



**Silk
Loop
for
Uzbek
Farmers**

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Executive Summary

Uzbekistan, a leading producer of silk cocoons, relies on forced labor for their production, which violates the rights of farmers and public-sector workers and exploits the vulnerability of the rural poor. Uzbek farmers and public organizations must produce silk cocoons under coercion to fulfill government quotas and they must sell their cocoons to the government at the official procurement price, leaving them little or no profit, and in many cases debt. The government of Uzbekistan processes and sells some silk cocoons domestically but exports the majority to global markets for hard currency. The central government establishes cocoon production policy, prices, and annual silk production targets, and requires regional- and district-level officials to ensure targets are met. Local officials use coercion, including threatening farmers that they will lose their land, to force farmers and public-sector institutions to fulfill annual silk quotas. Farmers, in turn, oblige family members, including children, or pay local laborers to assist in the cultivation of silkworm cocoons to meet required production quotas and avoid penalties. The system relies on and exploits rural poverty as many farmers can only meet their production targets with the help of local workers who agree to assist in the arduous job of cocoon production in return for desperately needed items such as firewood and food. Directors of public institutions require their staff to cultivate silkworm cocoons or make payments to contribute to the institution's quota and avoid fines and other repercussions. Although the government promises to pay producers a government-set price for silk cocoons, in practice, the government usually only pays producers a small advance on the value expected from the producers' quota of cocoons. We found that in many cases the government underpays or fails to pay producers upon delivery of cocoons. Silk production is expensive, labor intensive, and not commercially viable for farmers and other producers. All farmers we interviewed said that the government forces them to cultivate silk cocoons, in violation of national and international laws prohibiting forced labor, and that they cannot refuse the government's orders.



Key Recommendations

To the Government of Uzbekistan

- Take immediate measures to eradicate forced labor in silk cocoon production, including:
 - o Stop using the forced labor of Uzbek farmers and personnel of the public organizations in the silk industry.
 - o Abolish mandatory production quotas;
- Reform the silk sector by
 - o Guaranteeing private property rights, especially for farmers and their use of land under lease agreements;
 - o Ensuring financial transparency in all aspects of silk cocoon production.

To International Financial Institutions and Donor Organizations

- Ensure that no financing or project support contributes to the use of forced labor;
- Conduct independent monitoring of all projects that support to the silk industry in Uzbekistan to ensure compliance with international labor rights standards;
- Establish a joint working group, including the International Labor Organization and foreign direct investors, to coordinate strategies on the silk industry in Uzbekistan;

Methodology

The report draws on 54 interviews with Uzbek farmers, government employees, mahalla committee [local neighborhood council, a form of local government] members, and public sector employees, and residents in rural areas who participate in silk production. Interviews were conducted during the summer of 2013 and May 2015 in Tashkent and the Tashkent region, and the Andijan, Kashkadarya, Jizzakh, and Surkhandarya regions of Uzbekistan. The monitors who conducted interviews and other research for this report live in the regions where they conducted research and had the opportunity to observe forced labor and other conditions related to silk cocoon production throughout the entire production cycle, from the contracting period and imposition of quotas to submitting live cocoons to collection centers. The monitors also participated in a series of training seminars on Uzbekistani labor law and international labor standards, including the conventions of the International Labor Organization. The report also draws upon existing legislation and other official documents and publications pertaining to the silk industry.

Introduction

Uzbekistan is one of the world's top three producers of silk cocoons, with the output for 2015 expected to exceed 26,000 tons.¹ Silk cocoon cultivation has been a part of life for rural residents across Uzbekistan even before the beginning of the 20th century.² The Soviet authorities developed the silk industry, built silkworm incubators, and distributed silkworm larvae to residents in every region of the country. In interviews with our monitors, numerous rural people told us that during the Soviet era, silk cocoon cultivation was a valuable means of contributing to household income.³ In many silk producing countries, cultivation of silk cocoons is seen as a key rural development enterprise or is part of poverty reduction strategies for the rural poor and especially women.⁴ However in Uzbekistan, rather than using cocoon cultivation as a development strategy or means of poverty alleviation, the government exploits the most vulnerable sectors of the population, such as farmers, teachers, and rural residents dependent on social welfare payments, to force them to cultivate cocoons under threats of penalties.⁵

Silk Cocoon Production in Uzbekistan

Although the total amount of silk produced in Uzbekistan makes up only roughly 5% of the total global volume (by contrast, China produces approximately 80% of the total volume), Uzbekistan produces more silk per capita than any other country. The Uzbek government considers silk a strategic export, and it serves as a key source of hard currency for the government. The government maintains total control over the silk sector, as it does with the cotton sector, establishing production targets, imposing quotas on producers, and setting the price at which it buys silk from producers. The government sets a low official procurement price for silk, maintains a monopsony over silk cocoon purchases, and sells the cocoons as well as other silk products such as silk thread, yarn, and fabric, abroad at international market rates, reaping a significant profit.⁶ Uzbekistan exports the bulk of its raw silk and dried silk cocoons to India, Iran, China, South Korea, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, and Russia.⁷



Management of the silk sector is divided between the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources (hereinafter, the “Ministry of Agriculture”) and the state-owned joint stock company Uzbekyengilsanoat.⁸ The Ministry of Agriculture oversees the production of raw cocoons.⁹ It has territorial associations in each region called Pilla (“Cocoon”). The Pilla branches enter into contracts with farmers for cocoon production, distribute silkworms, and run collection centers where raw cocoons are accepted, weighed, and sorted. Agronomists from the Pilla branches also visit farmers periodically throughout the silk production season to inspect production facilities and check on the process. Uzbekyengilsanoat controls silk processing and export, including spinning, weaving, and exports of silk products. It owns, in whole or in part, all silk-spinning factories throughout the country.¹⁰ Uzbek-

kyengilsanoat is the sole purchaser of silk cocoons and buys cocoons at the government-set procurement price. The silk production plan and the procurement price for silk is established annually by the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources in cooperation with Uzbekyengilsanoat and the State Committee on Privatization, De-monopolization, and Competition.¹¹ Although the exact price varies according to the quality of cocoons, in 2015 the average official procurement price for 1 kilogram of cocoons was approximately 6000 soum, (approximately \$1.50 USD).¹²



Although formally the Ministry of Agriculture oversees silk cocoon production, as in the cotton sector in practice local government officials at the regional and district levels, known as hokims, bear enormous responsibility for the fulfillment of the cocoon production plan and use coercive measures to ensure that production targets are met. Hokims are responsible for imposing quotas on individual cocoon producers. Generally they allocate the regional production target among farmers, forcing farmers to meet quotas based on the size of their land holdings. However, it is common practice for hokims to impose cocoon production quotas on mahalla committees (local neighborhood councils, a local government institution) and public organizations, such as rural schools, colleges, agricultural institutions, hospitals, and medical clinics, to meet the regional production target. Hokims wield significant control over their regions and have the authority to involve local law enforcement, tax officials, and various government inspectors to force local populations to cultivate silkworm cocoons under threat of penalty.

