

Estimation of the number of adults forced to pick cotton in Uzbekistan in 2013

Two methodologies to estimate the total persons mobilized produce an estimate of over 4 million adults. The estimated cost of the Uzbek government’s mobilization of public-sector workers to pick cotton is \$211- \$291 million, depending on the exchange rate, official or unofficial.

A. According to the Labor Demand:

Assumptions-

1. The annual production target for raw cotton is 3.5 mln tons.
2. Almost all cotton is harvested manually. The amount of cotton harvested by machinery is negligible.
3. Over last two years, in 2012 and 2013, the school kids of the age up to 14 years old were released from forced labor in cotton fields. In the previous years, they had to work in cotton fields 45 days in average each season.
4. In 2012 and 2013 the government had to compensate for the loss of school children as the main labour force for harvesting cotton by dramatically increasing the number of adults and university students mobilized for harvest. The number of mobilized high school (colleges and lyceums) students remained unchanged – most of them have been and still are subject to forced labor. According to the Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, not less than 1.4 lm high school and university students are being mobilized for cotton harvest each year [See “Cotton — it’s not a plant, it’s politics”: The system of forced labour in Uzbekistan’s cotton sector, Berlin: Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, 2012, p. 35.]
5. While the high school and university students would stay in the cotton fields for the whole season, 45 days in average, the employees of organizations and enterprises have been mobilized on a rotation base, for 10 days each round.
6. Although the daily norm of picking cotton for each pickers has varied between 50 – 70kg, in reality productivity has been 30 kg in average.

Taking into account the above assumption, we made the following calculations according to the labor demand:

National production target	3,500,000,000 kilograms
No of high school and university students mobilized for cotton harvest	1,400,000 teenagers
No of days the students work in the cotton fields	50 days
Daily productivity per person	30 kg
The volume of cotton the students would pick over a harvest season	2,100,000,000 kg
Remaining cotton	1,400,000,000 kg
10 days productivity (adults)	300 kg
No of adults required to pick 1.4 mln tons of cotton	4,666,667

B. According to the citizens available to the Government to mobilize through state institutions:

Assumptions-

1. This is based on the observations that suggest the universal character of mobilization for cotton wherein the authorities make no exclusion to any category of organizations and enterprises.
2. According to official statistics, there were 12,523,000 people employed in the economy and public institutions in 2013. [Uz24.Uz, March 19, 2014, <http://www.uz24.uz/society/chislennosty-naseleniya-uzbekistanauvelichilasy-na-4951-tis.-chelovek.>]

According to these assumptions, it would fair to suggest that at least third of this number, approximately four million adults, have been subject to compulsory mobilization for cotton and each worked at least ten days in the cotton field on a rotation base.