



Georgian Farmers' Association
Newsletter
April-June
2023

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Important Highlights

"European Influence on Agriculture" - The Georgian Farmer's Association actively participated in Europe Day celebrations



On May 6th that The Delegation of the European Union to Georgia celebrated Europe Day with a large-scale event in Expo Georgia.

Georgian Farmers' Association had a special exhibition booth and welcomed hundreds of guests throughout the day. The visitors had the opportunity to engage in a variety of interesting activities, such as measuring the level of nitrates in vegetables, becoming acquainted with testing procedures for the shelf-life of dairy products, observing the demonstration bee-house and learning about the peculiarities of honey production, and taking part in a quiz game about food safety and environmental protection.

As part of a new format for Europe Day celebrations – the storytelling event "My Europe", the Chairwoman of the Georgian Farmers' Association, **Nino Zambakhidze**, shared with the audience her story about Europe and also discussed the best examples of sharing European experience in agriculture.

The Georgian Farmers' Association participated in the event as part of the new three-year EU-funded Capacitated Agricultural Practices And Consumer Awareness (CAPCA) program, the implementation of which is being administered primarily by the Association.



The Georgian Farmers' Association's management team and Swedish partners visited Samtskhe-Javakheti

The management team of the Georgian Farmers' Association hosted a visit in Samtskhe-Javakheti for representatives of long-term partners, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the Swedish Embassy in Tbilisi. During which they discussed the projects carried out through close collaboration among the partners.

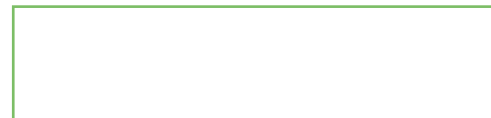
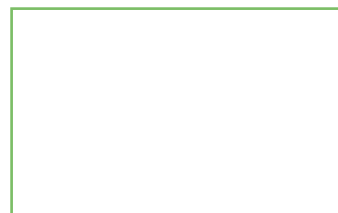
The guests paid a visit to the GFA regional office in Samtskhe-Javakheti, where local staff members updated Swedish partners on ongoing projects supported by the Swedish government, presented an annual progress report, and discussed future plans.

“Our association is proud to have a long history of very successful cooperation with Sweden, which is one of the main supporters of the Georgian Farmers' Association, its growth, and its success. With their assistance, we were able to expand our regional office network, and we are now represented in four regions of the country.

One of the primary objectives of the Georgian Farmers' Association is to ensure that all farmers and agriculture entrepreneurs from across the country have equal access to the GFA's diverse projects, services, educational programs, and grant opportunities. With the continuous support of our Swedish partners, we are expanding our regional activities each year, resulting in a much stronger agriculture sector and regional development.

Nino Zambakhidze, Chairwoman at the Georgian Farmers' Association.

During the visit, the Swedish partners met with small and medium-sized agricultural enterprises such as dairy farmers, potato farmers, beekeepers, and local honey producers. They also met with the owner of a snail farm, linseed oil makers, and Meskhetian traditional cheese producers.



Farmers' Council presented 11 initiatives to the Government

The Farmers Council has presented the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia with a set of eleven suggestions developed by member sectoral associations. The document identifies current problems in the respective areas and suggests potential resolutions.

Given the importance of dialogue between the public and private sectors, Ministry representatives expressed their willingness to learn about the challenges that each sector is currently facing and, in consultation with sectoral associations, develop effective measures for each sector's rapid and sustainable development.

The importance of creating action plans for each sub-sector's development, with clear timelines and budgets, was emphasized in the recommendations.



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Eleven initiatives developed by the Farmers' Council have been submitted to the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, and collaboration with all stakeholders, including farmers, sector representatives, and sectoral associations, is currently in progress.

The law on tourism, for instance, remains especially important right now. discussions on this topic are currently underway and Georgian Farmer's Association plays an active role in the discussions regarding agritourism, as well as other important directions. The first high-level meeting with the Ministry was convened to review the initiatives and proposals developed by the Farmers' Council, which is important for an effective course of proceedings.

Rati Kochlamazashvili, Deputy Chairman of Georgian Farmers' Association.