The government of Uzbekistan appears committed to expanding silk production in the country, which has enormous implication for the use of forced labor. The government has pilot tested production of silk cocoons twice a year, instead of the single crop per year it had previously produced. Since silkworms feed exclusively on mulberry leaves, production is limited by the available supply of leaves. Once the leaves are used to feed the silkworms in the spring, the next production cycle can only begin when the trees produce more leaves, typically a year later. However, the government began importing “intensive mulberry trees,” which produce leaves in the spring and autumn, from China and first achieved a fall crop of silkworm cocoons in October 2013.¹³



Little information about export volumes, the export price, the total income from silk cocoon sales, and how revenues are spent is publicly available. One farmer told us that the district hokim threatened a fellow farmer for asking how the government spent the income generated by silk exports. He said, “One day during a meeting, one of the farmers wanted to know: where is the money going from the sale of the cocoons? The district hokim interrupted him: ‘You really want to know? It’s interesting to you, is it? Well, tomorrow I will send you an assessor; he will measure your garden [farmers are prohibited from growing vegetable gardens on leased agricultural land, although they provide a primary means of survival for farmers], and along the way explain where the money goes from the cocoons. Got it??’”¹⁴

Forced Labor in Silk Cocoon Production

International and Uzbek law explicitly prohibit forced labor and specifically prohibit a government from forcing a person to work against his or her will under threat of punishment or penalty.¹⁵ Yet according to official statistics, the government imposes contracts on more than 45,000 farms per year to deliver annual quotas of silkworm cocoons. Although some of the farms are specialized silk farms, the vast majority are small-scale farms that also produce cotton, wheat, livestock, or vegetables.¹⁶ Given the short but intensive production cycle of silk cocoons, to meet their silkworm cocoon quotas many farmers rely on family members' labor, others offer in-kind goods in exchange for their neighbors' labor, and some hire workers, either with written or verbal contracts. In addition to the official number of farms that produce silk, local authorities also require numerous public organizations such as mahalla committees, schools and hospitals to produce cocoons. Where the regional or district hokim also imposes silk cocoon quotas on public organizations, this occurs completely informally and without a contract.



The government exploits the vulnerability of farmers and public sector employees to force them to produce cocoons and the system relies on rural poverty since many rural people agree to help farmers produce cocoons in return for in-kind payments of basic items needed for survival, such as firewood and cooking oil. The government owns all agricultural land and farmers lease it with few protections. Agriculture, and especially the production of key or strategic crops such as cotton and silk, is centrally-controlled. The government imposes quotas on producers for cotton, wheat, and silk, and producers must sell to the state at the official procurement price. The government wields tremendous power over farmers: it can take a farmer's land or assign him less desirable land; government-owned or controlled monopolies supply all agricultural inputs; and the government controls all financial transactions related to farming.¹⁷ The government prohibits farmers from growing vegetable gardens on leased agricultural land, although such gardens provide a crucial means for farmers to feed their families and earn cash. The gardens put farmers in violation of their lease agreements, giving hokims additional leverage over farmers. Public sector employees such as teachers, school officials, and medical workers, and other people dependent on the government for livelihood support such as people receiving welfare payments, are also vulnerable to state-orchestrated forced labor because they fear losing their jobs or support payments.

Cocoon Cultivation Process

Most silk in Uzbekistan is produced by from cocoons of the bombyx mori silkworm, and their cultivation, which occurs throughout the country, is a laborious process lasting 30-40 days and carried out entirely by hand. Although the cultivation period is relatively short, it requires significant commitment of time and resources. According to one farmer in the Shakhrisabz district of Kashkadarya, "To get good cocoons you have to put all your other business to the side and work only on the cocoons."¹⁸ Government-run breeding factories produce silkworm larvae which officials distribute to farmers in mid-April or early May, depending on the climate in each region and when mulberry trees have produced leaves. Silkworms feed exclusively on mulberry leaves and the cocoon-growing season begins as soon as the mulberry trees have leaves. Whereas other silk-producing countries such as South Korea and Japan cultivate mulberry shrubs with leaves that can be machine harvested for silk production, Uzbekistan relies on traditional mulberry tree leaves, which must be collected manually. Upon maturity, the silkworms produce an adhesive substance in their mouths that turns into a silk thread, which they use to construct their cocoons.

Feeding and taking care of silkworms during cultivation requires constant, hands-on labor. Silkworms eat nearly constantly during the larval stage, except when they are molting. Silkworms increase in size 10,000 times from hatching to maturity and must have a constant supply of fresh mulberry leaves to feed on. Silk producers must take care to maintain appropriate cleanliness, temperature and humidity during the cultivation period. While some farmers use barns or sheds, many cultivate silkworms inside their homes to maintain sufficient humidity to prevent the mulberry leaves from drying out, and many heat the silkworm rooms with electric or wood-burning heaters. The caterpillars and leaves and branches required to feed them can take over several rooms of a house during the cultivation period, which aside from being disruptive, can damage living quarters.¹⁹ When the cocoons are formed, producers pluck them by hand from mulberry branches and deliver boxes of live cocoons to collection centers in each district. As one farmer explained,

We get up at 3:00 a.m. and work until night. We collect mulberry leaves, feed the caterpillars, clean and air their rooms. We sleep in shifts of one or two hours, and then it all starts again. Someone is always on duty in the room [where the caterpillars are]. Four times a month caterpillars sleep for half a day each time [during molting], and then we take a shower, and do other things, but only for half a day.”²⁰

Farmers deliver raw or live cocoons to collection centers. Later, the cocoons are hand dipped into hot water to clean them and release the silk thread, which is unwound in special silk-winding factories. A single silkworm cocoon produced in Uzbekistan weighs between 1-1.2 grams.²¹ One box of larvae, on average, results in 50-60 kilograms of cocoons.²²

Contracting and Imposition of Quotas

The district Pilla branches enter into contracts with farmers for silk cocoon production even though there is no legal basis that requires farmers to produce cocoons. A governmental decree requires district Pilla branches to sign contracts with farmers for cocoon production by February 1 and pay advances to farmers by April 1. The law specifies that advance payments to farmers should equal at least 30% of the anticipated total value of the raw cocoons expected from the farmers based on the quota imposed on each and the number of boxes of silkworm larvae each receives, and that the value be calculated on a futures basis. The law also provides that contracts should be paid in full for the silk delivered no later than November 1 and even provides for penalties for late payments to farmers.²³ However, the farmers we interviewed reported that their leases do not include requirements for silk cocoon production and the law prohibits forced labor. A farmer from the Muzrabot district of Surkhondarya region said,



I have not heard about colleagues who dared to abandon the cultivation of cocoons. In our area, the district branch of the regional Pilla branch, in January of each year makes each farmer sign blank contracting agreements on the cultivation of cocoons. Otherwise, the land of the farmer will be taken away. But in the 49-year land lease from the state, there is no agreement on the duties of the farmer to grow silkworm cocoons. But paragraph 3.1 of the lease of the land plots notes that the state can make orders for the cultivation of agricultural products. The hokimiat [regional or district government administration] constantly refers to this contract clause.”²⁴

Furthermore, none of the farmers we spoke to ever received a contract at all; all were unaware of the contracts' conditions, and some reported that they were made to sign blank contracts. One farmer told us “They don't give the farmers copies of the contracts. They justify this by saying that a lawyer has to legalize the contract, and the hokimiat.”²⁵

In addition, many of the farmers we interviewed said that they received advance amounts of less than 30% of the estimated value, and some received as little as 15%.²⁶ Numerous farmers reported that they received no payment at all for delivery of cocoons after the original advance (see Underpayment and Costs to Farmers, below).²⁷

One farmer noted:



According to the law on farming, a farm is considered an independent legal entity on which the state has no right to impose any agreements or contracts on farms. Since cotton and wheat are strategic agricultural crops in Uzbekistan, you can understand why the government requires us to grow them. But there is no such necessity for silk. Despite this, every year the district hokimiat forces farmers to produce silkworm cocoons. They just bring the contracts to farmers from the district branch of the regional Pilla and force them to sign blank contract forms. 99% of farmers do not even get a copy of the contract.²⁸

While the Pilla branches manage the contracts, the local hokimiat assigns cocoon production quotas to farmers in its district, and generally link quotas to the size of the farmer's land holdings even though the requirements of silk cocoon production are unrelated to a farm's other products such as cotton, grain, vegetables, or livestock. A farmer in Shahrisabz in the Kashkadarya region told us that officials generally distribute one box of cocoons for every 3-5 hectares of land, and this was generally consistent with accounts both from officials and other farmers we interviewed.²⁹ In distributing the quota for the silkworm cocoons the local hokim's office does not consider whether the farmer has the necessary experience or capacity, including space, mulberry trees, financial means and workforce, to cultivate the allocated quota of silkworm cocoons. A source in Jizzakh described a meeting with the regional hokim at which the hokim imposed cocoon quotas on farms, schools, and hospitals. The meeting occurred in June, after the usual cocoon cultivation period, underscoring the reality that many farms and other institutions are forced to buy cocoons at inflated prices from other producers or make a bribe payment in lieu of delivering cocoons [see Buying Out of Cocoon Production, below].



