



**UNODC**

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



**Islamic Republic of Afghanistan  
Ministry of Counter Narcotics**



# Afghanistan Opium Survey 2015

Executive Summary

OCTOBER 2015

## ABBREVIATIONS

AGE	Anti-Government elements
ANP	Afghan National Police
CNPA	Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan
GLE	Governor-led eradication
ICMP	Illicit Crop Monitoring Programme (UNODC)
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
MCN	Ministry of Counter-Narcotics
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following organizations and individuals contributed to the implementation of the Afghanistan Opium Survey and to the preparation of this report:

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Prof. Salamat Azimi (Minister), Haroon Rashid Sherzad (Deputy Minister), Mohammad Ibrahim Azhar (Deputy Minister), Sayed Najibullah Ahmadi (Acting Director of Narcotics Survey Directorate), Humayon Faizzad (Provincial Affairs Director), Saraj Ahmad (Deputy Director of Narcotics Survey Directorate), Nasir Ahmad Karimi (Deputy Director of Narcotics Survey Directorate) Mohammad Ajmal Sultani (Statistical Data Analyst), Mohammad Hakim Hayat (GIS & Remote sensing analyst), Shabir Ahmad Taieb (GIS & Remote Sensing Analyst), Sayed Shahenshah Sadat (Quality Control and Digit Specialist), Ahmad Mustafa Safi (Database Analysis & Statistics Member), Najeem Alcozai (Database Analysis & Statistics Member), Karimdad Qadari (Database Analysis & Statistics Member) and Hamida Hussaini (Administrative Officer)

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### *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (Vienna)*

Jean-Luc Lemahieu (Director, Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs), Angela Me (Chief, Research and Trend Analysis Branch), Chloe Carpentier (Chief Statistics and Surveys Section), Coen Bussink (GIS & Remote Sensing Expert), Irmgard Zeiler (Statistician).

The implementation of the survey would not have been possible without the dedicated work of the field surveyors, who often faced difficult security conditions.

The MCN/UNODC Illicit Crop Monitoring activities in Afghanistan were made possible by financial contributions from the Governments of Germany, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland the United States of America.

## Introduction

The report presents the key findings of the *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2015*. The full report on cultivation and production will be published in November and a separate report with a socio-economic analysis will be presented early 2016. The survey is implemented annually by MCN in collaboration with the UNODC. The survey team collects and analyses information on the location and extent of opium cultivation, potential opium production and the socio-economic situation in rural areas. Since 2005, MCN and UNODC have also been involved in the verification of opium eradication conducted by provincial governors and poppy-eradication forces. The information is essential for planning, implementing and monitoring the impact of measures required for tackling a problem that has serious implications for Afghanistan and the international community.

The opium survey is implemented within the technical framework of the UNODC Illicit Crop Monitoring Programme (ICMP). The objective of ICMP is to assist the international community in monitoring the extent and evolution of illicit crops in the context of the Plan of Action adopted by the United Nations (the 53<sup>rd</sup> session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in March 2009). Under ICMP, monitoring activities currently supported by UNODC also exist in other countries affected by illicit crop cultivation: in Asia, Myanmar and the Lao People's Democratic Republic; in Latin America, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru; in Africa, Nigeria.

The *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2015* was implemented under project AFG/F98, "Monitoring of Opium Production in Afghanistan", with financial contributions from the Governments of Germany, Norway, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.

**Fact Sheet, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2015<sup>1</sup>**

	<b>2014</b>	<b>Change from 2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
Net opium poppy cultivation (after eradication)	224,000 ha (200,000 - 250,500)	-19%	183,000 ha (163,000 - 202,000)
Number of poppy free provinces <sup>2</sup>	15	-1	14
Number of provinces affected by poppy cultivation	19	+1	20
Verified eradication	2,692 ha	+40%	3,760 ha
Average opium yield (weighted by cultivation)	28.7 kg/ha	-36%	18.3 kg/ha
Potential production of opium	6,400 tons (5,100 - 7,800)	-48%	3,300 tons (2,700 - 3,900)

<sup>1</sup> Numbers in brackets indicate the upper and lower bounds of the estimation range.

<sup>2</sup> Poppy free provinces are those which are estimated to have less than 100 ha of opium poppy cultivation.

