



Milestones of Organic Agriculture in Armenia



Yerevan 2012

Introduction

Shen is a pioneer in introducing organic agriculture practices in Armenia aiming at creation of a new sustainable and environmentally friendly income source for Armenian rural households. Starting from 2000 till 2012 Shen with financial and thematic support of HEKS-EPER (Switzerland) with SDC as a main partner was promoting the development of organic agriculture by disseminating information on organic agriculture cultivation methods among farmer groups and individual farmers. This endeavour was a part of EPER regional programme in South Caucasus countries. It had been done through developing free advisory services to farmers as well as raising awareness on organic fruits among the local consumers. During these years other Shen's partners, namely Chene-France, EED (Germany), ICCO (the Netherlands), UNDP GEF, Regional Council of Ile-de-France co-funded this project too.

The main objectives of the project goal were:

- initiating organic extension group;
- establishing private local organic certification body;
- introducing the new markets of the organic agricultural inputs to the farmers,
- involving both export and local markets channels,
- lobbying and advocacy activities.

Upon passed 12 years Shen can assume that all mentioned objectives are principally met and the organic food sector is evolving in Armenia. Indeed the further development of the sector is taken over by Armenian private sector that we are witnessing now. The below presented facts speak on the development trends of the sector.

Accredited Certification Body

There is a full-fledged organic agriculture certification organisation in Armenia accredited by DAP for EU market and by USDA National Organic Program – Ecoglobe LLC (<http://www.ecoglobe.am>). It is

compliant with ISO Guide 65 and EN 45011. Ecoglobe's proprietary "Standard on production, processing, labelling and marketing of products, produced with organic methods" is equivalent to EU Reg. 834/2007, 889/2008. It operates based on USDA NOP 7 CFR 205 valid for USA and Canada markets, as well as on Codex Alimentarius, IFOAM organic rules. This company successfully provides a range of services such as: organic



Figure 1: The first organic certificate in Armenia awarded by Nune Darbinyan, Director of Ecoglobe LLC, to an organic apricot orchard representative, 2002

certification, independent on-site inspections, development of standards, trainings for inspectors and other certification bodies in other (mainly in FSU) countries.

State support to development of organic agriculture

The Law on Organic Agriculture is approved by National Assembly of Armenia in 8 April, 2008. The law stipulates the process of organic production and the main provisions on labelling requirements for organic products.

The government subsidised a company to establish a 40 ha organic raspberry fields and two processing companies to initiate production of organic foodstuff. The Ministry of Agriculture prioritised the organic production and subsequently included it in its strategic development plan.

Organic agriculture extension service

In 2005 for the first time in Armenia an Organic Agriculture Extension Service has been established that successfully operates to date. So far Shen's Organic service provided 1300 small holder farmers with free of charge various trainings and consultancy regarding organic agriculture. It included site visits, seminars, and consultancy on how to overcome operational problems regarding organic production, as well as how to use approved biopreparations, plant infusions, organic fertilisers their application timetables and methods and the like.

Shen's Organic Service has developed an internal control system that makes accessible the certification service especially for small holders. Already several dozens of such farmers got into a two groups aiming at to share the certification fee.



Figure 2: Organically cultivated fruits and vegetables from Ararat Valley

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Organically certified farms

To date totally 1695 ha area are being cultivated organically. Out of these 300 ha are certified areas, 450 ha – in transition towards certified areas, and 800 ha – wild collection areas by Ecoglobe LLC. The remaining 145 ha is certified by SGS Organic (Germany) which is active in Armenia since 2011.

Locally produced organic agriproduce

Over 30 organic crop varieties are being produced in Armenia by 57 small and big farms, such as:

- 11 fruit and berries (apricot, peach, plum, cherry, grape, quince, pomegranate, pear, apple, raspberry and blackberry);



Figure 3: Cultivation of organic raspberry for further processing and export

- 14 vegetable and cereals (tomato, pepper, eggplant, zucchini, cucumber, carrot, cabbage, potato, spelt and wheat);
- 6 wild collection crops and greens (buckthorn, rosehip, mint, peppermint, immortelle, etc.)

Organic agricultural processing Armenian companies

As of 2012 seven food processing Armenian companies produce organic foodstuff. The local market of organic processed (mainly apricot, peach, pomegranate and raspberry) food is getting rather competitive. The main market players are Tamara Fruit, Kilikia (Areva brand), Sis and Euroterm (Noyan brand). As a result during last two years the prices for certain products have increased by: apricot – 20%, raspberry – 65%, and peach – 15%. Moreover, in 2010-2012 this competition led to involvement of new 20 farms into organic farming out of total 57.



Figure 4: Preparation of apricots for drying at Tamara Fruit processing company

Organically processed Armenian foodstuff

Totally 37 types of processed organic food are being produced in Armenia.

- Kilikia produces 6 types of organic juice (Areva brand, <http://www.arevajuce.com>).
- Tamara Fruit produces a whole range of organic products such as juices, juices with honey, and teas – totally 14 products (<http://www.tamara-fruit.com>).
- Sis Natural produces two types organic juices (Yan brand) – Pomegranate and Sea-buckthorn as well as Rose-hip drink (<http://www.sisnatural.am>).