On June 17 at 8:00 p.m. the hokim of the Jizzakh region, Akmal Abdullaev, called a meeting with farmers and said that 1,200 farmers in the region must buy and turn in 250 kilograms of cocoons each. There are 54 schools in the region. Each school director must find and turn in 75 kilograms of cocoons. Directors of the 22 kindergartens in the region each received the assignment to find and turn in 50 kilograms of cocoons. In the Jizzakh region there are 12 hospitals. Every hospital must turn in 500 kilograms of cocoons. Farmers and all the other leaders [of institutions] must find the means to fulfill the quota imposed or else the prosecutor will conduct inspections of each [farm or institution]. The hokim gave three days to fulfill the quota. Presently, many have fulfilled the quota. One kilogram of cocoons costs 15,000 soum. At the beginning of his speech the Jizzakh hokim acknowledged that there was an order [for cocoon production] from the prime minister.³⁰

Another farmer similarly told us, "Now a farmer who has produced extra cocoons sells them to a farmer that didn't meet his quota at a rate of 15,000-20,000 soum per kilogram [approximately \$4-5 USD, in contrast to the 6,000 soum average official price]. And meeting the cocoon quota is mandatory. There is a cocoon plan for all public organizations: for schools, rural colleges, hospitals, clinics, and rural health centers."³¹

We found that although some farmers were aware that the contracting process and imposition of quotas constituted a violation of their rights, they did not believe they could effectively challenge the contract conditions or refuse to produce silk.

Coercion and Penalties

Mandatory silk production occurs in the context of enormous poverty and vulnerability of farmers and the rural population in Uzbekistan. As noted above, farmers depend heavily on local and regional authorities for land, inputs, and treatment overall. In addition to mandatory production quotas, farmers are subjected to the harsh coercion and entrenched corruption that attend the agricultural system in Uzbekistan. Local hokims are aware that farmers cultivate vegetables “illegally.” This provides them with additional leverage over farmers to coerce them to produce silk or other crops for no profit because if farmers refuse, hokims can threaten to destroy their vegetable plots, often farmers’ main means of survival. Hokims and other officials involved in silk production also rely on the fact that farmers can turn to impoverished rural populations to help with cocoon cultivation because they are in desperate need of fuel and other necessities that the farmer can provide in lieu of cash.



Local authorities including the police and prosecutors assist the hokim to enforce production quotas, intimidate, humiliate, and threaten farmers, and punish those who fail to meet quotas. They also sometimes use physical violence such as beatings.³² Underscoring the enormous pressure on farmers, on July 2, 2015, 29-year old farmer Nodirbek Khaidarov from the Izboskan district of the Andijan region killed himself after being humiliated, excoriated, and threatened with prison by the district hokim and prosecutor for failure to meet his wheat production quota.³³ In another example, on December 29, 2014, Dilshod Murodillaev, a 40-year old farmer from the Samarkand region committed suicide after local authorities threatened to take his land after he failed to meet his cotton production quota and faced enormous fines and other debts.³⁴

Some farmers told us that they do not want to cultivate silk at all, while others said they might be willing if they could make a reliable profit. For example, one farmer from Tashkent region said,

I do not want to grow silkworm cocoons. If I could, I would remove the word „cocoon“ from my vocabulary. I do not know who needs it. The mulberry trees that feed caterpillar cocoons become less and less. Growing cocoons is not an easy task. If I had it my way, I would grow fruits and vegetables. Or at least I would try cattle or poultry.³⁵

All of the farmers we interviewed said they could not refuse to cultivate cocoons, fearing penalties or reprisals from local authorities. One farmer told us, “We are farmers in name only, in reality everything is in the hands of the hokims. Farmers aren’t free.”³⁶ Another told us,

They [hokims] have a lot of surprises for us. We cannot abandon the cultivation of cocoons. If you do, you will be put in a very bad position with the hokim. All activities in the region depend on his will. He can come up with all sorts of surprises. Whether a farmer gets land, fertilizer and fuel for agricultural machinery - it all depends on the hokim. If the farmer doesn’t get these things on time, it’s useless to engage in farming. If the hokim wants, he may limit irrigation water on your land, or not give you fertilizer or fuel. In short, you work quietly. Every day official inspectors are sent to your land. You just have to grow silkworm cocoons.³⁷

The government also enforces silk cocoon quotas by threatening farmers with penalties ranging from loss of land to the threat of criminal prosecution. One farmer told us, “If a farmer refuses to cultivate silkworm cocoons, the government starts to threaten us saying that our land will be taken away, and we will go to jail. The worst thing is that they can do that. The representatives of the local prosecutor’s office, the police can come any time. In short, we have no other choice.”³⁸

According to a farmer from the Chinaz district of the Tashkent region:

To be honest, to abandon silk production is impossible. The administration has a lot of leverage—it can shut down my farm, and even go after me. Almost every day the hokimiat asks for a progress report. They come into houses that grow mulberry. The prosecutors and police are also involved. I do not invite them, but somewhere at the top someone also asks them for reports, probably. They are already accustomed to poking their noses everywhere.

Another noted, “First, they take away the land. Second, they call for meetings at the hokimiat, and there you will be insulted, threatened and beaten. Third, they may put you in prison. The government has many causes and reasons, the laws do not work. If I will be ‘shut down,’ who will protect me?”

Underpayment and Costs to Farmers

In addition to being labor intensive, silk cocoon cultivation can be costly for producers. Many farmers hire additional labor at their own expense to meet their production quotas, and must pay for inputs, facilities, and transport. Given low official procurement prices for silk cocoons, little if anything is left for farmers. In our interviews farmers noted that in addition to paying for cultivation costs, they often received little or no payment for the cocoons they did cultivate. The practice of nonpayment or underpayment to farmers appears to be common, arbitrary, and widespread, with some farmers receiving in-kind goods or some payment, some receiving delayed payments if they pursued them over many months, and many receiving no payment at all.

Underpayment and Nonpayment for Cocoons

Although the government ostensibly pays farmers for cocoons, farmers make little, if any, profit from silk production due to cultivation costs and the common practice of underpayment or nonpayment to farmers for cocoons. Many farmers reported receiving an advance payment, sometimes minor or in-kind, such as cooking oil or flour, and then never receiving the promised monetary payments for actual delivery of cocoons. None of the farmers interviewed said that they ever received full payment for their harvest of raw cocoons. Instead, many farmers incurred costs that exceeded their payment to cultivate silk cocoons, thereby informally subsidizing the government’s silk sector. One farmer described the financial burden of cocoon production on farmers:



Growing silkworm cocoons means continuous costs for the farmer. We bear the costs for growing worms; actually, we pay money to the villagers to grow silkworms and help us to fulfill the plan established by the state. All costs are borne by us; the state does not spend even a single penny. From the state we only get silkworm larvae and the paper necessary to prepare the site for the larvae. None of the dogs from the Pilla association is interested in our problems. We have to run and ask for the payment of our work. They won't lift a finger to pay us our money. I still have not received 2 million soum for last year's crop of cocoons. If you tell them that you need money to pay for fuel, fertilizers for the further work of the farm, they brazenly reply that they haven't received money for the silkworm cocoons. After visiting their office five or six times in a row, would you want to go back there again? They are used to it and know that the farmer cannot abandon the cultivation of silk cocoons. If a farmer refuses, the hokimiyat will still make them, as they well know. And when the time comes again to distribute silkworms, they appear again in front of you and don't even blush. If you refuse to cooperate with them, they will immediately notify the state administration. Try then to refuse. Therefore, they are not afraid of farmers.³⁹

Another farmer confirmed the government's practice of making initial payments to farmers and failing to pay for actual delivery of silk cocoons, "I've been in agriculture since 1984, almost 30 years. It has never been the case that after delivering the cocoons those who raised and delivered them got anything. When you deliver the silkworms they give you 102,000 soum (approximately \$34) as salary. We receive this amount from our bank in cash. That's all. They gave us nothing more. And will not give us anything more."⁴⁰

The government does not provide explanations for the delay or lack of payments to farmers who cultivate the silk cocoons.

