

Research Article

Opportunities and Challenges in Agricultural Product Marketing: A Sociological Analysis of Bamyan Province, Afghanistan

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Abstract: This research aims to sociologically examine the opportunities and challenges of marketing agricultural products in Bamyan Province, Afghanistan, and proposes solutions to enhance local, national, and international marketing systems. The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to provide a comprehensive analysis. The target population includes farmers from eight districts of Bamyan, as well as educated individuals, experts, and employees from government and non-governmental organizations. Data was collected through interviews, focus group discussions, and structured questionnaires. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, while qualitative data were processed through MAXQDA, following a mixed-method analytical framework. The findings reveal that agriculture serves as the primary source of income for households in Bamyan, playing a pivotal role in sustaining livelihoods. Key crops include potatoes, wheat, and beans, with apricots being particularly significant in districts such as Kahmard. However, most farmers lack formal marketing training and rely on traditional methods and local intermediaries. This, combined with inadequate infrastructure and limited access to national and international markets, significantly reduces profitability and negatively impacts living standards. Additionally, the lack of coordination among farmers underscores weaknesses in forming effective agricultural cooperatives. Social institutions and marketing support committees, particularly in the post-Republic era, have shown limited activity. Women's participation in agricultural production and marketing is further constrained by social norms and a lack of training, limiting their economic contributions. Based on these findings, the study recommends several measures to address these challenges. These include developing adequate infrastructure, enhancing marketing training programs, and formulating supportive policies to improve marketing systems and increase farmers' income. Strengthening agricultural cooperatives, promoting gender-inclusive training, and fostering better coordination among stakeholders are also critical to ensuring sustainable agricultural development in Bamyan Province.

Keywords: agricultural products; marketing; rural sociology; Bamyan province

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1. Introduction

Bamyan Province, renowned for its rich history, breathtaking natural landscapes, and agriculture-dependent society, stands as one of Afghanistan's key regions for agricultural production. Agriculture, as one of the primary sources of livelihood in this region, holds not only economic importance but also profound social and cultural significance. It serves as the main source of income for the majority of the population, playing a pivotal role in ensuring food security and social stability (Directorate of Economy of Bamyan Province, 2019). The growth and development of agriculture are intrinsically linked to the market and the marketing of agricultural products. Marketing acts as a critical component of the agricultural value chain, with the potential to significantly enhance farmers' livelihoods, boost production, and drive economic development.

Sociological studies explore the interactions and mutual influences among individuals, groups, and social structures. In the context of agricultural product marketing, social factors such as gender dynamics, literacy levels, land ownership patterns, and community participation in economic processes play a decisive role. For example, in Bamyan, women

constitute a vital part of the agricultural labor force, yet their involvement in marketing activities remains severely limited. Furthermore, cultural and social factors, such as the relationships between farmers and intermediaries or the adoption of new marketing technologies, are of particular significance. These factors shape the efficiency and inclusivity of agricultural marketing systems, influencing both economic outcomes and social equity.

By examining these sociological dimensions, this research seeks to uncover the underlying social dynamics that affect agricultural marketing in Bamyan. It aims to provide insights into how social structures and cultural practices can be leveraged to create more equitable and effective marketing systems, ultimately contributing to the sustainable development of the region's agricultural sector.

Due to its unique climate conditions, Bamyan, like other regions of Afghanistan, has the potential to produce organic and high-quality agricultural products (Rahimi & Artukoğlu, 2021), which could garner significant attention in both local and international markets. Moreover, international organizations and non-profit entities can play a pivotal role in developing sustainable supply chains and marketing systems in the region. Numerous opportunities exist to enhance the marketing of agricultural products in Bamyan. For instance, improving infrastructure – such as constructing modern storage facilities and upgrading transportation networks – can significantly increase the economic value of these products. Other effective strategies include establishing agricultural cooperatives to enable direct sales to consumers, reducing reliance on intermediaries, and strengthening farmers' bargaining power. Digital marketing and the adoption of modern technologies also offer promising avenues to promote Bamyan's products in national and international markets. From a policy perspective, the government and relevant institutions can play a critical role in bolstering this sector by implementing supportive programs, such as providing financial facilities, subsidies, and marketing-related training. Additionally, the development of agricultural tourism presents a unique opportunity to showcase local products and attract new customers.

However, several challenges hinder progress. The lack of proper roads, cold storage facilities, and efficient transportation systems significantly reduces the effectiveness of supplying agricultural products (Rahimi & Artukoğlu, 2023). Many local farmers lack the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively market their products (Sarhadi et al., 2014). Social barriers, such as the limited role of women in marketing, distrust of intermediaries, and unfair competition among producers, further complicate the situation. Additionally, climate fluctuations and reduced rainfall pose serious risks to agricultural production, undermining farmers' ability to market their products effectively (Ghulami, 2017). Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that combines infrastructure development, capacity building, and policy interventions to unlock the full potential of Bamyan's agricultural sector.

A sociological analysis of the opportunities and challenges in agricultural product marketing in Bamyan can provide new perspectives for the sustainable development of this region. This research aims to identify existing barriers and serves as a guide for policymakers, non-profit organizations, and the local community to improve the economic and social conditions. Furthermore, this study can pave the way for further research on sustainable agricultural development and the marketing of local products in Afghanistan.

Taking this into consideration, the main research question is the following: What are the opportunities and challenges associated with marketing agricultural products in Bamyan Province, and what solutions can be proposed to enhance and develop its agricultural marketing systems?

2. Literature Review

The sociological study of the opportunities and challenges of agricultural product marketing in Bamyan Province is a novel research topic that has not yet been thoroughly addressed. Despite this, related studies conducted in Afghanistan and other regions provide valuable insights contributing to the literature.

Rahimi and Artukoğlu (2023) explored the export of agricultural products from Afghanistan and identified several significant barriers to export development. Among these, energy supply issues emerged as the most pressing concern. Additional challenges include limited access to suitable markets, insufficient working capital, administrative complexities, and inadequate transportation infrastructure. Furthermore, issues such as inappropriate behavior by some government employees, lack of international certifications, insufficient processing and packaging infrastructure, and inadequate storage facilities exacerbate the

difficulties faced by exporters.

In Bamyan's Yakawlang district, Honaryar (2019) investigated the specific obstacles farmers face in potato production and marketing. The study highlighted price instability as the most critical challenge, followed by high storage costs, uncertain water supply, lack of marketing facilities, and post-harvest spoilage of potatoes. These findings underscore the vulnerabilities in agricultural practices and market access within the region.

