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Women-led grassroots initiatives on local seed production, agroecology and innovative ways of market access

Case Studies from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Türkiye

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Agroecology for Women's Economic Empowerment and Strengthening their Autonomy

Experiences from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Türkiye

3rd November 2022

Theme 1: Women-led seed production

State of art

- Agricultural biodiversity is deteriorating due to industrial monoculture production
- Peasants access to local / organic seeds is limited and in some cases legally restricted
- Gender stereotypes limit women's freedom to exercise their economic rights
- Organic / peasant production suffers from high production costs and low prices



Desired environment

- There is a public awareness on the importance and support for (a) women's (economic) rights, (b) peasant's rights to seeds, (c) agricultural biodiversity conservation and (d) heritage products
- Women exercise their right to seeds without restriction
- Agricultural biodiversity is maintained

Young women organic production group from Armenia (including seeds)

- Gandzaqar women's group / Emma Hakobyan

Gandzaqar, Tavush, Armenia

Since 2007

Approach:

- Group certification
- Joint production and marketing (share workload & increased volumes)
- Group extension
- Joint fundraising

Results:

- Certified organic bean production
- Enhanced capacity of women producers engaged in agriculture
- Networking and cooperation within and outside of the group



Women-led seed production from Azerbaijan “BEREKET” Vegetable Seeds Cooperative/ Olqa Babayeva

Fizuli, Samukh , Azerbaijan

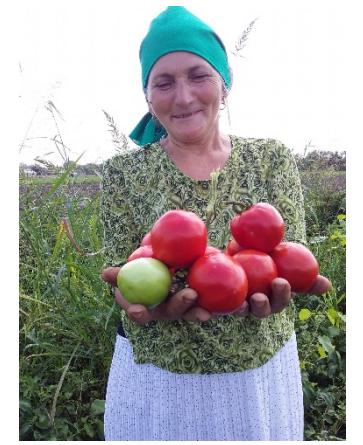
Since 2018

Approach:

- Quality crops start with a quality seed (experience based results)
- Sorted and regionalized seed production and consumption
- Nutrition of the soil, richness of the microelements is in focus
- Cultivation tips of the local seed are passed from generation to generation.

Results:

- A woman- led Cooperative with 72% female workforce
- Cooperative meets the 70% need for seeds in the country
- 40 tons of seeds from 80 hectares per season
- Seed sowing is done by men, weeding and harvesting by women
- Potential Seeds Factory is built by AzGov based on the woman-led Cooperative's request



Women-led seed production from Georgia - Biological Farming Association ELKANA members

Akhaltzikhe, Samtskhe-Javakheti region, Georgia

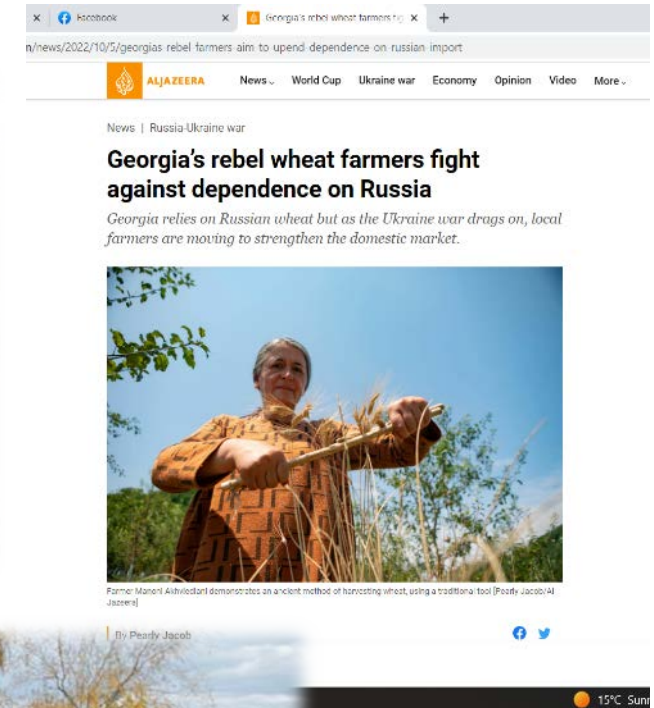
Since 2004

Approach:

- Heritage legume and wheat seed distribution among ELKANA member farmers & creation of the seed bank
- Trainings & consultations on heritage seed production and traditional products
- Bread Festival, testing events & support to local women groups
- Marketing support for heritage legume and wheat producers

