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## Net the fish, not ask for it

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*“I keep inputs for vertical tomato farming and it is making me famous day by day. Farmers contact me not only from the nearby villages but also from far flung areas. The aspect of LPH I admire is that it did not provide the fish but helped us learn how to catch fish. Vertical tomato production is something new introduced by the LPH – hence local provision of inputs makes the farmers very happy.”*

**Hafiz Umar Said-Input Supply dealer, Aurang Valley, Bajaur Agency, FATA**

“We all keep mentioning that Pakistan is an agricultural country yet to date, I believe the LPH is the only programme that has come near us, paying special attention to the farmers who are the backbone of agriculture. Like many poor people of the country, I too am a school drop-out. Extreme poverty knocked on our door throughout my young life. I did get to attend a madrassah, though, many kilometers away to which I used to return on foot (after holidays at home). I would cry my eyes out asking my mother for the meager travel fare, which she could not afford and would brush away with excuses. How hard it must have been for her to see her son suffer but what could she do?

After completion of my madrassah<sup>1</sup> education in 1994, (I was trained in religious education and have also memorized the Holy Qur’an), I opened up an electronics shop which did not last so after trying

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<sup>1</sup> Madrasa (Arabic: *madrasah*, *pl.* , *madaris*, Turkish: *Medrese*, Kazakh ) is the Arabic word for any type of educational institution, whether secular or religious (of any religion). The word is variously transliterated *madrasah*, *medresa*, *madrassa*, *madraza*, *medrese*, etc. In the West, the word usually refers to a specific type of religious school or college for the study of the Islamic religion, though this may not be the only subject studied.

for 4 years, I went to Karachi to try my luck. Double duties, living in negligible conditions helped me save up roughly PKR 30,000 which was not a rough deal in the year 2000. The longing for my home and family saw me return to my village in the year 2001.

With my saved income, I bought some bags of Urea fertilizer from a neighboring district market. Each bag cost about PKR 300 and I bought those in bulk. I sold those to the farmers with some profit. This boosted my morale and I decided to start work in the same line on a small scale. I opened a shop again in 2002 but this time not with electronics but fertilizers to offer for sale. Farmers started to purchase from me. Sometimes they also asked me to bring pesticides with certain names which I used to bring from the city as per demand. But I was clueless about the prescribed dosage or how to use those pesticides. I just fulfilled their demand but had no advisory role. The shop helped me manage my household expenses. In the meanwhile my maternal uncle offered me to provide services as Imam<sup>2</sup> Masjid in village Mera in Aurang valley of Bajaur Agency in FATA. I accepted the offer since the mosque was pretty close, and I could work on both fronts at a time.

Though my shop ran well, it did not bring any extraordinary profit. However, in the floods of 2010 my shop was damaged along with the material in it. The standing crops of the farmers were also damaged and we went through a difficult period. In 2013 the LPH started its interventions in Larsadin and my first interaction with the LPH staff was in 2014. In the beginning I was reluctant, I watched how things went for the people around me. In the end, I applied and was selected for 6 days training on seeds and pesticides in Tarnab Farm. In that training for the very first time I got to learn about quality seeds, diagnosis, dosage and use of pesticides, and safety measures while applying the inputs. I have also recently received another advanced training on pesticides application in 2016. We were also provided certificates along with permission letters from the Agriculture department to legalise the input supply business and bring the dealers under regulatory cover. I developed contacts with another wholesale dealer in the nearby village of Charssada who started to give me inputs on reasonable rates and also with the Agriculture Department which assisted in adding dynamic inputs like vertical tomato farming in my shop on 50% cost sharing basis.

I am getting famous day by day regarding the vertical tomato farming inputs. The LPH introduced me to about 147 farmers who were practicing vertical tomato farming. The farmers bought inputs for vertical tomato farming (wires, net, seeds etc.) on 50% cost sharing basis which means that 50% of the cost was paid by farmers and 50% by the LPH. Farmers get in touch with me not only from the nearby villages but from far flung areas of Bajaur and also from other adjacent district Dir (65 km away) to buy inputs and the seeds for vertical tomato farming. Many also borrow inputs and pay back later when they have money. This year 'Anna' variety of tomato brought in a good yield and about 50–60 farmers have booked their orders with me for the next year inputs in advance. I know about 90 farmers that



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<sup>2</sup> An imam (/ˈmːm/; Arabic: imam, plural: a'immah; Persian: ) is an Islamic leadership position. It is most commonly in the context of a worship leader of a mosque and Muslim community by Sunni Muslims.

have dedicated land for vertical tomato farming and have made profit like the farmer Taj Akbar from village Shaga. He grew tomatoes on a quarter of an acre land and has earned so far PKR 400,000 this season, and till Nov it is expected that he will earn another PKR 300,000.

LPH has made me realize the uselessness of one time solutions and that learning the skills of a trade is more sustainable. Another aspect that distinguishes the LPH from other projects is that it helped farmers learn practically, then followed regularly and gave due importance to our opinion as well. My business has flourished so well that with the profit I took half an acre land on Ijarah<sup>3</sup>, cultivated tomatoes on one-eighth of an acre and on the rest I cultivated wheat. I also bought a buffalo to fulfill the nutritional needs of the family. I was also able to buy a generator as well as solar system and 3 solar fans to cover the need of power supply as at present there is an electricity crises and for hours we have no electricity. I also bought a fridge. As my business is expanding and the need for transportation is dire, so with this year's savings, I plan to buy a Hilux pickup.

All this because my children need not walk for miles to reach a source of learning. I want to provide them with all the facilities I can. My two sons are attending a private school while the other two are not of school going age yet. My daughter will accomplish her course from the madrassa this year. When



I compare my life now with the past, a lot has changed since then. I now wish to perform the pilgrimage along with my wife to thank Him who takes care of us". In my childhood there was poverty, ignorance and conflicts sometimes on petty issues which remained for years. But now people want peace; they are sending their children to other countries to earn better and have a better future. Education has brought more awareness and social cohesion among the people. Everyone is striving for better life. Previously when there was any conflict

among two people the whole village used to divide on either conflicting party's side and then the conflict remained for years, but now people opt for reconciliation and mediation.

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<sup>3</sup> Ijarah is about the contract between a lessor and lessee in which the lessor being the owner of the property allows the lessee to enjoy the usufructs of the property at agreed terms on the rental and period of lease