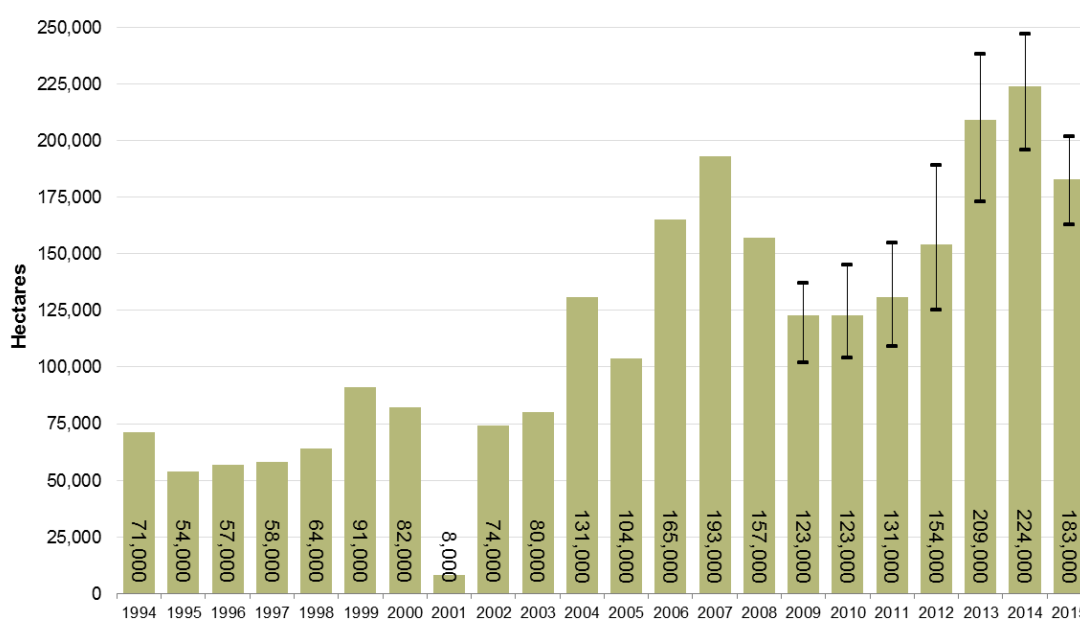
## Executive Summary

### Area under opium poppy cultivation decreased by 19%

The total area under opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan was estimated to be 183,000 hectares (163,000 - 202,000) in 2015, which represents a 19% decrease from 2014. Area under opium poppy cultivation has decreased for the first time since 2009 and is at its fourth highest level since the beginning of estimations in 1994; higher levels have been estimated in 2007, 2013 and 2014.

In 2015, 97% of total opium cultivation in Afghanistan took place in the Southern, Eastern and Western regions of the country, which include the country's most insecure provinces. The Southern region accounted for 66% of total cultivation; the Western region for 24% and the Eastern region for 7%, where cultivation concentrated in Kapisa, Kunar, Laghman and Nangarhar provinces. The remaining regions (Northern, North-Eastern and Central) together accounted for 3%.

**Figure 1: Opium cultivation in Afghanistan, 1994-2015 (Hectares)**



Sources: UNODC and UNODC/MCN opium surveys 1994-2015. The high-low lines represent the upper and lower bounds of the 95% confidence interval.

Hilmand remained the country's major opium-cultivating province (86,443 hectares), followed by Farah (21,106 hectares), Kandahar (21,020 hectares), Badghis (12,391 hectares), Uruzgan<sup>3</sup> (11,277 hectares), Nangarhar (10,016 hectares), Nimroz (8,805 hectares), and Badakhshan (4,056 hectares).

The number of poppy-free provinces in Afghanistan decreased in 2015. In the Northern region, Balkh (204 hectares) lost its poppy-free status, which it had regained in 2014.

All three main opium-cultivating regions experienced a decrease in poppy-cultivation levels in 2015, with the largest relative decrease being in the Eastern region (-40%; mainly driven by decreases in Nangarhar), followed by the Southern (-20%) and Western (-10%) regions. In the Central (+38%) and Northern (+154%) regions a strong increase was observed. In the North-eastern region (-5%) area under poppy cultivation could be considered as stable.

