

# Story 3

## Championing Women Entrepreneurs in Agribusiness

**USAID's support towards women-led agri-tech company Dairy Solution results in increased agricultural technology sales by up to 40 percent**

Pakistani women play a critical role in a range of agricultural activities, but men usually undertake entrepreneurial activities and benefit from profitable agribusiness ventures. While women's contributions to agriculture sector are primarily overlooked, there is immense potential to facilitate their economic empowerment and agency by helping them build prospering agri-tech businesses. Enabling Pakistani women to leverage technology-based solutions for farm operations through training, leadership opportunities, and networking can help narrow the gender divide and encourage more women to transform their businesses into commercially viable entities. One such example is USAID Pakistan Agricultural Technology Transfer Activity's (PATTA) facilitation for Zahra Hasan, a Lahore-based young mother and co-founder of Dairy Solution - a full-service provider of dairy farm-related technologies established in 2007. The four-year USAID-funded project calls on the private sector to invest in reducing gaps between men and women in agribusiness sector.

Zahra's entrepreneurial journey with PATTA commenced in September 2018 when she signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to become the project's women-led Supply Side Partner (SSP) and acquired technical assistance on business expansion and human resource development. Zahra faced several constraints being a working mother leading a dairy technologies-related business in a sector which is predominantly male-dominated. "While struggling to overcome gender-based stereotypes since this sector is typically not considered as a 'women's domain' and juggling business operations with motherhood, I realized the need for a solid support system and guidance related to expansion. This is why I partnered with USAID PATTA," explains Zahra. "Being in-charge of a range of business functions including finance, dealerships, marketing, and sales, I was leading a team of thirty employees to help establish Dairy Solution as a pioneer of dairy-related innovations to support increased milk productivity and encourage farmers' adoption of efficient milking systems. I also wanted to set an example for other women who can start agri-tech companies and breathe new life in Pakistani agriculture," she adds.

Striving to achieve Dairy Solution's five-year strategic expansion plan, Zahra decided to participate in PATTA's learning and capacity development training opportunities targeted towards business development and financial management. The project supported her in enhancing skills related to application of financial and tax management procedures, budgeting, and costing. "PATTA's financial management trainings were very beneficial for me and helped me achieve my five-year business expansion plan in just two-years, says Zahra.

During its programmatic course, USAID PATTA has provided women with several leadership development opportunities and platforms to participate in meaningful discourse related to agri-tech development in Pakistan. For example, in December 2019 PATTA facilitated Zahra Hasan's participation in USAID's national-level radio show 'Hum Aap Aur Behtar Zindagi', during which she promoted Dairy Solution and deliberated on the significance of developing women's linkages so that they can act as change agents for driving competitiveness in agriculture. "Since inception, the project has created entrepreneurial opportunities for 51 other women by developing their linkages in agricultural technologies business. In January 2020, PATTA also invited Zahra to represent Dairy Solution in a panel discussion at the 'Modernizing Agriculture Through Innovative Technologies Conference' in Islamabad, where more than 200 key agriculture sector actors were introduced to her take on women's leadership in agri-tech.

In addition, PATTA has supported Zahra to enable Pakistani farmers' usage of advanced technological innovations from the United States. Recently, the project facilitated Dairy Solution to promote their full-range of U.S.-based BouMatic robotic milking systems in expos,



***"I am exceptionally happy that with PATTA's support, Dairy Solution has expanded its business presence and reached farmers across Pakistan – especially women. Women in rural areas still don't have access to improved agricultural products as compared to men."***

awareness-raising sessions, and mega demonstrations organized in Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Punjab to 5,992 farmers. The project has helped Zahra to increase technology sales and discover new ways for promoting Dairy Solution's agricultural products and services, including smart Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) tactics to improve engagement with farmers and develop marketing collateral especially targeted towards increased technology uptake in dairy sector. "I am thankful to PATTA's consistent support in business expansion. In February 2020, PATTA took Dairy Solution to Peshawar - a new geographical territory for us - where we connected with 61 women livestock farmers and promoted our calf-management technologies in a gender-inclusive session." Zahra says as she talks about her experience as PATTA's women-led SSP.

USAID PATTA continues to garner increased visibility on women's contributions to agriculture systems in Pakistan through gender-inclusive agricultural technologies demonstration. The project's sensitization campaigns have enabled 5,360 women farmers and entrepreneurs to use women-friendly agricultural tools and products so that no woman is left behind from achieving the full economic potential of their farmland.