Through the mediation of the Council, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia has already begun to conduct separate meetings with sectoral associations. On June 20th, the first meeting with the regional tourism association was conducted, and the meetings will proceed subsequently.

Members of the Local Economic Development Core Group assessed the outcomes of the activities of the past two years

Representatives of the Georgian Farmers' Association have taken part in a conference "Strengthening the Local Economic Development System in Georgia", which was attended by officials from the Ministries of Economic Profile, local self-governments, representatives of the private sector, as well as the civil sector and academic field. The conference aimed at discussing recommendations relating to the enhancement of Local Economic Development including opinion and experience sharing on important findings applied to the local economic development policies.

Through the course of the conference **Tamar Toria** - , Executive Director of Georgian Farmers' Association, as a member of a LED National Core Group, delivered a strong view of the results achieved as part of the Local Economic Development system, emphasized the importance of the experience gained in the process, and made a presentation for the attending audience. As part of the event, Tamar Toria also participated in a panel discussion.



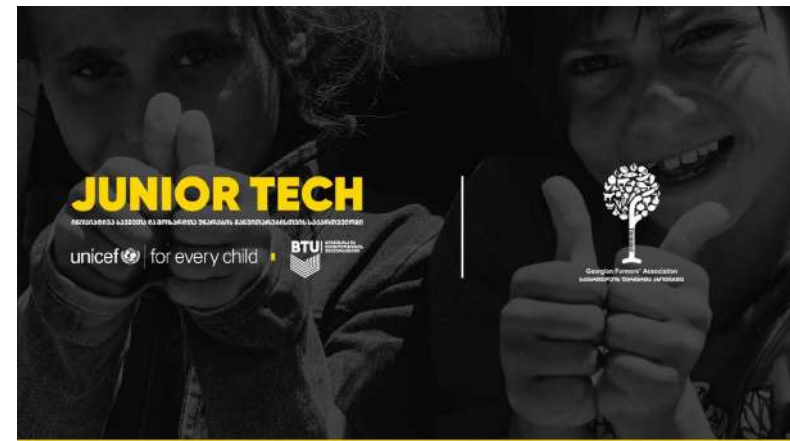
The conference featured an open dialog and exchange of views among the working groups. During those discussions challenges, main opportunities and initiatives were identified with the aim to strengthen cooperation between the stakeholders;

The conference was funded by the Swiss Government and organized by the National Association of Local Self-Governments of Georgia (NALAG) and consultancy firm "Mezopartner", in cooperation with the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure (MRDI) and the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development.

Georgian Farmers' Association is the supporter of JUNIOR TECH initiative

As part of Junior Tech project initiated by Georgia and the University of Business and Technology (BTU) and funded by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF Georgia) Georgian Farmer's Association signed a memorandum of cooperation with Georgia and the University of Business and Technology (BTU).

Within the framework of the initiative for development of skills of children and adults, Georgian Farmer's Association will fund the tuition fee of an educational course for the period of one year, for two beneficiaries. Selected learning modules include the courses of cyber hygiene, internet safety, principles of digital technologies and basic course in digital literacy.



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We are delighted to be able to support the education of two representatives of the Junior-Tech target group. The Georgian Farmers' Association is committed to increasing young people's access to resources for technical education and development as part of its corporate social responsibility."

Tamar Toria - Executive Director of Georgian Farmers' Association.

The target group of Junior-Tech are socially vulnerable children, children with disabilities, children under state care and children involved in diversion and mediation programs.

Six farmers from dairy sector received GeoGAP certificates at the event dedicated to world milk day

Executive Director of Georgian Farmers' Association, Tamar Toria presented GeoGAP certificates to 6 farmers from dairy sector, on an award ceremony.



The local GeoGap standard, which is adapted to local conditions and legislation, is in full compliance with the international standard, GlobalGap. The main goal of the standard is to ensure the quality and safety of the milk produced and its traceability. The GeoGap standard is permanently being renewed in accordance with the amendments made in the relevant Georgian legislature. Whereas it is also possible to broaden the capacity of the standard based on market demand.

