

Command Area Development Component of Jalalpur Irrigation Project

Developing Culturable Wasteland with High Efficiency Irrigation System

For as long as 26 years old, young and zestful Agricultural Entrepreneur Ms. Ayesha Sikandar can remember 15 acres of her uneven rocky terrain just 30 km away from the **Khewra Salt Mines** of Pind Dadan Khan, Jhelum, was a barren land – nothing could grow on it.

Her farmland lies in the Potohar plateau, almost 11 km away from the Lillah interchange M2 (Lahore to Islamabad) Motorway and 2 Km from the Ahmadabad-Toba link road. Ms. Ayesha Sikandar decided to develop her land during 2019-20 after launching of the **“Command Area Development (CAD) Component of Jalalpur Irrigation Project (CAD-JIP)”**-Joint venture of Punjab Government & Asian Development Bank. She shared her experience of starting agriculture and growing high-value orchards on her land “We were unable to sow Barani crops on our land due to uneven topography of the area and surface runoff of saline/brackish water from salt mountain/range of Khewra mines. The underground water was brackish and the far away surface water source was not enough to irrigate the undulated dunes. In simple words, **Traditional Agriculture was impossible through flood irrigation with limited available water”**.

She added that “On Farm Water Management (OFWM) staff approached us and mobilized us for adoption of new intervention” drip irrigation” under the CAD component of JIP. After thorough study and visit of such farms with drip irrigation system, I decided to cultivate the “barren” dune using the **drip irrigation system**. Drip irrigation system & water storage pond was installed/constructed on subsidy basis by the On Farm Water Management through private SSCs. They also trained my Farm Manager for basic operation & maintenance of drip system and its operation modalities. Water is stored in the water storage pond and then used for irrigation through the drip irrigation system. I have grown 6 acres of Guava and 9 acres of Olive orchards. My Guava orchard is going to mature this year.”

“Moreover, the installation of a **drip irrigation** irrigation system and the development of a culturable wasteland for growing high-value orchards has created job opportunities for the people of a nearby village. Currently, one technical farm manager, 3 permanent workers, and 3 non-permanent workers including 2 women are working on my farm.” She explained while sharing her experience of newly developed orchards.

“Ayesha's dune is a sight to behold: fruit orchards have flourished in the rocky terrain, irrigation is precise, and there is no evaporation, no runoff, and no wastage. Water mixed with fertilizer (fertigation) is carried out through pipes with heads known as drippers” explained Mr. Gulzar, Farm Manager of the site, who was releasing **a certain amount of water per minute directly** to the roots of each plant across the orchard. He admitted that without drip irrigation the **“dune would never have produced anything.”**



The Director General Agriculture (Water Management) Punjab, Malik M. Akram shared his views as “the farmers in Jhelum & Khushab are being incentivized for the promotion of agriculture through the installation of drip/sprinkler irrigation systems on 2,000 acres, organization of 485 water users associations (WUAS), development and construction of 485 watercourses, LASER land levelling on 30,000 acres in watercourse commands, construction of 20 water storage ponds and solar powered pumping stations for irrigating un-commanded areas in the outlet commands, provision of 120 Rabi drills, 1200 hand sprayers and establishment of 664 D-Plots under the **CAD component of JIP**. The key objective of the project is to develop the culturable wasteland for agriculture in Jalalpur Canal irrigation command and promote irrigated agriculture with efficient utilization of limited water resources being made available from the new canal system through sustainable infrastructure development at the farm level to alleviate poverty in the project area by generating enhanced employment opportunities and maximizing farm profitability”. He added that “It is encouraging that many farmers are adopting this innovative technology and getting huge benefits not only in terms of savings on agricultural inputs but also earning higher economic returns. Ayesha's drip irrigation site is a landmark example of the success of the **CAD component of JIP** project. This project will revolutionize the uneven, rocky terrain as well as irrigated area of the Khushab and Jhelum districts”.