



THE PROCESS OF MASTERING VIRGIN LANDS IN ANDIZHAN REGION AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Turgunov Abdurakhmon

Andizhan State University Andizhan region,

Andizhan city, Republic of Uzbekistan

Abstract:

The Second World War inflicted profound economic and social disruptions on the Soviet Union; however, the central government emphasized that post-war recovery would be achieved through the nation's internal resources and collective efforts. In the subsequent reconstruction period, extensive policies were implemented to restore the economy and expand agricultural production. A central aspect of this strategy was the reclamation and development of new agricultural lands across the Union republics, with a particular focus on strengthening cotton cultivation as a key raw material base. In Uzbekistan, and notably in the Andizhan region, substantial areas of land were brought under cultivation, leading to a significant increase in cotton output. This expansion not only contributed to regional economic growth but also played a critical role in supplying the Soviet textile industry. The land development initiatives in Andizhan thus illustrate the broader dynamics of Soviet agrarian policy, serving as an important element in post-war reconstruction and the modernization of the national economy.

Keyword: era, hectare, cotton, trust, cultivation, agriculture, irrigation.

The aftermath of the Second World War necessitated a massive project of economic reconstruction across the Soviet Union. In line with the state's doctrine of autarky and centralized planning, this recovery was predicated on the intensive mobilization of internal republic-level resources. Nowhere was this more evident than in the agrarian sector of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR), which had been systematically developed since the Tsarist era as a primary source of cotton for the empire's industrial needs. This article argues that the post-war period witnessed not merely a continuation but a significant intensification of this policy, transforming



International Conference on Modern Science and Scientific Studies

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20th September 2025

regions like the Fergana Valley into hyper-specialized zones of cotton monoculture to serve the Union's strategic economic interests.

Focusing on the case study of the Andizhan region, this study examines the mechanisms—specifically large-scale land reclamation and irrigation projects—through which the central government implemented this policy. It analyzes how these top-down initiatives facilitated a dramatic expansion of cotton-growing areas, thereby ensuring a stable raw material base for the national textile industry. Furthermore, it explores the profound socio-agrarian consequences of this drive, arguing that the reshaping of Andizhan's landscape was a quintessential example of Soviet modernist ambitions, where environmental and agricultural systems were radically engineered to fulfill state production quotas. Through an analysis of regional archival materials, Five-Year Plan reports, and agricultural statistics, this paper situates the local transformations in Andizhan within the broader historiography of Soviet post-war recovery, economic planning, and the enduring legacy of resource-based republic specialization within the USSR.

In the early 1950s, the Soviet administration began large-scale work in the Uzbek SSR to adapt previously unused reserves and wastelands for agriculture, especially to increase cotton crops. In Andizhan region, in accordance with these instructions, work was carried out to expand cotton areas by developing reserves and wastelands in the region. By 1951, the reclamation condition of 44 thousand hectares of land in the region had improved [1. –P 189]. Also, by the end of 1951, the task was set to create 368 thousand hectares of new irrigated land in the territory of the Uzbekistan SSR, of which 52 thousand hectares fell precisely in the Andizhan region [2. Sheet 222].

According to the Fifth Five-Year Plan of the Soviet Union, which ran from January 1, 1951 to December 31, 1955, this period was one of the last stages of post-war reconstruction and development, and at the same time the process of economic specialization in the former USSR republics accelerated. In this process, Uzbekistan was transformed into a region specialized in cotton cultivation. As a result, much attention was paid to expanding the area under cotton cultivation in agriculture, while the area under other crops - grains, vegetables and other technical crops - was



International Conference on Modern Science and Scientific Studies

Hosted online from Madrid, Spain

Website: econfséries.com

20th September 2025

reduced. A policy of monopolizing cotton was implemented, and a number of government decisions were adopted in this regard.

For example, on October 10, 1952, the 19th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union issued a number of important instructions in agriculture for the fifth five-year plan. These instructions set the task of increasing the gross yield of agricultural products, especially cotton, by 55-65 percent, and increasing cotton yields in Central Asia and South Kazakhstan to 26-27 centners per hectare. It was also envisaged to continue the construction and development of irrigation networks for water supply, especially in the Syrdarya, Zarafshan and Kashkadarya basins and in the Central Fergana region.

The main tasks were to expand the area of irrigated land by 30-35 percent over five years, construct 30-35 thousand hectares of water basins and reservoirs on collective farms and state farms, and effectively manage and plan them [3. -P 725-727]. In this regard, on September 2, 1952, the USSR Council of Ministers adopted Resolution No. 3975 on irrigation and land reclamation measures. To implement this resolution, on September 16, 1952, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan and the Council of Ministers of the Uzbek SSR issued an expanded resolution "On the development of the Central Fergana lands." This resolution set out specific practical tasks for the development of the first and second priority lands and the further development of irrigation systems.

