

Research Report  
**MUNISH '12**



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**Forum:** Economic and Social Council

**Issue:** Controlling illicit crops used in the production of narcotics

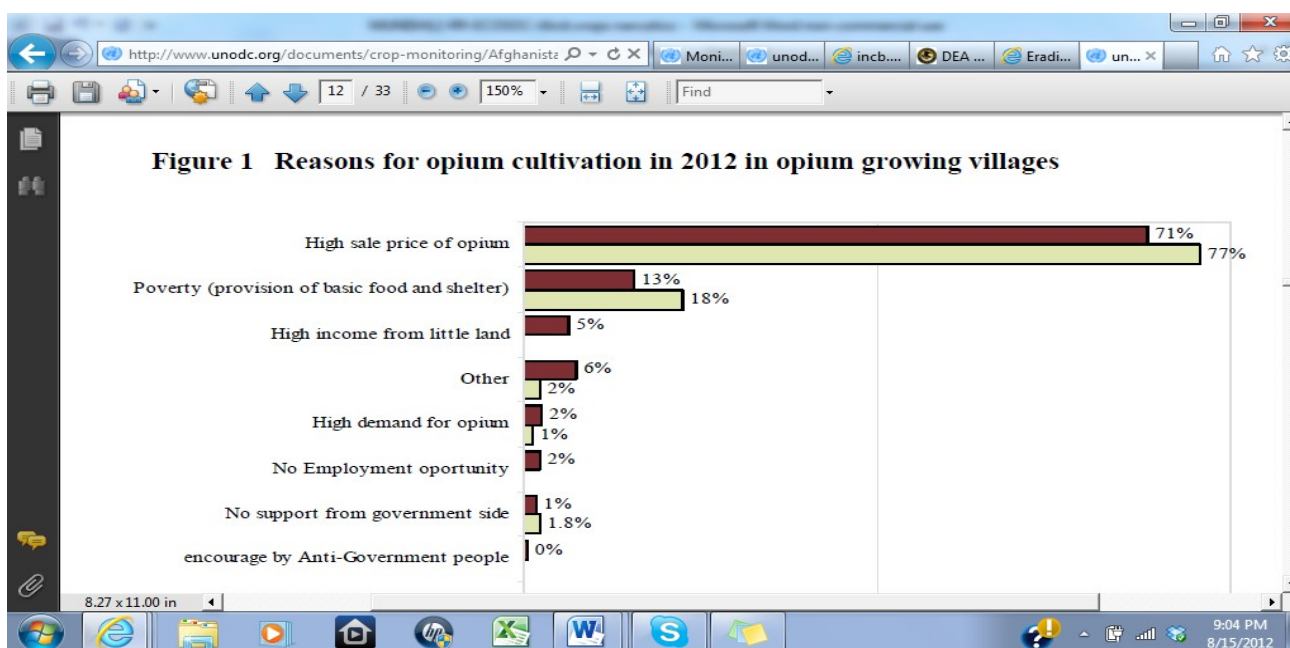
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## Introduction

The narcotic drug illicit industry is the cause of thousands of young peoples' addictions and the horrific gang violence in Mexico. It is also a major financier of criminal activity. The opium produced in Afghanistan has an estimated annual value of \$31 billion dollars. It all starts with a seed and some soil. As local police arrest drug addicts to drug dealers to drug traffickers it is the international community can focus on the beginning of the problem, crop cultivation.

Narcotic drugs have been used since ancient times when they produced opium from the poppy plant. In modern times this illicit crop is used to make narcotics. Unfortunately the price of opium poppy plant increased drastically in 2011 making it an even more viable option for farmers. In a survey 13% of farmers said that they grew the opium poppy plants because they were living in poverty a lot of other Afghanistan citizens said that it was because of the high price they received for their crop. Below we can see a chart from a survey of why farmers cultivated opium poppy.



*Results from Afghanistan survey in illicit opium poppy growing communities, reasons for opium cultivation, 2012*

From this we can see that to prevent these farmers from growing the opium poppy we do not need to target the drug traffickers or anti-governmental organizations as we do for other parts of the drug cycle but counter act the positive financial incentive cultivating illicit crops gives them.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Illicit Crops

Illicit crops are simply the plants which the government has deemed illegal to grow. In the narcotics trade there are three main crops which are the base to the majority of the natural narcotics, synthetic narcotics being made in the lab. The three crops are opium poppy, coca bush, and cannabis.

