

BALKH

Located in northern Afghanistan, Balkh borders Kunduz and Samangan to the east, Jowzjan to the west, Saripul to the south and Uzbekistan to the north.

The Balkh river basin provides for the cultivated area to be concentrated in the southern and central districts of the. 90% of the cultivated land is spread over 10 of the 16 districts of Balkh province. Farmers raise livestock in all districts because of the proximity to Mazar-e-Sharif and opportunities for trade that this brings.

Balkh is famous for producing melons, cashmere, wool, grains and pistachios.

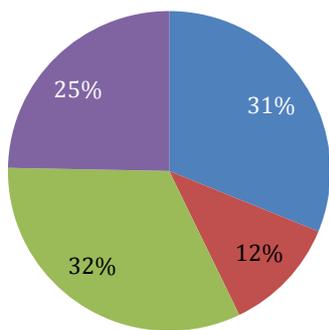
Balkh in a Nutshell

- *Surface area:* 16,000 sq. km
- *Capital:* Mazar-e-Sharif
- *Districts:* 17 – Balkh, Chahi, Char Bolak, Charkent, Chemtal, Dehdadi, Dowlat Abad, Kaldar, Khulm, Koshenda, Marmal, Mazar-e-Sharif, Nahrishahi, Sholgara, Shortepa, Zari
- *Main markets:* Sheberghan, Mazar-e-Sharif, Sari Pul, Maimana, Samangan, Faryab, Herat
- *Population:* 1.2 million inhabitants (64% living in rural areas)
- *Most populated districts:* Mazar-e-Sharif, Balkh, Sholgara
- *Ethnic Groups:* Mainly Tajiks (1st) and Pashtuns (2nd) and minority groups of Hazaras, Turkmens, Arabs and Baluchs
- *Main languages:* Dari
- *Kuchi Migrations:* Between 50-100,000 individuals in both winter and summer
- *Returnees, IDPs:* Balkh is the destination of 2.6% (roughly 119,000 individuals) of the total returnee population, but not an important hosting province for IDPs

HORTICULTURE

KEY CROPS

Total production (2008): 596,956 metric tons



- Grains: Wheat, Barley
- Vegetables: Tomato, Eggplant
- Fruits & Nuts: Melon, Watermelon, Almond, Grape, Pomegranate
- Fodder & Industrial: Cotton, Flax, Alfalfa

DIVISION OF LABOUR BY GENDER

Production:

Cultivation is mainly conducted by men in Balkh. Harvesting is done by both men and women for all crop categories.

Processing:

Both men and women are involved in drying fruit and shelling nuts, although women are more heavily involved in these activities.

Sale & Trade of Goods:

Men handle a large majority of the selling and trading of horticulture goods.

INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN (UNDER 15)

Children under 15 in Balkh are not involved in cultivation. They do, however, participate in the harvesting of all crop types. Children also participate in drying fruit and selling nuts.

IMPROVED PRACTICES

Use of fertilizer (% of farming households):

- Field crops: 84%, Garden plots: 8%
- Both field and garden plots: 8%

Other Improved Practices: According to key informants, there has been an increase in the use of tractors, notably threshers and combines, as well as sprayers.

LIVESTOCK

KEY ANIMALS

Main Animals	District Concentration	Total Heads
Sheep	No significant concentration	3,106,036
Goats		760,516
Cattle		195,978
Poultry	Balkh (47%)	810,688

INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN (UNDER 15)

Children share the responsibility of raising livestock and poultry with their older family members in Balkh. While they are typically not involved in the sale of livestock, it is common for them to sell eggs, milk and dairy products.

DIVISION OF LABOUR BY GENDER

Animal husbandry:

Both women and men are active in raising livestock and poultry in Balkh, although women are more involved than men in the raising of poultry.

Processing:

Men perform most of the butchering and shearing of animals. Women are in charge of producing dairy products and processing wool into yarn.

Sale & Trade of Goods:

- **Livestock & Poultry:** Men sell and trade most livestock and poultry. Both men and women sell eggs.
- **Dairy:** Both men and women sell milk and dairy products, although men sell a majority of the latter.
- **Commodities:** Trading of commodities is handled solely by men

IMPROVED PRACTICES

According to key informants, there has been an increase in the use of equipment for pumping and storing milk, training to improve animal health and hygiene, incubators for baby chickens, vaccinations, and medicine for animals.