Burian, Macek, and Krepl (2010) conducted research in Logar Province, identifying three core issues impacting the agricultural population: lack of specialized agricultural training, inefficient irrigation systems, and weak market linkages. The absence of adequate support and commitment from local authorities further compounds these challenges, deterring traders from establishing robust connections between the province and national markets.

Similarly, Alamyar and Boz (2018) examined the agricultural landscape in Takhar Province, emphasizing the detrimental effects of a lack of marketing cooperatives and processing facilities. These deficiencies contribute to reduced rice quality and low sales prices. To address these issues, the study advocates the creation of processing facilities, joint branding initiatives, product grading, and enhanced research and development efforts. Additionally, targeted training in sales strategies, seed production, and irrigation methods is recommended to bolster agricultural productivity and market competitiveness.

Rahimi and Artukoğlu (2021) underscored the pivotal role of agriculture in Afghanistan's economy, noting its contribution of approximately one-fourth to the GDP and two-thirds to exports. Despite the promising potential of organic products, the sector is hindered by challenges such as lack of sea access, inadequate marketing services, and non-compliance with global standards. The study suggests various measures to overcome these obstacles, including improving marketing efforts, encouraging investments, reducing customs tariffs, developing infrastructure, and enhancing security.

Certain works (Lalzai et al., 2023) examined the marketing challenges faced by potato farmers in Parwan Province, identifying several critical issues, including long distances to markets, inadequate grading facilities, transportation difficulties, information gaps, and buyer exploitation. The study also addressed consumer-related concerns, such as limited access, price fluctuations, and insufficient packaging. To tackle these challenges, the research underscores the necessity for improved infrastructure, the establishment of grading and storage facilities, and measures to stabilize prices.

Globally, researchers have focused on the challenges and opportunities within rural agricultural marketing, uncovering both commonalities and region-specific issues. For example, Goud and Narahari (2022) noted the significant growth potential for marketers in rural India, driven by increasing literacy rates, a growing middle-income demographic, and technological advancements. However, they highlighted weak infrastructure as a notable obstacle, a sentiment echoed by Pande (2022), who reported logistical and communication challenges hindering rural-urban market integration. Similarly, Najafabadi's (2011) study in Iran emphasized the crucial role of accurate market information in effective agricultural marketing, identifying insufficient information as a major barrier to rational decision-making in uncertain environments.

In the context of sustainable agriculture, Hariharan, Barath, Suresh Kumar, and Janani (2023) highlighted the pivotal role of marketing in enhancing food security and reducing poverty. They pointed to the benefits of cooperative systems in overcoming infrastructure deficiencies, market access challenges, and transportation costs. Tagar's (2014) research in Pakistan further elucidated the negative effects of intermediaries and systemic inefficiencies, which diminish farmers' incomes and bargaining power, exacerbated by poverty and limited market awareness. The lack of adequate storage facilities complicates these issues, a concern also noted by Khalate (2024), who advocates for pre-market product preparation and cooperative investments to enhance product quality and farmer profitability.

From a policy perspective, Hans and Govindaswamy (2024) discussed India's reforms aimed at creating competitive agricultural markets through modern technologies, such as e-platforms and mobile applications, which facilitate direct farmer-consumer communication. These innovations enhance price transparency and empower farmers, marking a critical step toward sustainable development. Meanwhile, Abdalla and Yunsheng (2015) addressed the implications of climate change on agricultural production and income in China, noting that vulnerability varies by region, season, and access to irrigation resources.

Through an analysis of these studies, it becomes clear that agricultural marketing in Afghanistan encounters a range of challenges that differ by region but commonly reflect issues such as infrastructural inadequacies, limited market access, and insufficient institutional

support. These insights offer a foundational understanding for addressing the specific challenges in Bamyan Province and developing actionable solutions to improve agricultural product marketing.

3. Materials and Methods

This research is applied in nature and employs a mixed-methods approach, which is considered one of the most effective methodologies in the social sciences, as it offers more reliable results. Data were collected through both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data were gathered using questionnaires, while qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

The study's statistical population encompasses Bamyan Province, which consists of eight districts. Samples were systematically selected using a simple random sampling method from various villages within each district, targeting local residents and indigenous populations. According to the Directorate of Economy of Bamyan Province (2019), the estimated population of the province is 572,874. Using Cochran's formula, the sample size was calculated to be 383 individuals; however, 400 questionnaires were distributed to enhance precision. Additionally, the research included 10 interviews and two focus groups, each consisting of five participants. The questionnaire sample comprised farmers from all eight districts, while the focus group and interview participants included officials, employees from the Department of Agriculture, professors from the Faculty of Agriculture, stakeholders, and educated individuals.

The research was conducted in the field with the support of a research team during July and August 2024. Data collection utilized tools such as questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. SPSS software was used for the quantitative data analysis, while MAXQDA software facilitated the qualitative data analysis. Finally, the data analysis was conducted integratively, aligning with the mixed-methods design.

4. Results

5.1. Demographic Profile of Participants

The research findings are based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, analyzed in accordance with scientific research principles. The demographic characteristics of the statistical population, derived from questionnaire data, provide an initial overview of the participants, who include farmers from eight districts in Bamyan Province.

In a traditional society like Bamyan, agricultural activities are predominantly male-dominated. This is reflected in the data, as 99% of the questionnaire respondents were male. However, participants in focus groups and interviews considered both men and women equally, highlighting a potential discrepancy between formal data collection methods and on-the-ground perspectives. Marital status data reveal that the majority of participants (88%) are married, while 12% are single. The age distribution of respondents ranges from adults over 18 years old up to 93 years old, indicating broad representation across different age groups.

In terms of employment, farmers in Bamyan are typically either landowners or laborers working on others' land. The social structure of villages often revolves around extended families, and the data show that the average family size is 8.5, underscoring the communal nature of rural life in the region. These demographic insights provide a foundational understanding of the participants and the social context in which agricultural activities and marketing take place in Bamyan.

Farmers in Bamyan Province are predominantly illiterate (45.80%) or possess only basic literacy skills (19.80%), as illustrated by the educational levels of the questionnaire participants (see Figure 1). However, participants in the focus group discussions and interviews included educated individuals, providing a more diverse perspective. Illiterate or less-educated individuals often engage in agriculture due to its lower skill requirements and its traditional role as a cornerstone of rural livelihoods. In contrast, educated individuals are more likely to pursue non-agricultural occupations that align with their skills, attracted by better prospects, higher income potential, and opportunities for career growth in fields such as administration, education, or technology. This disparity highlights the significant influence of education on occupational choices and economic contributions, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to improve literacy and skill development among farmers to enhance their productivity and market participation.

