



# USAID ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION OF THE ARAL SEA II

## FACT SHEET

### INTRODUCING ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY AGRO-TECHNOLOGIES FOR CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

The Aral Sea tragedy is one of the world's most infamous environmental disasters. Once the fourth-largest lake in the world, the Aral Sea began to decrease in the 1960s and by 1997 had shrunk to approximately 10 percent of its former size due to water diversions from the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers to irrigate vast fields of rice, wheat, and cotton. Today, the area is often referred to as the Aralkum Desert, the newest desert in the world, spanning more than 62,000 square kilometers. The Aral Sea's dried lake bottom contributes heavily to annual sand and dust storms. Airborne salt and pesticide residues negatively impact soil fertility, regional biodiversity, and animal and human health within a radius of several hundred kilometers.



THE DRIED BOTTOM OF THE ARAL SEA.  
(ISHENBERGER FOR USAID/CENTRAL ASIA)

In 2021, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev unveiled *Yashil Makon* (Green Nation), an ambitious and progressive initiative to plant one billion trees and shrubs across the nation over the next five years. At the same time, the Presidents of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan renewed their commitment to maintaining and strengthening cooperation to counter the adverse effects of the Aral Sea disaster on their countries and the region. Since then, both countries have undertaken various initiatives to promote knowledge exchange on best afforestation practices to combat desertification and land

degradation. These initiatives will help purify the air, enhance living conditions in sandstorm-prone areas and implement climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies through coordinated national and regional initiatives.

USAID launched Environmental Restoration of the Aral Sea II aimed at providing technical assistance to the Republic of Uzbekistan in its efforts to improve the resilience and livelihoods of the population living near the Aral Sea. USAID will also facilitate cooperation between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to jointly address environmental challenges.

In Uzbekistan, USAID aims to demonstrate and evaluate a variety of innovative technologies, planting, and irrigation practices that will add new dimensions to the regional knowledge base on afforestation of desert biomes. USAID will also support private sector initiatives for environmental restoration and agro-business. By incorporating cutting-edge techniques into existing afforestation efforts in Karakalpakstan and by demonstrating the private sector's commitment, the USAID will promote better public and private ownership of the environmental agenda, thus enabling long-term sustainability of soil improvement and forest reclamation initiatives in the Muynak district of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

USAID will work in cooperation with the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Forestry, the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Ecology and Environment Protection, the Ministry of Innovative Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the International Innovation Center for the Aral Sea Basin under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and academic and research institutions and administration (*khokimiyat*) in the Muynak district. USAID will implement proven methods that enhance the sustainability of results and provide options for scaling up and replicating those efforts by local communities, governments of the region, and other donors.

## **IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD:**

Environmental Restoration of the Aral Sea II is a three-year sub-activity implemented by the [USAID Regional Water and Vulnerable Environment Activity](#), with a budget of \$1.65 million, from October 2022 to September 2025.

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