

FAO Office of Evaluation

Evaluation of FAO's cooperation with the Republic of Armenia

Annex 7, assessment of key projects

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1 GCP/ARM/001/ITA Assistance to Brucellosis Control in Armenia (Phase I)

Box 1. Basic project data

Beneficiary Country	Armenia
Donor	Italy
Date of project start-up (Entry On Duty date)	May 2007
Planned date of project closure (Not To Exceed date)	December 2011
Budget (USD)	1,069,999
Date of Evaluation's assessment	September 2012

Box 2. Scoring for GCP /ARM/001/ITA

Evaluation criteria	Score *
Relevance	5
Design	5
Implementation process/efficiency	5
Results/effects	5
Effectiveness of capacity development	6
Effectiveness of partnerships	5
Gender mainstreaming (all criteria)	5
Sustainability	3
Impact (actual or potential)	5

*: 1=very poor; 2=poor; 3=inadequate; 4=adequate; 5=good; 6=excellent; NA: not possible to assess/Not Applicable

1.1 Background

1. The disease brucellosis has both veterinary and public health significance. It causes production losses in animals through abortion and reduced fertility. In humans, brucellosis is a chronic, debilitating disease usually caught from consuming raw dairy products or contact with infected foetal material. There are different species of the *Brucella* bacterium, which have different host preferences. For example, *Brucella abortus* is mainly found in cattle, *B. melitensis* is mainly found in sheep and goats, but both have the ability to affect other host species, including man. Different vaccines are available for different *Brucella* species.

2. Pre-independence in 1991 most livestock were maintained on state farms in Armenia and brucellosis vaccination was organised. Post-independence, most livestock ownership became private. The State Veterinary Inspectorate was under-resourced and no longer had a comprehensive vaccination programme for the disease.

3. At the time of project design, prevalence in the animal and human population was considered to be high, but the prevalence in cattle, sheep and goats was not known. Therefore, the project aimed to elucidate *marz*-level prevalence in different host species. This information can be found through surveys in which blood samples are collected from statistically significant sub-groups of the livestock populations and then serum is tested for antibodies to *Brucella*. FAO had implemented brucellosis surveillance and control projects in Central Asian countries such as Tajikistan and was well placed to apply relevant technical experience in Armenia.

1.2 Relevance

4. In the context of changed agricultural practices, probable high prevalence of infection, and human health issues, the project was highly relevant to the country. By trialling

targeted vaccination of most susceptible animals, the project provided an opportunity to demonstrate an alternative control strategy to test-and-slaughter to the authorities and, thus, to influence national planning for controlling this disease. Information on disease distribution that was found from prevalence surveys was very relevant to planning disease control.

1.3 Design

5. The project was well designed, but ambitious. The budget did not enable vaccination of cattle as well as sheep and goats in the pilot vaccination trial. The original budget was USD 770,000, but it was necessary to agree a USD 300,000 budget increase to enable cattle vaccination with *B. abortus* RB51 vaccine.¹ The Project Document anticipated pilot vaccination in three *marzes*, but vaccination was in fact carried out in one *marz* only.

1.4 Implementation

6. The timings in the workplan were unfeasible and flexibility was required during implementation. Some stakeholders, including the GoA and USDA, needed convincing that vaccination was the appropriate control strategy: when the first round of vaccination was planned and veterinary workers contracted, the Minister requested more time, resulting in six months delay (vaccination is carried out in spring and autumn). The proposed EOD was 30 September 2009, but the actual EOD was 31 December 2011.

7. REU's operational support for procurement and recruitment was good. Although FAO HQ technical staff were busy with HPAI prevention and control, technical backstopping to the project was also good. Inputs by international consultants were highly valued by national stakeholders.

1.5 Results/effects

8. The components of the project's Specific Objective were fully achieved, that is, (i) technical and managerial capacity was built, (ii) the extent and distribution of brucellosis was understood and (iii) control methods were tested. The pilot vaccination strategy was implemented in one *marz* rather than three, but this was appropriate as it enabled proper and thorough testing of the model in an area where sero-surveillance had shown that brucellosis was prevalent.

9. The project showed that in Armenian conditions it is possible to achieve a measurable reduction in brucellosis prevalence in small ruminants. Public health and veterinary authorities now believe in the effectiveness of this approach. Additionally, vaccinated animals were identified and this was the sole animal identification and registration system in the country.

10. It had been intended to find out which *Brucella* species were present in Armenia, but this was not accomplished.

1.6 Effectiveness of capacity development

¹ First Tripartite Review Meeting, Yerevan, 03 October 2008

11. The survey and pilot vaccination have greatly improved the capacity of government veterinary and human health staff. Significant resources went into technical assistance, national brucellosis sero-surveys, brucellosis control planning workshops and direct on-the-job training of vaccinators. State laboratories and data analysis units were strengthened with reagents, equipment and staff training. The laboratories received training on ELISA and PCR techniques and successfully tested 16,000 serum samples in three weeks for the sero-survey.

12. The project prepared the ground well in an 18-month period before vaccination actually started and, in the pilot *marz*, farmers and livestock owners became convinced that vaccination is effective.

1.7 Effectiveness of partnerships

13. The fact that wider application of the trialled brucellosis control method is now realistic in Armenia is a major accomplishment and due in part to the effective cooperation between the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Health that was brokered by the project. Cooperation between the two ministries was poor at first but became close by the end of the project. A “One Health approach” developed, as demonstrated by:

- joint meetings;
- joint visits to the field;
- guidelines for physicians that were prepared under this project; and
- multimedia campaign on human brucellosis.

1.8 Gender equality and social inclusion

14. Men, women and children care for livestock and there were no adverse gender-related elements in the project design. Care was taken to brief female staff to avoid handling vaccines if pregnant. Women were actively involved with awareness campaigns, which aimed to specifically target women.

15. The poor in Armenia are more or less evenly distributed between urban and rural areas, but poverty is decreasing more rapidly in urban centres. Almost 80% of rural families own at least one ruminant animal and, therefore, targeting livestock owners and the animal health sector are effective ways of reaching the poorest group of the population. Increased animal production enhances food security and incomes for all, but can be particularly important for poor livestock owners. Brucellosis is also a human disease and reducing its incidence contributes to rural poverty reduction by reducing medical costs and lost work days.

1.9 Sustainability and impact (actual or potential)

16. As the project title indicates, this project was designed as a first phase. More investment is needed to build on the experience, both by continuing the vaccination in the pilot *marz* and by implementing it in other *marzes*. Additional needs included the development of a legal framework for brucellosis control and further strengthening of laboratories.