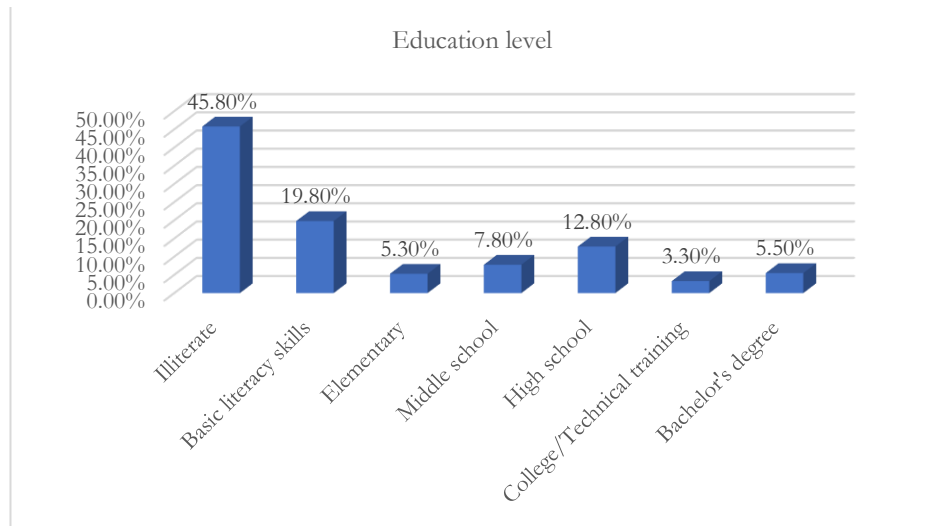


Figure 1. The education level of the participants.

Extended families are the predominant social structure in rural areas, particularly in Bamyan province, where the average household consists of 8.5 members. The livelihoods of these families primarily depend on agriculture. Many families live in poverty, with 57% earning less than \$1,000 annually (see Table 1). The average household income among the surveyed families is \$1,472, resulting in an annual per capita income of \$172 based on family size. In contrast, the national per capita GDP in 2023 was \$415 (ALFRED, 2024). This data reveals that the per capita income of farming families in Bamyan is only about half of the national average.

Table 1. Annual family income in Bamyan province.

Annually Family income	Frequency	Percent
Less than 500\$	68	17%
From 501\$ up to 1000\$	159	40%
From 1001\$ up to 2000\$	104	26%
From 2001 up to 3000\$	42	10%
From 3001 up to 5000\$	13	3%
From 5001\$ up to 10000\$	8	2%
More than 10000\$	6	2%
Total	400	100%

As one of Afghanistan’s poorest provinces, Bamyan grapples with widespread absolute poverty (Ahmadi, 2024). Projections indicate that without significant political and economic improvements, a majority of the population risks falling below the poverty line. By 2022, nearly half of Afghanistan’s population—over 18 million people – required substantial humanitarian aid, with more than one million children facing the threat of malnutrition and hunger. Alarmingly, extreme poverty has driven some families in certain regions of Afghanistan to resort to desperate measures, including selling their children (Ahmadi, 2024).

The global poverty line, established at \$2.15 per day in 2022, defines absolute poverty as the inability to meet basic daily needs (Hasell, 2024). An analysis of rural households in Bamyan indicates that approximately 90% of the population lives below this threshold, highlighting that 90% of people in Bamyan experience absolute poverty. This finding is supported by research from Lawrence Technological University in the United States. In their survey, some scholars found that more than three years after the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Taliban’s return to power, 88.38% of participants reported experiencing some degree of food insecurity (Hanson-DeFusco et al., 2025).

By integrating these findings, the study offers a nuanced understanding of the demographic and socio-economic context of farmers in Bamyan province. This foundational analysis lays the groundwork for further discussions on agricultural practices and social dynamics within the region.



5.2. *Quality of life and income of participants in Bamyan Province*

The quality of life in a society is intrinsically tied to its economic and political conditions. Political and economic crises invariably have a detrimental effect on the well-being of citizens. Bamyan has historically been one of Afghanistan’s relatively poorer provinces. However, in 2021, the fall of the Republic, the establishment of the Emirate, and the withdrawal of foreign development assistance plunged the country into a severe economic crisis. Compounding this, a devastating drought in the same year triggered a food crisis. During the first 10 months of the Emirate, Afghanistan’s GDP contracted by \$5 billion, dropping from \$20 billion to \$16 billion. By early 2022, 72% of the population lived below the poverty line. In 2024, the year the survey was conducted, the economy stabilized at a low equilibrium point, with modest growth of 2.7%, recovering approximately 10% of the economic losses (World Bank Group, 2024).

This challenging context was reflected in respondents’ assessments of changes in their quality of life and the impact of political shifts on their livelihoods. About 55% of survey respondents and focus group participants reported that their quality of life had deteriorated in recent years. A third of respondents observed no significant change, while 10% indicated that the situation had improved or significantly improved (see Table 2). There was widespread agreement among interviewees that economic hardships, unemployment, drought, and political changes had collectively worsened their quality of life.

Table 2. Views on farmers’ quality of life – 2024.

	The quality of life in recent years	
	Frequency	Percent
Much better	13	3.3
Better	27	6.8
Remained the same	137	34.3
Worse	201	50.3
Much worse	22	5.5
Total	400	100.0

The quality of life in rural communities is closely tied to agricultural income. The growth and development of agriculture directly enhance living standards, while challenges in the agricultural sector negatively impact the well-being of the population. Data from the study reveal that 41% of participants reported a recent decrease or significant decrease in agricultural income, while 46% indicated that their income remained unchanged, and 12% noted an improvement or significant improvement (see Table 3). These findings underscore the overall decline in the quality of life for participants in Bamyan, reflecting the broader struggles faced by rural communities due to agricultural and economic challenges.

Table 3. Trends in agricultural income in recent years.

