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**AFGHANISTAN**

## Sowing Hope: Shafiq's Path to Sustainable Farming and Resilience

**USAID/AVCP equips farmers with modern techniques that reduce costs, boost productivity, and promote sustainable farming, improving both their livelihoods and long-term success.**



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Shafiq at the composting pit created as a result of his skill building through AVCP.

***"Before the compost-making training, I struggled to keep my farm going. My crops were weak, and the costs of chemical fertilizers were too high. But now, I make my own compost, my crops are healthier, and I've cut my expenses. Not only am I saving money, but I'm also helping the environment. This training has completely changed how I farm and how I live."***

**- Shafiq**

In a quiet village nestled in Helmand Province's Nad-e-Ali District, Shafiq faced a growing crisis on his farm: years of relying on chemical fertilizers had drained his finances and degraded the fertility of his soil, affecting his crop yield and his family's livelihood. Unpredictable weather patterns and continued water access issues only made matters worse. Shafiq knew his current farming methods were unsustainable.

Rather than giving in to these mounting pressures, Shafiq decided to take a new approach. He enrolled in a compost-making training program offered through USAID's Agricultural Value Chains Program (AVCP). This initiative taught farmers like Shafiq how to create organic compost from readily available on-farm materials, cutting their dependence on costly fertilizers while naturally improving soil health.

The results are ongoing, but no less significant. By applying the composting techniques he learned through AVCP, Shafiq is actively rebuilding the health of his soil. The application of compost on soil enriches the natural biome of the soil, and the introduction of organic matter supports increased water and nutrient retention. Financially, the shift was transformative -- by reducing his use of expensive chemical inputs and fertilizers, Shafiq has retained a significant portion of his farm budget, which he has been able to reinvest into his farm.

Shafiq did not stop there. Motivated by the success he saw; he became an advocate for sustainable farming within his community. He shared his knowledge with other farmers, demonstrating first-hand the benefits of composting. His leadership sparked a wave of change, with many farmers in the village adopting these sustainable practices to improve their own yields.

Shafiq's journey is part of a broader success story. Through the AVCP composting initiative, 1,001 farmers across nine provinces, including Helmand, have been trained in sustainable practices. These farmers are now utilizing livestock waste, reducing costs, increasing yields, and improving their soil health.

Today, Shafiq's farm is a powerful example of how sustainable agricultural practices can transform not only individual farms but entire communities. His story is proof that with the right tools and knowledge, Afghan farmers can secure a more resilient and prosperous future for themselves and their families.