Results:

- Heritage legumes, grains (check peak, grass pea, lentil etc.) and wheat species / varieties (Tsiteli Doli, Dika, Makha, Zanduri etc.) reintroduced
- Women are keen to produce legume and vegetable seeds, but increasingly also start to lead heritage wheat restoration as the guardians of forgotten crops and taste and stewards of local food security



Women-led seed production from Türkiye - EKODER / Ecological Life Organization

Bursa/Nilifer, Türkiye

Since 2002

Approach:

- Seed Exchange Festival (EKODER)
- Educational events in cooperation with the local University
- Workshops on vegetable seed production and maintenance

Results:

- **Improved access to local seeds by both rural and urban population in the area** - 17,000 packages of local seed distributed in 2021 and 35,000 - in 2022
- **Awareness on the importance of the local seeds raised among local population** - most of the packaging work conducted by volunteers



Theme 2: Market access for women-led agroecological initiatives

State of art

- Gender stereotypes limit women's freedom to exercise their economic rights (decide what to produce and where/how to sell)
- Organic / peasant production suffers from high production costs and low prices
- Difficulties in marketing of handmade agricultural products (incl. food safety regulations)
- Limited connection / common areas with people living in the city
- Low level of technology use (incl. zero-waste production methods)
- High certification costs



Desired environment

- There is a public awareness on the importance and (financial) support for (a) women's (economic) rights, (b) products produced by local women (esp. artisan and/or GI products), (c) products optimizing resource utilization and reducing negative impact on environment
- Women have access to necessary information and extension on food safety and ecofriendly technologies
- Women are present on the market via various niche market spaces

Innovative Market access strategy of women-led agroecological initiative from Armenia

- ORWACO - Organic fertilisers / Lusine Nalbandyan

Abovyan, Kotayk region, Armenia

Since 2011

Approach:

- Transform organic waste (40 % of total household waste) into marketable products instead of producing waste
- Natural processes to close the environmental loop and promote non-waste production
- Organic certified fertilizers providing a healthy, nutritional and microorganism-rich natural environment for plant growth

Results:

- Development of the sector of organic fertiliser production, sales and consumption
- Changing the behavior of farmers towards organic fertilisers
- Development of a new culture towards organic waste processing



Innovative Market access strategy of women-led agroecological initiative from Azerbaijan

“CHINAR” Women Group/Saadat Dibirova

Yukhari Tala, Zakatala, Azerbaijan

Since 2019

Approach:

- Development of local agri-food systems
- Organic food is better choice for sale
- Capacity building for Food Producer Groups on Quality & branding

Results:

- 23 Food Producer Women Groups are equipped with innovative food production machines
- Women Group grow local strawberry on 3 hectares for making jam based on contract with Restaurants Chain
- 93 women food producers were trained on quality & branding as well as practiced the knowledge sharing



Innovative Market access strategy of women-led agroecological initiative from Georgia

- Association ELKANA Farmers Markets & online shop ECOMART

Tbilisi, Georgia

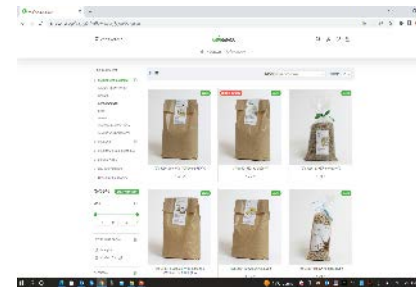
Since 2019

Approach:

- Agroecological labelling for ELKANA member farmers (informal certification)
- Online shop of Elkana member's produce - ECOMART
- Organizing farmers markets by-monthly
- Support members to sell products via different niche / organic shops in Tbilisi

Results:

- Improved consumer awareness on farmer's products, including ELKANA label, GI / artisanal produce
- Improved market access and bargaining power of smallholder / artisanal women producers



Innovative Market access strategy of women-led agroecological initiative from Türkiye

Nilufer Agricultural Development Cooperative

Nilufer/Bursa, Türkiye

Since 2018

Approach:

- Educational and awareness rising activities / trainings for female rural producers, workers and their organizations on cooperation, right to speak / bargaining power, hygiene, labor rights/equal wages etc.
- Economic support was provided by selling their own products in the markets of the cooperative

Results:

- **Improved awareness on their (women's) rights** – Their products were sold at market prices
- **Improved market access and bargaining power** – Women realized how valuable the products they produced are and began to determine the value of their products



Thank you for your attention!

