

**Code:** GCP/ARM/003/GRE

**Title:** Support for pesticide quality control and residue monitoring in Armenia

**Country:** Armenia

**Starting date:** April 2008

**Duration:** Three years

**Contact:** Regional Office for Europe

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## **PROJECT SUMMARY**

Agricultural food production and processing is one of the most important sectors of the Armenian economy contributing 30 per cent to GDP, including 19% for agriculture, which currently employs around 45per cent of the labour force. The primary area of agricultural production is the Ararat Valley where nearly 80 per cent of the arable soils are located.

Its strategic geographical location between Europe and the Middle East provides Armenia with opportunities for the production and export of various processed and unprocessed food products.

Marketing of agricultural commodities and value-added food products, however, requires compliance with WTO, Codex Alimentarius and other accepted international regulations, guidelines and standards.

Agricultural inputs and agricultural practices play an important role in the production of safe food and feed. Following the collapse of the centrally planned economy and the liberalization of markets, including a free pesticide market, new pesticide products of various origin and quality were imported and used in the country, often without proper control. Transformation and restructuring of the country during 1991-92 and its land reform, together with the disappearance of many state farms, left the country with more than 330,000 individual farmers who suddenly had to manage their own small plots of land, mostly without the necessary knowledge of and experience in using these pesticide products.

As a signatory to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, Armenia is also required to develop a National Implementation Plan describing how the country will meet its obligations under the Convention. In this context, different sources mention huge amounts of old or obsolete pesticides stored or buried at various sites in Armenia, which could pose a threat to food safety and the environment.

Provision of high quality agricultural inputs, together with adherence to good agricultural practices, are essential to the production of safe food. There are no manufacturing plants for agricultural chemicals in the country, and thus Armenia depends on the quality of imported products, some coming from Europe or the USA, and the majority from Asian countries such as China and India.

Quality control of these products is important but requires a number of measures and efforts in order to be effective. After introduction of pesticide registration and improvement of the legal framework, the main challenges faced by the sector include the import of low quality or fake pesticide products, the inability to perform adequate analytical checks both on the quality of the products and for possible residues on the food produced, and the poor education of the farmers in the use of pesticide products. To meet these challenges the Government of Armenia has requested expertise and support for the sector as outlined below. The strategic focus of the Ministry of Agriculture lies on the upgrading and improvement of laboratory

structures to perform pesticide quality control and residue monitoring, which will both contribute to safer food production and sustainable agricultural development in Armenia. Since 2006 there have been discussions between the Government of Greece and the Government of Armenia (GoA) regarding cooperation in agriculture and specifically in the fields of abattoirs and residue contamination testing. In early 2007, FAO was approached to provide the specialized expertise to develop a programme for cooperation in the area of provision of safe food for consumers. In early 2007, the Government of Greece agreed to provide funding to FAO for the development of two areas: the abattoir sector and pesticide use in Armenia. In order to develop a full project agreement, in November 2008 the Plant Protection Service of FAO fielded a mission to review the current situation regarding pesticide control measures, both pesticide quality control as a preliminary pipeline measure, and pesticide residue monitoring as confirmation of adherence to Good Agricultural Practice in Armenia. The mission was to make recommendations on the possible improvement and strengthening of both areas, particularly with a view to improving and protecting public health and ensuring the safety and quality of food for consumers.

**National Counterparts**

Ministry of Agriculture

**Funding Source**

Government of Greece

**Budget**

US\$2 000 000