Do any farmers believe in getting compensation for the cultivation of silk cocoons? It's very difficult to obtain compensation for the cultivation of cocoons. Some farmers get it within one year, some farmers only after two or three years. When a farmer takes silkworm cocoons for growing, he only gets an advance at the beginning. This is petty money. For example, for one box of silkworm eggs they give an advance of 5,000 soum. If a farmer is very persistent and willing to fight for compensation, he can get his money a year after the delivering the crop. But most farmers cannot get their money for years, sometimes up to five years. Honestly, now I do not even think about getting money. I will be glad just for the fact that I was able to fulfill the state plan and that it's already behind us. Because I know that compensation for the cultivation of silk cocoons will never be paid. Even if they pay a tiny amount, it will be not until January-February next year.⁴¹



In addition to delays and underpayment, the government often makes in-kind, rather than cash, payments for silk. Farmers reported receiving in-kind payments, including for advance payments intended to offset production costs, of flour and cooking oil. The in-kind payments are frequently unnecessary or low-value household goods not of the farmer's own choosing. Another farmer described them:

I handed over to the state collection center the highest-grade cocoons, worth 6,000 soum per kilogram. But the government still has not paid me for my work. I have no hopes of getting this money because, as happens year after year, we are forced to grow silkworm cocoons without compensation. A farmer cannot get even a tiny amount of his labor compensated. In March, during the distribution of silkworm cocoons, they pay an advance of 10-15% of the contracting amount. We spent all this money to pay the costs for cultivation of silkworm cocoons. After fulfilling the state plan, instead of decent compensation for our work, they give us offensive gifts, to photograph us for their newspapers. For example, they give you a tin kettle, thermos or plastic buckets. I must tell you, cultivation of silkworm cocoons is an insult and humiliation for the farmers.⁴²

Some farmers told us that nonpayment, underpayment, and in-kind payment for silk are due to financial mismanagement and corruption among the Pilla organizations and other entities that oversee silk production. Even in cases when farmers filed complaints in local courts and the courts found evidence of corruption at the Pilla branches, farmers reported that they still could not get paid. For example, a farmer from the Surkhandarya region said:

Last year [in 2012], a court convicted the former heads of the Muzrabot district Pilla branch, Parda Hudaerov and Holmumin Matrayimov, for embezzling the organization's money, including our money for our work in the cultivation of silk cocoons. The new head of the Muzrabot district Pilla branch, Ortikov Zamonov, did not make the appropriate conclusions from this and has still not transferred our money. In 2012 I handed over 400 kilograms of silk cocoons, for which the Pilla still hasn't paid me. The next year [2013], they owed me a little more than 2,000,000 soum. Recently, the district administration awarded me a used Singer sewing machine and a used plow. But later I learned that the gifts were given to me in lieu of the money the government owed me for the cocoons. They assessed that old sewing machine as being worth 800,000 soum and that old plow as 1,000,000 soum, and in their papers they noted that the debts had been paid. I went to the Muzrabot Pilla office and raised a fuss. They told me that I could not do anything because our money was stolen by the former heads of the organization.⁴³

Costs for Labor and Equipment

Although farmers often receive little or no payment, they must bear all the costs for silk production, including hiring additional labor. For many rural people hired to assist farmers and public organizations in silk production, the work is an important way to make ends meet. They receive firewood, livestock feed, other agricultural products, or, in very few cases, cash payments for cocoon work. Some rural poor agree to cultivate cocoons only because it gives them access to the mulberry branches, which can be used as firewood, an especially valuable resource given the country's chronic fuel shortages.⁴⁴ One woman who received silkworms for cultivation from her mahalla committee told us, "Well, [cultivating cocoons] is not mandatory. If you don't want to you don't have to take them. But now there is no gas. Firewood is expensive. And so poor people take them [silkworms] for the firewood."⁴⁵



The cocoon production period, which begins in mid-to late April and ends in late May or early June, occurs at the same time that farmers must weed, fertilize and plant cotton and tend to wheat crops, both crops for which they also have to fulfill state-imposed quotas. Farmers and public organizations rely on different methods to mobilize and compensate workers. For example, some farmers distribute silkworm larvae among their employees for cultivation in return for the temporary use of a piece of land for vegetable gardening. Others trade firewood, wheat, cottonseed oil, or other commodities in exchange for raw cocoons. One farmer said that he must hire labor to fulfill his cocoon quota to allow him to continue his regular farm work, "There is no profit from cocoons. There are only costs because cocoon cultivation happens at the same time as cotton planting. If I cultivate cocoons, who will plant the cotton? And the grain must be irrigated and fertilized."⁴⁶ The farmer said he pays local women 150,000 soum (approximately \$37 USD) and a cartload of hay for each box of silkworms they agree to cultivate for him.⁴⁷

Farmers do not receive financial assistance to help pay for the labor involved in cultivation:

Anyone who is more or less familiar with agriculture in Uzbekistan, realizes that cultivating silkworm cocoons is unprofitable for farmers. For example, I was paid an advance of 15% of the total contract amount. The total contracting amount was 2,032,000 soum (approximately \$510 USD). I spent the advances I received on purchasing special racks, nets and papers required for the cultivation of the cocoons. I was able to fulfill only 60.6% of the quota imposed on me. For the rest of the plan I used my

own money [to purchase the remaining cocoons needed to meet the quota]. So I lost approximately 350,000 soum. This is excluding the wages I paid to two employees for their work in the cultivation of the cocoons. Today, even this outcome with losses for the farmer is considered a positive result. I have many colleagues who have debts with the government.⁴⁸

Even when farmers received payment for the silk cocoons delivered, their costs, including for additional labor, often exceeded their profit. For example, a farmer in the Chinaz district of the Tashkent region reported,

There is not much revenue [in cocoon production]. I delivered over 780 kilograms [of silk cocoons], including 500 kilograms of the highest grade, worth 6200 -7500 soum. I averaged 5500 soum per kilo. In total I should have earned 2.5 million soum (approximately \$833). But I haven't yet received this money from the government. Let's say even if I get my money, if I deduct the salaries of the farmworkers—5,000 soum (approximately \$1.66) per kilogram—only half a million soum is left. But, I have already spent this money to purchase shelving, transport, etc. [for cultivation]. So nothing is left for me. As in the case of cotton, they pay for the first and second harvest, and in the end they stop paying. The same here, in the beginning people get a bag of flour and five kilograms of cottonseed oil as an advance [payment], and the rest is not paid.⁴⁹

An Uzbek farmer described the costs of fulfilling his silk cocoon quota, and how he does it:

You ask how much income I received from the cultivation of silk cocoons? I'll tell you "zero." Ask instead how much I lost. Those people whom I hired to grow cocoons came to my home again and again, asking for wheat, flour and oil. There is nothing left in my house. Sometimes, I had to take food from my own children to give to them. For one month I gritted my teeth and endured until it ended. I will not get income from the cocoons. I'm just told "thank you" for the implementation of the state plan; perhaps, they will give me a carpet or something like that. But I gave at my own expense a bag of wheat and four kilograms of oil to all those who helped me to grow the cocoons.