In particular, it was planned to develop 36 thousand hectares of land in the central part of the Central Fergana Valley first. These activities continued from 1953 to 1958, and as a result, the possibilities for cotton cultivation in agriculture significantly increased [4. -P 26]. All of this was aimed at strengthening the raw material base of the Soviet economy, as well as achieving a stable and high level of efficiency in the agricultural sector.

In March 1953, in order to organize the work on the development of new lands and irrigation systems, a special water management construction organization - the "Ферганаводстрой" trust was created as the general contractor. Ch.Sh. Aitmetov was appointed as the first head of this trust (1953-1954). The Fergana Inter-Kolkhoz Council (chairman Z.Ya. Fayzullaev) acted as the general customer for irrigation works [5. -B. 9-14]. Two separate departments were established within this council



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Hosted online from Madrid, Spain

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20th September 2025

for irrigation and development of new lands [6. –P. 20]. “Ферганаводстрой” construction organization led the development of protected and wasteland areas in Central Fergana until the establishment of “Андижанводстрой” trust.

On June 16, 1954, the Council of Ministers of the Uzbek SSR and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan adopted Resolution No. 620 “On the progress of the implementation of the work plan for the development of lands in the Central Fergana region” [7. Sheet 26]. This resolution noted that land development work in Central Fergana was carried out at an unsatisfactory level. As of June 11, 1954, only 8.8 thousand hectares (61%) of the 14.5 thousand hectares of new and reserved arable land planned for development had been completed. Due to the lack of construction of the necessary structures on the new canals, there was an insufficient supply of water for irrigation of the newly developed areas and disruptions in the irrigation systems.

Due to the irresponsibility and poor organization of work in the activities of the “Ферганаводстрой” trust (head Ch.Sh. Aitmetov and chief engineer Shpotin), construction work was not carried out on time. According to the resolution, in the fourth quarter of 1954, 12.7% of the annual plan for construction and installation work was implemented, including waterworks construction - 12.2%, road construction - 11%, housing construction - 13.5% and earthworks - 14.9%. It was also noted that in the first quarter of 1954, there was a lack of training of personnel, insufficient technical support, and the lack of involvement of necessary equipment and mechanisms, such as excavators, bulldozers, scrapers.

On September 29, 1954, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan and the Council of Ministers of the Uzbek SSR adopted a resolution “On measures for the planned development of new and protected lands in Central Fergana”. The resolution indicated the need to carry out special preparatory work (irrigation and land reclamation, sowing, plowing and washing) in the fall of 1955 for the rapid development of 142 thousand hectares of new and protected lands in the Fergana Valley. These instructions were assigned to the Ministries of Agriculture and Water Resources of the Uzbek SSR and the party committees of Andizhan, Namangan and Fergana regions.



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20th September 2025

According to the instructions, it was determined that 24.7 thousand hectares of new land should be developed, taking into account the work not completed in 1954 and the preparation of new lands allocated for planting in 1955. However, as of December 1954, 7.9 thousand hectares of new lands had not been prepared in the Andizhan region, and only 0.3 thousand hectares had been prepared by the new ear.

Conclusion

After World War II, the Soviet Union implemented a number of agricultural policies to restore the economy and industrialize. The main goal of the policy of increasing the development of cotton was to meet the raw material requirements of the central government's light industry and to produce it on a large scale. Cotton occupied an important place in the economic programs of the Soviet Union, and its production volume was constantly increased. The purification of the product production and the overexploitation of natural resources were highlighted.

The extensive development of cotton cultivation has had a significant negative impact on soil fertility. Years of intensive agricultural practices, including the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, have led to a decrease in soil biological activity and erosion. The expansion of cotton cultivation has led to negative environmental consequences, such as changes in water sources, soil structure degradation, and salinization.

In addition, intensive cotton farming and monoculture (planting only cotton) have reduced natural diversity and led to a decline in biodiversity. This, in turn, has degraded the natural environment necessary for the stability of ecosystems. The expansion of cotton farming has also led to mismanagement of land resources, reducing long-term soil fertility and negatively affecting the future prospects of agricultural production.

The development of cotton cultivation during the Soviet era, especially in the Central Asian region, was accompanied by long-term negative environmental consequences. The ecological damage of this process, on the one hand, aimed at ensuring the development of agriculture, but on the other hand, seriously threatened the impact on the natural environment and its sustainability and resource needs [9. –P. 411].



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20th September 2025

This situation ultimately created problems that require further ecological research and socio-political analysis.

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