

**ECONOMICS OF COTTON PRODUCTION, PROCESSING, AND MARKETING IN SOUTHWEST
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The author and presenter volunteered for a 12 month tour to Afghanistan with the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service spanning 2010. The author was appointed the Regional Agricultural Advisor for the Southwest Regional Command encompassing Helmand, Nimroz, and part of Farah Provinces. The author consulted with farmers, ginners, oil millers, and government officials on all aspects of cotton production, processing, and marketing. This presentation will concentrate on the economics of all phases of the industry in this volatile area of Afghanistan. The presentation will also address feasibility and policy issues that are rapidly developing as the industry struggles to mature. Cotton is favored by a majority of farmers in the area due to the crop's drought tolerance, soil salinity tolerance, prolonged harvest period, and profitability. Cotton may well provide a major part of the alternative livelihood Afghan producers are seeking to replace large scale poppy production. US policy and support will be critical to the viability of the commodity in the future.