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# World's 92% opium from Afghanistan

Vienna, Austria: Afghanistan produced dramatically more opium in 2006, increasing its yield by roughly 49% from a year earlier and pushing global opium production to a new record high, a UN report said on Tuesday.

Opium production increased from 4,100 metric tons in 2005 to 6,100 metric tons in 2006, according to the 2007 World Drug Report released by the Vienna-based United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Opium is the main ingredient for heroin.

In 2006, Afghanistan accounted for 92% of global illicit opium production, up from 70% in 2000 and 52% a decade earlier. The higher yields in Afghanistan have brought global opium production to a new record high of 6,610 metric tons in 2006, a 43% increase over 2005.

The area under opium poppy cultivation in the country also expanded, from 104,000 hectares in 2005, to 165,000 hectares in 2006 — an increase of about



A boy collects resin from poppies in an opium poppy field in the Khogyani district of the Nangarhar province, Kabul

59%. "This is the largest area under opium poppy cultivation ever recorded in Afghanistan," the report said, noting that 62% of the

cultivation was concentrated in the country's southern region.

UNODC executive director Antonio Maria Costa warned that Afghanistan's insurgency-plagued Helmand province was becoming the world's biggest drug supplier, with illicit cultivation there larger than in the rest of the country put together.

"Effective surgery on Helmand's drug and insurgency cancer will rid the world of the most dangerous source of its most dangerous narcotic and go a long way to bringing security to the region," Costa said in a statement.

Early indications suggest Afghanistan could see a further increase in opium production in 2007, the report said.

"Developments in Afghanistan will continue to determine the levels of global opium production," the report said.