17. The major impact was that the piloted brucellosis control in Syunik *marz* has provided a model strategy to control brucellosis countrywide.

18. The project has institutional sustainability because government personnel in the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Health have acquired know-how for brucellosis

control and experience of working together to achieve it. Farmers and other stakeholders have become convinced that vaccination is an effective means to control this disease.

19. Medium-term financial sustainability may come from donor contributions for further control of this disease. It is necessary to assess farmers' willingness to pay for vaccination in future: Cost-recovery will be needed if vaccination will be carried out beyond the scope and time span of donor-funded projects.

2 GCP/ARM/003/GRE, Support for pesticide quality control and residue monitoring in Armenia

Box 3. Basic project data

Beneficiary Country	Armenia
Donor	Greece
Date of project start-up (Entry On Duty date)	March 2009
Planned date of project closure (Not To Exceed date)	August 2013
Budget (USD)	2,000,000
Date of Evaluation's assessment	September 2012

Box 4. Evaluation scoring of key project GCP/ARM/003/GRE

Evaluation criteria	Score *
Relevance	5
Design	3
Implementation process/efficiency	2
Results/effects	1
Effectiveness of capacity development	4
Effectiveness of partnerships	3
Gender mainstreaming (all criteria)	1
Sustainability	NA
Impact (actual or potential)	NA

*: 1=very poor; 2=poor; 3=inadequate; 4=adequate; 5=good; 6=excellent; NA: not possible to assess/Not Applicable

2.1 Background

20. This project was requested in 2006 by the Government of the Republic of Armenia (GoRA) to the Government of Greece, together with a request for developing private slaughterhouses in the country. The Greek Government agreed to support Armenia in these endeavours but asked FAO to be the implementing agency, given the technical contents of both initiatives.

21. After being contacted by the Government of Greece in early 2007, FAO fielded a mission in 2007, comprising of a consultant and an FAO officer, to formulate the two projects and prepare the Project Documents. The project was entered in FPMIS pipeline in early December 2007. In March 2008, it was put on hold in the system, for 'reasons outside FAO control'. The funding agreement was ratified in February 2009 and between March and May of the same year, the ProDoc was finalized and the project declared operational. LTO role was assigned to AGP in HQ, and BH and operational responsibility assigned to SEU.

2.2 Relevance

22. The ProDoc mentions that Armenia, a signatory to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, imports pesticides from Europe and Asia, in particular India and China. Controlling the quality of these pesticides is important, also because a large part of the national agricultural output comprises of fresh fruits and vegetables and potatoes. Part of this production is also for export, in particular towards EU countries.

23. Reportedly, in Yerevan one or two private labs could carry out this type of work, but the national food safety institution did not have enough infrastructural capacity and staff competence to carry out either type of analysis.

24. The absence of proper laboratory infrastructure and capacity to determine the quality of imported pesticides, as well as of detecting pesticide residues in crops, are thus a major threat to food safety, consumers' protection and an obstacle to increased exports.

25. In this context, the project objective was and still is relevant. Also, it was stated that those pesticides which are fake or of poor quality and do not meet the international norms and standards, will be deregistered, a guarantee that farmers will be able to use quality pesticides. However, it was still debatable that the problem of pesticide residue and quality control should have been addressed through an intervention aimed exclusively at lab-based controls rather than focused more upstream in pesticide import regulations and use, and downstream in direct capacity development of farmers to make informed choices in the purchase and sustainable use of quality pesticides.

2.3 Design

26. The project planned to establish/upgrade two laboratories, one for pesticide quality control (toxicology) and one for pesticide residue monitoring; develop technical capacity of laboratory staff to carry out the required chemical analysis; and develop awareness on pesticide residue problems. Among project aims is attaining certification ISO 17025.

27. Project design was highly focused on the laboratory part, both infrastructure and Capacity development. The awareness raising component looked like an added-on formality: the work plan included no activities in this component and the ProDoc did not include any provision in terms of specific human resources nor any discussion or detail on how to carry it out made. Furthermore, the national legislation foresees that information on pesticide residue should be maintained confidential for Government's decision making, thus pre-empting any awareness campaign based on real evidence and risk assessment.

28. Moreover, the project design completely neglects the aspect of use of pesticide by farmers and the need for capacity development at that level for ensuring a proper application of any chemicals to crops. Admittedly, more funds might have been necessary for tackling all these aspects but in their absence, it is likely that the overall effectiveness of the intervention will be greatly undermined.

2.4 Implementation

29. The LTU is AGP and the LTO is in HQ while operational issues are handled from REU. LTO came on two missions, once to provide technical backstopping in 2009 and for the Tri-partite review mission in 2011. The LTO input is on technical inputs exclusively. The project included provisions for a visiting CTA. The selected expert also had formulated the project and carried out the first mission in May 2009.

30. Work was planned on two laboratories and two locations were identified: for the toxicology lab, a Ministry of Agriculture building in Merdzavan, approximately 15 km from the capital city was assigned, whereas for residue monitoring, a lab within the Central Veterinary and Food Laboratory was made available.

31. In the case of the toxicology laboratory, once the project was operational, FAO decided that room allocated was not enough and more space was required. The CTA started working on two potential lay-outs and the Project Implementation Task Force in March 2010 decided to choose the larger size proposal. This was also endorsed by Ministerial Decree.

32. The process leading to the preparation of a bill of quantity was extremely complex and long: an initial proposal was used to launch a tender, a firm was selected, designs were reviewed with the support of UNDP and it emerged that actual cost would have been almost twice as much. REU eventually decided to recruit a national company to revise the lay-out and bill of quantities, in collaboration with an international expert. Issues about compatibility of national and international norms had emerged as well.

33. In 2010, the GoRA decide to re-structure completely the food safety sector and created a parastatal institution responsible for the inspection and regulation of the Food Safety and Phytosanitary Measures sector. This meant a new impasse in the renovation works of the lab, compounded by the fact that the Merdzavan building was transferred to another Ministry.

34. By mid 2011 no progress had been made, when the decision was made to carry out a tripartite review of the Greek funded initiatives. This took place in November 2011 and agreed to push forward for completing the project, with an extension of 18 months. A month later, the GoRa decided to change the location of the toxicology laboratory and move it to the same premises as the pesticide residue monitoring laboratory.