<sup>3</sup> Including Gizab district, a district formally part of Day Kundi, but under the administration of the Governor of Uruzgan province.



Opium cultivation decreased in most of the main opium poppy-growing provinces, including Nangarhar (-45%), Nimroz (-40%), Kandahar (-38%), Farah (-23%), Hilmand (-16%) and Badakhshan (-4%), whereas it increased in Badghis (+117%) and Uruzgan (+22%) provinces.

However, caution is needed when interpreting these results: Between 2014 and 2015, the availability of improved technology led to a major improvement in the methodology used to estimate area under poppy cultivation. The changes affected all 12 provinces in which a sampling approach to select satellite imagery was employed (estimation method “S” in Table 4 “Opium cultivation and eradication”), including all major opium poppy-growing provinces.

The change in methodology may have had the effect of making the extent of changes appear greater than it actually was. While additional research undertaken by MCN/UNODC confirms the direction of the change (decrease/increase) at provincial, regional and national level, the actual extent of the change needs to be taken with caution as some of it may be due to methodological changes. Caution is in particular required in four provinces, Badghis, Kandahar, Nangarhar and Zabul, which were particularly affected by the shift to the new methodology. A detailed discussion of the effects of the change in methodology will be provided in the full report on cultivation and production.

**Table 1: Regional distribution of opium cultivation, 2014-2015 (Hectares)**

Region	2014 (ha)	2015 (ha)	Change 2014-2015 (%)	2014 (ha) as % of total	2015 (ha) as % of total
Southern	149,711	119,765	-20%	67%	66%
Western	49,049	44,308	-10%	22%	24%
Eastern	20,353	12,242	-40%	9%	7%
North-eastern	4,253	4,056	-5%	2%	2%
Central	233	321	+38%	0.1%	0.2%
Northern	738	1,875	+154%	0.3%	1.0%
<b>Rounded Total</b>	<b>224,000</b>	<b>183,000</b>	<b>-19%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **Total eradication of opium poppy increased by 40%**

A total of 3,760 hectares of verified poppy eradication was carried out by the provincial Governors in 2015, representing an increase of 40% from 2014 when 2,692 hectares of Governor-led eradication (GLE) was verified by MCN/UNODC.

Eradication took place in 12 provinces in 2015 (17 provinces in 2014): Badakhshan, Day Kundi, Farah, Hilmand, Kandahar, Kunar, Laghman, Nangarhar, Nimroz, Sari Pul, Takhar and Uruzgan.

The largest amount of poppy eradication took place in Hilmand province (1,747 hectares; 122% more than in 2014), followed by Badakhshan province (1,246 hectares; 12% less than in 2014), and Kandahar, where 396 hectares were eradicated (482% more than in 2014).

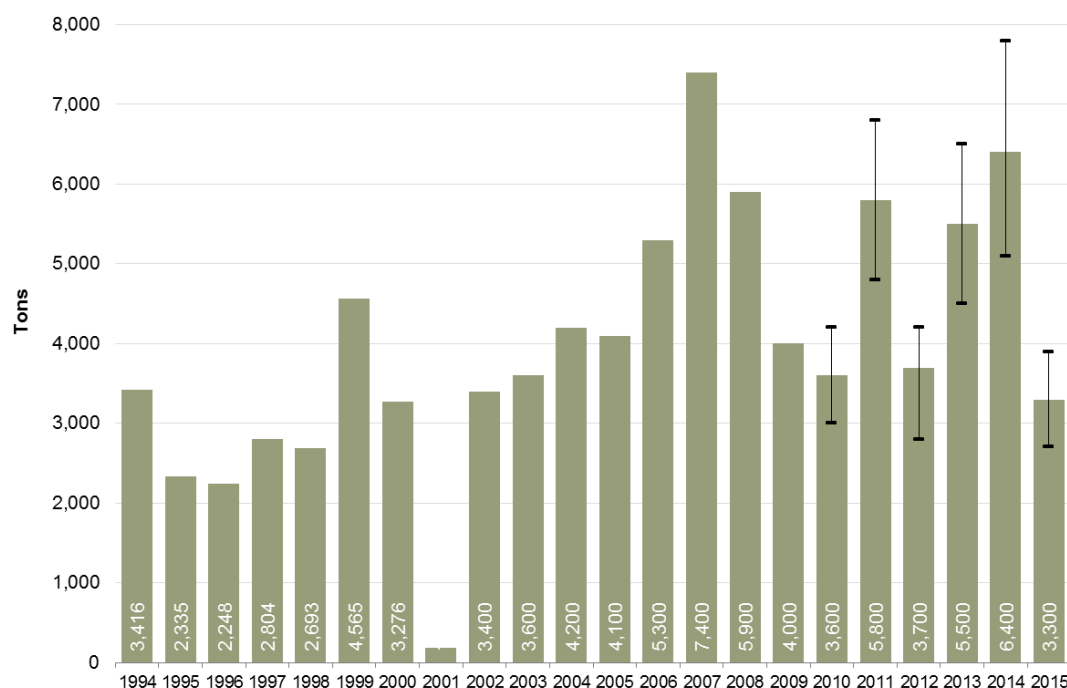
In 2015, less security incidences occurred than in 2014. In 2015, 5 lives were lost (1 Police officer, 3 Afghan Local Police officers, and 1 member of the Afghan National Army) and 18 persons were injured (2 Police officers, 3 Afghan Local Police officers, 7 members of the Afghan National Army and 6 farmers). In 2014, 13 lives were lost and 26 persons were injured.