	The agricultural income in recent years	
	Frequency	Percent
Increased significantly	10	2.5
Increased	40	10.0
Remained the same	185	46.3
Decreased	152	38.0
Decreased significantly	13	3.3
Total	400	100.0

5.3. *Agriculture Sector*

5.3.1. Agricultural Crops

Bamyan Province, one of Afghanistan’s colder regions, specializes in agricultural products well-suited to its climate. Table 4 highlights the percentage of crops cultivated by farmers in the province. According to the data, potatoes and wheat are the most significant crops, each cultivated by 89.5% of farmers. These are followed by fodder at 70%, barley at 52.8%, and beans at 30.5%, which occupy the subsequent ranks (see Table 4). This distribution reflects the agricultural focus of Bamyan’s farmers and their reliance on crops adapted to the region’s cold climate.



Table 4. Major Agricultural Products in Bamyán Province.

No	Agricultural crops	Percent	
		Yes	No
1	Wheat	89.5%	10.5%
2	Barley	52.8%	47.3%
3	Potato	89.5%	10.5%
4	Beans	30.5%	69.5%
5	Chickpeas	4.3%	95.8%
6	Forage (clover, alfalfa, etc.)	70%	30%
7	Saffron	0.3%	99.8%
8	Cucumber	4.5%	95.5%
9	Okra	2.5%	97.5%
10	Cauliflower	1.8%	98.3%
11	Fava bean	2.8%	97.3%
12	Bitter vetch	11%	89%
13	Lentil	10%	90%

5.3.2. Horticultural Products

Farmers in Bamyán Province practice horticulture by cultivating a variety of fruit trees, as indicated by the percentage distribution of these crops. The most significant fruit trees, well-adapted to Bamyán’s climate and favored by farmers, are apples and apricots. Apples rank first in cultivation, closely followed by apricots, both showing high percentages (see Table 5). This underscores the importance of these fruits in the region’s horticultural practices and their suitability to Bamyán’s environmental conditions.

Table 5. Most Important Fruit Trees in Bamyán Province.

No	Fruits	Percent	
		Yes	No
1	Apple	85.7%	14.3%
2	Apricot	73.4%	26.6%
3	Plum	16.9%	82.6%
4	Berry	22.1%	77.9%
5	Grape	18.6%	81.4%
6	Almond	16.8%	83.2%
7	Peach	12.8%	87.2%
8	Pear	15.8%	84.2%
9	Walnut	22.2%	77.8%
10	Cherry	17.4%	82.6%

5.3.3. The Role of Agriculture Crops on Farmers’ Income

Agricultural products play a vital and decisive role in securing the income and livelihoods of farmers in Bamyán Province. The economy of most families in the region is predominantly dependent on agriculture, with basic needs being met through the income generated from farming activities. When participants were asked about the relative usefulness of agriculture, horticulture, and animal husbandry, they identified agriculture as the most significant source of benefit, with 69% of respondents prioritizing it. This was followed by animal husbandry at 21% and horticulture at 10%. Other activities, such as poultry farming and greenhouse



farming, accounted for less than 1% of perceived benefits in the village and region (Table 6).

Table 6. Percentage of farmers' income from agriculture crops, horticulture, livestock, and poultry.

Percentage of farmers' income from agriculture, horticulture, livestock, and poultry		
	Frequency	Percent
Crops	275	68.8
Horticulture	40	10.0
Animal husbandry	83	20.8
Poultry farming	2	.5
Total	400	100.0

However, the effectiveness of agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, and other sectors varies across each district. Data indicates the performance of these sectors in each district separately, accompanied by frequency metrics. Based on the statistics, agricultural crops in the Bamiyan Center, Yakawlang No. 1, and Shibar districts, horticulture in the Kahmard District, and livestock farming in the Waras, Panjab, and Yakawlang No. 2 districts demonstrate the highest levels of productivity and income (see Table 7).

Table 7. Utility levels of agriculture, livestock farming, horticulture, and other activities based on district classification.

Districts * In your opinion, is agriculture and horticulture more beneficial or animal husbandry in your village or region?

		In your opinion, is agriculture and horticulture more beneficial or animal husbandry in your village or region?			
		Agricultural crops	Horticulture	Animal husbandry	Others
Districts	Center of Bamiyan	57	1	2	0
	Shibar	36	1	3	0
	Yakawlang No: 1	49	4	6	1
	Yakawlang No: 2	21	5	14	0
	Waras	24	5	30	1
	Panjab	35	2	23	0
	Saighan	31	4	5	0
	Kahmard	22	18	0	0
Total		275	40	83	2

This section analyzes the most significant products from which farmers generate the highest income. According to the statistics, the key products contributing to farmers' profits, in decreasing order, are potatoes (54%), wheat (28%), rice (9%), beans (6%), and barley (3%) (see Figure 2).

The qualitative data corroborate the findings, indicating that potatoes are the most significant product influencing farmers' income, followed by wheat, beans, apples, and apricots in descending order. However, in the Kahmard district, where fruit farming is more prevalent, apricots are identified as the most important agricultural product.

5.4. Consumption and Sale of Agricultural Products

The consumption and sale of agricultural products are vital to farmers' livelihoods and the local economy. Farmers consume a portion of their produce to meet their families' food needs, while the remainder is intended for sale in local markets or more distant regions. The income generated from these sales helps cover living expenses, invest in agricultural land improvements, and purchase farming tools. Key factors influencing the profitability of these activities include the type of product, production levels, access to markets, and pricing.

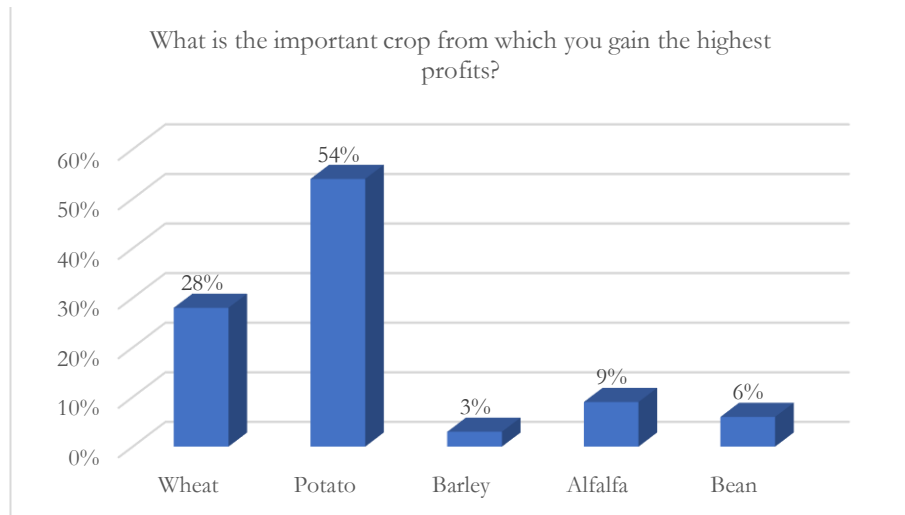


Figure 2. The most important source of income for participants from agricultural crops.