35. In parallel, the GoRA and the World Bank had agreed on a project for the refurbishment of the Central Veterinary Laboratory where the pesticide residue monitoring laboratory was supposed to be established. Works had started in 2009 to be completed by the end of the year, but they actually finished in late 2010.

36. Thus, during 2011, also with FAO's assistance and participation, the GoRA carried out the selection process of staff for the residue monitoring laboratory. This was completed in late 2011 and in February 2012, the project started the technical training of two staff from the new laboratory, plus a veterinary doctor and a quality control expert, on new lab techniques and use of newly installed equipments. The training, four months in total, was assessed as very useful by participants. The four trainees went in September 2012 to China, for a three weeks additional training; China covered all costs of trainees while in the country. This was highly successful, in the view of the FAO project manager: Armenian experts had found it very useful, a good rapport was developed among the Armenian and Chinese staff and further collaboration in future will be easier.

37. Some English courses have also been offered in the mean time and some other corollary activities have been carried out, but of limited importance. The GoRA appeared to have difficulties in recruiting competent lab staff for the toxicology lab, who also have enough knowledge of English.

38. In parallel, the work on the toxicology laboratory had come to a halt as the proposed location within the Central Veterinary Laboratory, posed clear risks of cross-contamination with the pesticide residue monitoring laboratory. An expert mission was carried out in late September 2012, to make a final decision about the possible relocation of the toxicology lab. By early November, a new location had been identified for a new construction, within the same compound but independent. Works were supposed to start as soon as possible, after which the procurement process for equipment could start.

39. By late of 2012, it was not certain yet that all planned activities for the toxicology laboratory could be completed by August 2013.

2.5 Results/effects

40. By the time of the evaluation in September 2012, no results had been attained. The four trainees in pesticide residue monitoring appreciated the training received and were eager to go to China and this proved successful; however, the CD activities were not completed yet and therefore it was not possible to verify whether the training had actually improved the skills and competences of the participants and of they had the opportunity to use these in their work.

41. By the end of 2012, uncertainties about actual date of full operations still existed, linked to potential obstacles in the construction and equipment procurement process, as well as to the identification of suitably competent staff and their possible needs in terms of capacity development. Last but not least, the issue of availability of running costs for full operation of the two new laboratories was also pending.

2.6 Effectiveness of capacity development

42. The evaluation assumes that capacities of four staff have been developed through the English courses and the training on improved lab techniques for pesticide residue monitoring. No other evidence is available in terms of CD.

2.7 Effectiveness of partnerships

43. Although some collaboration took place, it appeared that better coordination and effective partnership between FAO and the WB in the activity of lab refurbishment and Capacity Development could have improved overall performance.. In this respect, FAO should play an active role in improving coordination between national agencies and their international partners. The Evaluation was aware that it was also likely that national institutions themselves did not promote any coordination among their international partners.

2.8 Gender equality and social inclusion

44. Although the theme of pesticide use and residue monitoring has a strong gender element in it, considering who applies these products and who harvests the crop, and the differential consequences on consumers of different age and sex, the way the project was designed, neither factors were taken into consideration.

45. Thus, in terms of the project per se, the two criteria are Not Applicable; however, the approach chosen by FAO in tackling the problem of pesticide use and residue monitoring was 'people blind' and as such, the initiative was scored as a 1.

2.9 Sustainability and impact (actual or potential)

46. It is possible that the GoRA, through its SNCO, will be able to run the laboratories at some pace; it is impossible to say whether their activity will be enough to effectively control

pesticide quality and pesticide residues and whether these will bring about an improvement in the safety and quality of agricultural produce in Armenia.

47. Sustainability and impact of the project will also be determined by the mechanisms that will be established to provide feedback to farmers about pesticide residues and toxicology. By the time of the evaluation, this key step did not seem to be included at all in the plans of concerned institutions.

3 GCP/ARM/004/GRE Support for abattoir development in Armenia

Box 5. Basic project data

Beneficiary Country	Armenia
Donor	Greece
Date of project start-up (Entry On Duty date)	March 2009
Planned date of project closure (Not To Exceed date)	August 2013
Budget (USD)	1,622,000
Date of Evaluation's assessment	September 2012

Box 6. Scoring for GCP /ARM/004/GRE

Evaluation criteria	Score *
Relevance	4
Design	4
Implementation process/efficiency	2
Results/effects	3**
Effectiveness of capacity development	4**
Effectiveness of partnerships	5
Gender mainstreaming (all criteria)	1
Sustainability	3
Impact (actual or potential)	2

*: 1=very poor; 2=poor; 3=inadequate; 4=adequate; 5=good; 6=excellent; NA: not possible to assess/Not Applicable

** based on the information available as of November 2012

3.1 Background

48. Hygienic meat production and associated public health control is a basic consumer requirement. Zoonotic diseases such as brucellosis and tuberculosis are endemic in Armenia and are risks to consumers. National legislation requires animal slaughter to be carried out in a slaughterhouse, but abattoir buildings that functioned during the pre-1990's Soviet era have mostly fallen into disuse. Consequently, most slaughter is 'informal', performed by farmers and householders in unregulated conditions.

49. The unacceptable slaughter conditions have been widely recognized. USDA funded a project to upgrade slaughterhouses some years ago. Many stakeholders, including members of the Armenian diaspora in Greece, have lobbied for action to improve conditions. From 2006 the Government of Armenia and the Government of Greece (GoG) have discussed cooperation, which has included abattoir development and residue testing. FAO was approached in 2007 to develop a cooperation programme and the GoG agreed to provide funding to FAO through this trust fund project.

3.2 Relevance

50. There is no doubt that at the time of project development and to this day, Armenia has great need for meat that is produced more hygienically. However, hygienic meat production is not emphasized in either (i) the GoA's agriculture development strategies² or (ii) the CPF.³ The UNDAF refers specifically to improved human health and to tuberculosis prevention/control, which is a target of the improved slaughter practices. However, the UNDAF also emphasized social inclusion. The project was not coherent with poverty reduction: a likely output of the project will be meat that will be more expensive than that derived from informal slaughtering and, therefore, less accessible to the poor.

51. The Programme and Project Review Committee (PPRC) noted that farmers are excluded as direct project beneficiaries and commented that the project's training strategy should strengthen linkages with farmers during implementation. The project definitely did address national and local level needs, even though these did not appear to link directly with the Government's or FAO's published national policies and priorities.

