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# FIRST PRIVATE EXTENSION SERVICE IN ARMENIA

The establishment of **the Farm and Veterinary Service Centers (FVSCs)** was aimed at increasing the access of subsistence dairy farmers to advanced veterinary services, input supplies, and output markets in the Shirak, Lori, and Syunik regions of Armenia servicing about 15,000 farmers. These FVSCs were established to offer wide range of services, among them: veterinary services including genetic improvement, disease prevention, and treatment; animal health medicines, veterinary input supplies, farm supplies; technical assistance, links to supply market; business development information, and financial services.

All three FVSCs have the same design, layout, and operations that demonstrate a model of first “private extension service” in Armenia. These Centers provide **free-of-charge and for-free agricultural support services**. Free of charge services include: training and workshops for farmers on various topics related to animal husbandry, crop production, greenhouses, orchards (trainings will be designed specific to the main agricultural activities of a particular region); training, workshops for agricultural professionals (veterinarians, agronomists, etc.); consultancy and advisory service provided by local expert (veterinarian and/or agronomist), CARD and invited foreign experts; public announcement services (example: a disease outbreak announcement board). For-free services are: examination of and vet services for farm animals provided at the farm including hoof trimming, dehorning, pregnancy check by rectal palpation, diagnosis and treatment of obstetrical, respiratory and digestive system diseases; agronomy services related to crop protection, seed selection and fertilization; sales of different agricultural input supplies, tools and farm equipment (including leasing and credit sales).

The FVSCs also provide **Business Development Services** such as: business training/advisory services, farm management trainings, trainings/consultations on “how to apply for credit” or “better management of credit resources”; information and reference services: including information about various supplies of agricultural inputs, business directories, price lists of various agricultural products, market information on agricultural outputs, etc.; advisory services in business and financial planning, rural credit and leasing. All free of charge. The for-free services include: advertising space service for the sales of agricultural products, services; computer, printing and scanning services; internet service; renting a training facility for various development and/or other organizations; credit and agricultural machinery/equipment leasing.

There are currently 70 veterinarians in these regions receiving continuous trainings on various issues of vet practices and all of them have access to high quality input supplies, new technologies, and information through the established FVSCs.

These veterinarians learned new methods of artificial insemination using advanced technologies and high quality bull semen imported from World Wide Sires Company, USA.

CARD organized over 60 trainings during the last two years that were run by highly qualified international experts from USA, Netherlands, Austria, Latvia as well as CARD veterinary specialists. The trainings covered topics of genetic improvement and artificial insemination, use of advanced veterinary medicine, animal diseases prevention and control, and on-farm animal husbandry, etc.

**Other Accomplishments:** About 20,000 cows were artificially inseminated to improve animal genetics through these centers over past three years; Three veterinary associations were established around the FVSCs that advocate for the private veterinary profession, common issues, and development prospective; Eleven professional booklets were translated on “Udder Health Management”, “Milking Machine Management”, “Dairy Housing Management”, “Dairy Herd Administration Management”, “Cow Comfort” etc. and distributed through the FVSCs.

**FVSCs became a model of Private Extension Service in Armenia.** Efforts of Government and International Development organizations in establishment of sustainable extension since 1996 were not successful. **A new model of private extension service** was created in Armenia.

The first 1.5 years of operations FVSCs proved their **financial self-sufficiency** in provision of private farm extension services.

**The unique model** and capacities of these centers attracted several development organizations, such as The World Bank, UNDP, and the Government to replicate this model in other areas and countries.

**CARD foundation has established crediting facilities** within the centers though which farmers in these regions got access to agricultural credits, farm machinery, and equipment leasing.

## **Economic Effect of FVSCs**

Improved genetics of 20,000 artificial inseminations resulted in birth of 7,500 higher performing pregnant heifers with 20-25% increased milking capacity. This means over three million kilograms in additional milk per year or about \$1.15 million incremental cash inflow to dairy farms.