Farmers typically utilize their agricultural products for both personal consumption and sale. Data indicates the levels of consumption and sale of agricultural products are reported separately, based on the mean, median, mode, highest, and lowest percentages. According to statistics, the mean percentage of products allocated for sale is 58%, while the mean percentage for personal consumption is 41.5% (see Table 8).

Table 8. Consumption and sale of agricultural products based on mean, median, and mode.

Statistics		
What percentage of your agricultural products is used for personal consumption, and what percentage is allocated for sale?	Percentage for personal	
	consumption	Percentage for sale
Mean	41.5811	58.0489
Median	40.0000	60.0000
Mode	20.00	80.00
Minimum	5.00	10.00
Maximum	90.00	95.00

5.5. Training Farmers in Agricultural Product Marketing

Training farmers in the marketing of agricultural products is essential for increasing their income and improving their economic conditions. Such training encompasses raising awareness about effective sales strategies, identifying target markets, utilizing digital tools for product promotion, and establishing efficient distribution networks. Additionally, training in packaging, branding, and communication with major buyers can enhance the added value of products. As a result, farmers can sell their goods at more competitive prices and, through strategic marketing, access new markets for their products.

Table 9. Agricultural training received from the government and agricultural organizations.

No		Yes	
		Percent	Percent
1	Have you received any agricultural training from the government or institutions?	28%	72%
2	Training on marketing and supply-demand analysis of agricultural products (answered the person who received the training)	10%	90%

This section analyzes the training of farmers in agricultural product marketing. Data reveals that 28% of farmers have received agricultural training from the government or agricultural organizations. However, of this 28%, only 10% (equivalent to 3% of all respondents) have received specific training in agricultural product marketing, while the

remaining 90% have not (see Table 10). The significant gap in marketing-focused training points to the need for targeted Programmes to equip farmers with the skills necessary to maximize their income and market potential.

The qualitative data highlight that agricultural training plays a significant role in increasing farmers' income and fostering agricultural development. Training programs can enhance productivity by introducing modern cultivation techniques and efficient resource management practices. They also contribute to improving crop diversity and quality while reducing production costs through the optimal use of resources. Furthermore, training in marketing and sales strategies empowers farmers to maximize profits by effectively promoting and selling their products.

5.6. Role of Women in Agricultural Product Marketing

Women in Bamyan province play a crucial role in marketing agricultural products, although their contributions are often overlooked due to social and cultural limitations. Many women, particularly in rural areas, engage in processing and packaging products such as potatoes, dried apricots, and beans, selling these items in local markets or through intermediaries. Furthermore, women frequently manage the income generated from product sales and are actively involved in family economic decision-making. However, challenges such as the closure of schools and universities for women (Hikmat & Ahmadi, 2023), restrictions on employment, limited access to larger markets, lack of marketing training, and insufficient support hinder their ability to fully leverage this role.

Quantitative data illustrates the key agricultural activities that women contribute to, as reported by participants. The top six activities, listed in order of priority and percentage, are land irrigation, meal preparation for farmers, dairy processing, crop collection, harvesting, and drying fruits. Additional significant activities, although lower in importance, are also presented in the figure (see Figure 3).

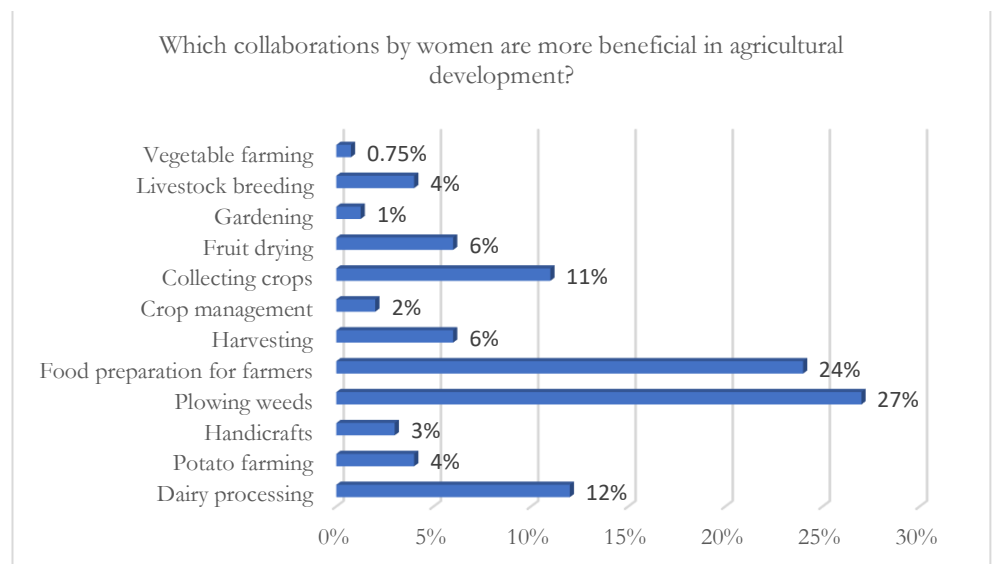


Figure 3. The most important activities of women in agriculture.

5.7. The Marketing Landscape of Agricultural Products in Bamyan Province

Marketing plays a crucial role in the agricultural development of Bamyan Province, as it bridges the gap between farmers and local, national, and even international markets. Effective marketing systems enable farmers to sell their products at better prices, understand market demand, and plan their crops more efficiently, ultimately boosting their income and productivity.

This section analyzes the marketing environment for agricultural products, identifying several critical challenges. Data indicate that most farmers struggle to achieve expected profits due to an unfavorable sales environment, as reflected in the percentage spectrum of the Likert scale. Despite these challenges, the consumption of agricultural products within the community remains high, effectively meeting the population's dietary needs. However, the data also reveal a significant discrepancy in market demand, with relatively low demand for these products beyond local consumption, further exacerbating unfavorable market

conditions (Figure 4).

