

ARMENIA

Second Birth of the Scientific Center

The Scientific Centre of Vegetable and Technical Cultures Makes Progress under the New Director's Supervision

There have been many changes in the scientific centre in the Darakert community of Ararat marz since Gayane Sargsyan became the director. In 2006, the centre was in an extremely bad condition, had many debts and very few prospects of development. Mrs. Sargsyan who has been working in this centre since 1983, at first as a postgraduate research student, later on as a scientific worker, undertook the mission of reviving the centre. The Millennium Challenge Account-Armenia's Water to Market Activity, which is being implemented by ACDI/VOCA, had a great input in that process.

From the previous belongings: greenhouses, lands and laboratories the centre had only 21 hectares in the open field and a few ramshackle seedbeds. The latter were in such an extremely bad condition that could not provide with seedling not only farmers but even their own production. The seedbed needed to be renovated in order to provide the centre with some income. The On-Farm Water Management and High-Value Agriculture components of the Water to Market Activity greatly helped the centre; they renovated the seedbeds and installed a micro-sprinkler irrigation system. The scientific centre was provided also with two soil moisture sensors, a meter and an ET (evapotranspiration) gauge for better irrigation scheduling, plus three sluices for better water management at the field level. The On-Farm Water Management Component organized also laser leveling of 0.5 ha in the open field for uniform water distribution.



Potted seedling, which was produced in the centre.

The High-Value Component also initiated seedling production in seedbeds. Later those seedlings were transplanted to the open field and distributed to other farmers. *“It is difficult for farmers to grow high-quality seedlings. Our centre produces not only seedlings of different vegetable crops but also potted seedlings”*, indicates Mrs. Sargsyan.

Seedling Production in Plastic Greenhouses

In 2008, the Water to Market Activity imported a few plastic greenhouses and installed three of them in the centre. They will serve as seedbeds and provide seedlings the whole year. *“Everything is being done in the interests of farmers as this center is the only institution dealing with vegetable crops in the country,”* adds Mrs. Sargsyan. The centre, because of its female director, actively collaborates



Micro-sprinkler irrigation system, installed in the seedbeds.

with other women farmers. One of the best examples is the women farmers of the Gargar village of Lori marz, whom this year the centre provided seedlings.

The centre also tests new varieties of vegetables and non-traditional crops in its greenhouses. Farmers’ interest towards non-traditional crops is increasing and the center has a great input in this process as it provides free consultations, especially on cultivation of non-traditional crops.



Canned non- traditional vegetables

Additionally, the centre tests processing of any new variety.

“We should offer farmers not only new varieties but inform them

If in 2007 the centre grew 300,000 seedlings of different crops, this year it produced over two million seedlings. One million was sold to the “Euroterm” LLC, “Alishan” cannery and other farmers.

about the canneries that will be able to process their produce”, emphasizes Mrs. Sargsyan. According to her, the development of agriculture should have the form of a triangle: scientific centers should provide farmers with seeds and seedlings and farmers should produce and provide processing companies with raw material.

Seedling Production in Tsovazard

Seedling production was initiated in the Tsovazard village of Gegharquniq marz under the supervision and assistance of Mrs. Sargsyan, within the frameworks of the Water to Market Activity. The greenhouse where boom irrigation system was installed produced seedlings of different vegetable crops and distributed to farmers of Gegharquniq, Syuniq, Lori and Ararat marzes. Mrs. Sargsyan’s input was incomparably big as the project succeeded due to her assistance. *“Every farmer in the Ararat valley knows how to grow cucumber, tomato but it is a new experience for farmers in the mountainous and sub mountainous regions”*, indicates Mrs. Sargsyan. *“I am an optimist and I hope that farmers will start growing same vegetables in these regions as well”*.



Vegetable seedlings.

Boom irrigation system.