3.3 Design

52. The FAO Animal Production and Health Division (AGA) fielded a mission in October 2008 to review the abattoir sector and recommend improvements: from here the project proposal was developed and agreed with the Ministry of Agriculture. The design is built around a public-private-partnership (PPP) concept. At its core was the construction or rehabilitation of (four) abattoirs in different *marzes* to provide improved slaughter methods in better abattoir facilities.

53. To protect consumers from food-borne disease, the design recognizes the importance of (i) meat and byproduct utilization and (ii) modern meat inspection techniques and procedures. Although these elements are described as "essential" in the Project Document, it does not address how meat and byproduct utilization will feature in implementation.⁴ The Project Document does include meat inspection and laboratory techniques (Annex 4, Capacity building).

54. The Center for Agribusiness and Rural Development (CARD), an Armenian NGO and commercial company, had experience with a somewhat similar project to upgrade abattoirs through a USDA-funded initiative from around 2002 to 2005. A key reason why this was not considered successful is that the expected enforcement of laws requiring animals to be slaughtered in upgraded, licensed facilities was not implemented by the government. The FAO Project Document states that the development of new abattoirs "*must be facilitated by relevant government regulations and a business environment in which abattoirs play a key role in safe meat production*". However, neither the risk of the legal framework not being in place, nor the prior obligation and prerequisite of the GoA to implement the legal requirement are specified in the section, *Prior Obligations and Prerequisites*. Thus, the business viability of refurbished slaughterhouses may be uncertain: this may partly explain the delay in signature of contracts by private partners.

² Agricultural Sustainable Development Strategy, Republic of Armenia, Ministry of Agriculture 2006 and 2010 - 2020 Sustainable Agricultural Development Strategy of the RA.

³ FAO-Republic of Armenia Country Programme Framework 2012-2015 (January 2012).

⁴ However, the Project Document does note, in section G, that there is a GoA obligation to "approach GTZ to source a technical advisor in meat section improvement".

3.4 Implementation

55. Technical assistance was timely and effective. Guidance was given to the GoA for the process of selection of private partners. At inception in 2009, the International Legal Consultant, LEGN, provided detailed information on the scope of work expected from the National Legal Consultant. The importance of licensing of the abattoirs was emphasized by the LTO, but subsequently, an FAO international consultant concluded that licensing was unfeasible and that registration should be aimed for as a preliminary step.⁵

56. Project implementation has been delayed substantially. Delays were due to:

- renegotiating the terms of the project with the authorities, for example, the number of slaughter facilities to be strengthened;
- replacing key personnel (the National Legal Consultant and the Project Coordinator); and
- drafting and agreeing the terms of the contract for private partners.

57. FAO's recruitment of the second National Coordinator was slow which contributed to the delay. However, a replacement lawyer was contracted quickly when the urgency was explained.

58. Following operational delays, an 18-month no-cost extension was agreed at the November 2011 Tripartite Meeting and officially approved in February 2012. The revised project end date (NTE) was August 2013.

59. At the time of writing, the project was behind in its revised workplan. For example, signature of PPP agreements was scheduled for January-February 2012.⁶ At the time of writing, agreements had not been signed, but PPP contract signing was expected to take place in the second half of December 2012. This late contract signature may postpone necessary building work as the weather can prevent construction in Armenia until March, in severe winters. It will be a challenge to complete all project activities by the NTE, but there were encouraging signs of accelerated progress under the management of the current Project Coordinator with HQ support.

3.5 Results/effects

60. It was too early for the Evaluation to assess results.

3.6 Effectiveness of capacity development

61. A training programme was envisaged, but had not been implemented yet. Some consumer awareness-raising activities were carried out by a contracted NGO, in the form of booklets, posters and TV campaigns.

3.7 Effectiveness of partnerships

⁵ *Slaughterhouse Registration and/or Licensing for the Upgrading of the Meat Sector in Armenia: Advantages and constraints in view of the current slaughterhouse situation.* Gunter Heinz, FAO International Consultant, May 2011.

⁶ Annex 4, Final Tripartite Review Meeting, Yerevan, 17 November 2011.

62. A core part of the project was the facilitation of partnership between government and the private sector. Public Private Partnership agreements took longer to negotiate than anticipated. Nevertheless, partnership between the public agency and private sector entities was clearly inherent in the project's design.

63. The project had formed a strong Project Implementation Team (PIT), which included representatives of the MoH, MoEnv, GoG and the NGO "Protection of Consumers' Rights". The team met, when necessary, about two times per year, and it appeared to be a useful forum for addressing implementation issues.

64. The project had links with an EU Twinning Project, whose purpose was to strengthen Armenian institutions by upgrading the safety controls system for animal-origin food and feed up to EU-SPS and other international standards, in terms of legislation, enforcement, institution building and general awareness.⁷ This was particularly relevant for ensuring that food safety legislation was compatible with the project's slaughter facility plans.

3.8 Gender equality and social inclusion

65. Both slaughterhouse operation and employment in the veterinary services are male-dominated work areas in Armenia. There was no gender equality activity in this project.

66. All social groups benefited from the enhanced health properties of hygienically produced meat, but the improved product will be more accessible to higher income members of society.

3.9 Sustainability and impact (actual or potential)

67. Sustainability will be contingent on whether the refurbished abattoirs are viable businesses and, thus, depends on factors such as consumer-awareness, government enforcement of the requirement to use licensed facilities, added value from meat processing and perhaps waiver by the government of tax on meat. It is possible that the increased costs of producing meat in these new facilities may make the products unattractive to poorer consumers where alternative, cheaper meat is available on the market.

68. The GoA plans to develop community, open-air slaughter points with running water and meat inspection and to require people to use them. This approach appeared to be a pragmatic and sustainable short-term option, while the more advanced approach of this project is implemented in parallel in several improved abattoirs.

4 TCP/ARM/3203-3303, Afforestation and Reforestation in the Republic of Armenia

Box 7. Basic project data

Beneficiary Country	Armenia
Donor	FAO
Date of project start-up (Entry On Duty date)	November 2009

⁷ Twinning Project No. AM11/ENP-PCA/HE/10: "Strengthening of animal origin and feed safety control in Armenia"

Planned date of project closure (Not To Exceed date)	December 2012
Budget (USD)	612,000
Date of Evaluation's assessment	September 2012

Box 8. Evaluation scoring of key project TCP/ARM/3203-3303

Evaluation criteria	Score *
Relevance	5
Design	4
Implementation process/efficiency	3
Results/effects	3
Effectiveness of capacity development	3
Effectiveness of partnerships	2
Gender mainstreaming (all criteria)	1
Sustainability	NA
Impact (actual or potential)	NA

*: 1=very poor; 2=poor; 3=inadequate; 4=adequate; 5=good; 6=excellent; NA: not possible to assess/Not Applicable

4.1 Background

69. Due to the economic crisis and the shortage in fossil energy sources, the pressure on forest resources and pastures increased sharply during the years after Armenia gained independence. The forest area decreased drastically, by about 4,000 ha annually. Large scale illegal logging resulted also in the loss of valued species.