Another farmer described the practice in his experience:

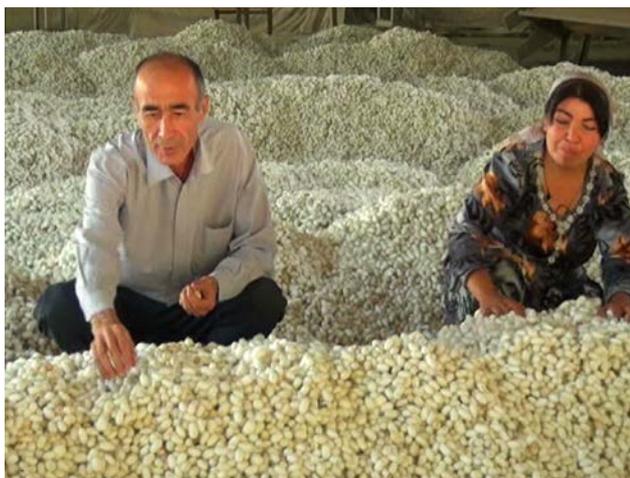
In addition to wheat, in fall, I give them guzapaya [dried cotton stalk, burned for fuel]. I also give them food for their animals or allocate 10-15 acres of land freed from wheat as a temporary vegetable garden for planting corn. If I hire high school students, I can promise to free them from participating in the cotton harvest in the fall. I also give their teachers temporary use of 20 acres of land for crops they need. If the kindergarten staff helps me in the cultivation of silk cocoons, I make renovations of the building of the kindergarten

According to another farmer, "After fulfilling the state plan of silkworm cocoon production I gave each assistant a bag of potatoes, onions or carrots and four kilograms of cotton oil. Within a month, when we had grown the cocoons, I bought one kilogram of meat for their families. Workers themselves live and eat at my house during the cultivation season."

A rural resident from the Andijan region said that he receives benefits from working for a farmer in silk production even though he is not usually paid in money:

It is good to work in the cultivation of silk cocoons, although we receive scant or no monetary compensation from the farmer. For example, we use the bare mulberry branches as wood for cooking and heating homes. The remains of mulberry leaves and silkworm excrement we use as fertilizer for our garden. The farmers allocated us the temporary use of 22 acres of his land to grow corn to feed our animals. The farmers also promised to give us dried cotton stalks [used as fuel] in the fall. All these are our revenue.⁵⁰

Another rural worker confirmed the importance of silk work, particularly as a source of fuel for rural residents, “The farmer gave me 200,000 sum, three kilograms of cotton oil and 20 kilograms of flour [for my work]. I didn’t get anything else from him. But one of the main reasons why we agree to grow cocoons for the farmers is to gather enough wood [for fuel] for the winter.⁵¹



Many farmers and other producers also told us that access to sufficient supplies of mulberry leaves can pose problems in meeting their quotas. One farmer told us that he has enough mulberry trees to produce enough for his silkworms required but that he hired farmworkers to guard his fields during the night in return for extra meals to prevent others from stealing leaves to feed their own silkworms.⁵² Several people reported that the problem of finding sufficient mulberry leaves was especially acute during the 2015 silk cocoon season, and that cocoon producers throughout the country had trouble getting enough leaves to feed the silkworms. Some said that the cold winter had killed leaves or caused the trees to produce fewer leaves.

Buying Out of Cocoon Production

Many people we interviewed noted that corruption is a major factor in the silk sector in Uzbekistan. Various corruption schemes and unregistered payments that serve primarily to enrich officials riddle the system. For example, some employees of public organizations make payments to buy their way out of the obligation to produce silk cocoons imposed on them by the regional and district hokims. These payments, which essentially amount to bribes, are unregulated and unrecorded and impose a further burden the already impoverished rural population.

Farmers unable to fulfill their quotas often try to purchase the necessary amount of cocoons from farmers who have exceeded their quotas or on local black markets, where raw cocoon prices are more than double the official price.⁵³ Other farmers avoid cultivating cocoons entirely and instead pay bribes to district officials, either the Pilla, or officials from the hokimiat, to avoid penalties. Some farmers make payments to avoid silk production entirely, make up for shortfalls, avoid penalties for failing to meet quotas, or as bribes to negotiate a lighter quota. One farmer said:

The regional state administration arbitrarily establishes the silkworm cocoon quota. For example, they establish a plan of three kilograms of cocoons for each hectare of a farmer’s land. If a farmer has 100 acres, he may be required to grow 35 boxes of cocoons. I have 55 acres of land. According to their calculations, I have to grow 17 boxes of cocoons. But I agreed with the district agronomist to only grow nine boxes and gave him 500,000 soum (approximately \$120 USD) for the remainder.⁵⁴

In another case a farmer who could not fulfill his cocoon quota told us that a local official demanded he pay for the equivalent of 38 kilograms of cocoons per hectare of his land, an amount far above the usual quota demand.⁵⁵

Similar unregulated payments are made to employees at local hokimiats or local cocoon collection centers to compensate for unmet quotas. As a result, farmers with debts to the government must seek additional resources

to pay bribes. A farmer from the Jizzakh region who failed to meet his cocoon quota described how he paid a bribe to a local official to avoid a penalty:



I did not grow [silk cocoons]. But the plan needs to be fulfilled. During this time I learned with horror there were too many like me [who failed to cultivate the required amount]. There was nobody who grew the cocoons and wanted to sell them for cash. I went to almost every house with money in my hands. I offered 10,000 soum per kilogram. I took my two brothers and went to the Samarkand region, toured many villages in Bulungur and Jambay districts. If we heard someone was growing silkworms, we certainly visited him. We had 1.7 million soum in the car, to buy 170 kilograms of cocoons at 10,000 soum per kilogram. But we couldn't even find one kilogram. All available cocoons had already been snapped up. On the way back we stopped at a teahouse by the river Sangzor. My brother advised me: You're a smart man. No wonder you have leadership positions for so many years. So, let's take a kebab, a bottle of vodka, sit down, have a drink, and take a break. I ate, drank, and got my head back. Then, I just went to the regional administration, where the assistant regional governor was my long-time friend. I called him in his office and asked him to come down. He sat down beside me in the car. I immediately put 500,000 soum in front of him and told him my request. He gave me back 100,000 soum, took 400,000 soums, and went back to the state administration. After half an hour he called me on the phone and said it was all right. I went home with a clear conscience and forgot about my plan of getting cocoons. And that's how it's done. Usually all documents and reports are made in the regional administration of the district hokimiyats. He recorded in the computer that my farm had delivered 170 kilogram of cocoons to the state. This report will be used at the end during the delivering of the cocoons. And then, when everything calms down, they will forget about cocoons, and forget about my quota.⁵⁶

Imposition of Quotas on Mahalla Committees and Public Sector

Although the government imposes the most of the burden of cultivating silk cocoons on farmers, it also forces personnel of public organizations such as rural schools, colleges, and medical centers, to fulfill cocoons production quotas. In many districts, the hokimiat tasks local mahalla (neighborhood) councils with distributing and enforcing production quotas on residents. While the involvement of the farmers in the cultivation of silkworm cocoons is ostensibly based on formal contracts with the government, the forced silk cocoon cultivation by personnel of public organizations or mahalla residents occurs outside any contractual or legal framework. The district hokimiats give verbal orders to the public organizations and mahalla committees. Residents forced to cultivate cocoons often must do so in their own homes, lacking access to barns, sheds, or other places suitable for cocoon cultivation. The silkworms and branches require plenty of space, ventilation, proper humidity, and warmth. According to one mahalla committee member,

