



FAO Georgia Newsletter

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ENPARD partners and stakeholders mark the 20th stakeholders committee meeting

Aiming to share progress in the ENPARD projects and to discuss new developments within the ENPARD family, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been facilitating the ENPARD stakeholders' round table discussions for the last six years. The committee serves as an effective platform for coordination, coherence and successful implementation of EU-supported agriculture and rural development projects in Georgia.

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"We have learned many lessons from the ENPARD projects in Georgia. First, we have concrete achievements that we can celebrate and second, we have been able to define next steps on the basis of this experience," stated Mikolaj Bekasiak, communication attaché at the EU Delegation.

At the event, the opening remarks were presented by Khatia Tsilosani, Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Vincent Rey, Head of Cooperation of the Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, Cristina Casella, Attaché, Programme Manager for Agriculture and Food Safety, the Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, and Raimund Jehle, the FAO Representative in Georgia.

Khatia Tsilosani, Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, updated the stakeholders about the implementation of the Strategies of the Agriculture and Rural Development. She highlighted new state-supported programmes focusing on supporting farmers on bio production.

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"FAO together with the ENPARD stakeholders is now implementing the third phase of the programme in Georgia, and we have already started to think together with the partners about the fourth phase of ENPARD. I think that ENPARD in Georgia with its results can become a good example to be considered when implementing the related projects in the neighbouring countries." Jehle said.

The meeting was attended by the representatives of the ENPARD implementing partner organizations: UNDP, Mercy Corps, Care, PIN, RDFG, HEKS-EPER, GIPA, CENN, Caritas Czech Republic, Action Against Hunger and other partners such as the development representatives from Czech Republic, Austria, Switzerland and the Netherlands. Important highlights of the day were the stakeholder presentations focusing on the topics of food waste and geographic indications.

The presentation of food waste counted with the presence of Carrefour representative, and raised the concern of the food wasted in Georgia and how to activate the policy discussions to implement a framework of food donations. On Geographic Indications, the presentation explained the work done to implement two GIs in Georgia for Tusheti Guda and Sulguni Cheeses, and how these pilots can be replicated by other partners. Also, the participants discussed the EU-supported rural development projects launched under ENPARD III in four new municipalities: Akhmeta, Tsalka, Tskaltubo and Mestia. These projects introduce in these municipalities a bottom-up, inclusive rural development approach that fully engages all stakeholders and communities. They promote socio-economic integration of vulnerable population, including IDPs, eco-migrants, people living in high-mountainous regions and ethnic minorities in Georgia. The EU is supporting agriculture and rural development in Georgia through its ENPARD Programme. Implemented since 2013 with a total budget of EUR 179.5 million, the main goal of ENPARD is to reduce rural poverty in Georgia. The first phase of ENPARD in Georgia focused on developing the potential of agriculture. The second and third phases of ENPARD focus on creating economic opportunities for rural population that go beyond agricultural activities.



FAO, CARD work with local businesses to improve the dairy sector in Armenia and Georgia

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Center for Agribusiness and Rural Development (CARD) organized a business to business (B2B) event today in Tbilisi which focused on enhancing market linkages in the dairy sectors of Armenia and Georgia. More than 50 farmers, veterinarians and agricultural input suppliers from Georgia, Armenia and other countries attended.

The overall goal of the B2B event was to present best farming practices and good examples of inputs and technologies to Armenian and Georgian farmers and to create market linkages between the two countries' value chain operators and international suppliers. FAO works with local private sector companies in both countries, helping to connect entities with complementary strengths in order to improve access to technology and information exchanges along the dairy and meat value chain.



The event focused on the challenges facing the animal husbandry sectors in Armenia and Georgia, and on opportunities for strengthening these sectors through better animal feed, cow comfort technologies and developments in genetics.

"The CARD Foundation has a great deal of experience in introducing and promoting advanced technologies by bringing the best international producers into local markets," said Sona Telunts, CARD Programs Director. "These organizations dedicate significant resources to research and development and have accumulated know-how and expertise which are essential for our markets. Events like this bring key expertise to local markets and introduce it to local farmers. They also expand the range of animal husbandry products and services available in Armenia and Georgia."