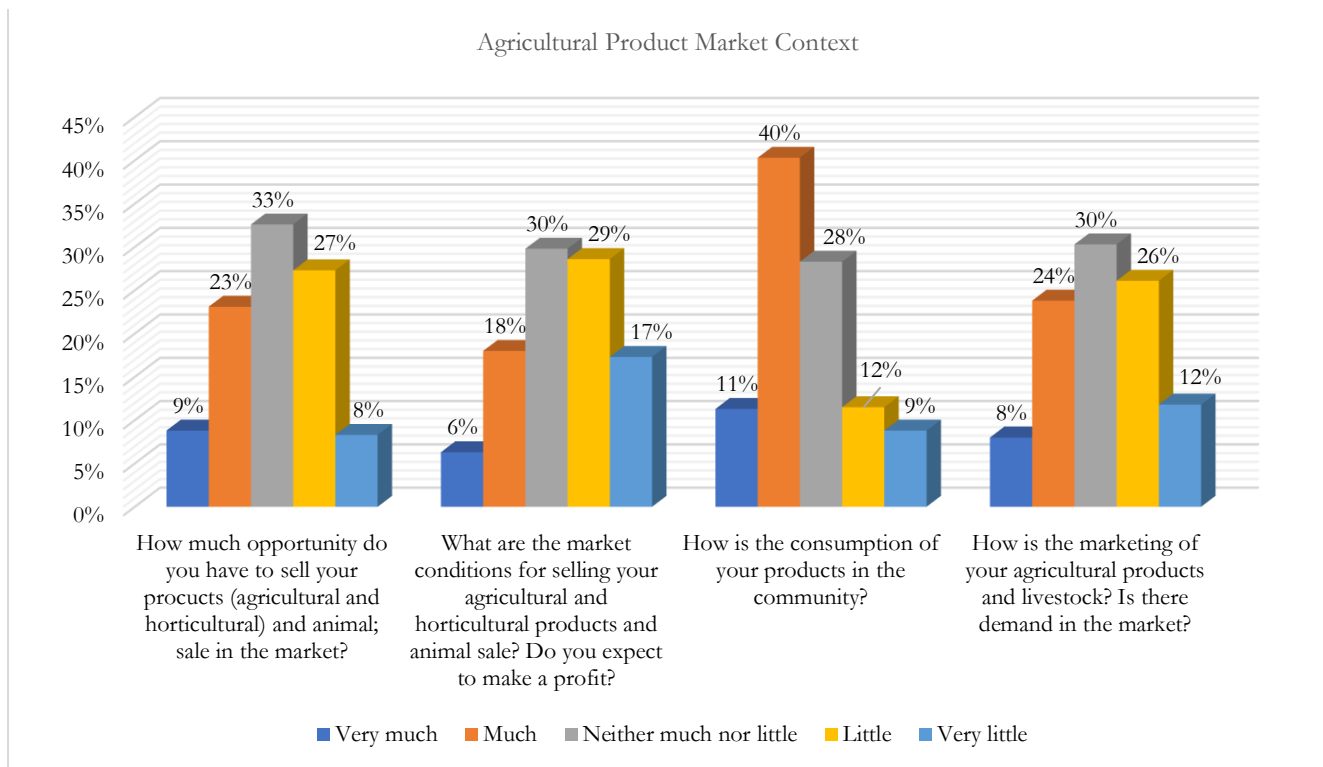


Figure 4. Agricultural product market context.

One of the key issues in marketing is access to local, national, and international markets. Statistics indicate that 96% of farmers lack access to these broader markets, selling their products primarily to local traders in their villages. Only 4% of farmers have access to both local and national markets.

Qualitative data reveals that farmers in Bamyan face significant challenges in achieving reasonable profits due to insufficient storage infrastructure, traditional marketing practices, and limited market access. Seasonal oversupply, particularly of potatoes, drives prices down, while reliance on local brokers and traders further constrains earnings. Additionally, the absence of modern marketing techniques, organizational support, and adequate storage facilities restricts access to national and international markets, despite the demand for high-quality products like potatoes both locally and abroad.

5.8. Farmers' Solidarity in Selling and Marketing Products

Solidarity among farmers is crucial in the sale and marketing of agricultural products. This collaboration can be achieved by forming agricultural cooperatives, local groups, or informal networks, allowing farmers to market their products collectively. Such an approach enhances their bargaining power against intermediaries and buyers, reduces transportation costs, and facilitates access to larger markets. Furthermore, farmers' solidarity serves as a platform for exchanging knowledge and experiences related to marketing, packaging, and product quality improvement, ultimately contributing to increased income and economic stability.

This section analyzes the collaboration among farmers in selling agricultural products. It indicates that only 4% of farmers sell their products collectively and in coordination, while a significant 96% sell their agricultural products individually and without coordination. Additionally, the data illustrates the decision-making process regarding pricing among farmers, showing that just 4% coordinate on setting the prices of their products, while 96% do not engage in price coordination (see Table 10).

Table 10. Coordination of farmers for the sale of agricultural products.

No	Questions	Answers	Frequency	Percent
1	Is there coordination among farmers in	Coordinated and collective sales products by	18	4%



	selling agricultural products? In other words, do they sell their products collectively and coordinated, or does each person sell their products individually?	farmers		
		Individual sale of products without coordination	382	96%
2	Is there coordination among farmers in determining the prices of agricultural products, or is it decided individually?	There is coordination in determining the price of agricultural products	15	4%
		There is no coordination among farmers in determining prices and rates	385	96%

5.9. Social institutions’ role in agricultural product marketing

Social institutions play a vital role in the marketing of agricultural products. They can facilitate communication between farmers and markets, provide access to up-to-date information, offer marketing skills training, and improve distribution networks, thereby creating better conditions for product sales. These institutions assist farmers in enhancing product quality, implementing effective marketing strategies, and staying informed about market conditions. However, in Bamyan, according to the data, 98% of participants report the absence of any local committee or institution that supports farmers and offers advice on agricultural marketing. In contrast, 2% of participants indicate that such a committee exists. Qualitative data further reveals that in the Bamyan region, only a few institutions and committees actively support farmers. Some respondents mentioned entities such as the Ministry of Agriculture, the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), and local agricultural committees that provide services, including consulting and the distribution of improved seeds, albeit with limited support. While some agricultural institutions were active during the Republic era, most have become inactive or less prominent today. Many participants express the belief that there is a lack of systemic support and effective institutions to assist farmers in the region.