“Every family has to take two or three boxes. People suffer. Two or three boxes of silkworms means that you need to free up seven or eight rooms. The people can end up living on the street! Silkworms are gluttonous. They eat a lot of leaves. Around 10 people will have to care for them. That's why farmers go around asking for help.”⁵⁷

Quotas for Public Organizations

The hokims assign quotas to public organizations based on the number of employees. One doctor told us that her clinic cannot refuse to cultivate cocoons or the head of the clinic would risk losing his job:

[The head of the clinic] doesn't refuse. He wants to keep his job. He's afraid that they would remove him if he refuses. It's better to calmly agree and get through the month of cultivation work. He is told from above—take them [silkworms]. If the chief doctor tells him to take them he takes them. Someone is also ordering the chief doctor. After all, he isn't the one who decides to tell us to take silkworms.⁵⁸

Some rural institutions cultivate silkworm cocoons if they have the space and labor necessary to do it. For example, rural colleges allocate classrooms and gyms for silkworm cultivation. For example, one rural teacher told us, “Yes, we kept [the cocoons] in school, usually in the gym or in home economics classrooms and in [other] classrooms too. For 40 days, until the time of the harvest. Harvest begins on May 10-15, so school ends at that time. This is not normal, but unfortunately there are still no farms specializing in sericulture, no specialized facilities or buildings.”⁵⁹



However, public organizations face great difficulty in procuring enough mulberry leaves to feed the developing caterpillars. Since they generally do not have their own mulberry orchards, they have to pay or trade with farmers to obtain enough leaves to feed their caterpillars. A teacher from a rural area described the exchanges that schools make with farmers to meet forced labor requirements, “For example, [public employees] may agree for the farmer to provide schools or the rural medical clinic with mulberry leaves, and the school staff or medical point can help the farmer with weeding cotton or harvest in the fall. It all depends on what they agree.”

According to another rural schoolteacher from Andijan region:

In the beginning, when the caterpillars are small, they do not consume a lot of mulberry leaves. Then it's easy for organizations to find mulberry leaves. When the caterpillars grow, then they eat a lot and then schools or hospitals have to beg farmers to give them mulberry leaves.... The director of the school or the hospital director pleads with the farmers. Sometimes they persuade farmers through a representative of the local mahalla committee. They will do everything possible to get the mulberry leaves. They promise to help the farmer with the cotton harvest.

Rural schools pay for all expenses related to the cultivation of silkworm caterpillars. Their personnel and, in many cases, schoolchildren, are required to raise funds for the process. Rural schoolteachers confirmed in interviews with us that they receive no compensation from the government for their expenses and labor and that students and teachers make payments to meet the quota. According to a rural school teacher, “At the beginning of the growing period, teachers collect 500 soum from each student, the money needed for the purchase of mulberry leaves to feed the caterpillars cocoons.” Another rural schoolteacher confirmed:

We put the silkworms in three classrooms. Later we put them in the gym. At the end of the season we had no mulberry leaves. Local farmers had also harvested all their mulberry leaves. Those who still had supplies of mulberry leaves did not want to sell them to us. Our director ordered all who have mulberry trees at home to collect mulberry leaves and bring them to the school. He also asked us to explain the situation to the parents and ask for permission to collect the leaves from the mulberry trees belonging to the families of students and teachers. So we went to their homes to collect mulberry leaves. Some families refused to give us their mulberry leaves.

Some public organizations prefer to collect money from their employees to buy cocoons from local farmers, pay someone else to cultivate the cocoons, or simply make a payment in lieu of turning in the assigned quota amount. Whether they grow or buy the cocoons or make a payment, the result is that public-sector workers directly subsidize silk cocoon production.

In hospitals and medical clinics, the staff members lack sufficient space and experience to cultivate silkworms and simply provide money to the Pilla instead of cocoons. One clinic employee told us,

I myself paid 100,000 soum (approximately \$X USD), and money was collected from other employees depending on how much their salary is. Some paid 50,000, others paid more than I did.... [The money] is probably given to the head of the cocoon collection center. Every year the cocoon center distributes the silkworms to public organizations. Whoever doesn't want to cultivate them pays money. Then they write down that the organization has turned in its quota of cocoons. No one says anything to contradict this. If you don't want to cultivate cocoons, it's enough to collect money and turn it in. The rest is their business.⁶⁰

One doctor told us,

The chief physician of our rural medical center gathered us together and told us about our quota for silkworm cocoons. He also said that the chief doctor of the district ordered the medical staff to not bother with the cultivation of silk cocoons, and just collect money to buy ready cocoons to implement the plan. Thus, we decided not to take silkworm larvae in April when they were distributed, and just bought cocoons a month later from other people. Depending on the varieties, we bought already-cultivated cocoons for 8,000 to 10,000 soum per kilogram. It's better than growing cocoons ourselves; yes, we had to spend our own money, but we spared so much time and trouble.⁶¹

Beginning in 2013, perhaps in connection with increasing efforts to reduce forced child labor, silk cocoon production quotas on schools and colleges appeared to decrease. Some people we interviewed in 2015 told us that schools in their regions did not produce silk cocoons this year.⁶² However, the coercion of teachers to produce silk cocoons has taken on new forms. Respondents told us that teachers are each assigned to families producing silk cocoons for their mahalla and are expected to assist in cultivation efforts by providing labor, money or other support if the families need it. The government does not compensate the teachers for this work.⁶³



Quotas for Mahalla Committees

Mahalla committees that receive boxes of silkworm larvae for cultivation from district hokims cultivate cocoons themselves or distribute the boxes among residents of their mahalla. When asked if mahalla committees could refuse to cultivate cocoons, a mahalla committee employee replied “That’s interesting—where would we get firewood and hay for the winter? They provide for us if we ask. They sponsor some of our activities. And the hokimiat knows this.”⁶⁴

Mahallah committee employees pressure residents to cultivate the cocoons, although for some rural residents, the promise of fuel from bare mulberry branches provides incentive to put in the labor required for cocoon cultivation. Since mahalla committees oversee distribution of many social benefits payments, such as child welfare payments, mahalla committees often force vulnerable residents, such as women who depend on child support payments, to take on the cultivation burden. One woman told us that her mahalla committee pressured her to cultivate silkworms or else she would not receive her child subsidy payment:

I receive a child subsidy from the mahalla but it needs to be renewed. So the mahalla committee chairperson told me “if you want to receive the payment for the next year then you should take some silkworms to care for.” If I don’t, then next year I will have to give my subsidy money to [the mahalla]. And the branches are leftover from the mulberry leaves. That is useful. Not like last year, when I had to buy dried cotton stalks [to burn], they cost 3,000-4,000 soum. Where should I get the money for that? So the branches will be good for firewood.”⁶⁵

Conclusion

Uzbek government officials use forced labor to reap the profit from silk exports, produced by a system that relies on human rights violations and which contributes to corruption and poverty. The silk production system is structured such that farmers and public organizations take on the majority of the costs and burden of production and receive little, if anything, in return. Uzbekistan exports the majority of silk produced, providing the government with a key source of hard currency, but profits are not returned to producers. The state strives to produce ever-greater quantities of silk but, given the current production system, this leads to greater pressure and rights violations against farmers and the further impoverishment of the rural population. This system survives only in the context of an opaque and corrupt state-controlled economy, lack of ownership of land and lack of rule of law. Entrenched interests in the profits from the silk industry in the hands of a small elite serve as a disincentive for true structural reforms.

Real structural reforms are needed to transform the silk industry from a system of exploitation to an economic sector that supports sustainable livelihoods to rural residents. Fundamentally, the government must uphold its international and national legal obligations to not use and abolish forced labor. Farmers must be provided real autonomy and meaningful decision-making authority over farming activities on the land they farm. Additionally, farmers should have the discretion to sell their products to the buyers of their choice, or state procurement prices should be based on competitive market rates.

