The holistic approach of ARDI program rural economic development includes ensuring the market accessibility of entrepreneurs’ and farmers’ businesses. For these purpose ARDI program supported 18 current and potential beneficiaries from Vayots Dzor region to participate in the 7th annual Areni Wine Festival on October 3. The entrepreneurs started the preparations earlier, designing and packaging their products. For some of them it was the very first experience to present their production in a festival. Private farmers, cooperative members and owners of small agribusinesses from Areni, Chiva, Yelpin, Aghnjadzor, Shatlin, Karaglukh, Taratumb, Zaritap and Gndevaz communities featured their produce: ecologically clean honey, fresh and dried fruits, cheese and chicks.

**Sun Kissed Dried Fruits from Areni**

Anna Ghazaryan works as an accountant in Areni community school. The family owns orchards and sells different fruits as well. However the family harvests more fresh fruits than they can sell during season. Then, Anna turned her old time hobby of making dried fruits into a new business. To increase her production Anna applied to ARDI program small grant project to co-finance and buy a 150kg capacity fruit drier. This year she made about 120 kg dried fruits. Samples are sent to Russia and the feedback was very positive with potential cooperation.

**Organically Growing Chicks**

David Martirosyan, a young entrepreneur from Karagloukh started his poultry business recently with 100 chicks and increased the number to 450. He uses only ecologically clean food for his farm. His plan is to have 33% profitability during first year. With the help of ARDI program he co-financed and obtained 2,000 chicks and a grinder for fodder.

**Golden Honey from Zaritap**

Gegham Grigoryan from Zaritap community, Vayots Dzor Marz started a beekeeping business with three beehives last year. Eager to expand his business further, the young beemaster participated in the entrepreneurship training organized by ARDI program and successfully applied for a grant.

Gegham now carries on his business with 13 beehives. Leaving recent hardship in the past, Gegham is looking forward to bright future as he expects about 200-250 kg ecologically clean honey next year.

**B&B owners from Shatlin and Areni villages promoted their hospitality service. During the festival they had the opportunity to present and sell their produce, find new venues and markets for produce/service realization and make new connections.**

## Program Updates

**ARDI is a 5-year program funded by the US Agency for International Development. Launched in September 2013, the program aims to increase rural employment by tackling constraints to rural economic development of select rural communities in the Syunik, Vayots Dzor and Lori marzes (provinces) of Armenia. The program will support interventions in three main rural economic sectors/Value Chains involving Dairy Processing, Fruit Processing and Rural Tourism.**

The ARDI program is being implemented by the Fuller Center for Housing Armenia and Heifer Project International Armenian Branch Office.
New B&B Venues to Enjoy: Areni and Dsegh Villages

There are estimated 100,000 foreigners and 300,000 local Armenians visiting regions as tourists. That is estimated 20% of total income from tourism in Armenia.

Based on expert evaluations, one of the reasons why tourists do not visit regions is the lack of infrastructure. ARDI program aims to develop rural tourism value chain through infrastructure development. Value Chain experts and ARDI program assessments of select clusters indicated building B&Bs especially in Dsegh village of Lori region. In the Spring three B&Bs were completed in Vayots Dzor region. This time the program completed 4 B&Bs in Dsegh village.

A professional training on how to establish and manage B&B was organized by the ARDI program. The program and families co-shared the cost of investment. The picturesque Dsegh village is a well known location for tourists visiting Lori region. The village with its surrounding has breathtaking natural beauty, and the immense number of historical monuments available nearby just add more interest for visitors as well as for hikers. Dsegh is also known for being the birthplace of one of the famous Armenian writers Hovhannes Toumanyan where his home-museum is operating year around.

Suzanne Kharatyan, the “Otevan B&B” owner said “Each year about 15,000-20,000 tourists are visiting our community. Taking this into consideration I would like to start my own B&B business, host guests, offer them the local food and take them to see nearby historical sites”.

The contacts of new B&Bs:

“Arima” B&B, owner Byureghik Sargsyan Tel: 094-81-74-73
“Smile” B&B, owner Shogher Kocharyan Tel: 098-90-98-74
“Otevan” B&B owner Suzanne Kharatyan, Tel: 0 77- 906-983
“Vernutun” owner Gohar Beglaryan, Tel: 093-61-55-41

Another promising B&B was financed via Small Grant Project. “Areni Wine Art” B&B owner David Simonyan, tel: 374 (0) 94-536-329. This B&B arranges lavash baking, honey straining, etc.

Wedding Accessories from Dsegh

Our youth is talented and landing a helping hand is a great way to support new businesses especially for young women who start or expand their business in rural areas. Ani Sargsyan from Dsegh village is an active citizen and enthusiastic in business and her home town development. For three years Ani has been renting out wedding dresses, making wedding cakes and accessories and organizing weddings. She attended professional design training and uses her knowledge in practice.

In winter with her mother she enhanced her business management skills at the training organized by ARDI program and successfully applied for a grant. Now with the help of her family she rents a 14 sqm room in the community cultural house for her business of Wedding dresses & accessory. She advances the opportunity of her store being nearby H. Tumanyan museum and sells handmade Armenian souvenirs by targeting tourists and shares info on Dsegh B&Bs.

Completed Projects in 2015

- Milk Collection Unit - 5
- Animal watering Point – 7
- Fruit Cold Storage - 3
- Irrigation Water System – 5
- Bed & Breakfast – 7
- Seed Grant Project - 34

Upcoming Activities

Start the construction and/or renovation of:

- Irrigation Water System - 1
- Seed Grant Project -7
- Fruit Cold Storage - 1
- Training of Rural Entrepreneurship Development.

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