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Last September in Tsaghkadzor, Armenia, a meeting was organized to support the local private sector in Armenia and Georgia in their engagement on implementing the Sustainable Development Goals with a focus on food security and nutrition. Following that, FAO was requested to facilitate further exchanges between key local private sector actors of Georgia and Armenia. The B2B event today is the first follow-up event of its kind to this request.

Magali Herranz, FAO programme officer, highlighted the importance of supporting local business development to address challenges within the dairy value chain. "We hope that both, Armenia and Georgia will be enriched from exchanging experiences and lessons learned through this B2B meeting which will pave the way for further collaboration between relevant actors from the two countries," Herranz said. "Every company, be it large or small, has the potential to make a notable contribution to inclusive and shared economic, social and environmentally sustainable progress."

Since December 2017, the CARD Foundation - with the support of FAO - has carried out several research projects to assess the dairy sector in Armenia and Georgia, in collaboration with the Georgian Farmers Association. These studies have helped to both identify gaps in the dairy production value chains and propose improvement mechanisms. Events like this, which allow Armenian and Georgian farmers to meet and exchange experiences, are part of the programme to strengthen the dairy sector.

Supporting dairy in Georgia



More than 200 commercial dairy farmers, processors, equipment suppliers, industry experts, and government representatives met in Tbilisi today for Georgia's annual dairy congress.

This, the fifth edition of the congress, was organized by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) with support from the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia and the European Union in Georgia via the EU4Business initiative. The European Union (EU)'s ambassador to Georgia said: "We have a number of projects to assist Georgian producers in meeting EU standards and in many cases quality and hygiene standards are being raised."

Staying competitive

The joint EBRD-FAO project is aimed at assisting Georgian SMEs in adapting to the challenges brought about by increased competition in the local market. As a result, all players along the dairy chain in Georgia need to raise the safety and quality standards of their products and differentiate them in national and export markets.

Nina Kuzmina from EBRD's Agribusiness Department said, "We are assisting through knowledge sharing, targeted advice and by supporting the expansion of commercial milk producers' capacities, but there are still too few producers to reverse existing negative market trends."

Andriy Yarmak, FAO economist added, "One of the major problems in Georgia is the lack of educated dairy professionals: veterinarians, feed crop production agronomists and nutritionists. Georgia would greatly benefit from good university programmes in these areas, which would educate students in all elements of modern production technologies."

A rise in milk production

Since the project's launch in 2015, the production of high quality milk in Georgia has more than doubled, and most of the commercial producers have been assisted by the EBRD and FAO. According to Levan Davitashvili, Minister of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, "Through our joint efforts, governmental policy is already stimulating local milk production, and with the support of inter-national organizations we're managing to raise consumer awareness of the high quality of the Georgian milk."

The Georgian Dairy Association also intends to conduct a campaign to promote local milk and its products and further increase consumer awareness in order to increase demand for raw milk as a healthy product. The safety and quality of Georgian milk is relatively low due to the lack of knowledge and capacity on modern approaches to production and handling. To boot, consumers are not aware of the food safety risks related to home-made dairy products and buy them in much larger quantities than from officially registered dairies.

A survey, conducted by the Georgian Dairy Association, also discussed at the congress, highlighted seasonality and the limited quantity of milk as one of the main challenges for the dairy sector. Increasing the number of commercial farms and was cited as one possible solution to remedy these problems.



Environmental focus

One session focused on the environmental impact of the dairy sector, and in particular on mitigation measures. Dairy production is a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions and as such sustainable farming systems should comprise appropriate waste management services, water management services and be mindful of land degradation.

The EBRD and FAO promote low carbon livestock, and increasing productivity is one way of reducing emissions per liter of milk produced.

FAO conducts training in locust management

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is conducting training-of-trainers on locust management for 20 master-trainers from Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation.

