

Monthly Newsletter

Volume 2, issue 1



Breaking news

CARD ORGANIZES ENGLISH CLASSES FOR RURAL YOUTH

In the majority of Armenian villages English language classes are being organized in a very poor manner, as there is a lack of qualified English language instructors. On the other hand, knowledge of foreign languages, particularly English, is becoming more and more important for the development of a person in terms of providing access to a wide base of information in English through Internet and literature.



The trainings were organized in Syunik, Lori, Tavush and Gegharkunik regions.

For six months, approximately 15 Youth Clubs with 10-15 members ages 11 – 17, were selected taught English by volunteer trainers from the U.S. Peace Corps Armenia organization. The weekly trainings welcomed local English teachers to follow the classes. They were able to observe new teaching techniques and methods applied by the volunteers for future use. The teachers were selected on a volunteer basis. The project will provide an increased opportunity for rural youth participation in U.S. exchange programs such as FLEX of ACTR/ ACCELS.



Breaking news

NEW IRRIGATION TECHNOLOGIES GUARANTEE EFFICIENT WATER MANAGEMENT

Precise irrigation mode technology is one of the important conditions for effective use of water resources and improvement of irrigation process. From 2005-2007, as a result of cooperation between USDA, the Center for Agribusiness and Rural Development (CARD), the Armenian State Agrarian University Extension Department, the Farm Water Usage Management Research Center and specialists from Utah University, five electronic stations and 30 ET gauges were imported to Armenia.



This equipment automatically fixes evaporation figures from soil and crop surfaces and uses results in the selection of a precise mode of irrigation. For the implementation of the project, 24 out of 30 ET gauges were installed in farms and six in Water Users Associations (WUA). Every day measurements were taken by ASC (Agricultural Support Center), Water Users Association specialists or directly by farmers. Periodically seminars were organized in 30 sites, during which the results were analyzed and presented to 150 farmers and WUA specialists.



Results found that it is possible to reduce the irrigation of crops by 2-3 times which will in turn reduce the water usage and save considerable resources. As a result, the farmers saved between 7,000 and 10,000 AMD for water usage fee and increased agro technical effectiveness by 10-20 percent. Two hundred fifty three specialists from WUAs and ASCs analyzed the results and observed an increase in yield and effective usage of water in 30 farms during vegetation period.

FIRST EXPORT OF ARMENIAN JUICES AND PRESERVES TO CANADA

The appreciation of Armenian dram against foreign currencies forced competition for Armenian products in local and international markets. Net export, one component of economic growth, is usually one of the key points for development agencies working in the economic development sector. The Center for Agribusiness and Rural Development (CARD) uses several methods to promote export of Armenian food products and one of the most efficient ways proved to be participation in international exhibitions.

In September 2006, CARD presented products of several Armenian companies in the Ethnic and Specialty Food Expo in Toronto, Canada. The range of products presented in Canada included juice and preserves, herbal tea and wines. The demand for ethnic and specialty food products in Canada



is vast and fast growing. Toronto, alone has more than 6,500 ethnic and traditional restaurants, but even the non-ethnic restaurants are including ethnic or fusion dishes in their menu as diners demand healthier and more tantalizing items. As the population expands, the industry will need to keep pace and respond accordingly. A difficult to acquire

import license was required of alcoholic beverages resulting in greater interest in juice and preserves.

Euroterm Company is the leading fruit juice and preserve producer in Armenia which purchases fruits and vegetables from roughly 500 farmers. The company informed CARD about the first shipment to Toronto, Canada as a result of CARD presenting the company's products at the Ethnic and Specialty Food Expo in Toronto, Ontario. This shipment could have been sent earlier, but Canadian legislation had a specific requirement for preserve language and label size for the preserves resulting in a product modification delay.

The first 20-foot container of the products was shipped to Canada in March 2007, preserve to fruit juice ratio constituted 7/3, and in December 2007 another container of the product with 6/4 preserve to juice ratio was sent to Canada. Artisan Food Inc., established by an immigrant family from Armenia, imports the shipments from Armenia. Samvel Shabbazyan, the managing director of the company, previously worked for a USDA MAP project and later for a DAI SME project in Armenia. His wife, Lilit Hakobyan, the director of Artisan Food, worked in Tufenkian Heritage Hotels before joining the company.

The second product shipment means that Canada is not just a test market but Euroterm is completing gradual penetration into a new market.

This collaboration will help promote Armenian products and create opportunities for export of other products in the future. This is the first step of market development for Armenian products in Canada and CARD continues to work with the current importer and other interested parties in Canada to export a wider range of Armenian products.



