

Accredited Certification Body

There is a full-fledged organic agriculture certification organisation in Armenia, Ecoglobe LLC (<http://www.ecoglobe.am>). It is accredited by DAkkS for EU, FOAG for Switzerland, USDA National Organic Program for USA and Canada markets. It is compliant with ISO Guide 17065 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 certification, independent on-site inspections, development of standards, trainings for inspectors and other certification bodies in other (mainly in FSU) countries.

Currently Ecoglobe has 26 Armenian and 11 foreign operators.



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

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.

Current international projects on development of organic agriculture

In Dec 2015 a new EU-funded project, Organic Agriculture Support Initiative (OASI), launched in Armenia to further boost the potential of the Armenian agriculture sector over the next three years. The project is co-funded and implemented by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA). This project specifically aims at increasing value-added Armenian organic products as well as assisting to improve efficiency of relevant public and private institutions. It supports the Ministry of Agriculture of Armenia at creating a clear and enabling legal environment for organic producers and processors in line with international standards. OASI also strengthens extension services for the promotion of organic technologies and support educational institutions through curricula development. The project has a budget of € 3.3 million and will be implemented over the course of three years.

The major part of the project support is directed to Armenian producers and processors through provision of grants. Small grants are available for smallholder farmers seeking to start, diversify or expand organic production, while bigger grants are for already established organic farmers, co-operatives and processors for enhancing productivity and market access. To convince Armenian farmers and consumers about the benefits and value-added of organic agriculture, an awareness raising campaign will be carried out.

To date more than 20 agricultural producers and processors representing different subsectors awarded OASI grants (big and small) for new projects with substantial financial contribution of grantees.

Organic agriculture extension service

Starting from late 00's in Lusakh, Argina and Shenik rural communities of Aragatsotn and Armavir marzes on the basis of Tsirani Aygi LLC and Amur Koriz LLC orchards Shen's agricultural consultants provides both trainings and free consultancy to farmers on organic and conventional horticulture issues.

In 2005 for the first time in Armenia an Organic Agriculture Extension Group has been initiated that successfully operates to date. So far Shen's Organic Group provided more than 3000 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, application timetables and methods and the like.



Tree pruning and training field day in early spring

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.

Starting from 2010 Shen initiated establishment works of specialised organic agriculture training centre. Eventually in 2016 on the basis of Organic Extension Group a Demonstrational Training Centre of Organic Agriculture is established. It will provide full-fledged free of charge agricultural informational services to all interested Armenian farmers on organic horticulture and/or crop production.

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);
- 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.)



Sorting and packing organic apricots

Organic agricultural processing Armenian companies

As of 2015 nine food processing Armenian companies produce organic foodstuff. The local market of organic processed (mainly apricot, peach, pomegranate, raspberry herbal teas) food is getting rather competitive. The main market players are Tamara Fruit, Yerevan Beer (Areva brand), Sis Natural and Euroterm (Noyan brand), Bio Universal LLC, Bizon. As a result, during last two years the prices for certain products have increased by: apricot (for processing) – 27%, raspberry – 45%, and peach – 15%.



Production of organic dried tomatoes

Organically processed Armenian foodstuff

Totally 88 organic food products are being produced in Armenia.

- Yerevan Beer produces 6 types of organic juice (Areva brand, <http://www.areva-juice.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 8 types organic juices and jams (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 (Manana brand) produces 9 types of organic teas, 4 types of essential oil and 6 organic herbal spices.
- Bison produces 5 types teas and 4 types of essential oils.
- Sipan – 3 types of juices.
- Manana – 15 types of various herbal teas.
- Mountain Tea – 6 types of teas
- Karen Ghazaryan LLC produces 6 organic foodstuffs – 3 types of bread and 3 types of cereals



Armenian organic honey



Organic bread

Export of Armenian organic products

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



Shen NGO presenting organic foodstuffs at Prodexpo 2015, Moscow, Russia



Armenian organic food producers at Biofach 2014, Nuremberg, Germany

- Fresh fruit by Tzirani Aygi LLC and Amur Koriz LLC, mainly to Russia and Georgia;
- Yerevan Beer annually exports 40 tons/annually (2010-2012) of organic juices to Singapore and Malaysia that being sold through Carrefour hypermarkets network;
- Tamara Fruit exports 60 tons/annually (2009-2012) juices and 2 tons of 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, s
- Ham Herbal Tea – 1 t of organic tee to Germany, Canada, France and Duty Free network;
- VRPack – production of organic packaging;
- 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.

Pesticides and nutrients for organic agriculture

Through Shen's facilitation consultations took place between Armenian pesticides producing and importing companies. The Extension Group presented them the results of applying the insecticide imported from Novosibirsk. Today several local companies offers wide range of the necessary inputs for organic farming. Hence, Hrashk Aygi LLC, one of the biggest pesticide importers in Armenia, started to import organic bio preparations (currently 18 products both pesticides and nutrients) of Russian and Italian production. Artagro LLC offers Lignohumate, highly efficient humic fertiliser (Russia) and locally produced Biohumus.

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://freshline.am>
- SAS Supermarket, 7 stores, www.sas.am
- Yeritsyan Supermarket www.yeritsyan.com



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

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 organisations 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 operating. Now OFPCA follows up its awareness activities 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.

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

- promo movie;
- various booklets and info leaflets;
- radio advertisement;
- printed ads in Yerevan subway stations and metro cars
- articles in journals and newspapers;

Recently Shen participated at two major international trade fairs on organic agriculture, Biofach 2014, Nuremberg, Germany, and Prodexpo 2015, Moscow, Russia, where most of Armenian organic food products were presented.



The first organic retail store in Armenia, 2006

Progress of Organic Agriculture in Armenia



www.shen.am

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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. In 2000 Shen with financial and thematic support of HEKS-EPER (Switzerland) and SDC as a main project partner started to promote the development of organic agriculture by disseminating information on organic agriculture cultivation methods among farmer groups and individual farmers. It had been done through developing free advisory services to farmers as well as raising awareness on organic fruits among the local consumers. Over the past years other Shen's partners, namely Chene-France, BfdW (Germany), ICCO (the Netherlands), UNDP GEF, region of Auvergne Rhône-Alpes (France), Regional Council of Ile-de-France co-funded this project too.

The main objectives of the first organic agriculture project in Armenia were:

- initiating organic extension group;
- facilitate establishing of 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.

Now one can assume that all mentioned objectives are principally met and the organic food sector in Armenia is evolving. 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.

Started form 2015 Organic Agriculture Support Initiative (funded by Austrian Development Agency) operates in Armenia playing crucial role in further development of organic agriculture in our country.