5.10. Marketing Opportunities for Agricultural Products

The marketing opportunities for agricultural products in Bamyan are significantly expandable based on various indicators. Access to local and national markets is a crucial factor in enhancing the sale of agricultural products, and the creation of marketing opportunities can lead to increased farmers’ income. The availability of modern storage facilities to preserve products, along with improved transportation infrastructure, plays a vital role in maintaining product quality and reducing waste. Additionally, security in agricultural areas and along transportation routes is essential for market development.

Increasing productivity through the use of modern machinery and appropriate irrigation methods, paired with technical and vocational training in agriculture, can enhance both the quality and quantity of products, better aligning them with market demands. Ensuring sufficient water for irrigation is also critical for the sustainability and development of agriculture. Therefore, the integration of these factors can provide a solid foundation for the effective and sustainable marketing of agricultural products.

Marketing opportunities for agricultural products are assessed based on the Likert scale, with security identified as one of the most significant opportunities for enhancing agricultural product marketing (see Table 11). Based on the participants’ responses, there is currently no suitable infrastructure for marketing agricultural products, which is a serious issue that the government and relevant organizations must address urgently.

Table 11. Assessment of Agricultural Marketing Opportunity Indicators in Bamyan Province.

No	Agricultural Marketing Opportunities	Percents				
		Very much	much	Neither much nor little	little	Very little
1	Access to local and national markets	14.8 %	15.5 %	20.8 %	30.8 %	18.8 %
2	Marketing opportunities for products	2.0 %	7.0 %	27.3 %	36.0 %	27.8 %
3	Modern storage facilities for products	1.5 %	4.8 %	11.8 %	37.3 %	44.8 %
4	Transportation convenience	17.5%	13.5 %	20.8 %	36.8 %	11.5 %



5	Security	72.0%	14.3%	3.5%	5.3%	5.0%
6	Increasing productivity of crops	14.3 %	23.5 %	26.8 %	22.3 %	13.3 %
7	Access to new agricultural machinery	2.3%	9.0 %	18.3 %	38.8 %	31.8 %
8	Technical and vocational agricultural training	2.8%	3.0%	18.8%	35.3%	40.3%
9	Sufficient water availability for irrigation	28.6%	12.8%	19.0%	23.3%	16.3%

Qualitative data also highlight the limited marketing opportunities for agricultural products in Bamyan province. However, the region has the potential to establish storage facilities, offer marketing training, and create agricultural cooperatives to enhance marketing efforts and access to national and international markets. Additionally, there is an opportunity to diversify agricultural products and leverage available modern technologies.

5.11. Challenges of Agricultural Product Marketing

The challenges of agricultural product marketing in Bamyan Province are multifaceted and include price fluctuations, security issues, and a lack of adequate infrastructure, all of which hinder access to domestic and international markets. Transportation and logistical problems, coupled with the absence of proper storage facilities, often lead to product spoilage and reduced profits for farmers. Additionally, unstable access to essential production factors – such as improved seeds, chemical fertilizers, modern technologies, and technical and vocational training – further diminishes farmers’ competitiveness. Compounding these challenges, drought poses a serious threat to both agricultural and livestock production, jeopardizing food security in rural areas.

Data presented in the study outline the characteristics of agricultural product marketing challenges in Bamyan Province based on the Likert scale. Except for insecurity, all listed characteristics – price instability, transportation and logistics problems, storage issues for agricultural products, marketing challenges, and infrastructure problems – are identified as significant obstacles, with a high percentage of respondents acknowledging their impact (see Table 12).

Table 12. Examination of indicators of agricultural Marketing challenges in Bamyan Province.

No	Agricultural marketing challenges	Percents				
		Very much	much	Neither much nor little	little	Very little
1	Price instability	37.3 %	42.0 %	18.8 %	1.5 %	0.5 %
2	Insecurity	7.3 %	5.3 %	4.3 %	16.0 %	67.3 %
3	Transportation and logistics problems	18.0 %	23.3 %	32.8 %	10.5 %	15.5 %
4	Storage issues of agricultural products	48.0 %	26.5 %	19.3 %	4.5 %	1.8 %
5	Marketing challenges	27.5 %	28.0 %	29.0 %	14.0 %	1.5 %
6	Infrastructure problems	38.0 %	29.8 %	22.8 %	6.8 %	2.8 %
7	Instability in farmers’ access to essential production factors such as improved seeds, chemical fertilizers, new technology, etc.	36.5 %	30.5 %	21.0 %	6.3 %	5.8 %
8	Lack of access to technical and vocational agricultural training	22.0 %	37.5 %	30.5 %	8.8	1.3 %
9	Drought posing potential threats to agricultural and livestock production	41.5 %	21.3 %	20.8 %	9.8 %	6.8 %

Qualitative data indicate that the agricultural challenges in Bamyan province include a lack of irrigation water, the absence of proper markets, limited access to improved seeds and modern technologies, and inadequate infrastructure, such as roads and storage facilities. Additional factors contributing to reduced farmers’ productivity and increased costs include the lack of technical training, market fluctuations, recent droughts, unfavorable economic conditions, and insufficient government support.



5.12. Effective Agricultural Product Marketing Policy in Bamyan Province

An effective government policy plays a pivotal role in enhancing the marketing of agricultural products. By developing appropriate infrastructure, such as cold storage facilities and collection centers, and improving transportation systems, the government can help reduce waste and increase the added value of products. Supporting farmers through subsidies, specialized training, and incentive policies to attract private sector investment in the agricultural value chain can create opportunities for improving farmers' incomes. Additionally, the government can facilitate farmers' access to domestic and international markets and leverage modern marketing technologies, such as digital platforms, to strengthen direct connections between farmers and buyers, thereby elevating agricultural product marketing to a higher level.

However, data reveal a stark disconnect between the potential of government policies and their perceived implementation. Only 1% of participants believe that an effective government policy for agricultural product marketing exists in Bamyan, while 99% state that no such policy is in place. Similarly, while 1% of participants acknowledge the presence of a government policy supporting farmers and creating opportunities for local, national, and international markets, the overwhelming majority (99%) believe that no such supportive policy exists (see Table 13).

Table 13. Presence of an effective government policy for marketing agricultural products.

No	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1	3	1%	397	99%
2	3	1%	397	99%

Based on qualitative data, improving the marketing of agricultural products in Bamyan could be achieved through several key measures: creating suitable infrastructure, adopting modern technologies, strengthening transportation networks, enhancing access to domestic and international markets, and empowering farmers through training and resources. Government support, combined with farmers' focus on innovation and collaborative efforts, can further boost productivity and income.