### Narcotics

As defined by the UNODC “In medicine, a chemical agent that induces stupor, coma, or insensibility to pain. In the context of international drug control, any drug defined as such under the 1961 convention” Narcotics are substances (drugs) that effect moods or behaviors. Narcotics can be used therapeutically to for example relieve pain. They can be taken in a variety of ways from injection to ingestion. However narcotics can be extremely dangerous, lethal in high doses and addictive. The illicit drug trade is particularly dangerous because the safety of the drugs is not guaranteed.

## General Overview

### The Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs

The Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs was created in 1961. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations had decided to create a single convention that would replace all of the existing multilateral treaties. It was also created to reduce the amount of organs that were only concerned with the narcotic drugs trade to a minimum to increase efficiency globally. It also brought a new side of the prevention of the illicit narcotics trade which this issue is particularly concerned with, the control of the production of the raw materials used to make narcotics.

In article 23 of the convention it calls for all parties that allow the crop opium poppy to be grow for the production of opium, the base of the large majority of natural narcotics, to create government agencies to monitor this. The National Opium Agencies would be responsible to designate areas and farmers that will be permitted to grow opium poppy, to specify on each farmer’s license the area for which they have been designated to grow the opium poppy, to purchase all crops from licensed farmers as soon as possible no later than 4 months after harvest, and to export, import, trade, or maintain a stock of the opium crops. Article 26 calls for similar measures in regards to the coca bush as well as article 28 for cannabis.

Article 24 goes on to limit the production of opium worldwide so as there is not a surplus of opium worldwide could find its way into the illicit trade. It does so by for example limiting the amount that may be exported and calling all members that wish to initiate opium poppy cultivation or increase production to first carefully look at the global need for opium.

### **Illicit Crops Monitoring**

Prevent the cultivation of the base plants of narcotics a fundamental step in preventing the narcotics trade. The main plants monitored are the opium poppy, the coca bush, and cannabis. These three plants do all have some beneficial characteristics especially for pain relief so the growth of the plants is not illicit everywhere but where it is legal strict monitoring is needed to make sure that no crops end up in the illicit trade as well as farms grow these plants that are not permitted to.

The UNODC is a major organization helping with the monitoring of the growth of illicit crops. Currently they are monitoring seven countries; Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Laos for opium poppy, Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru for the coca bush, and Morocco for cannabis. The UNODC uses a variety of techniques to monitor the country and also strengthens the country's own capacity to carry out the monitoring themselves. These techniques are as follows:

- Field and village assessments
- Fly-over verifications
- Interviews
- Demographical socio-economic analysis
- Satellite imaging
- Geographic data

Monitoring the illicit growth of crops on land can be especially difficult and dangerous. The coca bush opposes the largest problem for ground detection because it can be grown amongst other plants, can be grown at any time of the year, and can be easily moved to another place. There is of course the very real threat of an attack on the ground surveyors. This could be from traps set to guard to illicit crop to direct attack. In southern Afghanistan UNODC choose surveyors from local villages. This reduces the risk of a direct attack. Locals will also know the terrain much better and to learn the skills they can simply be trained. To conduct surveys they are accepted by the communities and know the customs so as to get the most truthful results from the surveys.

### **Monitoring the Evolution of Illicit Crop Cultivation**

It is important that the organizations combating the cultivation of illicit crops monitor how the illicit crop cultivation is evolving. Which techniques are being used to hide the crops is a major piece of intelligence that takes careful monitoring. UNODC is doing so in the seven countries it is present and publishing this annually.

## Eradication of Illicit Crops

For a long term solution to eradicate illicit crops we need to combat the reasons why people are attracted to the illicit crops but for a short term solution the physical eradication of these crops may be necessary. When illicit crops are found they can be destroyed. This way these crops cannot be used to make narcotics and it will give the farmers a disincentive to continue cultivating illicit crops because they run at the risk of losing another harvest and a lot of money.

For example in Colombia as United States of America aid package called Plan Colombia eradicated illicit coca crops through aerial fumigation. They flew over the crops and sprayed poisonous chemicals that would kill the coca crops but unfortunately also killed most of the other plants in the area. The aim of Plan Colombia was to reduce Colombia's coca production by half by 2005. Plan Colombia was the second fumigation action taken against the Colombia coca farmers. In the 90s fumigating large areas of coca farms saw no effect as the production of coca tripled. The Colombia government had overlooked the reason peasants were farming illicit crops, simply to survive and provide for themselves. Farmers receive almost 2 ½ times more money for a kilo of coca than a kilo of coffee and almost 4 times as much for a kilo of coca than a kilo of cocoa.