GeoGAP- Dairy product module was created in the frames of USDA SQIL პროექტის ფარგლებში SQIL project, which is implemented by an American organization "Land O'Lakes Venture37, with financial support from United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and in partnership with Georgian Farmer's Association



Project (BioValue): Visit of Georgian Farmers' Association representatives to Norway



Tamar Toria, Executive Director of the Georgian Farmers' Association, **Kakhi Jashi**, Financial Manager, and **Ilia Kunchulia**, Certification Specialist and Project Coordinator, went on a working visit to Oslo, Norway, as part of the "BioValue" project. ((BioValue) supports sustainability through biodiverse agri-food value chains, and a simulation tool based on the farm-to fork concept).

The project's implementing parties summarized the results of the previous 18 months and discussed future plans. The project "BioValue" is financed by European Union in the frames of research and innovations program "Horizon 2020" and is being implemented in 12 countries, by 17 organizations including Georgian Farmers' Association.

Meetings with farmers in the frames of the project “Cattle farming in Georgia: Towards increased productivity, competitiveness, and sustainability”

Within the frames of the project “Cattle farming in Georgia: Towards increased productivity, competitiveness, and sustainability”, Georgian Farmers’ Association and the Protected Landscape of Tusheti organized a training for cattle farmers from different regions of the country. The topic of the training was business development of cattle farming and creation of business plans.

Trainers and participants also explored the following topics during the training: livestock farming as a business activity; evaluation and analysis of ongoing activities; development of existing activities; defining a business idea; and access to finance. Participants in the training also received individual consultations and publications about livestock farming.

The project “Cattle farming in Georgia: towards increased productivity, competitiveness, and sustainability”, is implemented by Caritas Czech Republic with financial support of Czech Development Agency.



With the support of the Georgian Farmers' Association, A fish festival was held in the city of Batumi



The objective of the festival was to promote the development of aquaculture in the region as well as the production of local products. The festival was attended by businesses in this industry as well as local farmers.



2

Women Entrepreneurs

Study visits for women entrepreneurs in Kakheti and Guria regions

The beneficiaries of “Women's Economic Empowerment” project (UN Women) were on a study visit in the regions of Kakheti and Guria regions.

Agro-tourism proprietors shared their best practices for business development, diversification, and obtaining financial resources with other women entrepreneurs. Participants in the study visit also learned about environmentally friendly management practices.

The study visit was implemented within the "Women's Economic Empowerment" project and is implemented by UN Women, with the financial assistance of the Norwegian government, in collaboration with the Georgian Farmers' Association.



Meeting with Internally displaced women entrepreneurs from Abkhazia



In Zugdidi, **Nino Zambakhidze**, the Chairwoman of the Georgian Farmers’ Association, met with women entrepreneurs, internally displaced from Abkhazia. The non-governmental organization "Hands for Peace" organized the meeting. The major purpose of the conference was to learn about the activities of women entrepreneurs and to support their business activities.

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Women involvement in the activities of the Association

Georgian Farmers' Association places a substantial emphasis on maintaining gender equality in all of its operations and increasing women's participation. According to the data from the second quarter of 2023, women's participation in all aspects of the association's operations has substantially increased.

Activity Title	%	Female	Male	Total
GFA Gender Representation				
Female board members	43%	3	4	7
Female heads of the departments	33%	5	10	15
Female staff members	51%	31	30	61
Female GFA member farmers	41%	55	80	135
Environmental working group female members	50%	5	5	10
Agritourism enterprises presented on agrogate.world led by women	100%	10	0	0
Professional program female students	24%	12	38	50
Training and seminar female participants	31%	45	98	143

4

Digital Agriculture

International Conference in Yerevan - "Sectors' Digitalization for Competitiveness"

Representatives of the Georgian Farmers' Association participated in the event "Sectors' Digitalization for Competitiveness" held in Yerevan, that was organized by project Reconomy and with financial support from Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)



