A favorable enabling environment for technology adoption is vital for modern practices to reach farmer communities across Pakistan, particularly in the most remote areas of the country. Because the slow rate of technology adoption is a major constraint in advancing Pakistan’s agricultural productivity, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Pakistan Agricultural Technology Transfer Activity (PATTA) is promoting a conducive environment for men and women to invest resources in agricultural activities and increase technology uptake.

PATTA places special emphasis on supporting women smallholder farmers and entrepreneurs by increasing their access to modern technologies and improving management practices in high-value sectors— including dairy, livestock, and horticulture. Approximately 65% of women are working in Pakistan’s agriculture sector, with most of the rural women involved in livestock care and management activities such as calf rearing, cleaning of cattle, milking and producing home-based dairy products including butter and yogurt.

The Dairy sector, in particular, is one area that remains constrained, as farmers are largely unaware of animal nutrition and unable to feed animals a balanced diet necessary for optimum growth and milk production. There is a need to develop understanding of nutrient requirements and formulation of diet for livestock at the community-level.

To tackle this issue in Pakistan’s northern region, PATTA introduced improved feed technology in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) through its agribusiness partner, Farm Solutions. In early 2019, PATTA and Farm Solutions held a series of women-centric awareness sessions and demonstration events in different villages of GB attended by a large number of women farmers. The activity not only developed linkages among local dealers with Farm Solutions, but also supported them at the local level to motivate dairy farmers to adopt modern, scientific-based feed for their cattle.

Ms. Farhat, a dairy farmer from the Barmas village in GB who participated in the awareness session, was one of the early adopters of ‘Barkat Feed’ for her cattle. Ms. Farhat owns two cows and earns her livelihood by selling milk to her neighbors. Before participating in the session, she was unaware of the best methods to feed cattle—such as the optimum amount of feed and timing to obtain the desired yield. “Experimenting with different local feed varieties always had a negative effect on the health of my cattle, particularly their digestive system,” said Ms. Farhat. Then she tried ‘Barkat Feed’ and experienced very positive results after some time.

“In addition to the benefits, the price of this feed is affordable for majority of dairy farmers. Its usage not only increased the yield of milk up to two liters per day, but also improved the health of my cattle.”

Farhat, woman dairy farmer, Barmas village, Gilgit-Baltistan.

“In addition to the benefits, the price of this feed is affordable for majority of dairy farmers. Its usage not only increased the yield of milk up to two liters per day, but also improved the health of my cattle,” remarked Ms. Farhat. Due to increase in production, she can earn an additional 4000 rupees per month through milk sales. “I’m grateful to USAID-PATTA for introducing modern products in our area,” she concluded.

Supporting Pakistani women’s control over their livelihoods in agriculture is a priority area for PATTA. By the end of the activity, PATTA anticipates that over 50,000 women will be benefiting from technology transfer, investments in agricultural technologies, and awareness-raising initiatives.