70. The “National Forest Program” adopted in 2005 set a target of 5,000 ha afforestation and reforestation annually to increase the forest cover up to 20 percent of total land in long-term. Until late 2000s, little progress had been achieved towards this goal due to multiple reasons and, in particular, because of the challenges of ensuring the supply of a broad variety of various species of plantation materials (plants and seedlings) as well as seeds, in sufficient quantity and quality. This challenge was in turn a result of disastrous condition of the nurseries (3 permanent and 8 temporary currently, down from 5 permanent and 15 temporary in the Soviet times), lacking equipment, modern technologies and skills base (in particular in silviculture management) and financing.

71. Other international donors were providing financial resources to renew technologies and machinery. The Government thus decided to request FAO's support to focus on the development of human resources in the fields of seed collection, nurseries, plantations and natural regeneration.

4.2 Relevance

72. The project was relevant for the country at the time of conception: State nurseries of “HayAntar” were financed out of the budget and partly via incomes from wood production and in this context, one particular challenge was to move towards commercial production of plants and seedlings. Individual and institutional capacity development were two key elements in achieving sustainability. The challenge was still relevant at the time of the Evaluation, as no other stakeholder had provided support in this area.

4.3 Design

73. The project was structured into two major parts: (i) development of forest seed and plant production with an emphasis on nurseries; and (ii) development of plantations (respectively natural regeneration) and corresponding care measures. Several pilot sites were foreseen as catalyzing cells to be used during capacity building measures and also beyond the current project. As for capacity building, apart from the new technology, which HayAntar and in particular the nursery experts learned (using container seedlings rather than bare root: the latter was the technology used before) in an on-the-job format, several workshops and study tours were planned.

74. Thus the project design was highly focused on technical and institutional capacity building with focus on Hrazdan nursery. There were also several studies planned to produce of both technical and economic nature to result in recommendations related to changes in HayAntar management.

75. The ProDoc of TCP/3202 mentioned, as a potential added benefit the possibility to bring the experiences in forest development of FAO in close collaboration with the NFPP (National Forest Program Facility). While there were no NFPP at the time the TCP was designed, five funding facilities were approved in 2011, all very relevant to the TCP:

- Green Land NGO: Support of carrying out an assessment of the contribution of the forest sector to the Armenian economy, taking into account the multiple benefits that the sector can offer, September 2011;
- “Biodiversity and Landscape Conservation Union” NGO: Support of implementing a public awareness campaign of the multiple benefits of the forest to the Armenian society, September 2011;
- Environmental Public Advocacy Center: In support of carrying out the validation of newly drafted forest bylaws at local levels, before the final approval of the government, September 2011;
- GOY Environmental- Legal NGO: Support of carrying out an analysis of the roles and responsibilities of the forest administration and other stakeholders. September 2011;and
- Hayantar State Non-Commercial Organization, Ministry of Agriculture: Coordinate the Partnership between Armenia and the Facility and validate the regulatory legal framework for the sector, June 2011; despite the closeness in management and in the conceptual linkage, the Evaluation considered that better coordination and synergy development would have been beneficial.

76. The awareness raising component looked like an added-on formality: the inception workshop and the distribution of the final report were seemingly thought to be sufficient. While this might be enough to reach the professionals and a narrow circle of the specialized NGOs, the outreach to a wider group of potential beneficiaries (e.g. potential sponsors) would have required a better elaborated outreach campaign.

77. A ‘missing component’ was the embedding of the afforestation and reforestation challenge in the overall policy and regulatory framework in Armenia, linked also to climate change and its potential impacts, taking into account other developments of the Government and other related donors’ activities. Reportedly, FAO staff planned this aspect as a potential next step: it then begs a question whether at least some initial steps were not needed in this phase with the identification of the bottlenecks in the regulatory field. Also, while the recommended reform of HayAntar, with the aim of putting the nursery on a commercial footing, had a potential to have policy-level results, no clear, time-bound benchmarks were suggested/agreed upon.

4.4 Implementation

78. The project TCP/ARM/3203 was requested on May 21, 2008 by the Government of the Republic of Armenia (GoRA). It was appraised on June 2, 2008, and approved on November 28, 2008 (formal reviews by PPRC were completed in November 2008), with the proposed implementation date of 01 Jan 2009 - 31 Oct 2010, but with actual implementation dates of 01 Nov 2009 - 31 Dec 2011. Approval took much longer than usual, mostly due to a vacant position for forestry officer in REU and the inability of the Forestry Department to re-assign the project.

79. The Phase II of the TCP, was approved with symbol TCP/ARM/3303 in the beginning of 2012, with 6 months duration: the need for this arose because of the delays in the implementation of the initial project. By the time of the evaluation in September 2012, the project was still operationally active, as a second extension, from June 2012 until January 2012, had been approved to complete activities.

80. After the project actually started in 2010 it suffered further delays, at this point in time mostly caused by the challenges of the procurement process, namely: i) lengthy procurement procedures for seedling containers and highly technical nursery equipment on the international market; and ii) difficulties in identifying qualified personnel for the consultancy assignments.

81. By the time of the evaluation, the project was still experiencing delays, related to complex procurement issues and difficulties faced by the Government in carrying out some of its tasks. There were at least 3 visits by FAO technical and management staff to Armenia during the course of the project, but still this did not help the project to make faster progress.

82. Some of the delays originated at HayAntar itself: changes in the management at HayAntar and the MOA were part of these. HayAntar on the other hand, made a significant financial and timely contribution to the project, corresponding to nearly 40% of the project budget. The project staff displayed real ingenuity and commitment in delivering some of their contributions, e.g. a few pieces of equipment were built using local talent, saving on costs.

83. The ProDoc envisioned the creation of a Steering Committee for the project, composed of about 5-8 members from among senior managers of the major stakeholder groups, namely Ministries of Agriculture and Environmental Protection, institutions and associations concerned with forestry and the environment, NGO's related to forest management, research and university community, etc. However, this never realized.

