

Email

Subject: Support for Cotton this Year?

Date: Fri, 12 Nov 2010

From: Dick Scott

To: (31 addresses)

Over the past couple of months many people and many organizations have been expressing an interest in support for the Lashkar Gah cotton gin and the farmers who continue to cultivate this long traditional cash crop in central Helmand: NATO, the US military, apparently USAID, State, etc etc. The reasons range from establishing a bio-fuel installation in conjunction with the present gin, one of the alternative cash-crops to compete with opium poppy, to winning the hearts and minds of the farmers who like the crop and consider opium an evil crop. The farmers of central Helmand have been asking for help with the cotton market as one of the prerequisites for getting out of the opium trade for more than 10 years, which I have been documenting.

To date, to my knowledge, the British have remained silent on Helmand cotton although they were instrumental in establishing cotton in Helmand as one of the primary cash crops in the 70s with the construction of two cotton gins in the region and getting Helmand cotton into the international markets. They would also be the most likely to be able to take quick action (if there was an interest) since the US is hampered by US cotton lobby restrictions.

But during this most critical season of the year for re-establishing cotton as a viable cash-crop in the farmers minds, after years of being ignored by the international community,

\*Is anyone, is any organization going to take any action in support of Helmand cotton?

\*The farmers should be beginning to bring their just harvested cotton crop to the gin for sale. And I understand that the gin will be buying \*\*this year's crop...unlike last year when they bought no cotton for processing for an international market that apparently now has the highest prices since the US civil war. I have no idea who may be financing this buying since the responsible Ministry of Small Industry has shown little interest in supporting this, one of their gins, for some time. Perhaps the buying represents a local initiative, as in the past where the gin gives chits to the farmers for cotton received which are paid off after the cotton is sold. This year, the most convenient market will be with the Pakistan weaving industry thanks to a semi-crop failure due to flooding in that country.

If we are interested in getting the farmers to grow more cotton next year, now is the time to tell them...through action. We should be working with the Lashkar Gah (Bost) cotton gin, perhaps subsidize the price by a few afs. to get the farmers' attention, tell them that next year's price will be as good and that perhaps there will be a small cotton gin based credit system established by planting time to help fund the needed fertilizer. But if decisions and funding cannot be certain, nothing should be said. The farmers of central Helmand have had about enough of foreigners' talk, promises and no action.

\*So, with all the talk of interest in support for Helmand cotton, is anyone, is any organization going to take any\* \*action during this most critical season of the year to get the cotton farmers' attention?\*

I would be happy to discuss again any of the issues raised in this email with anyone interested in addressing this most critical but not new problem. And please share this email with anyone you think would be interested.

Dick Scott