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## New Food Testing Laboratory Will Reduce Customs Delays

**JALALABAD, AFGHANISTAN | SEPTEMBER 18, 2011** — A cutting-edge food-testing laboratory, the second of its kind in Afghanistan, was inaugurated today in Jalalabad. The laboratory will provide food examination services to local producers and to traders importing food items via the Torkham border, resulting in reduced costs and quicker processing.

The laboratory, supported by USAID, is equipped with modern machines and equipment and provides high-quality analysis of food items through physical, chemical, and microbiological methods, a USAID senior official announced.

“Establishing this important testing facility with the Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industries is yet another step toward returning Afghanistan to its place as a contributing partner in the regional economy,” said USAID Mission Director Dr. S. Ken Yamashita. “This Afghan-owned and operated facility will increase the efficiency of cross-border trade with its neighbor, Pakistan, and will generate a steady revenue stream that will help to ensure its success and sustainability.”

Afghanistan’s public health policy requires all foods to be checked for quality and the quantity of active ingredients before entering the local market. In the past, traders had to take samples to Kabul for testing, which resulted in processing times of as much as a month. Due to a lack of proper storage in the customs house, traders incurred costs for food spoilage and transportation. The new lab has the capacity to provide test results within 24 hours, avoiding food spoilage from unnecessary delays.

“Before establishing the lab, food would wait for about a month in Nangarhar Custom House for approval which occasioned lots of problems for traders,” said Engineer Mohammad Qasim, Nangarhar Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NCCI) executive manager. “With the new lab, the process is quicker and less expensive.”

The NCCI will manage the lab, charging between 200 and 1,000 AFN per test. These fees will cover all lab costs, including staff salaries, making the lab sustainable from the first day of its operation. To support economic growth in the region, USAID helps Afghan traders and producers to run their businesses more efficiently.

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