

# Drugs Statement, Opium Poppy Cultivation and Cropping Season in Afghanistan (2006-2022)

Nasibullah Khalili<sup>1</sup>; Noorullah Azizi<sup>2</sup>; Dr. Ali Ahmad<sup>3\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Student of Law and Political Science Faculty, Bost University, Peace Watt, Lashkar Gah 3901-Helmand, Afghanistan

<sup>2</sup>Lecturer and Dean of Law and Political Science Faculty, Bost University, Peace Watt, Lashkar Gah 3901 - Helmand, Afghanistan

<sup>3\*</sup>Associate Professor & Head of Research Center, Agriculture Faculty, Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension, Helmand University, Peace Watt, Lashkar Gah 3901 – Helmand, Afghanistan

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## Abstract:

This article discusses the variables that contribute to drug trafficking and usage in Afghanistan as well as the illegal drug cultivation taking place there, the money generated there, the financial advantages of using drugs, the international market, and these aspects. The prevention of drug-related crimes and measures to stop drug usage and trafficking in Afghanistan have also been mentioned.

**Keywords:** Drugs, Cultivation, Harvest, Factors of drugs addiction and trafficking

## Introduction

It's concerning that drug addiction is still a problem in Afghanistan. In this place, a fresh calamity strikes every year. The drug problem in Afghanistan should receive more attention from the international community in order to prevent further tragedies. In order to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a disaster, we will once more provide information that has been gathered on the state of drugs. Various statistics and information about drugs have already been published. The area under opium poppy cultivation in the 2022 cropping season was estimated at 233,000 hectares. Opium cultivation continued to be concentrated in the south-western parts of the country (accounting

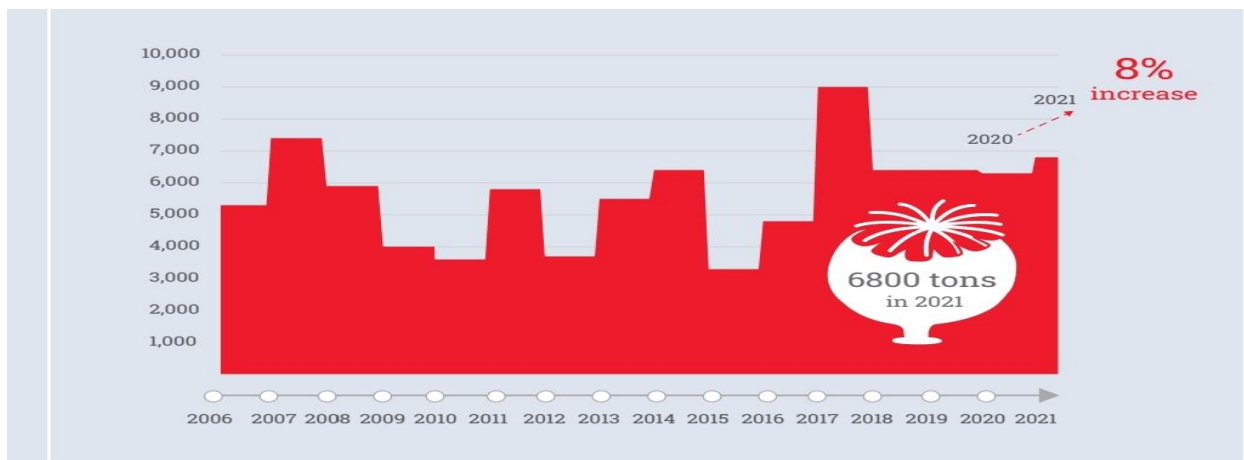
for 73%), where the largest increases took place, followed by the western provinces (accounting for 14%). In some regions opium poppy cultivation occupied a significant proportion of overall agricultural land. For example, in Hilmand province one-fifth of arable land was dedicated to opium poppy, and in some districts the proportion was even higher – taking away fields from vitally important food crops, including wheat. Following drought conditions in early 2022, opium yields declined from an average of 38.5kg/ ha in 2021, to an estimated 26.7 kg/ha in 2022, yielding an opium harvest of 6,200 tons (10% less than the 6,800 tons in 2021). The 2022 opium harvest can be converted into 350 – 580 tons of heroin of export quality (50 – 70% purity). The Taliban de facto authorities announced a ban on opium poppy cultivation in April 2022, just as the opium harvest was about to begin. However, a grace period of two months was granted, and this year’s harvest was largely unaffected by the ban, although some eradication was reported to have taken place.<sup>1 2</sup> The ban caused prices to increase dramatically, with per-kilogram prices nearly doubling from USD 116 in March 2022 to USD 203 after the announcement. This came on top of already elevated prices which had spiked following the takeover in August 2021. Recent years have been marked by depressed prices since the record harvest of 2017 and continued abundant supply, but political upheaval and uncertainty over the future of the market have seemingly decoupled prices from broader market dynamics. The high prices during harvest time in 2022 tripled the income made by farmers from opium sales, from USD 425 million in 2021 to USD 1.4 billion in 2022. However, the increase in income did not necessarily translate into purchasing power as inflation has soared during the same period. The price of food increased on average by 35 percent, with the poor spending 60-70 percent of their income just to eat. Recent reports indicate that overall inflation increased from 4.2 percent in August 2021 to 17.9 percent in June 2022 (UNODC, 2022).

