

Afghanistan and opium

A welcome comedown

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From Economist.com

Opium production and cultivation in Afghanistan continue to fall

OPIUM poppy cultivation in Afghanistan has fallen by a fifth since 2008 to 123,000 hectares, according to the UN's annual survey released on Wednesday September 2nd. The biggest reason for cheer is Helmand province, where cultivation has decreased dramatically from 103,590 hectares to 68,833 hectares. Opium production has dropped less, by 10% to 6,900 tonnes, because farmers are extracting more opium per bulb. This is still far above the annual global demand of 5,000 tonnes, and oversupply and lower market penetration in Europe have pushed opium prices to their lowest levels in ten years. The UN notes that prices have not crashed completely, estimating that over 10,000 tonnes of opium has been stockpiled and may be used to fund insurgents.

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