



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

FAO In Action
IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

*Award-winning forester helps fight
malnutrition while greening the steppes of Mongolia*



MONGOLIA

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Great Plains, Mongolia – Few people have done more than Tsendsuren Deleg to make Mongolia greener and create jobs for people at the same time. Born 63 years ago to a herding family, struggling for survival on the broad expanse of Mongolia’s steppes, Deleg knows how hard life can be. The area, known as the Great Plains, has a harsh dry climate that makes finding nutritious food, especially fruits and vegetables, a real challenge. But Deleg would one day prove it was a challenge that could be overcome.

Deleg’s father was popular with members of his herding community, and he was elected to represent them in the country’s parliament. As a representative he had the means to provide his daughter with a university education and Deleg chose to study forest engineering at Mongolia’s Agricultural University. “I wanted to be close to nature. I feel peaceful and serene whenever I am in the forest,” says Deleg.

During the time of her studies, only about 10 percent of Mongolia was forested and that was a problem. Without forests to serve as watersheds, the land was not fertile enough for people to grow the fruit and vegetables they needed for a nutritious, healthy diet. It was a problem that Deleg was determined to address.

Initially, after graduation, Deleg found work as a forestry official with the government and she established Mongolia’s first ‘leaf tree nursery’. Each year, the nurseries planted 300 000 aspen and 250 000 elm trees, along with 30 000 sea buckthorn and blueberry plants.

Not only did these nurseries contribute to the greening of Mongolia, leading to improved diets, but

the nurseries also provided jobs at a critical time for the country’s economy.

In the early 1990’s Mongolia began transitioning from a command economy to that of a market economy. Many government jobs, including Deleg’s, were lost due to budget cuts. While that was a setback, Deleg saw it as an opportunity to work toward her goal of improving access to nutrition. She entered the private sector and started a successful fruit and vegetable plantation, hiring as many unemployed people as she could to work with her.



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Even while managing her plantation, Deleg still contributed to the regeneration of Mongolia’s forests. She and her plantation workers volunteered to participate in the government’s *Green belt*

“I wanted to be close to nature. I feel peaceful and serene whenever I am in the forest.” – Tsendsuren Deleg, Model Community Forester



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programme, planting nearly 30 000 sea buckthorn, elm and aspen trees. This, in turn, led to even more vegetable plantations. Since then, more than 22 tonnes of vegetables have since been harvested from that green zone.

An award-winning forester

In recognition of her achievements, Deleg received *FAO's model community forester award* in 2009 and in 2011 her women's cooperative was selected as the *Best Women's Cooperative in the Asia and Pacific Region*. She has continued to manage her cooperative partnering with six other leading women in the community. The cooperative now produces three sea buckthorn products, including sea buckthorn ointment, juice and syrup – all of which have become very popular in Mongolia.

Now a mother of three, Deleg continues her work. She says FAO's interventions like community-based forestry management, food processing and forestry cooperative management, and its awareness-raising activities promoting women's rights in the agriculture sector, gave Deleg "the encouragement and vision to achieve" her goals.

"I'm proud to be leaving something for the next generation," – Tsendsuren Deleg.

"I'm proud to be leaving something for the next generation," says Deleg.

Undoubtedly, Mongolia's next generation will also be proud – and thankful – for the vision, effort and dedication of Tsendsuren Deleg.



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ACHIEVING FAO'S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The work of FAO and its member countries, with model foresters like Tsendsuren Deleg, is helping to meet two of FAO's strategic objectives to eliminate hunger and malnutrition while making agriculture and forestry more productive and sustainable.

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