### **1. Drugs Harvest in Afghanistan:**

In the production of drugs, Afghanistan is one of the countries that produce different types of drugs at a high level. In 2021, the latest statistics show that poppy production in Afghanistan was higher than 6,000 tons. In the five years before 2021, opium production in Afghanistan was also at a high level, reaching 8,000 thousand tons in 2018. Was complete This production includes different types of drugs made from poppy, generally up to 320 tons of pure heroin are

produced in Afghanistan and offered to international markets every year. Also, the production of hashish from Afghanistan is at a high level, which is transferred to international markets. After 1980, the cultivation of hashish in Afghanistan was decreasing and until 2001, the graph of hashish was falling, but after 2001, the cultivation of hashish in Afghanistan became faster and more. It is in this situation that the executive director of UNODC in 2010 called Afghanistan the largest producer of hashish (UNODC, 2021).

**Fig. 1: Statistics of opium harvest in Afghanistan from 2006-2021**



Source: (UNODC, 2021)

## 2. Land Grown on Poppy in Afghanistan:

The highest income of Afghan farmers' incomes is from poppy, and they meet the basic necessities of life through this income. Due to the fact that Afghan farmers earn more than poppy more than other halal crops, poppy cultivation is increasing. Before 2010, poppy plants were planted only in one season of the year, but since that year, poppy smugglers have obtained seeds from their international partners that farmers can grow different varieties of poppy plants in different seasons of the year. In 2021, according to a UNODC survey, 177,000 hectares of land in Afghanistan were planted with poppy. This poppy cultivation is 21 percent lower than in 2020. Because 224,000 hectares of land was planted with poppy in 2020. Poppy cultivation in

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Afghanistan was traditionally very simple in the beginning, but after 2010, poppy farmers, with the help of drug traffickers, learned new methods for poppy cultivation. Also, various types of chemicals for poppy cultivation were available to poppy growers for better cultivation and better production, which would enable them to produce higher yields from less land (UNODC, 2021).

### **3. International Markets:**

After planting poppy in Afghanistan, the farmers sell it in local markets to national and international poppy smugglers. Afghan poppy is transferred to different countries of the world, the entire process of this transfer is illegal. There are also poppy processing factories in Afghanistan, which make different kinds of drugs from poppy and then illegally transport them to neighboring countries, Europe, the Middle East and North America by international smugglers. Afghanistan's drugs have international sales markets in all the above countries. According to a UNODC report, more than 25 million people in the world use drugs produced in Afghanistan. Any kind of financial, economic and compositional changes in Afghanistan's drugs have different effects on drug users, drug traffickers and international drug markets all over the world. According to some reports of the United Nations, there are 4 million people in Afghanistan who are involved in the drug trade. Afghanistan is one of the best producers and markets for the international drug market (World Drug Report, 2021).