Uzbek silk is exported to many countries around the world and is used in the products of leading fashion brands and textile industries, including in countries with laws prohibiting forced labor or trade in products produced by forced labor. In its advertisements, the government of Uzbekistan declares that Uzbek silk is used by leading international designers and clothing retailers.⁶⁶ International companies that use Uzbek silk should know that it is produced by forced labor and take steps to remove Uzbek silk from their supply chains until forced labor in silk cocoon production is eradicated in Uzbekistan. Further, many textile projects and businesses in Uzbekistan receive funding from international investors and international financial institutions. These stakeholders have the obligation to conduct due diligence regarding the way silk is produced in Uzbekistan and to take appropriate action, including by eliminating any silk produced by forced labor from their supply chains.

Recommendations

To the Uzbek Government

- Take immediate measures to eradicate forced labor in silk cocoon production, including:
 - Stop using the forced labor of Uzbek farmers and personnel of the public organizations in the silk industry.
 - Abolish mandatory production quotas;
 - Hold government officials who continue to use or ignore the use of forced in the silk cocoon production accountable under the law;
 - Invite the International Labor Organization to examine compliance with international labor conventions;
 - Conduct independent, effective, transparent investigations into the use of coercion and against nonpayment to Uzbek farmers, public sector workers and other individuals in relation to their involvement in silk production and hold the perpetrators accountable under the law;
- Reform the silk sector by
 - Guaranteeing private property rights, especially for farmers and their use of land under lease agreements;
 - Using world market prices to establish procurement prices and ending government monopoly control over the silk cocoon market;
 - Ensuring financial transparency in all aspects of silk cocoon production.
- Ratify and apply ILO Convention No. 87 on the freedom of association.

To International Financial Institutions and Donor Organizations

- Ensure that no financing or project support contributes to the use of forced labor;
- Conduct independent monitoring of all projects that support to the silk industry in Uzbekistan to ensure compliance with international labor rights standards;
- Establish a joint working group, including the International Labor Organization and foreign direct investors, to coordinate strategies on the silk industry in Uzbekistan;
- Urge the government of Uzbekistan, as a matter of priority, to undertake structural reforms of the silk cocoon industry aimed to eliminate the use of forced labor in cocoon production;
- Design and implement programs to:
 - Provide legal assistance and human rights protection to Uzbek farmers;
 - Support Uzbek farmers to organize trade unions, rural credit unions, and private sales and marketing networks;
 - Create sustainable employment opportunities for rural residents, especially women;
- Support, including through project funding, independent Uzbek civil society groups and independent media that work to expose violations in the silk industry;

To International Companies that Buy or Use Silk Produced in Uzbekistan

- Take steps to eradicate silk produced by forced labor from all supply chains;
- Provide country-of-origin and other production information to consumers;
- Conduct independent monitoring of silk suppliers;
- Secure binding commitments from all companies in supply chains that the silk used in the company's products is produced in accordance with international labor standards.

Endnotes

¹ Internal memorandum on silk production in Uzbekistan for 2015, Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources, May 2015. A copy of the memorandum is on file with the Uzbek-German Forum for human rights. The data are consistent with those given in an interview by an official from the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources (name withheld), Tashkent, May, 2013. Although sources differ, Uzbekistan ranks consistently in the top silk producers globally, with China, India, Brazil, and Japan. See for example the International Sericulture Commission, Statistics, <http://inserco.org/en/statistics>.

² For an overview of silk production in Uzbekistan, see “Uzbeks Toil to Keep Silk Industry’s Traditions Alive,” Fargis Najibullah and Sadridin Ashurov, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, March 12, 2013, <http://www.rferl.org/content/uzbekistan-silk-industry/24926469.html>.

³ please list one or two citations to interviews.

⁴ See for example, Sinha, Sanjay, “Development Impact of Silk Production: A Wealth of Opportunities,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Jan. 21, 1989), pp. 157-163. For an example of sericulture as part of a rural development program in Afghanistan, see: <http://acdivoca.org/our-programs/success-story/revitalizing-silk-sector-afghanistan-and-developing-rural-economy>.

⁵ Exceptions to forced labor under the International Labor Organization’s conventions are narrow, applying only to “normal civic obligations of citizens” and limited to minor works or services performed in the direct interest of the population. There is no exception for work for purposes of economic development, which is specifically prohibited. See ILO Committee of Experts observation on Convention No. 105 in Uzbekistan in its current report: http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID:3188564.

⁶ “Узбекистан произведет более 1,5 тыс. тонн нитей шелка-сырца и свыше 4,1 млн. кв. м шелковых тканей,” [Uzbekistan produces more than 1.5 million tons of raw silk thread and more than 4.1 million square meters of silk fabric], UzReport Information Agency, August 23, 2012, http://news.uzreport.uz/news_4_r_99391.html.

⁷ “Шелкопряды потрудились на славу,” [“Silk Producers Worked for Glory”] Kamil Akhrorov, Uzbekistan Today Information Agency, August 12, 2010, http://old.ut.uz/rus/delovoy_klimat/shelkopryadi_potrudilis_na_slavu.mgr.

⁸ Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Measures for the Further Reform of the Silk Sector in the Republic,” Collected Legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan, November 15, 2006 No PP-512, available at <http://engilsanoat.uz/ru/>. There is no publicly available information on who holds the private shares of Uzbekengilsanoat. In the cotton industry, Khlopkoprom is a joint-stock company that manages contracts with farmers on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture although the private shareholders are understood to be government officials. See Ilkhamov, Alisher and Murodov, Bakhodiy, “Uzbekistan’s Cotton Sector: Financial Flows and the Distribution of Resources,” Open Society Foundations Eurasia Program, October 2014, available at: <http://www.opensociety-foundations.org/reports/uzbekistan-s-cotton-sector-financial-flows-and-distribution-resources>.

⁹ See Appendix 1. <http://engilsanoat.uz/ru/?script=cir>.

¹⁰ There are currently 36 major silk processing factories in Uzbekistan. Investors from Japan, South Korea, China, the United States, Switzerland and Great Britain have entered into joint ventures with Uzbekengilsanoat and currently co-operate some of the silk processing factories.

¹¹ Interview with official of the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan, name withheld, Tashkent, May, 2013. The official said that Cabinet of Ministers resolution No. 96 of March 15, 2000, establishes the competence of the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources to create the silk cocoon production plan and procurement price with Uzbekengilsanoat and the State Committee on Privatization, De-monopolization, and Competition.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ See “Интенсивные саженцы – высокая эффективность и качество [Intensive trees – high efficiency and quality],” National Information Agency of Uzbekistan, February 19, 2013, <http://uza.uz/ru/business/22344/>, and “Кокконы в Узбекистане будут заготавливать два раза в год [Uzbekistan will produce silk cocoons twice a year],” *Gazeta.Uz*, October 25, 2013, <http://www.gazeta.uz/2013/10/25/silk/>.

¹⁴ Interview with the farmer, Jizzak region, June 2013.

