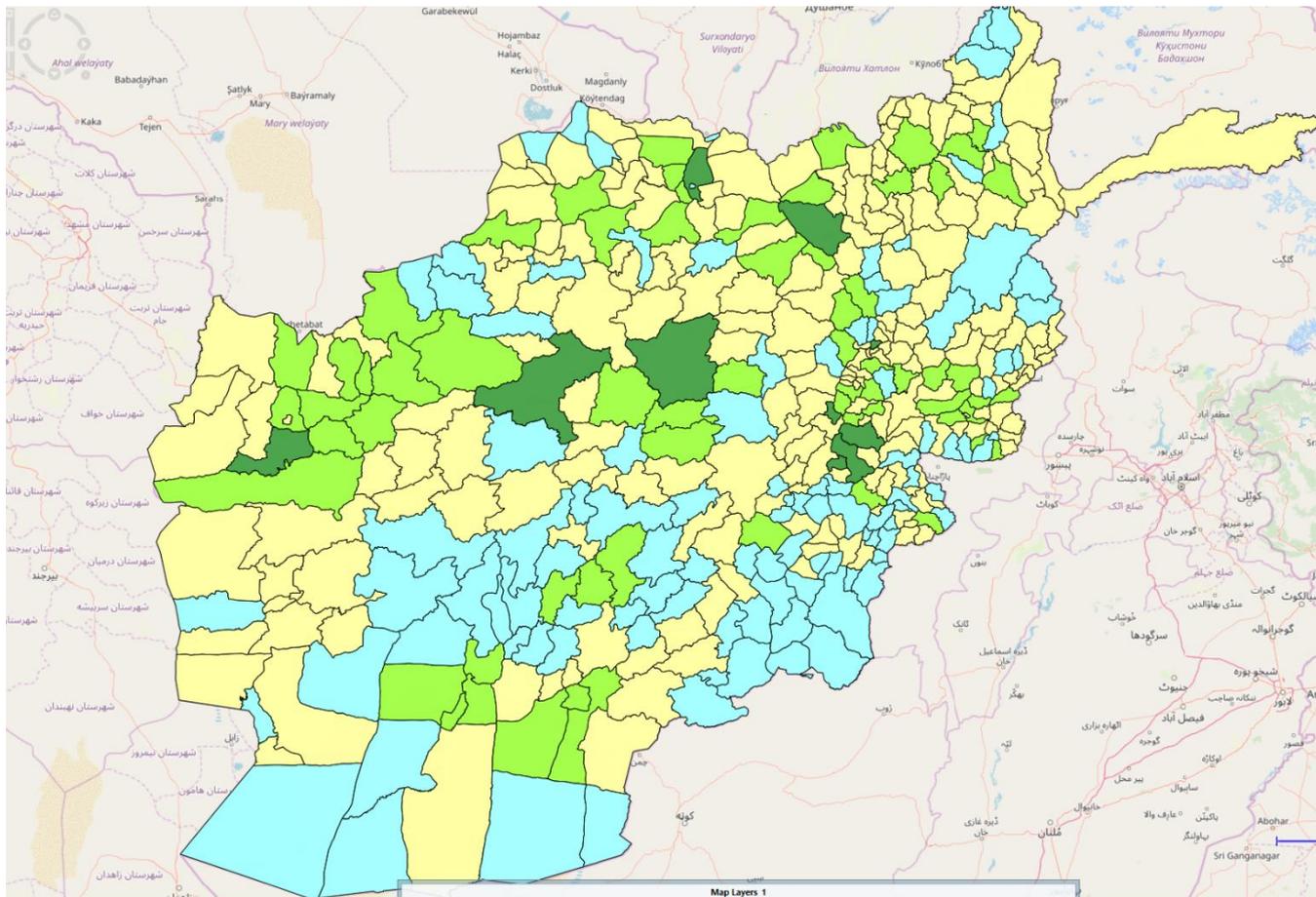


Figure 2. District map of Afghanistan indicating number of VFUs based on VFU assessment study 2019. Legend: Light blue: No VFUs; yellow between 1 and 4; bright green: between 5 and 9 VFUs; dark green: between 10 and 14 VFUs. Ten VFUs are not included in this figure (as their district identification was not known). They are from Marjah, Zazi, Arub, Ali Sheer, Dand and Khugyani district

2. Sustainable integrated livestock and agriculture production

Initiating, integrating and promoting sustainable agricultural (arable, horticulture) and livestock production to strengthen rural livelihoods and food security. This will lead to higher incomes and new job opportunities for rural communities and concurrently ensure a reliable supply of high-quality animal and agricultural products. Specific attention will be given to:

- **Value-chain development:** Expanding and promoting community-driven livestock-, arable, and horticulture-based production. This will be complemented with initiatives to optimize processing and marketing of products. Communities are actively involved in selecting products for development, with DCA-LP providing expertise, training, inputs for value addition, market linkages, and other means of support to manage value chains sustainably;
- **New agriculture initiatives and activities:** Building expertise in agricultural development to secure livelihood opportunities for rural communities through diversified agricultural production, improved crop yields and sustained pasture management;
- **One health, one welfare, one environment:** Continuing to integrate sustainable livestock and agricultural production approaches based on the realization that well-being and health of animals, humans and environment are intrinsically dependent of each other;

- **Training and extension:** Providing training and extension for rural people on aforementioned animal, arable and horticulture production techniques to promote climate-friendly production, value-adding processing, marketing and innovation.

To realize these two strategic goals, cooperation and coordination is actively pursued with the DfA and local authorities, with professional actors in the veterinary and agriculture field and with private stakeholders. The aim is to learn from experiences and to coordinate rather than to compete in the specified areas of work.

3. DCA-LP organization

Securing the governance, expertise and competitiveness of DCA-LP.

- **Organizational governance:** Optimizing the organizational structure based on the considerations that 1) DCA-LP needs to diversify its expertise and its funding sources to remain competitive with other organizations, and 2) DCA-LP wants to continue the transition of responsibilities from the Netherlands to Afghanistan.
- **Networking:** Extending support to the coordination between local, national and international organizations (including donors) on policy issues regarding food safety, food security, One health - One welfare - One environment and environment-friendly farming techniques and sustainable crop management.
- **Knowledge, expertise, and MEAL:** Enhancing and strengthening of DCA-LP staff competencies in technical areas as well as in networking, advocacy and lobbying. The overall aim for DCA-LP is to guarantee evidence-based project and strategic results, where possible through quantifying the effect of DCA-LP efforts. This includes continuation of knowledge management, program-wide monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and self-learning (MEAL) as well as encouraging innovation and application of new technologies through conducting research. In addition, improving the institutional capacities at senior and junior levels and paying attention to the well-being of its employees.