### **4. Drugs Proceeds in Afghanistan:**

From the sale of drug seeds to local, national and international trade, all drug traffickers have financial income from these illegal activities. National and international drug traffickers are making huge financial gains. The process of growing, extracting and producing poppy is a major source of income for Afghanistan. Afghans could earn between 1.7 and 2.5 billion dollars from poppy in 2021. According to a UNODC survey conducted in 2019, it is revealed that poppy farmers and all beauticians pay 6 percent of taxes to non-governmental actors. Non-governmental actors' tax is based on sales, when the sale price of poppies is high, they take a lot

of tax, but when the sale price is low, and they reduce the tax. In general, non-governmental operators charge a tax of 2 to 10 percent on the sale of poppy. The latest data for 2019 shows that 14.5 million dollars have been paid in taxes to poppy farmers and stakeholders. In Afghanistan, non-governmental activists use these taxes for their own purposes. For non-governmental activists, it is a high source of income that they earn from all kinds of poppy production and transportation. The above income of poppy to Afghanistan is a very small part, the major part of the income is also earned by other countries. International drug traffickers also make high profits from Afghanistan's poppies. Afghanistan's heroin and hashish are widely used in international markets and have high incomes for the parties involved. In any case, Afghans have an income of 1.8 to 2.7 billion dollars from poppy and its compounds alone. Afghans earn much more money from all drug production (UNODC, 2021).

### **5. Illegal Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan:**

Providing conditions for poppy cultivation is the most important task of poppy smugglers. Poppy smugglers closely monitor social, economic and security factors and then cultivate and trade poppy plants. The conditions for growing poppy plants in Afghanistan are very similar. The country's bad social situation, bad and chaotic economic situation causes farmers to cultivate poppy freely. The poor living conditions of the farmers make them to cultivate the weedy poppy plant. Most of the poppy farmers are at a low level of life, these farmers are located in the districts of Afghanistan that are far away from the educational field. Also, the residents of the districts of Afghanistan who have the possibility and access to the markets of the cities do not cultivate poppy, because for such farmers there are transport routes to the city and transport equipment, but those farmers who don't have access to highways and don't have access to city markets for their products, or it is difficult to transport their products, they are attracted to poppy cultivation because poppy smugglers often live in such areas for their own profit. Also, in the areas where the farmers grow poppy on a large scale, they have been far away from the aid of the government and international organizations, public awareness, literacy and other useful

programs. More poppy farmers than non-poppy farmers have expressed vulnerability due to their poverty and lack of opportunities (UNODC, 2022). Some of the factors associated with poppy cultivation include low income from legal crops, lack of planting material, large number of family members and lack of regular and constructed highways. In addition to this, poppy farmers also suffer from insecurity and mistrust. 20 percent of the poppy farmers had low confidence in the responsible authorities to protect their lives, 14 percent had a low belief in the unity of the community, but the farmers who do not grow poppy trust their responsible authorities to bring a better life. He believed and had a good opinion about unity (UNODC, 2017).

#### **6. Factors of Drugs Addiction and Trafficking:**

Narcotic drugs are forbidden according to the rules of Islamic Shari'ah (the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: Every intoxicant is forbidden). Drugs are forbidden in Islam. Drug addiction and drug trafficking in Afghanistan have some factors:

- a. Personal factors: Among the personal factors, psychological problems and lack of personality development can be mentioned. People with mental problems become addicted to drugs, because these people do not respect religious, moral and social principles. Some people use drugs to get rid of mental stress and to relieve some pain.
- b. Family factors: among these factors, hypocrisy in the family, bad behavior between parents, death of father or mother, and non-guardianship of children should be mentioned.
- 3-Cultural factors: Some people use drugs for fun and to pass the time, imitate from movies and cinema and then become addicted to drugs.
- c. Social factors: Relationships between unhealthy people, especially drug addicts, cause young people to turn to drug use, non-enforcement of the law and lack of public awareness are among the reasons (Safi, 2014).

Also there is some prevention of drug-related crimes:

- a. Governments should Restrictions on the production, trafficking and use of drugs.

- b. Arrest and prosecute those who are involved in drug production and trafficking.
- c. The general awareness of the people should be high and people should be aware of the harms of drugs.
- d. Unemployed people should find a suitable job.
- e. Films, cinemas and songs should prevent showing drugs.
- f. The heads of the families should supervise the younger ones.
- g. The government will pay special attention to the treatment of drug addicts.
- h. Addicts should not be humiliated unnecessarily (Danish, 2010).