84. The use of a broad participatory approach was expected to ensure a smooth and efficient implementation of the project outcomes with regard to the design of the administrative framework for afforestation and reforestation measures. A number of institutions, including WWF Caucasus Programme Office in Armenia, the Armenia Tree Project (ATP) NGO and the State Agriculture University of Armenia, were supposed to be some of the key stakeholders. While the representatives from these agencies and organizations were invited, and some did participate in the opening events and alike, there was no evidence that they had contributed inputs "in the design of the administrative framework for afforestation and reforestation". Nor was it clear what was meant under a "new administrative framework".

85. The project benefitted of the support of the best national expertise from the Experimental Research Center on Forests under the Ministry of Environment; however, there was no evidence of active involvement of the Ministry per se, which was intended to be one of the main stakeholders. However, the Evaluation also noted a potential conflict of interest for one national consultant, who was holding at the same time a senior management role in HayAntar.

4.5 Results/effects

86. By the end of Phase 1 the project achieved the following deliverables:
- rehabilitation and putting into operation of a centrally located forest nursery in the town of Hrazdan for seedling production (bare-root and container seedlings);
 - completion of technical assignments by national and international consultants;
 - implementation of a study tour to commercial nurseries in Czech Republic and Slovakia;
 - training courses in the fields of seed collection, nursery management and reforestation methods through the implementation of 1 training course;
 - a number of reports were prepared, both by national and international consultants; their recommendations formulated related to the technical capacity building of the nursery were taken on board; in so far the recommendations on administrative restructuring of HayAntar (and the nurseries) were concerned, these should be considered as medium- to longer terms objective: they were under review by the Ministry of Agriculture and will likely be a useful background to guide the reform process.
87. The following deliverables were outstanding: i) completion of the installation of nursery infrastructure (gas pipeline for green house); ii) finishing the procurement of nursery equipment (e.g. soil substrate) to continue with the implementation of training courses on nursery techniques, management of seed and seedling production; iii) the Web page development and set-up;
88. By the time of the evaluation in September 2012, the gas pipeline was not in existence as yet, despite the fact that the tender documents to choose the company to conduct the gasification of the greenhouse had been prepared and sent to REU in Budapest in March 2012: the local team was waiting for the selection of the winner. The procurement of the nursery equipment was mostly completed, but not entirely: the delays in other procurement were mentioned to the evaluation team as one of the reasons, since an uncertainty was created regarding the amount of money that could be spent on the nursery equipment.
89. Attendance in the training course held in November 2010 were all from HayAntar, with 24 participants plus only one outsider. Similarly, five national staff in total, three of whom from Hrazdan nursery and Hayntar, took part in the study-tour. Thus, capacity development events were less than planned, involved about 10% of planned trainees and benefitted a restricted circle of participants. Possibly the involvement of a larger group, comprising more staff actually working at the nurseries would have contributed to more solid results. A second training course appeared to be planned for late 2012.
90. The assistance was expected to strengthen international partnerships, e.g. with UNEP and IUCN in the framework of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (<http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/cpf/en>): there was no evidence that this happened.

4.6 Effectiveness of capacity development

91. The Evaluation found that local capacities had been built in the field of afforestation and reforestation. This was done both through on-the job training while working on the pilot sites, learning the new technology and training workshops. Also, the study tours and the involvement of well qualified international consultants had helped to build the knowledge

base and skills. However, only 1 workshop had been organized and the target figures for the trained professionals was not reached.

92. Capacities developed could be well expected to impact afforestation and reforestation beyond the actual duration of the project and contribute to long-term sustainable impact.

4.7 Effectiveness of partnerships

93. The opportunity to develop effective partnerships with NGOs through a Steering Committee, actively involving these in the trainings was missed.

4.8 Gender equality and social inclusion

94. The project was designed not to include “gender” and “social inclusion” dimensions: Thus, in terms of the project per se, the two criteria are Not Applicable. However, the project should have integrated these perspectives, as a number of project initiatives will have an impact on communities and long-term results and sustainability will also depend on people’s interest in the afforestation efforts. Thus, the Evaluation scored the initiative as 1 for these criteria.

4.9 Sustainability (actual or potential)

95. The project was expected to put administrative measures in place to ensure sustainable impact of the project outcomes through their integration into the regular tasks of the National Forest Services. As mentioned the administrative restructuring of HayAntar, recommended by the international consultant were only under review and no concrete road map had been developed as yet. Some evidence of potential buyers for the seedlings existed, for example the Armenian Copper Company for the reforestation of Teghut forest, which would be affected by an existing mining project.

96. According to FAO international consultant, the Hrazdan nursery will be a successful commercial business venture only when there will be a regular seedlings market background at the regional and national level. The Cost Benefit Analysis developed indicated the return on investment over a period of 10 business years.

97. Apparently, the norms and guides on the technical sides of afforestation and reforestation should be supported through the new guidelines being developed under the NPF projects. However tackling the sustainability of the project in a more comprehensive way, required fundamental and multiple changes in the laws and regulatory framework, e.g. ensuring that controls of illegal logging are enforced effectively. The latter also requires a much increase funding from the state budget (which currently covers only 80 percent of the salary costs with the rest covered through the sale of wood), but it also requires establishing effective monitoring mechanisms, with the participation of active environmental NGOs

98. The inputs provided by the Ministry of Agriculture for improving the facilities at the Razdan nursery as national contribution to the project showed that there is a national interest in long-term sustainable impacts of the project on afforestation and reforestation. The government had declared reforestation as a priority and the project activities were in line with the National Forest Program of Armenia, Forest Policy and Strategy principles. This was a good basis, but rates of afforestation and reforestation have declined in the last 3 years due mostly to financial crisis and its negative effects on the state budget. At this rate the

implementation of the commercialization of the nurseries (and Hrazdan nursery in particular) is also threatened.

4.10 Impact (actual or potential)

99. The project was expected to lead to improved contribution of forest land use to sustainable development of natural resources, particularly forest ecosystems. This will materialize only if the recommendations of the project regarding HayAntar Status and the status and investments in the nursery/nurseries are materialized. There was no evidence as yet that concrete steps in this direction were taken.

100. In terms of the impact on local community, the only visible evidence was that some members of the communities neighbouring Hrazdan were hired to work in the nursery. Putting such impact on a sustainable footing also requires legislative changes, e.g. reforming the legislative framework around environmental payments and use of Non Wood Forest Products resources, which were not in the scope of the project. While a project focusing on capacity building cannot go far in terms of regulatory improvement, the Evaluation considers that a minimum step was to ensure that the project was effectively linked with the projects/initiatives targeting such changes.