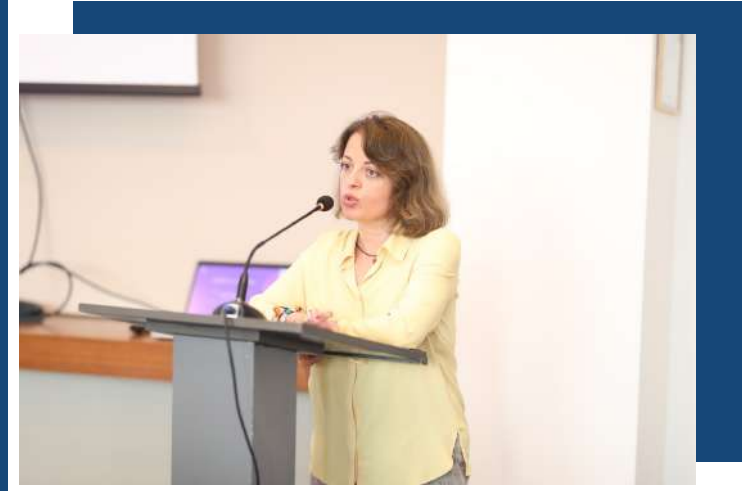
During the event, representatives of the Georgian Farmers' Association engaged in workgroup discussions with their Armenian and Moldovan colleagues to address agriculture and food sector digitization issues and share their knowledge regarding digital platforms, as well as methods for developing digital ecosystems and implementing supporting measures.



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Vocational Education

One of the association's top priorities is the support and implementation of educational projects and initiatives; therefore, its team continuously works to grow and increase the availability of such programs.



Joint Meeting of Georgia Farmers' Council and Agro-Duo

Farmers' Council – the main consultancy body of Georgian Farmers' Association consolidated results delivered during the last 6-month period and together with Sector Skills Organization Agro-Duo held discussion on challenges found in the agriculture sector, the importance of vocational education, and the opportunities for elevating employment rate in agriculture.

Education is still considered as one of the main challenges in agriculture. Within the scope of the meeting, while discussing the relevant issues, Council member organizations along with Sector Skills Organization Agro-Duo put focus on the efforts needed to support this particular direction. Also, meeting participants reviewed a renewed charter of Agro-Duo, its structure and the means of future cooperation.

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Agro-Duo is an organization comprised of ten distinct sub-sector associations. This meeting will allow us to plan appropriate activities more efficiently, leading to an increase in the number of subsector associations that are actively engaged. A lack of human resources is a widespread problem that affects each sector association equally; therefore, it is essential to engage all parties in the process. It is also essential that Agro-Duo members identify the problems facing their respective subsectors, and develop educational modules based on these findings.”

Tamar Toria - Executive Director of Georgian Farmers' Association and Chairwomen of Agro-Duo.

Sector Skills Organization Agro-Duo has been working on the provision of compliance between the vocational education and agriculture labor market since 2019. The organization aims at training/retraining vocational workforce through strengthening high-quality vocational education efforts.



The "Agro-Duo" long-term educational strategy is currently in progress

The Sector Skills Organization convened a meeting to discuss the development of a long-term education strategy. It was supported by the Vocational Skills Agency, the United Nations Development Programme, and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

In addition to a long-term education strategy, the delegates discussed the functions of sector skills organization, registration criteria, the need for charter modification of "Agro Duo" in accordance with current legislation, the representativeness criteria of "Agro Duo," and the organizational structure.

Agro-Duo participated actively in a review of the perspectives and challenges of the veterinary vocational education program. At the conclusion of the meeting, the National Skills Agency and Agro Duo agreed on the next steps for the development of the action plan of the strategy.



Georgian Farmers' Association took an active part in Skills Week 2023



Skills Week 2023 was organized by the Professional Skills Agency and supported by partner international organizations (USAID, Skills4Jobs, SDC, EU, LEAD, UNDP), with participation from private sector and educational institution representatives, sector associations, public agencies, and international donor organizations.

The chairwoman of the organization and the executive director of the Georgian Farmers' Association, **Tamar Toria**, presented the activities of "Agro Duo" as part of the event's framework for sharing information about sectoral associations' experience and future plans regarding vocational education.

During the panel discussions the parties discussed the challenges faced by industries in terms of the adaptability of the labor force to labor market demands.

