ARDI program has adopted a holistic approach for rural development. The first steps include assessments of target communities, three value chain analyses, identification of potential gaps and brainstorming of action plans with the communities, organization of training, making hard investments, creation of forward linkages and connections are to follow. Furthermore, the importance of cooperation among different stakeholders - the farmers, private sector and government officials is on the agenda for discussion.

During Spring-Summer 2016 the ARDI program organized two events and invited different stakeholders to discuss rural development issues and partnership possibilities.

Advanced Farmer Service Center in Meghri

ARDI program and CARD foundation started a fruitful cooperation this year and the first joint project was completed and dedicated on June 24th in Meghri community, Syunik region as a new Farm Service Center in the frames of “Markets for Meghri” project. It is a partner project and was co-financed by the “Swiss Development Corporation”, ARDI program and a local investor Mr. A. Avetisyan.

“The center will enable the improvement of horticulture in the region through making available quality inputs and equipment, through providing the farmers with training and transferring the best agricultural practices. The center will be equipped with up-to-date equipment and tools”, said Susanna Khachatryan, COP of ARDI program.

The goal of the center is to deliver a whole package of services to the local farmers; establish links between the farmers and international organizations, offering supplies, equipment and information on advanced technologies for the agriculture development; facilitate the development of new market links and help local farmers and SMEs access to financial resources.

The Center will cooperate with farmers, technicians of the adjacent communities, as well as the other Farm Service Centers, operating throughout the country. It will host regular workshops and training programs conducted by Armenian and foreign experts. They plan to serve more than 1,800 local farmers from 13 communities in Meghri region of Syunik marz.
Learning from Overseas Best Practice

ARDI program is partnering with local government and one of the aspects is to enhance their knowledge and capacities in management practices, necessary for the growth of environmentally sound economic activities in the rural regions of Armenia.

For this purpose a study tour abroad for best practice exchange visit was organized in July for 24 participants of 17 target communities to Estonia, one of former Soviet Republics that has well advanced in agriculture since the collapse of Soviet Union.

During a week long visit the study tour participants in general learnt about Estonia as a country, the agricultural structure, different structures and events leading to development of agriculture and rural tourism in the country: Rural Development Foundation, Ministry of Rural Affairs, Open Farmers Day, Rural Network Support Unit in Jäneda, eip-agri (agriculture and innovation) initiative, Valgehabuse Ski and Recreation Centre, Animal Breeders’ Association of Estonia, greenhouse at Sagro Horticul ture, Kuivajõe Milk Farm, Viking village, Roogoja Farm, E-Dairy Cheese factory in Põltsamaa, Rural tourism great example at Emumägi, Muuga Rural women association and Kevili Cereal Cooperative.

At the end of the trip participants brain stormed and shared ideas where changes would be possible and effective to implement. These would include rural tourism, as there is immense potential to reach and huge work still to be done starting from infrastructure, community green area, attractiveness, round tables dedicated to rural tourism and new product development, preserving the historical sites, for horticulture will be good to include artificial insemination and for agriculture new technologies would be needed to obtain.

USAID New Mission Director Visiting ARDI Project

On August 17 ARDI program hosted USAID Mission Director Ms. Deborah Grieser in Mets Parni community to present recently completed Milk Collection Unit. Mets Parni is the cluster center serving Katnajur, Tsaghkaber and Lusaghbyur communities in Lori region. The community has 653 households and most of them are involved in animal husbandry. About 60% of community territory is pasture. The cluster has 1,849 cows and animal to pasture ratio is over 5, well above the 1.89 ha required minimum land area per animal in Armenia, thus there is good possibility to increase the number of cows.

Mayor Mr. Gagik Palyan stated “Our community is hard working and ready to overcome all challenges to develop the dairy value chain. The cooperative has 158 members, and all are collaborating well together”. He told about more plans ranging from fodder production to rural tourism development.

A cooling tank of 1,850 litres capacity, a milk collection truck (donated by Heifer Armenia and other donors) and other necessary equipment is installed to start operations. This new MCU will have big economic impact for the cluster; over 70 farmers will supply milk, and the unit has capacity to sell 510 tons of milk annually.

Total 13 animal watering points are being built in Katnajur, Tsaghkaber and Lusaghbyur neighbouring communities with the support of ARDI program. Further plans, including milk processing plant are under discussion.

Completed Projects

Milk Collection Unit - 7
Animal Water Point – 21 in 7 communities
Irrigation Water System – 8
Bed & Breakfast – 8
Farmers Service Center - 1
Seed Grant Project - 68

Upcoming Activities

Start the construction and/or renovation of:
Bed & Breakfast - 2
Irrigation Water System - 6
Seed Grant Project - 2
Dry Fruit Production - 1
Animal Water Point – 32 in 9 communities
Cheese Production - 1
Farmer Service Center - 2

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