The data presented above clearly indicate that the Bamyan community urgently requires an effective agricultural product marketing policy. However, the government and relevant institutions have yet to undertake meaningful actions to design and implement such a policy.

5. Discussion

The findings from this study provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted challenges and opportunities in agricultural product marketing in Bamyan Province, Afghanistan. These insights are critical for understanding the socio-economic dynamics of a region heavily reliant on agriculture for livelihoods and income generation. This discussion explores these findings thematically, focusing on key issues such as infrastructure limitations, educational gaps, gender dynamics, and institutional support. Additionally, the implications of these findings for the research question – addressing the opportunities and challenges of agricultural product marketing in Bamyan – are examined.

- Infrastructure limitations. A central theme emerging from this study is the lack of adequate infrastructure to support efficient agricultural marketing in Bamyan. Data reveal that 96% of farmers lack access to national and international markets, relying primarily on local middlemen and traders to sell their products. This dependence on intermediaries results in farmers receiving lower prices, particularly during the harvest season when oversupply drives prices down. This finding aligns with some studies (Rahimi & Artukoğlu, 2023; Lalzai et al., 2023), which emphasize the critical role of infrastructure in enabling market access. The absence of modern storage facilities exacerbates the problem, forcing farmers to sell their products immediately and depriving them of the opportunity to benefit from higher prices later.
- Educational gaps. Another significant theme is the limited access to educational

opportunities for farmers in agricultural marketing. Despite the pivotal role of marketing education in enhancing productivity and income, only 3% of farmers in Bamyan have received any form of agricultural marketing training. The study highlights that marketing education can significantly improve farmers' ability to adopt effective sales techniques, identify target markets, and utilize digital tools for better market integration. This finding is consistent with research by Alamyar and Boz (2018), who advocate for targeted training programs to address gaps in marketing knowledge.

- **Gender issues.** The role of women in agricultural product marketing is another critical theme explored in this study. Women play a significant role in agricultural production, particularly in planting, harvesting, processing, packaging, and selling local products. However, social restrictions and a lack of marketing training hinder their effectiveness in these roles. This finding reflects broader socio-cultural dynamics in Afghanistan, where gender norms often restrict women's participation in economic activities.

- **Institutional support.** The findings also highlight the limited activity of institutions and social committees in facilitating agricultural marketing in Bamyan. While some organizations, such as the Department of Agriculture and the AKF, offer limited services, farmers lack systemic and sustained support. According to the data, 99% of participants believe there is no effective government policy to support agricultural marketing in Bamyan. This lack of institutional support leaves farmers without the guidance and resources needed to navigate the complexities of agricultural marketing.

In summary, this study highlights the critical need for infrastructure development, educational initiatives, gender empowerment, and institutional support to address the challenges of agricultural product marketing in Bamyan. By addressing these issues, stakeholders can unlock the potential of Bamyan's agricultural sector, improve farmers' livelihoods, and contribute to the region's socio-economic development. These findings provide a foundation for future research and policy interventions aimed at fostering sustainable agricultural growth in Bamyan Province.

The absence of a cohesive and active marketing policy represents a significant obstacle to the development of agricultural marketing in Bamyan. The study emphasizes that government involvement is critical in formulating and implementing a comprehensive policy that addresses infrastructure improvements, marketing training, and enhanced market access for farmers. This aligns with the findings of Rahimi and Artukoğlu (2021), who highlight the necessity of government action to tackle the challenges facing Afghanistan's agricultural sector.

The study's findings also underscore the broader implications for sustainable agricultural development in Bamyan. The interplay of infrastructure challenges, lack of marketing education, gender constraints, and limited institutional support creates a fragile agricultural system that is highly vulnerable to economic fluctuations, climate change, and other external factors. Given that agriculture is the backbone of Bamyan's economy, addressing these issues is essential for improving the quality of life for farmers and ensuring long-term economic stability.

In relation to the research question – which explores the opportunities and challenges of agricultural marketing in Bamyan – the findings reveal that while opportunities exist (e.g., establishing storage facilities, providing marketing training, and forming agricultural cooperatives), significant barriers hinder their realization. Overcoming these barriers requires targeted interventions, including infrastructure investment, policy reform, educational initiatives, and strengthened institutional support.

The challenges and opportunities of agricultural product marketing in Bamyan are deeply interconnected and multifaceted. Addressing these challenges demands a holistic approach that integrates infrastructure development, targeted marketing education, gender empowerment, and robust institutional support. The findings of this study highlight the importance of creating an enabling environment for farmers to thrive in the agricultural market, which can significantly enhance their economic well-being and contribute to the overall development of the region. By focusing on these key areas, Bamyan can unlock the potential of its agricultural sector, improve farmers' livelihoods, and pave the way for sustainable economic growth.

6. Conclusions

The agricultural sector in Bamyan is a cornerstone of farmers' livelihoods, contributing 68.8% of their income, primarily from crops such as potatoes and wheat. However, farmers



face significant challenges, including limited marketing education, reliance on traditional methods, and inadequate infrastructure. While women play a substantial role in agricultural activities, social restrictions and a lack of marketing training constrain their potential contributions. Marketing practices remain predominantly traditional, with farmers depending on local middlemen, which leads to low prices, limited market access, and reduced income potential.

An analysis of coordination among farmers reveals that only 4% sell their products collectively, while 96% operate independently. Similarly, in pricing decisions, only 4% of farmers follow coordinated and collective procedures, whereas 96% set prices individually without coordination. These findings highlight the lack of collaboration and collective action among farmers, which undermines their bargaining power and market efficiency.

Moreover, the role of social institutions and committees in supporting agricultural product marketing is highly limited in Bamyan Province. This lack of organized and institutional support exacerbates existing challenges, reducing the efficiency and profitability of agricultural activities. Farmers also face environmental threats, such as droughts, which jeopardize agricultural and livestock productivity. A critical issue is the absence of an effective government policy to support agricultural marketing, with 99% of farmers acknowledging this gap. This lack of systematic support hinders the development of modern marketing strategies, storage infrastructure, and access to national and international markets.

To address these challenges, this study recommends the implementation of targeted policies focused on agricultural marketing, infrastructure development, and farmer education. Establishing storage facilities, modernizing transportation networks, and promoting agricultural cooperatives could enhance market access and reduce post-harvest losses. Providing training in modern marketing techniques and empowering women to participate more actively in the sector could further boost productivity and income. Strengthening government support and adopting adaptive measures to address climate challenges are essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability of Bamyan's agricultural sector.

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