Project (SECTORs) -Skills for Employment and Cooperation - Opportunities for Regions of Georgia (SECTORs)

The Association actively collaborated with agricultural vocational education institutions. Within the framework of donor-funded educational programs, new training modules and modern knowledge-sharing techniques have been introduced with the aim of expanding theoretical knowledge and fostering the development of practical skills. A number of important actions were carried out in this regard:

The Georgian Farmers' Association initiated and co-organized the EU Ambassador's visit, which was hosted by project partner bee farm "Bee World," which is engaged in the dual beekeeping initiative. The project participants shared information about the characteristics of beekeeping in the Adjara region and emphasized the need of professional education in the field's development.



A study trip to Poland proved highly important for building international ties and sharing best practices and innovative approaches to agricultural education, as well as professional education in general. Representatives of business clusters established within the project participated in the visit.

A number of significant developments took place in the local vocational educational programs as well:



Mid-term assessments of students were carried out at the Senaki branch of Shota Meskhia University and the "Blacks" collage branch of Qeda using mid-term assessment instruments developed by the Georgian Farmers' Association and invited trainers and individuals involved in the dual beekeeping program

The college "Lakada" announced admissions for the second stream of the program "Cultivation of Blueberries" with the support of the association. Through the selection procedure, 12 students were selected from a pool of 20 applicants. The instructional procedure commenced in early June. The college "Horizonti" announced the admission of the second flow of trainees, and approximately thirty applicants enrolled for the short-term program "Protection of Tree Crops." Fifteen trainees were accepted through the selection procedure.

The authorization process is currently underway. For the purpose of empowering educational institutions and enhancing their capacity, a short-term educational program entitled "Feeding Animals" was developed in collaboration with the association and the college "Akhali Talgha, that has obtained permission from the agency and authorization process is currently underway.

A centralized admissions process has been announced for the beekeeping dual program developed as part of the project. This is an additional opportunity for residents of the Adjara and Samegrelo regions to enroll in an educational program and acquire knowledge and skills in collaboration with partner agribusinesses.



Courses on the cultivation and care of vines have commenced



The educational process takes place at the multifunctional center in Chiatura. The program is implemented in collaboration with the Georgian Farmers' Association. Within the framework of this collaboration, association representatives actively contribute to the development of the training program and direct the training process.

The trainees will acquire free theoretical and practical knowledge regarding agro-technological and phytosanitary vineyard growing measures, vine pest prevention strategies, and grape variety characteristics. Chiatura multifunctional Center is supported by Georgian Manganese.

6

Agriservices for Farmers

Certification

Agronomy and Certification Department of Georgian Farmers' Association provided consultancy for introduction and extension of the GlobalGAP and GeoGAP certification standards in four different blueberry producer companies in Guria and Imereti regions.

Model agricultural practices were implemented on more than 80 hectares of land, and over 200 personnel, both permanent and seasonal, were trained.

More than 20 laboratory water, soil, and blueberry sample analyses, as well as compliance assessment audits, were carried out. The Georgian Farmers' Association's foremost objectives include diversification and the promotion of export markets. The first step in this process is obtaining the Global Gap certification.

The Association has actively implemented Geogap, the local standard. Horticulture standards are being implemented in the vertical farming enterprise "Space Farm," which produces salad greens. In terms of livestock farmers, the SQIL (Safety and Quality Investment in Livestock – Georgia) project team, in collaboration with the Georgian Farmers' Association, continues to visit dairy farms in order to prepare them for Geogap certification. As of today, 7 dairy farms have successfully been certified by GeoGap Certificate.

In addition, a seminar on Geogap was conducted in May with the purpose of discussing and refining the existing requirements and methodology of Geogap. The National Food Agency (NFA) inspectors and legal staff attended the Geogap workshop. The legal team of the National Food Agency has expressed a desire to incorporate an important component of Geogap's requirements into the agency's monitoring protocol.



Farmers that are in the process of implementing the Geogap standard have received technical assistance for labor safety. Thirty contracted producers were provided with technical assistance in labor safety requirements, as well as production-related documentation and recommendations.



Satellite monitoring and groundwater analyses

Farmers of the Georgian Hazelnut Growers Association (GHGA) were introduced to satellite monitoring services and their benefits by the Georgian Farmers' Association. Eventually, the association deployed satellite monitoring systems across 65 hectares, and the Association granted the contracted farmers access to the platform. In addition, two groundwater analyses were conducted.



