



Center for Agribusiness and Rural Development MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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BREAKING NEWS

STUDY TOUR IN ARMENIA

In the "Poverty Reduction and Confidence-building in Border Areas of Georgia and Armenia by Strengthening Civil Societies in Sustainable Rural Development" (STAGE II) project study visit to Shirak and Tavush regions was organized on March 29-30, 2010.



The aim of the study tour was to strengthen cross-border cooperation and establish links and contacts between Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Local Governments (LGs) from Armenia and Georgia, to gain access to information about the issues faced by communities and their representatives and to study how problems are tackled by civil society and authorities across the border and look for opportunities for strengthening cross-border cooperation.

The first day of the visit meeting was held in Gyumri, Shirak Marz. Two Armenian CSOs – "Shirak Competitiveness Centre" (SCC) and "Yerevak" NGO presented structure of their organizations, their activities and implemented projects. In the afternoon, participants visited a milk collection centre established with the support of SCC and met with the Jrapri Farmer Union. Members of the Union shared their experience of milk collection and accessing the market with the tour participants.

Delegations visited HATM Project – (Armenian-American Housing Company), which was established in 1991 after the earthquake and is a beneficiary of SCC. The Director of the company, Mr. Harutyunyan, presented the work of the company that is diverse and includes production of furniture and building materials that are mostly used for the recovery of the earthquake zone. The company regularly participates in Shirak Expo organized by SCC, which also provides marketing support to HATM.

Earthquake of 1988 by initiative and support of Consul of Gyumri and the Honorable Citizen of Spitak, Mr. Antonio Montaldu. SFA closely cooperates with the centre and supports them through marketing; i.e. presenting the products to the public on different occasions, among them the Diversity Festival in Rustavi in November 2009 within the STAGE II project. The core aim of the center is to support people affected by the 1988 earthquake. The target groups attending the courses in the center are children, young people and women.

The center provides the opportunity to enhance different skills such as, pottery, sewing courses and embroidery (needlework). Mr. Antonio Montaldu also paid a visit to the center to meet the study tour delegation and discussed opportunities for possible cooperation.

The tour participants also attended legal consultancy workshop organized by SFA in the Spitak Cultural house. The workshop was organized for the governmental office, NGO representatives and community members.

Afterwards, the study tour delegation visited agricultural projects of SFA, namely: (a) their greenhouse, which has been established with support of Heifer International and UNDP in order to assist the women headed households in the community; (b) bio-humus production that started in 2001 with support of Heifer International through importing Californian worms to Armenia. SFA is promoting organic agriculture via distributing bio-humus to the communities interested in it; (c) French goat breeding with support of FAO started in 2009, again to support vulnerable families headed by women; (d) buffalo breeding center, which is established and connected to the need of protecting the animals from disappearance. The project started in cooperation with World Bank in 2007.

The participants of the study tour exchanged information on their experiences and practices and expressed wish and interest in learning more about each other's projects and cross-border cooperation.



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MAKING A CHANGE IN KHACHIK VILLAGE

CARD Foundation already supports Khachik village development through the provision of agricultural assistance especially to women and young members of the community. Recently, a new program was launched in the village, establishment of a computer room for a young farmers group in Khachik.

The room is furnished with five computers (four provided by CARD and one by AGBU), multifunction equipment that can be used for printing, scanning and copying (from CARD), five cables, five chairs and other supplies (from AGBU) necessary for full function of the computer room.

The project aims at providing a facility for young people in the village to use computers, the internet and to get updated information about issues and topics of their interest. The core idea of this project is to enable the young people to develop their own proposals and initiate fundraising (also online) for local projects. The community members will use the facility when necessary for printing, scanning, copying different documents, managing their farm bookkeeping, developing bank applications and such. The project targets at least 100 young people to gain skills in and access to computer and the internet. With this, the project implementer hopes that the upgraded computer room will motivate the community's young people in initiating activities and looking



for development opportunities towards the improvement of their livelihood in this remote village of Armenia.

Along with the aforementioned project, CARD and AGBU did a tree planting in Khachik village with community members. 90 decorative trees and 15 bushes were provided by the Ministry of Environmental Protection in order to establish a park for the community. This park will later be furnished with benches, a playing yard and other facilities to make it a pleasant place for old and young.

HERITAGE AND AGRICULTURE EVENT

Erebouni archaeological museum and the International Council of Monuments and Sites/ ICOMOS in Armenia organized an event called "Heritage and Agriculture," which aimed at presenting the artifacts found in the Erebouni fortress to the public. These artifacts testify that Armenia is a country with an ancient agricultural heritage.



Many guests were invited. Among them, representatives from the ministries of Armenia and international and local organizations. The director of Erebouni museum, Mr. Gyurjyan, opened the event and thanked the sponsors of the event. Yerevan Beer Company, one of the sponsors, presented the modern technologies of beer making next to the exhibition of ancient items of beer production dating back to Urartu times. CARD Foundation provided local agricultural products, such as wine, cheese and chocolate for tasting.

TASTING AT "FRESH" SUPERMARKETS

On April 30th wine and cheese tasting was organized in Fresh Supermarket. It was a collaborative project of "CARD" Foundation and "Fresh" LLC which aims at promoting Armenian products and introducing consumers the high quality of cheeses and wines available in Armenian market. At the same time, organizing tasting event envisions to increase welfare of Armenian producers.



Several producers, among them "Golden Goat" LLC, "Selim" LLC, "Dustr Melania" LLC, "Mastarachedo" LLC and "Cheeseler" LLC from cheese producers and "Maran" LLC, "365 wines" LLC from wine producers were taking part in it. The surprise of visitors testifies that the Armenian consumers are not familiar with the variety of Armenian products, which as a consequence leads them to buy imported products. It is important also to highlight that the consumers realized the competitiveness of cheese varieties like Colored cheeses, Gouda, Feta versus imported products. The next day of tasting Mrs. Karine Mkhitarian, the executive director of "Fresh" LLC indicated that there is an increase in sales after tasting, thus this kind of events should be organized frequently and promote more of Armenian products in Armenian and foreign markets.