The increased security during eradication has been attributed to a better coordination between the Ministry of Counternarcotics and the Ministries of Defense and Interior. Eradication was carried out in the vicinity of military operations in Hilmand and Kandahar provinces, which reportedly increased security.

## Potential opium yield and production decreased in 2015

In 2015, estimated potential opium production in Afghanistan amounted to 3,300 tons (2,700-3,900 tons), a decrease of 48% from its 2014 level (6,400 tons). Average opium yield amounted to 18.3 kilograms per hectare, which was 36% less than in 2014 (28.7 kilograms per hectare).

**Figure 2: Potential opium production in Afghanistan, 1994-2015 (Tons)**



Sources: UNODC and UNODC/MCN opium surveys, 1994-2015. Figures refer to oven-dry opium.

The low production is a result of a reduction in area under cultivation, but more importantly of a reduction in opium yield per hectare. Yield decreased in all main opium poppy cultivating regions. The strongest decrease occurred in the Southern region, where the average yield decreased by 45% from 29.5 kilograms per hectare in 2014 to 16.1 kilograms per hectare in 2015, followed by the Western region (-20%; from 20.4 in 2014 to 16.3 kilograms per hectare in 2015) and in the Eastern region (-8%; from 39.6 in 2014 to 36.5 kilograms per hectare 2015).

The low yield in the Southern and Western regions had a strong impact on the decline in the national production. There have been no wide-spread reports of a disease affecting the quality of poppies. Reports from the field (Nimroz province) pointed towards a lack of water, which may have affected field quality and thus yields. This has been confirmed by satellite imagery and field photographs from the Western and Southern regions, which showed overall poor quality of the fields (low plant density).

Accounting for 58% of national production, the Southern region continued to produce the vast majority of opium in Afghanistan. With 22% of national production, the Western region was the country's second most important opium-producing region in 2015, followed by the Eastern region (13%).

**Table 2: Opium yield, by region, 2014-2015 (Kilograms per hectare)**

Region	2014 average yield (kg/ha)	2015 average yield (kg/ha)	% Change
Central	48.5	41.5	-14%
Eastern	39.6	36.5	-8%
North-eastern	38.2	39.6	+4%
Northern	34.5	38.3	+11%
Southern	29.5	16.1	-45%
Western	20.4	16.3	-20%
<b>Weighted national average</b>	<b>28.7</b>	<b>18.3</b>	<b>-36%</b>

**Table 3: Potential opium production, by region, 2014-2015 (Tons)**

Region	Production 2014	Production 2015	Change 2014-2015 (%)	2014 (tons) as % of total	2015 (tons) as % of total
Central	11	13	+15%	0.2%	0.4%
Eastern	805	446	-45%	13%	13%
North-eastern	161	161	0%	3%	5%
Northern	20	72	+264%	0.3%	2%
Southern	4,420	1,928	-56%	69%	58%
Western	999	721	-28%	16%	22%
<b>Total (rounded)</b>	<b>6,400</b>	<b>3,300</b>	<b>-48%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>