Working group on climate change and environmental protection



A working group on climate change and environmental protection supported the initiative of the union "Gurian honey and beekeeping," which has initiated to deliver 550 melliferous tree saplings of honey plants from Bokhvauri village nursery of Ozurgeti municipality to the farmers of Guria, Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi, Samegrelo, and Shida Kartli regions.

Perennial plants grown in the nursery of farmer Makho Kotrikadze (Sumach, Korean Evodia, paulownia, Hovenia dulcis, chestnut, lime and Caucasian persimmon). It provides a continuous source of food during the vegetation season not only for bees, but also for other pollinating insects. This activity will, on the one hand, create windbreak vegetation and, on the other, promote and preserve biodiversity, which is essential for cultivating crops and enhancing their quantity and quality.



7

Sector Projects



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საქართველოსთვის



Project - Capacitated Agricultural Practices and Consumer Awareness (CAPCA)

During the course of the Capacitated Agricultural Practices and Consumer Awareness (CAPCA) project, activities were conducted in three different directions, including the identification of stakeholders involved in the dairy farming and beekeeping sectors and the undertaking of preliminary research on the beekeeping sector in Georgia.

Stakeholder identification in the beekeeping and dairy production sectors focused at establishing and validating target groups in the project's four target regions: Kakheti, Imereti, Guria, Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti.

During the process of dairy production sector research total of 1396 stakeholders passed the validation (This includes: 1333 dairy producers, 16 dairy procession farms, 2 milk collections centers, 20 veterinarians, 2 veterinary pharmacies and clinics, 13 livestock feed producers and 10 other sector associations.)

As part of the dairy sector research the following type of data was collected: the number of dairy cattle, the type of major product produced, the number of products produced (per day), and the names of the other types of products produced.

The preliminary research of the beekeeping sector was developed to perform extensive, qualitative, and quantitative research with an emphasis on food safety as well as sanitary and phytosanitary requirements. Reports on the research were prepared in both Georgian and English languages.

In the beekeeping sector, 1356 stakeholders (1332 beekeepers, 7 accredited laboratories, 9 collectors, 8 sector associations, honey processing enterprises, honey packaging and container providers, honey carrier companies, and honey purchasing organizations) went through the validation phase.

Safety and Quality Investment in Livestock – Georgia (SQIL)

Number of activities have been carried out within the SQIL project, which is implemented by an American organization "Land O'Lakes Venture37, with financial support from United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and in partnership with Georgian Farmer's Association.



Market price research for milk, meat and dairy products

A monthly market price survey of milk, dairy products, and meat was conducted twice (March and April), and brochures rendering this information were published on the Georgian Farmers' Association's website and in the "Agrarian Georgia" publication.

Cheese Way

The project's implementation organization made several visits to cheese processing farms and filled out special questionnaires in order to select 30 cheese producers to participate in this initiative. The selection process is nearing completion, and the project team is assisting the Dairy Products Producers Association in mapping the GPS parameters of commercial entities along the Cheese Road.

Training in branding for dairy producers and processing companies

The project team provided branding training to nine milk processing company representatives with the aim of assisting dairy processing enterprises in becoming more competitive and increasing sales via the use of modern marketing and branding tools.



World Food Safety Day and Sulguni Festival

Sulguni festival was held in the precinct of Dadiani palace in Zugdidi to celebrate the World Food Safety Day.

The main objective of the event was to promote Sulguni cheese as a Georgian cheese with a registered geographical indication and to increase consumer awareness of food safety issues.

Another key objective of the event was to establish a connection between local producers of milk and meat products and final consumers, as well as to facilitate communication between all stakeholders involved in the food safety sector, including government and non-government organization representatives.

The event concluded with a fun competition to stretch Sulguni cheese, in which over 15 farmers competed. The project awarded the competition winners various types of equipment, including Lactoscans, milk coolers, and other equipment.



Field practice for student veterinarians

The team of SQIL project (Safety and Quality Investment in Livestock – Georgia) hosted ten students of veterinary and veterinary technicians from different regions of the country.

