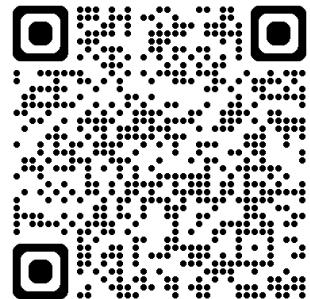


Afghanistan fights opium poppy cultivation



<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/videos/20250903213207568/>

Afghanistan has long been known for poppy cultivation, the raw material of opium and heroin. The United Nations says more than 80% of the world's opium comes from the country. The Taliban returned to power 4 years ago and have made efforts to eradicate the crop amid calls from the international community, but poppy cultivation is once again on the rise. NHK World's Ota Yusuke reports.

This video shows the Taliban destroying a poppy crop 3 years ago. The in-term government banned its cultivation in 2022 and imposed penalties for growing it. The Taliban is also treating people who are addicted to drugs, a rampant problem in the country.

Taliban officials stress their efforts to fight drug abuse as well as production.

Our strict campaign against the drugs aims to not only lower its graft to zero, but to eradicate it from the country.

The United Nations reports that the total area under poppy cultivation dropped sharply after the Taliban took action, but then last year it increased. The reason is economic harvesting. This farmer said he switched to grow wheat after the poppy ban, but his fields are now once again filled with the flower.

This is an opium sample. It sells for about 58 to 73 dollars. A big quantity of wheat is worth much less.

The farmer says his monthly income from wheat was less than half of what he needs to feed his 10 children.

People could find work before such as joining the army, but not anymore. If we had jobs, we could stop growing poppies.

Japan has contributed over 10 million dollars through the United Nations to encourage farmers to grow other crops. The southern province of Kandahar used to have many poppy fields. Now farmers grow crops such as figs. They say receiving high quality seeds and agricultural equipment has helped them make the switch.

We have now cultivated okra, tomatoes, figs, and pomegranates. We have yielded good produce because we followed their directions. We will certainly continue as it is more profitable than poppies for us.

When alternatives are provided and implemented, then it's obvious that poppy cultivation will drop and ultimately go to zero. We want to see this program extended to other regions so that more people can benefit from it.

Afghanistan's biggest challenge is not convincing its farmers to give up poppy cultivation but rather ensuring that they can make a sustainable living without it.

Source: (NHK World News)

Now discuss the questions with a partner.

1. What is more important, to follow the law or to provide for your family?
2. Are there any crops grown in Japan that are good for money but bad for health?
3. Can you think of any other strategies to encourage the farmers to stop growing poppies?
4. Do you think it is a wise investment for Japan to be contributing money to stop poppy growth in Afghanistan? Why or why not?
5. If you were a farmer with 10 children and no job, what would you do?