

Cotton gin reopens to Afghan farmers

Regional Command Southwest

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Date: 10.01.2010

Posted: 10.02.2010 13:04

News ID: 57372

LASKAR GAH, Afghanistan – More than 170 local Afghans went back to work when the Lashkar Gah cotton factory reopened, Sept. 28. The announcement was made by Mr. Al. Haj. M. Sheerin, the manager of the factory, after receiving permission from Afghanistan president, Hamid Karzi.

The factory was built in the 1960's by the British government and is under ownership of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

“About a year ago, the decision was made to shut the gin and the whole mill down,” said Wes Harris, Regional Agricultural Advisor, United States Department of Agriculture. “The government was considering privatizing the gin.”

Duncan said as cotton is the predominant crop grown during the summertime, the opening of this cotton gin will allow hundreds of farmers from several communities to bring their products to the gin. They can process it much faster at the gin than they could with the small gins located in the local bazaars.

“Anything that comes in with the cotton is usable,” said Harris, from Statesboro, Ga. “It can be used to make clothes, rugs, food and also be used for animal feed.”

Al. Haj. M. Sheerin, manager of the Lashkar Gah cotton gin, said farmers have been calling the factory every day since harvest asking if they can bring their cotton in to the factory to sell for ginning.

The factory, although it is not modern, has been maintained very well and is fully operational. It has the capability of employing 400 at the site.

Bill Duncan, part of the Defense Task Force, business and stability operations, said the gin opening was done completely by GIRoA and had no financial help from coalition forces.

Hundreds of farmers are now able to bring their products to the gin from numerous neighboring communities including Marjah, Nad Ali, Nawa and Gereshk.

Mr. Sheerin began calling all of the farmers right away to let them know the gin is reopened and they can bring in their cotton.