



SUCCESS STORY

After Six Years, Justice and a Future for “Shohob-1”

Defending the land use rights of farmers



Shareholders of dehkan farm “Shohob-1” sowing their field.

“We were lucky to have our land back after six years, [and] now we are able to feed our families [with] no need to go abroad for a job.”

— Safar Tagoev, head of dehkan farm “Shohob-1”

Telling Our Story

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In August 2012, when Safar Tagoev established dehkan farm “Shohob-1” in Tajikistan’s Yovon District, he planned to use the land to improve his economic livelihood and grow food for his family. In October 2013, however, district authorities seized more than half of his 74 hectares, distributing them to other farms and a commercial entity. The reason? The local government claimed that Mr. Tagoev had voluntarily abandoned his land and, therefore, forfeited the right to farm it. What followed was a six-year campaign for Mr. Tagoev and 29 other shareholders to get back the land on which they had staked their economic futures.

Falsification of documents and corruption in local government remain a significant obstacle to land tenure security in Tajikistan. In addition, gaps in information and farmers’ understanding of land use rights prevent recognition of illegal actions.

Luckily, in July 2018, Mr. Tagoev and other shareholders had the opportunity to solve the issue by participating in a roundtable facilitated by the USAID *Feed the Future Tajikistan Land Market Development Activity*. At the roundtable, Qamchin Uzbekov — a local tashabbuskor, or land rights activist — consulted individually with farmers to help resolve their land issues. Mr. Uzbekov connected Mr. Tagoev to the district’s legal aid center, where attorney Mr. Bobisho Asoev and his colleagues took the case.

After reviewing the facts, the legal aid center submitted a claim to the Economic Court of Khatlon Region to invalidate the district authority’s decision. On January 8, 2019, the court declared that the land should be returned to dehkan farm “Shohob-1.”

The decision was as timely as it was happy, because it allowed the shareholders to sow the land during the spring and produce food for their families that year. For Mr. Tagoev, the outcome was a satisfying end to a hard-fought battle and provided hope for a bright economic future in his homeland. *“We were lucky to have our land back after six years [and] now we are able to feed our families [with] no need to go abroad for a job,”* he said.

In total, the *Land Market Development Activity* and legal aid centers assisted 35,919 citizens with individual consultations and representation in courts and mediations, resulting in the return of 857 hectares and helping farmers to secure their land rights, demand transparency, and acquire sustainable food security.