5 TCP/ARM/3004, Support to the Preparation and Implementation of Land Consolidation and Improved Land Management Schemes

Box 9. Basic project data

<i>Beneficiary Country</i>	Armenia
<i>Donor</i>	FAO
<i>Date of project start-up (Entry On Duty date)</i>	August 2004
<i>Planned date of project closure (Not To Exceed date)</i>	December 2006
<i>Budget (USD)</i>	268,449
<i>Date of Evaluation's assessment</i>	September 2012

Box 10. Evaluation scoring of key project TCP/ARM/3004

Evaluation criteria	Score *
<i>Relevance</i>	4
<i>Design</i>	3
<i>Implementation process/efficiency</i>	3
<i>Results/effects</i>	3
<i>Effectiveness of capacity development</i>	3
<i>Effectiveness of partnerships</i>	2
<i>Gender mainstreaming (all criteria)</i>	3
<i>Sustainability</i>	2
<i>Impact (actual or potential)</i>	3

*: 1=very poor; 2=poor; 3=inadequate; 4=adequate; 5=good; 6=excellent; NA: not possible to assess/Not Applicable

5.1 Background

101. Armenia was the first country in the former Soviet Union to embark into a land privatization process. Through it, around 324,000 family farms emerged, along with 265 collective farms. On average, individual farms received a homestead plot and three different

parcels of land. In reality the total number of farmers may have been considerably higher, around 380,000, due to subdivisions resulting from inheritance on the basis of gavelkind tenure. Most of these subdivisions have not been registered however.

102. Not all the land in the rural areas was privatised: in every community, 25% was kept as state property. In addition, pastures, for a total of 695,000 hectares, were excluded from distribution.

103. Land fragmentation affected the efficient and effective management of the agriculture sector, hindering the implementation of new production patterns, utilisation of machinery and appropriate technologies. This led small farmers to focus mostly on production for subsistence purposes, and at times, also, simply to abandon the land, rather than investing into a more entrepreneurial and commercial type of agriculture.

104. Land fragmentation was also a hindrance for resolving ecological challenges, e.g. land degradation, and for effective water and forest conservation: this required consolidation and re-allotment of plots and parcels together with clear and transparent ownership rights and, hence, clear and transparent duties and responsibilities.

105. Thus it was acknowledged that land consolidation was one important element to increase productivity and hence efficiency in the agriculture sector. Land consolidation also triggers land market development. In its simplest form land consolidation consists in the amalgamation and re-allotment of plots and parcels using voluntary land exchange to merge scattered and/or uneconomically shaped parcels of two or more owners.

106. In early 2003, in a combined effort, the Ministry of Agriculture and the State Committee of the Real Property Cadastre of the Republic of Armenia approached FAO with a request for TCP assistance in the framework of land consolidation and improve land management schemes.

107. FAO agreed to support the initiative, which was expected to be used as a model for local and national decision and policy-makers in the development of sustainable land management practices.

5.2 Relevance

108. The project ranked among the highest priorities for the Government of Armenia and was relevant for the country at the time of conception; it also remained relevant at the time of the Evaluation in late 2012. At the start of the project, the total number of farms in the country as 328,893. And the average holding size in the country stood at 1.21 ha. The amount of land distributed to the families, varied greatly between villages.

109. The project idea was in line with the national strategy on poverty reduction in Armenia, including the development of the agriculture sector and rural development. The main objectives of the project corresponded to the principles of 'The real property market development concept paper' approved by the Government of Armenia.

110. The project was also coherent with FAO's mandate and priorities for the region on food security, rural development, and sustainable resource management. It provided opportunities for effective cross-sector and multidisciplinary approaches, and would have enabled capitalisation and dissemination of best practices and lessons learned to other countries and regions.

111. Additionally the project was in harmony with on-going at the time internationally-funded projects (WB, USAID, EU-FSP, UNDP, Swedish Cooperation) in the fields of rural development, land management, cadastre and registration.

112. However, as was recognized also in the Project Document, general preconditions for such project include:

- a suitable political and social climate and the awareness and consciousness of political leaders of the crucial role land consolidation can play in rural development, for land market development and for land administration in general;
- recognition and acceptance of the role of land consolidation at the national level, along with the political willingness to create the appropriate legislation and administrative infrastructure; and
- ideally land consolidation should be an essential part of any rural, regional or national development effort and closely linked to or combined with other development programs and projects.

113. There were no convincing demonstration in the Project Document that these preconditions were present at the time of project approval, that the project modality met the challenge and that the risks were adequately assessed.

5.3 Design

114. The overall objective of the project TCP/ARM/3004 was to contribute to a viable and sustainable agriculture structure and strengthen rural- regional development. Specific objectives included:

- addressing the necessary preconditions for land consolidation/improved land management;
- elaborating appropriate mechanisms, tools and instruments for its implementation; and
- designing and developing the necessary legal, organizational, institutional, technical and managerial framework for land consolidation and improved land management schemes.

3. The three components of the project included: (a) an area development pilot project in Nor Erznka village of Kotayk marz; (b) Training and capacity building; and (c) strategy for land consolidation and improved land management.

115. With hindsight, a much stronger public awareness component was necessary to build the necessary support and lobby from the community level, for the implementation of the land consolidation reforms.

Further, the project was designed in an environment where other necessary building blocks for such a reform were missing..

5.4 Implementation

116. The Preliminary Appraisal dates back to January 2004, and the project review was completed in April 2004. According to the Project Document (ProDoc) the project was planned to start in April 2004 but the effective start date is August 2004.

117. Overall, implementation was smooth and planned activities were carried out. The project team was credited for being very proactive and committed.

118. However, commitment to achievements of project objectives was apparently lacking on the Government side. Besides the inadequate assessment of project risks and necessary preconditions, both in terms of the presence of the strong political will to implement the

reforms, more concrete issues became obstacles, namely the complexities of administrative procedures regarding the approval of land consolidation transactions.

119. Once project activities were completed, moreover, there was no adequate follow up to ensure the uptake of its outputs. For example, the Nor Erznka Area Development Plan remained on paper and no action was taken for its implementation.

