



USDA-CSREES 2007 National Water Quality Conference

Organizing Water Users Associations and Infrastructure Rehabilitation in the Post-Soviet Republics

Starting in 1990, several Central Asian countries declared independence from the former Soviet Union. Overnight, the socio economic structure of these countries transformed from state sponsored socialist systems into capitalist systems. In several of these countries, the independence was followed by economic collapse and social unrest which resulted in the deterioration of the agricultural industry. Agriculture is the main source of income for these countries. The collapse of the irrigation systems combined with the lack of capital resulted in sharp reduction in agricultural production. The agricultural problem was exasperated by the disintegration of the large collective farms into small plots. The irrigation infrastructures which were originally managed by government, were now left unattended and looted. In 2004, Winrock International and New Mexico State University started a USAID sponsored project to form water users associations (WUAS) and rehabilitate the irrigation infrastructure in several Central Asian Countries. This paper discusses the tortuous process of forming WUAS and rehabilitating irrigation infrastructures in the chaotic post soviet republics.

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