- Ham produces 5 types of organic herbal teas (<http://www.armeniantea.com/en/46/56/>).
- Bio Universal LLC produces 6 types of organic teas, 4 types essential oil. (Manana brand, http://www.manana.am/en/products-general.html?page=shop.browse&category_id=7).
- Karen Ghazaryan LLC produces 6 organic foodstuff – 3 types of bread and 3 types of cereals



Figure 6: Organic bread by Karen Ghazaryan LLC



Figure 5: Yan organic pomegranate juice in a Yerevan supermarket

Export of Armenian organic products

According to Armenian exporters reports totally about 151 tons/annually of organic products are exported, of which:

- Kilikia annually exports 40 tons/annually (2010-2012) of organic juices to Singapore and Malaysia



Figure 7: Areva juices for export markets

that being sold through Carrefour hypermarkets network;

- Tamara Fruit exports 60 tons/annually (2009-2012) juices and 2 tons honey per year;
- Sis Natural - 20 tons/annually (since 2012) apricot and sea-buckthorn juices;
- “GALS” LLC exporter – about 30 t (since 2011) 5 types of fresh fruit (apricot, peach, grape, plum, quince), www.gals.am;
- Ham Herbal Tee – 1 t of organic tee to Germany, Canada, France and Duty Free network;
- Cheer CJSC has produced 20 t of organic dried fruit (mainly apricot, peach and tomato) in 2006-2012. In 2006-2008 70% of production has been exported to France and Switzerland as organic foodstuff and then through Fairtrade network.



Figure 8: Tamara Fruit organic products

Import of organic products

More than 400 organic products are being imported to Armenia by SAS Supermarket chain (more than 100 products), Centre for Agribusiness and Rural Development (CARD) Foundation (more than 200 products) and Fresh Line organic shop (more than 80 organic cosmetic products).

Organic products retail trade

To date one can buy various organic products from at least 10 stores in Yerevan, such as Green Day organic store, Organic shop, Fresh Line (organic cosmetics goods), SAS (7 stores) and Yeritsyan supermarkets.

- Green Day, (CARD Foundation) 1/21 Azatutyan Ave., Yerevan, <http://organicclub.am/>
- Organic Shop, 9 Tumanyan St., Yerevan, <http://organicshop.am/>
- Fresh Line, organic cosmetics goods, 28 Moskovyan St., Yerevan, <http://www.spyur.am/en/companies/fresh-line-fresh-organic-cosmetics-shop/25019/>
- SAS Supermarket, 7 stores, www.sas.am
- Yeritsyan Supermarket www.yeritsyan.com



Figure 9: Marriott Armenia Hotel purchases organic asparagus directly from the producer for its restaurants

Training centres of organic farming

There are 4 training centres in Armenia offering free of charge training courses on organic agriculture, viz:

- In Lusakn, Argina and Shenik rural communities of Aragatsotn and Armavir marzes on the basis of local orchards the training centres are providing both trainings and free consultancy to farmers on organic horticulture issues;

- A demonstration and training centre for organic agriculture established in Akunq community of Kotayk region serves as a platform for practical learning and knowledge, as well as for cooperation of organic farmers across the country which will result in increase of the actual number of certified farms and product varieties.



Figure 10: Organic agriculture training centre in Lusakn village

Armenian NGOs and organic agriculture

A number of local NGOs are implementing projects aiming at development of organic farming in rural communities of Armenia. Among them are:

- Organic Food Producers and Consumers Association (OFPCA);
- CARD;
- Green Lane;
- Ayrum Horticulture Development Foundation.

Organic food awareness

In addition to and “reinforcement” of all abovementioned achievements specific activities have been carried out by Shen NGO and several other agencies to make the general public aware on the notion of organic products, development trends and market offers.

In 2007 an Organic Food Producers and Consumers Association (OFPCA) NGO was founded which in its turn established Amur Koriz, a for-profit company to foster the sales of local organic products in Armenia. Amur Koriz was the first in the country to open an organic store which operated for two years. The presence of such pioneer-store triggered the emergence of other, more professional retail outlets in Armenia that are currently successfully running their businesses. Now OFPCA is continuing to raise awareness among the producers and encourage emergence of new players in Armenian organic market.

In response to the worldwide growing awareness of the need to promote healthy food production, protect natural resources and educate the consumer, in April 2008 CARD established an Organic Consumers Club. The members of the Club are regularly being informed on the latest trends and news in Organics and the availability of organic products in Armenia.



Figure 12: The first organic retail store in Armenia, 2006

Shen NGO has developed and disseminated a number of various media on organic products and its benefits, namely:

- 1 promo movie;
- 12 various booklets;
- More than 45 info leaflets;
- Radio advertisement;
- Printed ads in Yerevan subway stations and metro cars during 12 months;
- 21 articles in journals and newspapers;
- Participation of organic producers at ArmProdExpo trade fair from 2008 to 2012.