5.5 Results/effects

120. Achievements under each of the three components of the project were as follows.

Area development pilot project in Nor Erznka village of Kotayk marz

121. The pilot project itself was very successful. Some of the results included:

- i. for participating landowners, the average number of parcels decreased from 3 to 2;
- ii. the average farm size increased from 1,25 ha to 2,5 ha; 25 ha of arable land was converted into orchards;
- iii. 17 ha of land was mortgaged; and
- iv. the average value of land increased 4-5 times; and the average area of a parcel increased from 0,47 to 1,25 ha.

122. Approximately 188 transactions were registered as part of the project; the total number of transactions, including the registration of inheritances, was 206. This high requirement for registration emphasizes the need for legislation that provides for a simpler land consolidation process.

123. Stakeholders were unanimous that the project staff was successful in winning the trust of the villagers and cooperation, which was challenging at the start. However the Area Development plan *per se*, developed with project support and submitted to State Cadaster and the GoRA ended nowhere. The Plan encompassed measures aimed at changing categories of the land, and their respective uses and management schemes, which, if approved could have had magnified the project results.

Training and capacity building

124. Training courses were conducted for the State Cadastre, Ministries of Agriculture and Nature Protection, municipalities and local communities, together with a set of training guidelines and recommendations, including on monitoring indicators on land consolidation and improved land management. Training seminars were organized to provide appropriate information on land consolidation, and on the international and Armenia experiences to a wide range of audiences.

Strategy for land consolidation and improved land management

125. Based on Nor-Erznka experience, the team developed a draft strategy on 'Land consolidation and Improved Land Management'. This comprised the following steps:

- i. analysis of the current state of socio-economic, legislative, ecological conditions and institutional arrangements pertaining to land consolidation, and an assessment of the possibilities and constraints regarding land consolidation; this was presented in the

- report 'Current situation of the Republic of Armenia in relation to land consolidation';
- ii. analysis of the key issues to be addressed in the national land consolidation strategy, presented in a 'Land consolidation framework paper';
 - iii. preparation of a draft national land consolidation strategy, presented in a report on the 'Draft National Strategy Document on Land Consolidation in the Republic of Armenia'; and
 - iv. preparation of a final national land consolidation strategy following the review of the draft version.
126. The Strategy was based on a Concept Paper prepared by the State Committee of the Real Property Cadastre. The project team recommended, *inter alia*, that:
- the concept paper with its recommendations be adopted by the Government as planned in the first quarter of 2007;
 - the funding for the implementation in 2007 of the concept paper's recommendations was identified, either through the state budget and/or through support from donors; and
 - the use of land consolidation as a tool for integrated rural development is promoted by strengthening the integration of services of relevant Government agencies in support of the needs of farmers and others in the rural communities where future land consolidation projects are implemented.
127. The Strategy contained specific recommendations to address land consolidation, including, *inter alia*:
- ensuring macroeconomic situation favourable for implementation of land consolidation; mitigation of rural poverty impact on land consolidation process;
 - recovery and improvement of agriculture production infrastructures;
 - improvement of ecological state of lands and land use;
 - completion and improvement of legislative-legal grounds boosting land consolidation; regulation of land consolidation process; formation of institutional grounds of management and monitoring of land consolidation;
 - design of efficient land use that enhance land consolidation; and
 - improvement of organizational-economic grounds of land consolidation; and improvement of methodological grounds of land consolidation.
128. The list illustrates the magnitude of the challenge. The Strategy was submitted to the State Cadastre and through it to the GoRA, but it was not adopted in the way it was submitted. Reportedly, the Government found it hard to adopt the Concept Paper and the Strategy because the needs, both in terms of institutional changes needed and financial needs, were too large.
129. In conclusion, the project was effective in terms of delivering a pilot case demonstrating the approaches that the Government needs to take to pursue land consolidation, but the Concept and Strategy for Land consolidation, developed by the project were ultimately not adopted by the GoRA in their entirety.

5.6 Effectiveness of capacity development

130. Participants in and observers of the training courses conducted by the project team for the State Cadastre, Ministries of Agriculture and Nature Protection, municipalities and

local communities considered these to be of high quality. Also, set of training guidelines had been made available. However, as the Strategy was not implemented, and the staff of the State Cadastre has mostly changed, there is no evidence that the knowledge gained was still in place.

5.7 Effectiveness of partnerships

131. The project worked effectively with state institutions, and several NGOs, which helped with the implementation of the project.

132. The project envisioned “*strengthening the existing institutional and organizational framework and the role of local/regional actors and stakeholders including the private sector and CSOs*”. However, it did not leave behind a legacy institution, an organization, e.g. a training or consultancy company, and associations of a farmers of which there are three in Armenia, which could have been trained to offer such trainings and continue to lobby for the reforms. This was a major weakness of the whole initiative.

5.8 Gender equality and Social inclusion

133. The project also envisioned “*strengthening the existing institutional and organizational framework and the role of local/regional actors and stakeholders including the private sector and CSOs with a special emphasis on women*”. In the Armenian villages currently the majority of residents are women due to large scale seasonal migration: the project de-facto worked extensively with women-heads of households. A more structured process of targeting women’s NGOs was however lacking.

134. The project idea, and corresponding reforms with land consolidation, if implemented fully, would have had the most potent impact in the poor and socially vulnerable farmers. In Nor Erznka pilot, the team worked extensively with all the social strata: the inclusiveness is one of the preconditions for a success of such a pilot.

5.9 Sustainability and impact (actual or potential)

135. After the end of the Project the Ministry of Agriculture embarked on the Elaboration of the ‘Strategy for the enlargement of farms’, which was adopted in November 2011. This includes also some of the measures aimed at land consolidation: reportedly, the recommendations of the FAO TCP and the experience in Nor Erznka were a great help in its preparation.

136. At the same time the focus of the adopted Strategy is on encouraging and support for the development of cooperatives, rather than land consolidation. According to the interviews with the GoRA, the idea of adopting a land consolidation strategy is still alive, but it is a major reform and needs more time for preparation; it intertwines with the ongoing debates about the enlargement of communities; and it requires significant financial resources, which the government currently does not have. In the views of CSOs, the process is in addition hindered by the challenges intrinsic to the governance and transparency of land resources’ management.

137. The project impact on the government policy making was significant, despite the lack of adoption of several concept papers, because important lessons were learnt as a result of the projects and pilots in particular, which were utilized in other strategies. However, according it appears that to some extent consolidation of land in the most valuable land is

already happening, but in an unregulated environment, without the necessary support to small and poor farmers.

138. As for the impact on the ultimate beneficiaries, the project had a positive impact in the *pilot location* (Nor Erznka).