### **7. Future Risks from Drugs in Afghanistan:**

The past three decades of conflict and instability in Afghanistan have put considerable strain on traditional coping mechanisms and survival strategies. Displacement of populations within and outside the country has largely destroyed extended family structures and clans. Consequently, the population has been left vulnerable to a wide range of mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) – common risk factors for initiation of drug use and development of drug use disorders. While use of drugs such as cannabis and opiates is well established in Afghanistan, the past decade has seen an expansion of the drug market with the production and use of synthetic drugs such as methamphetamine. Epidemiological data on drug use in Afghanistan are patchy but what is clear is that drug use, notably opiate use, is among the highest in the world. Three national drug use surveys have been conducted since 2009, but their findings are not comparable since they covered different population groups and employed different methodologies. In 2020 a survey was conducted among the young people. While in 2015 a survey was conducted among Afghan households and in 2009 a survey targeted adult regular drug users and key informants. Based on the surveys carried out in 2009 and 2015, it is likely that between 1 and 2 million Afghans use alcohol and drugs, including pharmaceutical drugs for non-medical purposes. The national survey on drug use in 2009 estimated that around 800,000 people had regularly used drugs (excluding alcohol) in the past year. The 2015 survey looked at the presence of drugs in

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biological samples of the survey participants, and estimated that between 1.9 million and 2.3 million people had used alcohol and other drugs in that year, including some medical use of opioids (UNODC, 2021).

The 2015 survey concluded that 2,757 families visited the survey, with at least one person addicted to drugs. The survey also found that cannabis and opium are widely used in Afghanistan. Cannabis and opium cultivation has made Afghanistan a major producer of narcotics (UNODC, 2021).

One of the biggest and most sustained problems in Afghanistan, which is a major concern, is that drug addicts are spreading the habit of drug addicts to their children. Another concern is that some children are given drugs in the form of drugs in which they lose their lives (UNAMA.2018).

According to a survey conducted in 2009, 80 percent of women who are addicted to drugs also give drugs to their children as a drug (UNODC, 2009).

Similarly, a survey conducted in 2015 found that two-thirds of children in rural areas had biological samples with opium (metabolites). This is despite the fact that rural areas in Afghanistan do not have access to health services, so drugs are also used to treat some common ailments, especially opium. Recently, the use of non-medical drugs in Afghanistan has also increased in men and women (UNODC, 2021).

The latest survey on drug use, conducted between 2019 and 2020, was part of the survey in children aged 13-18 who found drug use among high school students. 12 per cent are for boys and 8.5 percent for girls' use of drugs and alcohol during schooling. From all reports, it is clear that men in Afghanistan are more addicted to drugs and alcohol than women.

Another type of synthetic drug that is spreading rapidly in Afghanistan is the use of methamphetamine and tablet K, a recent survey found that young people are more addicted to the drug and in some cases some families. Uses this drug together. The use of tablet k is reported to be more common in cities and some educated young people also use such dangerous substances. The constant use of cigarettes in schools has led some young people to become close friends with

their other drug addicts and become addicted to drugs because they are comfortable, cheap and can be found everywhere in Afghanistan (UNODC, 2021).

Afghanistan is constantly in turmoil due to a long-term war, a bad economic situation that is unbalanced and poor security, making it a fertile ground for drug and other illegal markets. The delay in the speed of international aid, the bad economic situation and the economic confusion are the obvious reasons for all this. Despite these problems, Afghanistan has always made great sacrifices due to droughts, floods and other natural disasters. A survey in 2023 shows that nearly 18 million Afghans need aid. Afghan children are suffering from malnutrition and one in three Afghans are suffering from lack of food (WFP, 2023).