Table 4: Opium cultivation and eradication in Afghanistan 2014-2015 (Hectares)

PROVINCE	Cultivation 2014 (ha)	Cultivation 2015 (ha)	Change 2014-2015 (%)	Estimation method 2015	Eradication in 2014 (ha)	Eradication in 2015 (ha)	Change 2014-2015 (%)
Ghazni	Poppy-free	Poppy-free	NA	V	0	0	NA
Kabul	233	321	+38%	T	0	0	NA
Khost	Poppy-free	Poppy-free	NA	V	0	0	NA
Logar	Poppy-free	Poppy-free	NA	V	0	0	NA
Paktika	Poppy-free	Poppy-free	NA	V	0	0	NA
Paktya	Poppy-free	Poppy-free	NA	V	0	0	NA
Panjshir	Poppy-free	Poppy-free	NA	V	0	0	NA
Parwan	Poppy-free	Poppy-free	NA	V	0	0	NA
Wardak	Poppy-free	Poppy-free	NA	V	0	0	NA
<b>Central Region</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>+38%</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>NA</b>
Kapisa	472	460	-3%	T	26	0	-100%
Kunar	754	987	+31%	S	75	9	-88%
Laghman	901	779	-14%	T	1	7	+600%
Nangarhar	18,227	10,016	-45%	S	34	137	+303%
Nuristan	Poppy-free	Poppy-free	NA	T	0	0	NA
<b>Eastern Region</b>	<b>20,354</b>	<b>12,242</b>	<b>-40%</b>		<b>136</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>13%</b>
Badakhshan	4,204	4,056	-4%	S	1,411	1,246	-12%
Takhar	Poppy-free	Poppy-free	NA	T	1	12	+1,100%
Kunduz	Poppy-free	Poppy-free	NA	T	9	0	-100%
<b>North-eastern Region</b>	<b>4,204</b>	<b>4,056</b>	<b>NA</b>		<b>1,421</b>	<b>1,258</b>	<b>-11%</b>
Baghlan	168	180	+7%	T	3	0	-100%
Balkh	Poppy-free	204	NA	T	35	0	-100%
Bamyan	Poppy-free	Poppy-free	NA	V	0	0	NA
Faryab	211	1,160	+451%	T	10	0	-100%
Jawzjan	Poppy-free	Poppy-free	NA	T	0	0	NA
Samangan	Poppy-free	Poppy-free	NA	V	0	0	NA
Sari Pul	195	331	+70%	T	43	33	-23%
<b>Northern Region</b>	<b>574</b>	<b>1,875</b>	<b>+227%</b>		<b>91</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>-64%</b>
Day Kundi*	587	381	-35%	S	6	5	-17%
Hilmand	103,240	86,443	-16%	S	787	1,747	+122%
Kandahar	33,713	21,020	-38%	S	68	396	+482%
Uruzgan*	9,277	11,277	+22%	S	163	75	-54%
Zabul	2,894	644	-78%	S	12	0	-100%
<b>Southern Region</b>	<b>149,711</b>	<b>119,765</b>	<b>-20%</b>		<b>1,036</b>	<b>2,223</b>	<b>115%</b>
Badghis	5,721	12,391	+117%	S	0	0	NA
Farah	27,513	21,106	-23%	S	0	52	NA
Ghor	493	1,721	+249%	S	8	0	-100%
Hirat	738	285	-61%	T	0	0	NA
Nimroz	14,584	8,805	-40%	S	0	40	NA
<b>Western Region</b>	<b>49,048</b>	<b>44,308</b>	<b>-10%</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>1,055%</b>
<b>Total (rounded)</b>	<b>224,000</b>	<b>183,000</b>	<b>-19%</b>		<b>2,692</b>	<b>3,760</b>	<b>+40%</b>

Area estimation method: S=remote sensing sample survey, T=remote sensing target survey, V=village sample survey and field observation. See Methodology section for detailed description of methods used. A province is defined as poppy-free when it is estimated to have less than 100 hectares of opium cultivation.

\* Gizab district of Day Kundi province was considered under Uruzgan province as per presidential decree.

