



Center for Agribusiness and Rural Development

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MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING SIGNED (MARKETS FOR MEGHRI PROJECT)



CARD Foundation, jointly with Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation (HSI), is going to implement “Markets for Meghri” (M4M) 4-year project funded by the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC). The project is aimed at contributing to sustainable economic development and poverty alleviation in the Meghri region by increasing sustainable income of small-scale producers through higher profitability of production and enhanced access to markets. The project will be launched on December 1st, 2012 and will focus on the horticulture sub-sector, more specifically on the value chains of fig, persimmon and pomegranate, and related support services.

During the project implementation period, CARD will closely cooperate with the “Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Development National Center of Armenia” (SME DNC) Fund for which a Memorandum of Understanding was signed on October 1st, 2012.



In the framework of this Memorandum, a package of services will be provided to the project beneficiaries in the processing and marketing of their products. Meetings, conferences and consultations will be organized with the participation of local and foreign business representatives, government and local self-government bodies, and non-governmental organizations to promote the development of the Meghri region. In the meantime, SME DNC Fund will undertake activities to address the development of entrepreneurship, particularly, but not limited to the provision of information, seminars and consultation on enterprise development.



“Through our joint efforts with the SME DNC, we will build capacities for providing a long-term package of services to farmers and SMEs of the Meghri region”, said CARD Director Gagik Sardaryan.

“We are very glad to be part of this great initiative, and I am convinced that through our joint cooperation, we will have good results in the Meghri region” mentioned SME DNC Executive Director Varazdat Karapetyan.

Improved access to markets through development of long-term and reliable relationships, new investment opportunities in the Meghri region through public-private partnership and institutionalization of project facilitated systems (models, mechanisms) through capacity building of involved parties (stakeholders) are the expected outcomes of the project .

INITIATION OF THE FOOD SAFETY COALITION



The USDA-supported food safety program in Armenia currently emphasizes sustainability, especially establishing capacity at the Armenian government and private/non-government levels to provide future technical support and training for the government and food industry in Armenia. One of the program objectives is focused on developing the infrastructure for sustainable training capacity. As a first step, USDA entered into a discussion with the Armenian government, higher education institutions and private food safety stakeholders regarding establishment of an **Armenian Food Safety Trainers Coalition (AFSTC)**. In fall 2012, USDA dispatched experts from Louisiana State University Agricultural Center Dr. Michael Moody, Mr. Gerald Wojtala and Dr. Jonathan Hubchen to Armenia who, in collaboration with CARD food safety specialists, held the first AFSTC establishment workshop.

Introductory meetings with representatives from the RA Ministry of Agriculture, the State Food Safety Service and the Armenian State Agrarian University were held before the workshop. Recurring themes from these meetings included the worth of a coalition as a mechanism for collaboration and a remedy from the conflict and duplication that arose from entities working in isolation. Dr. Moody stressed the need for “lanes of responsibility” for each coalition participant to be clearly defined as well as for standardized curriculum and high quality trainers to be identified and developed. Mr. Wojtala described the work of International Food Protection Training Institute (IFPTI) in curriculum development throughout the regulatory career and said that the IFPTI would share that curriculum with a functional Armenian training coalition. It is expected that the Armenian workshop participants would adapt these models to their local conditions.

When describing the workshop’s purposes, the US specialists represented the coalition as a mechanism for collaboration, leveraging resources, and ensuring consistency in training.

CARD Food Safety Department Manager, Ms. Zaruhi Davtyan, provided clarification regarding the relationship between a coalition and its members. The coalition does not try to usurp the members’ autonomy, resources or marketing of products. Instead, a coalition offers its members advantages in providing a unified voice in promoting the validity of the members’ products (such as training programs) and the potential ac-



cess to resources. The latter is both through sharing resources between members – based on mutual agreement – and through improved access to external resources through joint proposals.

USDA Coordinator, Lawrence Barbieri, also attended the conference. He felt that food safety should be a national priority beyond export enclaves.

During the workshop the participants discussed the following topics: common goals among members, including the coalition’s purpose, audience, and ways of training provision; Armenian’s food safety training strengths and weakness, including established training capacities, training gaps, current network and coordination, current recourses and actions to be taken to make the coalition successful and sustainable, including next steps to be taken before the next meeting in April 2013, actions that will contribute to long-term success, resources that can be leveraged and the role of each participant.