ECONOMIC FACTORS AND PROVINCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

LIVELIHOODS AND INCOME SOURCES

61% of rural households rely on agriculture as their main source of income; 70% of rural households own or manage agricultural land or garden plots in the province. However, more than one-fifth of households (21%) in rural areas derive income from trade and services and at least a quarter (25%) in rural areas earn some income through non-farm related labour. Livestock also accounts for income for 29% of rural households.

Key Income Sources

Poor: Labor Handicraft production, crop sales
Better-off: Crop sales, Trading, Livestock sales

ACCESS TO CREDIT

Access for men and women

Men who need to borrow money or buy goods on credit in Balkh mainly go to their family or neighbours as well as shopkeepers or suppliers that sell items on credit.

Majority of interviewees in Balkh said women have access to credit, from family and neighbours, and suppliers or storekeepers that sell items on credit.

LAND TENURE

In 2007, 48% of the households in Balkh owned land or farmed land based on renting, sharecropping or mortgaging arrangements.

According to our interviews, commercial farmers primarily lease or own their land (shared ownership), while subsistence farmers mainly lease or have share cropping. Interviewees claim that livestock producers in the province are both sedentary and nomadic. Their main challenges with regards to access to land are expansion of residential housing onto pastures and overgrazing

IRRIGATION

In 2007, on average 67% of households in Balkh had access to irrigated land, whereas 28% of rural households and 14% of urban households had access to rain-fed land. Interviewees claim that between half and most farmers cultivate irrigated land. The proportion has decreased somewhat over the past 3 years.

ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE & ACCESS TO MARKETS

In 2007, the transport infrastructure in Balkh was reasonably well developed, with 38% of roads in the province able to take car traffic in all seasons, and 34% able to take car traffic in some seasons. However, in more than a quarter (27.5%) of the province there were no roads at all. Roads to remote areas such as Zari, Kishindih, Marmul and Chahar Kint districts are blocked. Interviewed stakeholders in Balkh perceive the quality of the road linking rural areas to markets as being sufficient with some reports of poor quality. The main challenges identified were distance from markets, lack/poor quality roads and lack of transportation

Microfinance Institutions

The implementing partners of MISFA present in the province are BRAC, OXUS, ASA and FMFB:

All Programs	Ag and Livestock Programs:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active clients: 53,293 • Active borrowers: 30,415 • # of loans disbursed: 218,344 • Amount of loans disbursed: 139,021,466 Afs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active clients: 6,551 • Active borrowers: 5,266 • # of loans disbursed: 14,379 • Amount of loans disbursed: 10,737,048 Afs.

SOCIAL FACTORS

POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

Poverty rate: 60.3%
Per Capita monthly total consumption: 1,298 Afs.

LITERACY

Literacy rate: 26.8%
 In 2007, Kuchi population in Balkh had particularly low levels with just 6.1% of men and no women able to read or write.

FOOD SECURITY

Problem satisfying food need of the household during the year (households %):	Calorie deficiency (% consuming less than 2100 calories per day):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never: 52%, • Rarely (1-3 times): 22%, • Sometimes (3-6 times): 24%, • Often (few times a month): 1%, • Mostly (happens a lot): 1% 	53.8%

CHILD LABOUR AND SCHOOL ENROLMENT

Child labour: 20.8%
School Enrolment: 53.5%

47% of Kuchi boys and 20% girls attended school in Balkh during the winter months. Only 25% boys and only 9% girls (9%) attend school in the summer.

SECURITY

Level of security in Balkh: ↑
 According to interviews, security in the province has improved greatly over the past year and the roads linking rural areas with markets are perceived to be quite safe.

STATUS OF WOMEN *Female literacy rate: 16.8%; Female share in active population: 36.8%*

Access to markets / female mobility: According to our interviews, majority of women in the provincial center go to the local bazaar to buy goods; More than half of these women are accompanied a male relative when they do so; Few go to sell items. Women outside of the provincial center are less likely to go to the local bazaar to buy goods and more likely to be accompanied by a male relative.