Staff news

An Educational Tour on International Standards of Packaging in Israel

CARD Foundation, in cooperation with ACIDI/VOCA supported ArmenPack association of packagers and the Presidents of 2 Farmers Associations from Armavir region (Kadjik Davtyan and Simon Asatryan) to take part in an educational tour in Israel. The educational tour was organized upon invitation of Mrs. Caroline Nave from the Israel Export & International Cooperation Institute and Mr. Nahum Grinberg, the representative of a Russian magazine, "Package and packaging" in Israel.



On January 7-13, 2008, the Armenian delegation, including CARD senior marketing specialist Karen Harutyunyan, seven specialists representing the Armenian packaging industry as well as fruit and



vegetable growers, visited several companies located in different parts of the country involved in packaging of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Participants also visited the XVII International Exhibition of Agribusiness, Technology & Fresh produce Agromashov 2008. The Export Institute also organized a short training on international standards of packaging for fresh fruits and vegetables at their premises.

The visit was very productive in terms of capacity building of Armenian specialists in fresh fruit and vegetable packaging and logistics.

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ARID Goat Breeding Center: Moving Towards Sustainability

The ARID Goat Breeding Center is located in Vayots Dzor marz, Yeghegnadzor that is in Southeastern part of Armenia. USDA MAP launched the Goat Industry Development Project in 1999 for assisting Armenian agriculture in developing independent and economically viable dairy goat production. As of 2005, the GIDP project was transferred to the newly established Center for Agribusiness and Rural Development (CARD).

During 2007, ARID Goat Breeding Center has implemented dairy goat industry development activities in goat farms



operating in 17 communities: Yeghegnadzor, Aghnjadzor, Salli, Hors, Goghtanik, Agarakadzor, Hermon, Horbategh, Khachik, Rind, Gnishik, Mozrov, Vernashen, Gomk,

Meghrashen, Lchashen, Gavar in three regions: Vayots Dzor, Gegharkunik, Shirak.

On the whole, the number of beneficiaries involved in the project is more than 234, including 82 members of seven youth clubs and 107 goat farmers. Due to the technical assistance provided by ARID Center, job opportunities have been created for approximately 45 people in the farms and eight processing units cooperating with the Center.

Since 2006, in order to organize efficient operation of the ARID Center, goats have been taken to the summer pastures.

Milking of goats in the pasture season is being carried out on a portable milking parlor with all the veterinary-sanitary conditions required for production and storage of high quality goat milk.



Currently the ARID Goat Breeding Center hosts 120 head of purebred goats, 27 of which are mother goats.

During the implementation of "Dairy Goat Industry Development and Genetic Improvement" project, as a result of consistent procedures followed by ARID Center the average milk yield of mother goats in ARID and other goat farms has been as follows:

Purebred /imported from the U.S./	650 l
Crossbred /second generation/	412 l
Crossbred /first generation/	320 l
Local goats	140 l

Provision of consulting services is considered to be the key component of ARID Center activities. Consequently, the organization of visits, practical courses and seminars are the most important project components.

As a result of the trainings, 36 goat farmers, 16 farm employees, four animal breeders, three veterinarians, 72 Youth Club members, three representatives of Armenian State Agrarian University Extension Department and other interested parties gained appropriate knowledge and experience in this field.



CHEESE FONDUE

In many parts of the world cheese is viewed as an appetizer or side dish or something to be sprinkled on the main dish. It's a complement for many main courses as well as side courses. But in some parts of the world cheese is considered the main focus. Many cultures prepare it so that it can be their main meal for a number of days. One such dish is now becoming popular world over.

I'm talking about cheese fondue and the unusual but clever history behind the same.



Believe it or not, cheese fondue came about as a method of survival in the bitterly cold Swiss Alps. Here one could not find food easily and natives of this region had to improvise. So they took all their dairy products and stuck it in one big pot cooking under a low heat. This transformed everything into a smooth goo to which they could add seasonings and herbs and even some wine. The resulting concoction was a satisfying and filling cheese fondue.

Nowadays, cheese fondue is prepared with garlic cloves, corn starch, crusted bread, brandy and white wine together with a hard or semi-hard cheese, often Gruyere or Vacherin cheese, to come up with a truly remarkable and unique flavor. You may find this kind of fondue under the category of soups in most fine dining restaurants in the metro.

Throughout history fondue has been a food enjoyed only by the upper class. However in modern times it is been made available to the masses and instant fondues were made available in 1950s but didn't take off until the microwave oven came on the scene. Nowadays, there are even fancy fondue cookers and many people make a party out of serving fondue.

On the next issue of Gourmet Corner we will talk a little about one of Italy's greatest cheeses, gorgonzola cheese.

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