The use, cultivation and production of drugs is high in Afghanistan because many people are unemployed and the head of the family is not able to meet the needs of his family, so they become addicted to the cultivation and use of drugs. Most of the farmers in Afghanistan are illiterate and cannot stop planting another good plant instead of poppy. At the international level, Afghans need wide public awareness so that they can avoid the cultivation and use of this harmful substance. Changing the situation of drugs in Afghanistan will cause it to have effects and changes at the national and international levels. The international level will bring good changes. In the three years before 2021, it can be clearly seen that the prices of opium have decreased, which means that due to the high production of opium, drug traffickers have large reserves of opium. The methamphetamine market is expanding globally as the demand for this substance increases. South East Asia and North America have large markets for methamphetamine, which drug traffickers make a lot of money from, and the international markets for this dangerous substance are still expanding. The demand of methamphetamine in international markets may be the reason why it is produced on a large scale in Afghanistan, that is, international traffickers will make Afghanistan a major center of methamphetamine production (UNODC, 2021).

At the international level, the use of opium is expanding, and besides this, the market and demand for artificial drugs is increasing day by day. Synthetic drugs will be a new threat to the

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world, which will take the lives of many people in the world and will cause many people's lives to suffer. At the international level, opium and synthetic drug markets can create another new crisis in the world. Opium and synthetic drug markets can make connections. This situation has been observed in Southeast Asia, where the production of methamphetamine has reduced the production of opium. There is still not enough evidence and documentation about the relationship between opium and methamphetamine, but some cases prove that there is a relationship between the two. Opium smuggling from Afghanistan provides evidence that some international traffickers manage both opium and methamphetamine businesses together. This evidence shows that international traffickers can effectively expand the market for opium and methamphetamine. These traffickers will be able to expand the market of methamphetamines if the cultivation of the opium plant is less. Before this we have good examples of drug integration in Afghanistan which was between opium and hashish. At one time, there was a similar relationship between the tobacco and hashish market in Afghanistan, but later it was seen that this relationship was ending (Champ, 2019).

The evidence predicts that solving the problem of drug production in Afghanistan requires some interventions, which should be preceded by serious measures. A reduction in drug production will not be sustainable as it may have the opposite effect. With the prohibition of opium in 2001, the price of opium quadrupled in the same year, from 87 dollars in 2000 to 385 dollars in 2002. Prohibition of opium has also had some other positive and negative effects on the opium market. Afghanistan is the world's largest drug center. There are a lot of drug producers and users in Afghanistan. Most of the people of Afghanistan who are addicted to drugs are facing many problems and poverty in life that these people cannot afford their own treatment. There are few drug treatment centers in Afghanistan, and it is possible that there will be even less, and this situation will be very difficult and dangerous for the families of drug users. Difficult, chaotic and complicated social and economic situation will cause many other mental diseases. The number of mentally ill people in Afghanistan is increasing day by day. The role of youth in drug use and trafficking in Afghanistan is worth mentioning, because this preoccupation has diverted

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the youth from legitimate work and education. Looking at the above situation, it is clear that the development of society is becoming difficult and the obstacles to development are expanding even more (UNODC, 2021).

### **Conclusion**

Measures to prevent drug cultivation and treatment of drug addicts: Implementation of the law: The law is a plan that is created to prevent all kinds of disturbances in the society and to implement justice, so that people can get their rights and live a peaceful life. Unfortunately, despite the fact that Afghanistan is an Islamic country, there are big problems in the implementation of the law, here the law is applied only to the poor people. Former Minister of Interior Ali Ahmed Jalali told the media several times that senior officials are involved in the cultivation of narcotics. Providing an alternative lifestyle: This is the important part that can prevent the cultivation and use of drugs easily and without any force. If the government officials cooperate with the farmers and help them for alternative cultivation, then no farmer is satisfied to plant these harmful plants. Those youths who traffic in drugs, if they read the lessons, they will never do this kind of evil again. Treatment: There are many problems in this area, because we have more than two million drug addicts in the country, but we only have 20 beds hospitals for treatment in all four eastern provinces, which cannot treat drug addicts on time and properly. . Another problem that exists after treatment is to provide employment after treatment. After treatment, 80 percent of patients return to drug use because there is no healthy occupation for them. Closing the drug market: The market is the factor that can increase or decrease the demand for something. Here too, when the market is open and traders are free, many people will use and smuggle drugs. The government should pay more attention in this area and stop this bad practice.

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