They participated in field education sessions at the Swiss-Caucasus College in Dmanisi. The practical training was designed to encourage a career in livestock veterinary medicine. In July, the project team will choose students for the second flow of practical training.

Trainings on animal nutrition and health issues in cooperation with company SANOT

The SQIL project (Safety and Quality Investment in Livestock - Georgia) team, in collaboration with the company SANO, provided training workshops on animal nutrition and health issues for about 100 farmers. In addition, a foreign expert (Imereti, Shida Kartli, and Kvemo Kartli) paid visits to the farms.

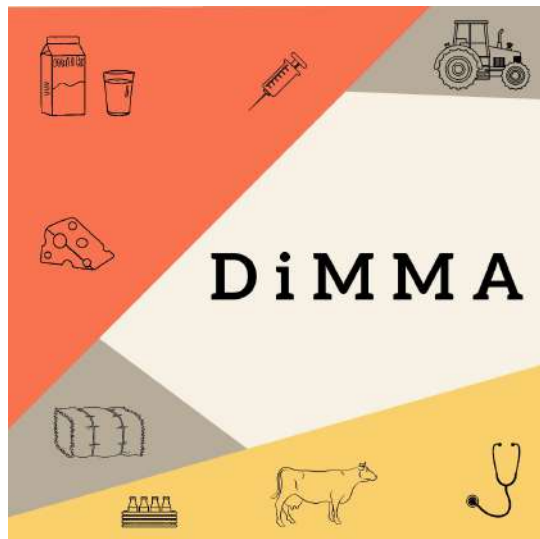
Dairy Modernization and Market Access State Program (DiMMA)

With the frames of the Dairy Modernization and Market Access State Program (DiMMA) a two-day exchange study tour was held for fifteen farmers from the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region.

During the study tour the representatives of SQIL project (Safety and Quality Investment in Livestock – Georgia) provided the participants with the information about milking best practices, illness categories (vector-borne, non-contagious, chronic), veterinary medications, and animal feeding regimens.

The farmer Zaza Burchuladze, on his hand shared with the participants his best practices about Farm management, food and feed production, feeding procedures, farm building maintenance, and animal health.

11 beneficiary farmers (5 from Samtskhe-Javakheti, 4 from Samegrelo, and 2 from) who own a demonstration facility received applicable equipment and technical consultation as part of the program.



8

Research and Analysis



Value Chain Analysis

A document entitled Value Chain Analysis of the Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) Sector in Georgia was created by the analytics and research team at on behalf of the Georgian Farmers' Association. The purpose of the study was to analyze every aspect of the NTFPs value chain in Georgia and identify strategies that can enhance the sector's competitiveness.

The research on the value chain was conducted in two stages: first, desk research and analysis of existing NTFP sector-related studies and data were conducted. In the second phase, the research team conducted in-depth interviews with key stakeholders representing various links in the NTFP value chain in Georgia, in order to gather the required data.

Agritech Research

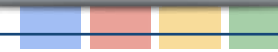
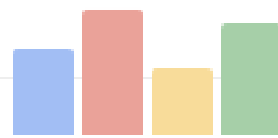
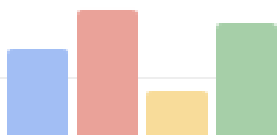
The purpose of the research conducted by the Department of Analytics and Research is to examine the degree to which modern technologies are utilized in agriculture and to evaluate the application of relevant skills in agribusiness. Respondents to the research were individuals engaged in agricultural business who employ modern technologies or who intend to operate in this field and are interested in incorporating modern technologies into their operations.

Market Price Research

The analytics and research team publish a monthly publication analyzing the monthly dynamics of market prices for products in the livestock industry (prices of 27 products, including dairy and meat products, raw materials, and services) in Tbilisi and ten administrative centers in Georgia.

The research project funded by World Bank - "The role of research and educational systems in improving the sustainability and productivity of agricultural activities"

This study included actors in the agricultural value chain as well as other stakeholders. The research's goal was to demonstrate the importance of research and educational systems in dealing with challenges in the agricultural sector, with the participation of agriculture sector players (farmers, sector associations, cooperatives, and processing companies) for the end result of overcoming the sector's challenges.



Media Coverage