## Major Parties Involved and Their Views

### Afghanistan

Afghanistan has quite a large problem with the illicit cultivation of opium poppy. Afghanistan has realized that for many of the farmers cultivating opium poppy it is a financial necessity. Farming licit crops may have meant that they would not make enough money to support themselves and their family. Therefore the Afghan government has devised alternative livelihood services which provide financial help for those that switch to licit crop cultivation.

### The United States of America

The United States of America is fighting against the illicit narcotic drug trade. The USA is the destination of a large amount of the narcotic drugs but relatively few of the base ingredients are grown within the United States. The large majority of drugs are cultivated and produced elsewhere and then are trafficked over the border to be distributed and sold within the United States. They are therefore working

with other governments to target the start of the problem, the cultivation of illicit crops. For example a little over 10 years ago the USA gave Colombia the third largest foreign aid package of 1 billion dollars for Plan Colombia.

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

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is the major UN organization concerned with the narcotic drug trade. It aims to eradicate the illicit drug trade which fuel large criminal organizations. It has created reports on all aspects of the drug trade for the cultivation of illicit crops to the trafficking of drugs to drug dependency. It most specifically has been given permission to monitor the cultivation of illicit crops in seven countries. It publishes these results in hope that it may assist other nations in their fight to eradicate illicit crops.

### **Timeline of Events**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of event</b>
1961	The Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs is created
1973-1975	Scientists discover the effect narcotics has on the body and most specifically the brain deducing its addictive power.
29 March 2001	ECOSOC passes resolution; International cooperation on the elimination of illicit drug crops and on alternative development
2008	ECOSOC passes resolution; Promoting sustainability and integrality in alternative development as an important part of drug control strategy in States where illicit crops are grown to produce drugs
12 March 2010	The Commission on Narcotic Drugs passes resolution; Strengthening systems for the control of the movement of poppy seeds obtained from illicitly grown opium poppy crops

### **UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events**

The United Nations has been involved in the issue of narcotic trafficking throughout history but became specifically involved with the issue of illicit crops in the narcotic trade in 1961 when the Single Convention was created. In the single convention two main organs were created and given responsibilities outlined within the convention; under the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the International Narcotics Control Board. These organs as well as the UNODC have the most involvement with the illicit crop cultivation within the United Nations.

- Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961
- Strengthening systems for the control of the movement of poppy seeds obtained from illicitly grown opium poppy crops, 12 March 2010, Resolution 53/12 (Commission on Narcotic Drugs)
- Promoting sustainability and integrality in alternative development as an important part of drug control strategy in States where illicit crops are grown to produce drugs, 2008, E/RES/2008/26
- International cooperation on the elimination of illicit drug crops and on alternative development, 29 March 2001, ECO/RES.44/11

## Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

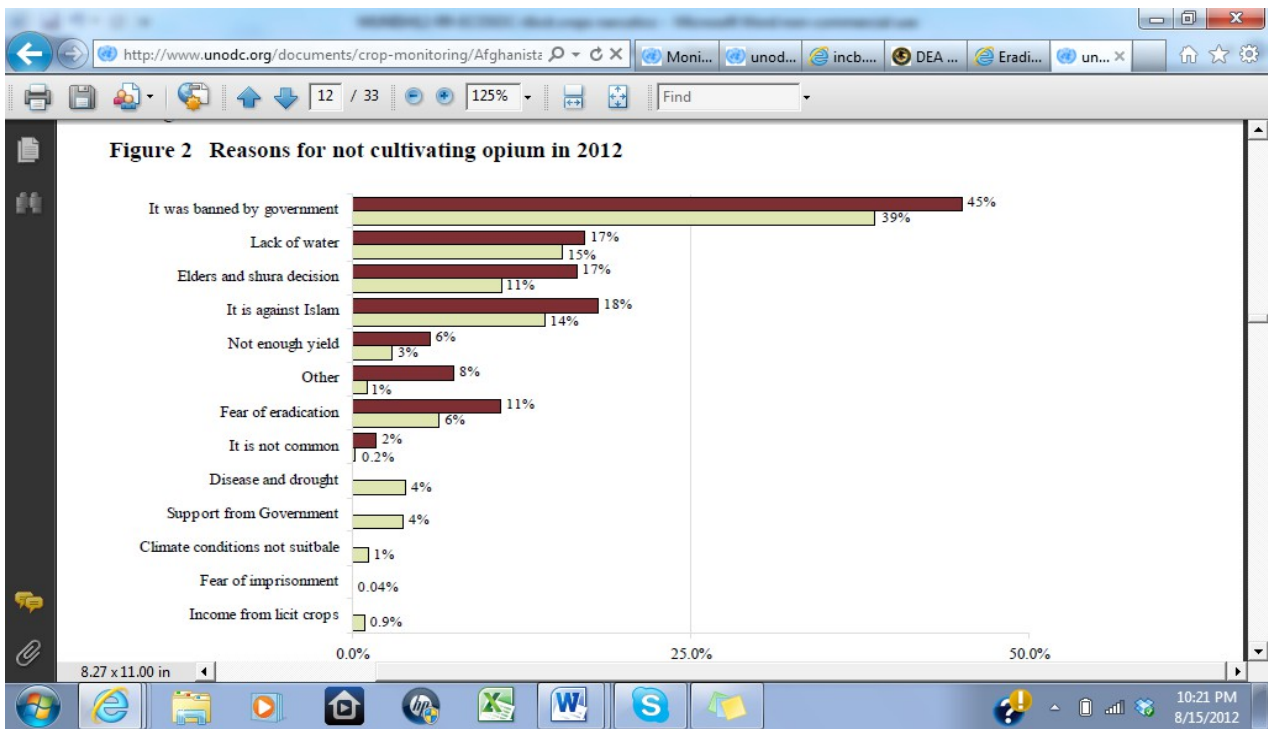
The Afghanistan government's alternative livelihood services are quite similar to the actions Colombia is currently taking to provide incentives for farmers to eradicate illicit crops. Colombia is also providing financial incentive to those who are committed to eradicating illicit crops. Colombia reported that their program was successful with a double of families participating. However it is worrying in countries such as Afghanistan where almost 80% of the workers work in the agricultural that there will always be the farmers to supply the drug traffickers with illicit crops.

Many past eradication plans have not been environmentally friendly and therefore not seen as sustainable. When crops are eradicated they would like to keep the soil fertile so that licit crops can be grown upon it. Although some eradication was seen as successful it was purely short term.

## Possible Solutions

Transparency is important between nations and organizations which are attempting to eradicate illicit crops. They can then share the newest information about how the farmers are evolving and to evolve their counter measures appropriately.

Below is a graphical representation of the results of a opium survey carried out in Afghanistan. Banning of cultivation seems to be quite effective therefore it would be a suggestion to make sure all governments have laws on the cultivation of illicit crops and these are well known to the public. Fear of eradication also seems to be effective. Even though it has many negative effects it is effective to reduce the amount of farmers cultivating opium.



*Results from Afghanistan survey in illicit opium poppy growing communities, reasons for not cultivating opium, 2012*

An issue that has also come to the attention of some organizations is that farmers choose to cultivate illicit crops because it is much more reliable. In many of the countries where illicit crop cultivation is common the country's infrastructure is poor. The farmers may find it hard to transport their crop to a selling place. If the grow illicit crop transport is not their issue as the drug traffickers will pay directly in cash and transport the product.

An idea would be to have a greater amount of information available to the UNODC about the eradication of illicit crops and other methods attempted to stop their cultivation. The UNODC has developed a great base of information about the trafficking of drugs and has therefore been able to develop great strategies to combat this. A similar base of information for the illicit cultivation of crops may assist in their eradication.

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## Appendix or Appendices

- I The latest reports made by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime about illicit crop monitoring

<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/crop-monitoring/index.html>

- II The Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs

[http://www.unodc.org/pdf/convention\\_1961\\_en.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/pdf/convention_1961_en.pdf)

- III Promoting sustainability and integrity in alternative development as an important part of drug control strategy in States where illicit crops are grown to produce drugs

<http://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND-ECOSOC/CND-ECOSOC-RES-2000to2009/ECOSOC-2008/CND-51-ECOSOC-Res-2008-26e.pdf>

- IV International cooperation on the elimination of illicit drug crops and on alternative development

<http://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND-Res-2000-until-present/CND-2001-Session44/CND-Resolution-44-11.pdf>

