



DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE AGRIFOOD SYSTEMS IN THE NORTHWEST REGION OF AZERBAIJAN

The northwest region of Azerbaijan lends itself to agro and food tourism thanks to its cuisine, which has been recognized for its long and unique history. This type of tourism has the potential to create jobs and generate income for rural producers on the region, who have knowledge of local ingredients, recipes and products, but lack the communication mechanisms, producer buyer networks, management skills, food safety knowledge and access to markets and financing that are required to start and run a business.

This project aimed to assist small and medium-scale farmers and producers in the Balakan, Gakh and Zagatala rayons in overcoming these challenges by: (i) introducing the concept of Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) and Geographical Indications (GIs); (ii) establishing inclusive and efficient agrifood systems for six selected products (honey and other beekeeping products, dried meat, food products made of or containing hazelnuts, dried persimmon, persimmon molasses, and jams, including walnut jam); (iii) strengthening producer-buyer linkages and promoting agro and food tourism in the region; and (iv) establishing and piloting a community-driven system for agricultural advisory services (AAS).



WHAT DID THE PROJECT DO?

A GIAHS multistakeholder working group was established with members from the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and its subordinate agencies, centres, and institutes, the Food Safety Agency, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources (MENR), Ministry of Economy (MoE) and the State Tourism Agency. Sensitization events on GIAHS were carried out, and proposals and action plans for identified GIAHS sites in the targeted region were prepared and endorsed by the MoA. In collaboration with the Agricultural Economics Research Centre (ARC) of the MoA, the project supported a decision of the Cabinet of Ministers to also establish a systems committee on Nationally Important Agricultural Heritage Sites (NIAHS). Six studies were conducted to understand the challenges and opportunities along the targeted value chains, and policy recommendations were prepared. Capacity-building sessions for more than 250 beneficiaries (60 percent women) were held on business development, bookkeeping, branding and marketing, operating cooperative businesses and understanding the basics of food safety and hygienic practices. Tailored coaching sessions were also carried out for producers' groups, and each group was supported to develop business plans. The groups also earned a food safety certificate and received equipment.

The project supported agrotourism in the region through a series of awareness-raising events, including local food promotion and gender equality-oriented campaigns, local food showrooms, farm tours and other activities. It was further supported through the selection of three facilities that benefited from capacity development and material assistance. A number of communication products, such as short video clips on the preparation of local foods, were developed and shared online. These products included interviews with local women leaders, government representatives, chefs and others. Multi-actor innovation platforms (MAIPs) were established to support the provision of AAS, and training sessions were organized for MAIP facilitators. These Platforms were designed to serve as repositories for knowledge, skills and good practices that were implemented under the project, as well as to promote innovative learning approaches.

KEY FACTS

Latest Approved Budget

USD 1 320 132

Duration

December 2019-November 2022

Resource Partner

The European Union

Partners

Agricultural Economics Research Centre (ARC); administrations of the targeted districts; Azerbaijan Food State Agency (AFSA); and the small and medium enterprise (SME) agency

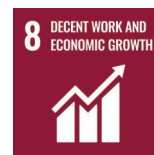
Beneficiaries

Small and medium-sized agrifood producers living in rural communities in the targeted rayons; local food operators, advisory service providers, tourism agencies, and related agrifood associations; local public administration; the wider public



IMPACT

The results of the project are expected to lead to a reduction in poverty for smallholders in the targeted area.



ACTIVITIES

- A brand called “Yurdumun Lezzeti” (“Taste of my Homeland”) was created. A hundred local foods were produced under the brand, logos were developed, professional packaging was procured, and catalogues and local food guides were produced and distributed nationwide to promote the brand.
- Two sales fairs were organized in collaboration with the “Kendden shehere” (village to city) initiative.
- Five masterclasses on the preparation of local recipes were held in collaboration with the Culinary Specialists’ Association.
- Local food weeks were organized in restaurants in Baku.
- Roundtable discussions were organized with food sellers, travel agencies, hotels and restaurants.
- Producer-buyer meetings were facilitated and led to the signing of twelve supply contracts.
- A study tour to Türkiye to foster learning on meat drying techniques was carried out.

Sustainable Food Value Chain Development - the concepts and principles

SPEAKERS

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- Ny You (ESA) - Agribusiness Economist, FAO HQ
- Heiko Bammann (ESA) - Agricultural Economist, FAO HQ
- Meeta Punjabi (ESA) - Urban Food Systems Analysis Expert, FAO HQ

3pm Thursday, June 11
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Password: VC-Dev

TARGET: ZERO HUNGER

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Project Title

Development of sustainable and inclusive agri-food systems in north-west region of Azerbaijan

Project Code

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