¹⁵ Uzbekistan is a member of the International Labor Organization (ILO) and has ratified seven of the ILO’s eight fundamental treaties. Uzbekistan is also a party to key international human rights treaties that prohibit the forced labor of children and adults. These fundamental conventions prohibit forced or compulsory labor as political coercion, as punishment for expressing particular political views, as a means of mobilizing, and for purposes of economic development. ILO Convention No. 29 defines forced labor as “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself [or herself] voluntarily.” According to the ILO’s Committee of Experts, “under menace of penalty” “should be understood in a very broad sense: it covers penal sanctions, as well as various forms of coercion, such as physical violence, psychological coercion, retention of identity documents, etc. The penalty here in question might also take the form of a loss of rights or privileges.” See International Labour Organization, “Giving Globalization a Human Face,” 2012, ILC.101/III/1B, Para 308, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_174846.pdf. Uzbek law, including the Constitution, provisions of the Labor Code and laws on child protection, generally prohibit forced and child labor in accordance with Uzbekistan’s international legal obligations. Article 37 of the Constitution guarantees the right to work and to fair labor conditions and prohibits forced labor. For a detailed overview of protection of the rights of the child and protections against child labor in Uzbek law, see: National Laws of Uzbekistan, Child Rights

- International Network, available at: <http://www.crin.org/en/library/publications/uzbekistan-national-laws>; Какие различия существуют между детским трудом и принудительным трудом? [“What Are the Differences Between Child Labor and Forced Labor?”], October 29, 2013, available at: <http://www.tashabbus.uz/razlichiya-mejdu-detskim-trudom/>. For a detailed overview of protection of the rights of the child and protections against child labor in Uzbek law, see: National Laws of Uzbekistan, Child Rights International Network, available at: <http://www.crin.org/en/library/publications/uzbekistan-national-laws>; Какие различия существуют между детским трудом и принудительным трудом? [“What Are the Differences Between Child Labor and Forced Labor?”], October 29, 2013, available at: <http://www.tashabbus.uz/razlichiya-mejdu-detskim-trudom/>, accessed May 10, 2014; and ILO Report Annex A, p. 27.
- ¹⁶ “Экономика: Шелководство в Узбекистане [Economics: Silk Production in Uzbekistan],” *Uzbekistan Today*, September 12, 2013, available at: http://www.uzbekistan.org.ua/ru/news/economical_news/3038.html.
- ¹⁷ For more information on the financial system in agriculture as it relates to the cotton sector, see: Ilkhamov, Alisher and Murodov, Bakhodiy, “Uzbekistan’s Cotton Sector: Financial Flows and the Distribution of Resources,” Open Society Foundations Eurasia Program, October 2014, available at: <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/uzbekistan-s-cotton-sector-financial-flows-and-distribution-resources>. For more information on forced labor and the quota system, see reports by the Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights on the cotton sector, available at: <http://uzbekgermanforum.org/category/ugf-reports/>.
- ¹⁸ Interview with farmer, Kashkadarya region, May 9, 2015.
- ¹⁹ Interview with mahalla committee employee, Namangan region, May 2015.
- ²⁰ Interview with farmer, Surkhandarya region, May 2015.
- ²¹ In contrast, cocoons produced in other countries often weigh between 1.6-1.8 grams. For a comparison of varieties, see “В Узбекистане выведен цветной кокон шелкопряда [Uzbekistan has introduced a colored variety of silkworm cocoons],” e-Tashkent, June 19, 2012, <http://e-tashkent.uz/index.php?mod=article&cat=city&article=4470>.
- ²² Interview with regional official for cocoon production, Tashkent region, May 2015. For example, in a 2015 interview, a farmer from Kashkadarya region told the Uzbek-German Forum that he received eight boxes of larvae and is expected to return 400 kilograms of cocoons.
- ²³ Cabinet of Ministers Decree “On measures of stabilization of financial activity of the silk industry enterprises” 2003- 2007, see the text of the document at <http://www.lex.uz/mobileact/246104>.
- ²⁴ Interview with farmer from the Sukhandarya region, DATE 2013.
- ²⁵ Letter from a farmer in the Sukhandarya region to the Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, June 24, 2015.
- ²⁶ Interviews with farmers in Jizzak and Kashkadarya regions, May 2013.
- ²⁷ Interviews with farmers in Andijan region, May 2013.
- ²⁸ Interview with farmer, Jizzakh region, May, 2015.
- ²⁹ Interview with farmer, Kashkadarya region, May 9, 2015.
- ³⁰ Letter from farmer in Jizzakh to the Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, June 26, 2015.
- ³¹ Letter from farmer in Jizzakh region to the Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, June 24, 2015.
- ³² In one example, on April 19, 2013 during a meeting in the Kasansay district of the Namangan region, the deputy hokim beat seven local farmers during a meeting for „illegally“ planting onions “Узбекский чиновник избил семерых фермеров и чуть не утонил землемера [An Uzbek official beat seven farmers and almost drowned a land assessor],” *Rosbalt*, April 25, 2013, <http://www.rosbalt.ru/exussr/2013/04/25/1122590.html>.
- ³³ “В Узбекистане оскорбления властей вынудили фермера покончить с собой [In Uzbekistan, insults from local authorities force farmer to kill himself],” *Ozodlik*, July 4, 2015, <http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/27109836.html>.
- ³⁴ “В Узбекистане повесился фермер, не выполнивший план по хлопку [A farmer in Uzbekistan hanged himself after failing to meet cotton quota],” *Profi-Forex*, January 6, 2015, <http://www.profi-forex.org/novosti-mira/novosti-sng/uzbekistan/entry1008240817.html>.
- ³⁵ Interview with farmer, Surkhandarya region, May, 2013.
- ³⁶ Interview with farmer, Kashkadarya region, May 9, 2015.
- ³⁷ Interview with farmer, Surkhandarya region, May, 2013.
- ³⁸ Interview with farmer, Andijan region, May, 2015.
- ³⁹ Interview with farmer, Surkhandarya region, May, 2013.
- ⁴⁰ Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights interview with farmer, Jizzakh, May 2013.
- ⁴¹ Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights interview with farmer, Andijan, May 2015.
- ⁴² Interview with farmer, Andijan region, May, 2013.
- ⁴³ Interview with farmer, Surkhandarya region, May, 2013.
- ⁴⁴ See for example, “Uzbekistan’s Deputy PM Was Sacked Due to Fuel Shortage,” *Sabir Shah*, *The International News*, January 19, 2015, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-35337-Uzbekistans-deputy-PM-was-sacked-due-to-fuel-shortage>.
- ⁴⁵ Interview with rural resident in Kashkadarya region, May 6, 2015.
- ⁴⁶ Interview with farmer in the Kashkadarya region, May 9, 2015.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid*.
- ⁴⁸ Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights interview with farmer, Surkhandarya region, May 2013.
- ⁴⁹ Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights interview with farmer, Tashkent region, July 2, 2013.
- ⁵⁰ Interview with a rural resident from the Andijan region, July 24, 2013.
- ⁵¹ Interview with a rural resident from the Kashkadarya region, May 2015.

- ⁵² Interview with farmer, Jizzakh region, May 2015.
- ⁵³ In 2015, a kilogram of raw cocoons bought on the black market cost between 15,000-20,000 soum (\$4-5 USD).
- ⁵⁴ Interview with farmer, Kashkadarya region, May 2015.
- ⁵⁵ Interview with a farmer in Jizzakh, May 2015.
- ⁵⁶ Interview with a farmer from the Jizzakh region, May, 2013.
- ⁵⁷ Interview with mahalla committee employee (name withheld), Namangan region, May 2015.
- ⁵⁸ Interview with rural medical clinic employee, Kashkadarya region, May 5, 2015.
- ⁵⁹ Interview with a teacher in Kashkadarya region, May, 2013.
- ⁶⁰ Interview with a rural medical clinic employee, Kashkadarya region, May 5, 2015.
- ⁶¹ Interview with a rural medical clinic employee, Kashkadarya region, May 5, 2015.
- ⁶² Interview with farmer, Jizzakh region, May, 2015.
- ⁶³ Interview with rural resident, Kashkadarya region, May, 2015.
- ⁶⁴ Interview with mahalla committee employee, Namangan region, May 2015.
- ⁶⁵ Interview with rural resident, Kashkadarya region, May 6, 2015.
- ⁶⁶ According to an Uzbek government promotional article, Uzbek silk is used by numerous international designers and clothing retailers, including Oscar de la Renta, Gucci, Zara, and Mango. See <http://gotraveluzbekistan.com/ru/iskusstvo-uzbekistana/han-atlas>.