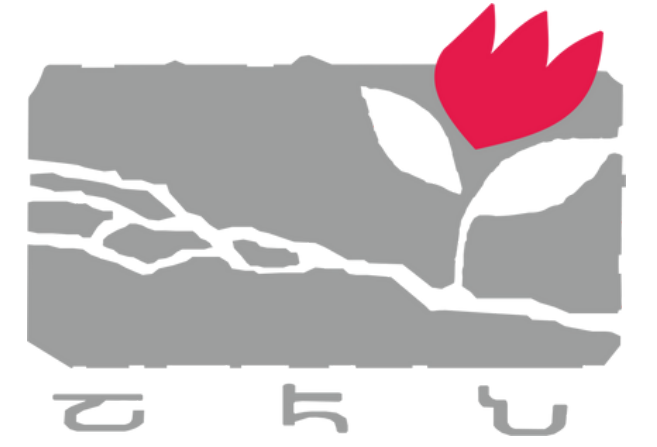


MOTIVATING FARMERS TO SUSTAINABLE USE OF ABANDONED AND UNUSED AGRICULTURAL LANDS, “SHEN” NGO



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Agricultural lands make up about 59% of Armenia's total land area. Today, about 80% of these agricultural land resources show different degrees of soil degradation and negatively impacted local hydrology with desertification characteristics*. Overall, only 32% of the total agricultural land area and 79% of the arable land area is currently utilised, whereof about 9.2% is irrigated. These figures point to serious problems in agriculture today and - against the backdrop of climate change – all the more so in the future.

Land abandonment in Armenia is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, rooting in interrelated issues and processes, such as small sizes of land plots and highly fragmented, inefficient farm structures, lack of availability of irrigation facilities but also of (decentralised) water retention capacity, lack of use of advanced farming practices and farmer's adaptive capacities, improper grazing regimes and various problems along agricultural value chains as well as rural outmigration and an aging rural population. Land degradation and abandonment affect both private and community lands.

To counteract land abandonment and bring more land back into sustainable and long-term use, thus improving the economic as well as the ecological and social situation of people in rural areas, a multi-layered approach is needed that covers different levels, from the promotion of knowledge transfer and adapted agricultural practices to and among farmers, to the improvement of infrastructure at community level and administrative and legal processes at the national level.

*IFAD 2018 Republic of Armenia Country Strategic Opportunities Programme 2018-2024

2433 ha

ABANDONED LANDS CULTIVATED



PROJECT IMPACT

Economic benefits:

- Increased productivity of lands and production of feed and food on formerly abandoned lands.
- Value increase of lands that are ameliorated and irrigated.
- Mostly production of high value tree crops in orchards on lands provided with irrigation water infrastructure.
- Increase in income of participating farmers.

Social benefits:

- Increase in farmer's knowledge through agricultural extension, including organic farming.
- Master's Programme in Organic Agriculture at ANAU with practical training at the organic agriculture training centre set up by Shen NGO and handed over to ANAU.

Ecological benefits:

- Reduced erosion due to permanent soil cover
- Improvement of site water relations, where woody perennials have been planted, due to better infiltration and water retention.
- Reduction of windspeeds, where roughness of landscape is increased.

PROJECT DESIGN

“Shen” NGO pursues a strategy that includes:

Technical support

Legal and administrative support

Pioneering/Reviving of Agroforestry Systems

ACHIEVEMENTS

Technical support:

- 2368 ha of lands irrigated in 83 villages in 8 marzes
- 2433 ha of land ameliorated

Legal and administrative support:

- 79 ha of land rented and managed by rural cooperatives

Pioneering/Reviving of Agroforestry Systems:

- 100 ha of pastures improved
- Animal feed production on 301 hectares of formerly abandoned land
- 71 ha covered by mixed forest plantations
- 8 ha covered by biodiverse agroforestry systems

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