The main goal of this training-of-trainers is to increase national capacities in locust surveillance and control based on worldwide recognized best practices. This means updating and harmonizing knowledge concerning bio-ecology of the locust pests, survey operations and information management, improving monitoring, forecasting, early warning and timely response.



The training-of-trainers includes regional and national sessions. The current regional session, delivered by an FAO, includes theoretical lectures and practical field exercises.

All participants receive a comprehensive set of educational materials. This regional session takes place before the locust campaign so the 20 master-trainers from the four countries can deliver training sessions in their nations, spreading the knowledge to experts in their nations.

“The only sustainable way to deal with transboundary pests as locusts is the so-called preventive control strategy, based on early warning and early reaction, together with a solid regional cooperation between neighboring countries as locusts do not know borders,” said Mamuka Meskhi, Assistant FAO Representative in Georgia. To achieve that objective, a number of projects are being implemented by FAO as part of the Programme. This training-of-trainers, for instance, is being organized thanks to a project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Fruits and berries of Georgia - investment and market opportunities



Today, Fruits and Berries of Georgia: Efficiency of Production and Marketing convened local producers in Tbilisi. The conference was organized by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and supported by the European Union under its EU4Business initiative and Georgia’s Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture. Attracting producers from Georgia, the event focused on helping local growers take advantage of numerous investment and market opportunities, both locally and internationally, by sharing best practices in apple, pear and berry production, storage, handling and marketing.

According to Mr Stig Kjeldsen, cooperation officer at the Delegation of the European Union to Georgia: “We believe that the production of fruits and berries has some unused economic potential in Georgia. Through this project, we are assisting SMEs in seizing the opportunities provided by the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA).”

Berry production on the up

Nina Kuzmina from EBRD’s Agribusiness Department said, “New, as well as traditional markets are developing towards modern retail formats, which demand higher standards of post-harvest handling and food safety.”

Berry production in Georgia is intensifying and by 2020 intensive berry orchards are expected to span 1,000 hectares. Existing infrastructure, however, cannot cope with this increase and short-falls already arise in storing and sorting products.



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According to Andriy Yarmak, FAO economist, “Georgia was a pioneer in blueberry production in the region but now it is time to upgrade the varieties, production and PHH technologies, logistics and marketing as the market becomes more saturated and margins decline. Growers should consider other berries too and explore air logistics opportunities.”

Apples and pears: Georgia has been a net importer of apples for many years but growing domestic production has helped satisfy local demand and apple producers are beginning to explore export markets. The natural choice is Russia, which is the only large importer of apples in the region. According to Yarmak, “This is the first year in which Georgia has exported fresh apples due to supply finally exceeding local demand. However, the current mix of varieties of Georgian apple orchards makes it rather difficult to consider exports beyond Russia as Russian

markets are becoming more and more saturated. To find new markets Georgian farmers would have to explore new, internationally recognized varieties of apples, and invest into modern growing, storage and Post-harvest handling technologies, which may take some time.”

As for pears, import volumes are increasing each year signalling the size of local demand, however production is limited. To meet local demand, local producers need to develop knowhow to improve production standards, increase cold storage facilities and adopt modern and more marketable varieties.

Investment opportunities identified

The conference was followed by training sessions on modern production techniques, storage and marketing of apples and pears in Georgia, and berry production. Tomorrow meanwhile, the delegation will visit an intensive apple orchard and modern cold storage facility in Georgia’s Mtskheta region – Khichateli Ltd – where they will also learn pruning methods.

Next up, berry producers from Georgia will participate in a study tour to Ukraine to continue to learn from their peers. The event was part of a joint EU-EBRD-FAO project that also supports Moldova and Tajikistan and is aimed at improving high-value trade opportunities in horticulture.

About EU4Business

The European Union’s EU4Business initiative is an umbrella initiative that covers all EU activities supporting SMEs in the Eastern Partnership countries. EU4Business includes 43 projects in the Eastern Partnership region, implemented both on a regional and bilateral level. The overall active portfolio amounts to almost €320 million of EU support under EU4Business, and has triggered a total of more than €1.96 billion of loans granted by partner banks to SMEs in the region.

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