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SNAPSHOT

Afghan Biscuits Energize Schools

Local factories in Afghanistan are producing high energy biscuits for school children



USAID/WFP

Sana, a third grader at a school in Kabul province, eats her first high energy biscuit.

The biscuits are an incentive for low-income Afghan families to send their children to school rather than out to work.

Local factories in Afghanistan are now producing high energy biscuits, the crisp nutritious cookies fortified with vitamins and minerals that are used in the World Food Program's (WFP) school feeding scheme. Local production of the biscuits, which are handed out to school children from low-income families every day, is part of the Purchase for Progress initiative. Two factories in Herat and one in Kabul have begun to make the cookies and children across Afghanistan received the first batch of local biscuits in July, just before the summer school break began.

The biscuits are an incentive for low-income Afghan families to send their children to school rather than out to work. School teachers say that the daily packet of cookies has boosted enrolment.

Sooma, who teaches at Sabz Sang School in the Qarabagh district of Kabul province, explains that "this community is poor, and the people do not know much beyond the idea of having their children start working as soon as possible." The biscuits have meant a marked increase in attendance for her students, she says.

Haji Khan, a shopkeeper in Qarabagh, says he is grateful for the daily biscuit ration received by his four children. He has two daughters and two sons and he says he has a profound sense of contentment "every day, when I see the WFP food in the hands of the children. They eat their biscuits when they walk home from school."

Meanwhile, the children seem to regard the biscuits as a treat. Sana, who is in Grade Three at the Markaz Girls' School in Qarabagh, bites into one and exclaims, "Mmmm, these new biscuits are good!"

Since 2010, USAID has contributed nearly 100,000 metric tons of food to World Food Programme's operations, providing vital food assistance to vulnerable Afghans across the country.