

# Capacity Development Strategy and Plan for the Organic Agriculture Sector in Armenia



Suggestions and recommendations by  
ICARE and IFOAM – Organics International

A study mandated by the  
Organic Agriculture Support Initiative (OASI) on behalf of  
the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and  
the European Union.



**The Title page shows the Armenian National Organic Logo which is used on certified organic products as set in Government Decree N 704-N as of 26 June 2009. For more information, please see Chapter 1.3 in this publication.**

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
ADC	Austrian Development Cooperation
ANAU	Armenian National Agrarian University
ANOAP	Armenian National Organic Action Plan
AOAF	Armenian Organic Agriculture Foundation
ASC	Agricultural Support Centers
AUA	American University of Armenia
AWHHE	Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment
BOKU	University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences
CARD	Center for Agribusiness and Rural Development
CB	Organic Certification Body
COROS	Common Objectives and Requirements of Organic Standards
CSA	Community Supported Agriculture
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HEKS/EPER	Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirchen Schweiz/ Entraide Protestante Suisse
ICARE	International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education
IFOAM	IFOAM - Organics International is the global organic umbrella organisation
IOAS	International Organic Accreditation Service
IQF	International Quality Federation
MAAN	Mountain Agro-ecosystem Action Network
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoEDI	Ministry of Economic Development and Investments
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoNP	Ministry of Nature Protection
NABU	Nature And Biodiversity Conservation Union
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OA	Organic Agriculture
OASI	Organic Agriculture Support Initiative
PGS	Participatory Guarantee Systems
PTD	Participatory Technology Development
RA	Republic of Armenia
SDA	Strategic Development Agency
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time Bound
TIPi	Technology Innovation Platform of IFOAM
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
VET	Vocational Education and Training

## Executive Summary

Organic sector development attempts in Armenia have been initiated about two decades ago through various international projects and with the active involvement of local NGOs. However, there hasn't been a united effort for a common sector vision development or a common strategy to direct the activities of stakeholders and to use synergies.

The OASI stakeholders' needs assessment implemented in Summer-Fall 2016 revealed major needs of all the stakeholder groups, disclosed current sector capacities and underlined obstacles for the organic sector development. The assessment was also complemented by secondary information examination and analysis. Based on these findings, the IFOAM-Organics International/ICARE consortium proposes a capacity development strategy and a sector development action plan that can serve as guidance for coordinated sector development.

The findings of the assessment were classified into stakeholder groups, including ministries, NGOs, producers/processors and education sector. In general, the need for capacity development was seen as one of the main factors necessary for organic sector development in Armenia. Respondents mentioned among others the importance of an enabling environment (need for regulatory improvements in the field), of improved market access mechanisms and tools, of increased awareness of organic produce among consumers, of improved production methodology and of the introduction of benefits for producing organically.

Given the gap between current and required sector capacities, it is advised to support the development of the organic industry sector across four pillars: 1) Effective and sustainable organic institutions; 2) Communication and promotion; 3) Facilitation of innovation; and 4) Conducive political environment.

**Strategic pillar 1, effective and sustainable organic institutions:** Stakeholders unite with common objectives and roles for each stakeholder. An Armenian national organic action plan shall describe how the institutions collaborate and how their actions are coordinated under a national umbrella and the ministry of agriculture. This pillar includes actions aimed at capacity development, at creating demand-driven training programmes and at monitoring of progress of the implementation of the national organic action plan.

**Strategic pillar 2, communication and promotion:** It underlines the narrative of Armenian organic farming in order to address societal challenges and for producing high quality food and other agriculture products. The narrative is used to build the understanding of organic agriculture as modern, as innovative, as fair, as promoter of health and ecology and as typically Armenian. Organic food is positioned as trustworthy, sustainable, healthy and authentic. The sector actively communicates with the public through media, product promotion, public events and active marketing. It develops and takes positions in public debates.

**Strategic pillar 3, facilitation of innovation:** It promotes research and innovations in organic farming to improve productivity, profitability and sustainability. Research addresses production challenges and it provides information for communication and for facilitation of market growth. Agriculture advisory systems and business development services and available local certification facilitate the uptake of innovation.

**Strategic pillar 4, Conducive political framework:** The Government creates an environment conducive to organic agriculture and promotes the uptake of organic agriculture in close collaboration with the sector representatives. This includes promoting policies with the aim to reward positive external effects. A simple and effective legal framework including the enforcement of rules is created in close collaboration with the sector representatives.

The capacity development strategy is a contribution to the sector strategy and it describes the needs for capacity development in order to reach the goal, objectives and targets. It differentiates between sector, institutional and individual capacity and it proposes 44 capacity development measures for a) formal capacity development of stakeholders (A-measures), b) coaching of stakeholders for individual/institutional/sector development and implementation (B-measures) and c) networking, linkage and knowledge exchange building (C-measures). The proposed measures are based on the present capacity and gaps found in the assessments and based on the assumed strategy with its above-described 4 pillars.

The very high priority measures include:

**For pillar 1:** *A1 Organic leadership course, A2 Armenian National Organic Action Plan (ANOAP) course, B1 Coaching ANOAP and C2 Public annual national forum.*

**For pillar 2:** *A6 Communication strategy development course and B7 Coaching national consumer campaigns.*

**For pillar 3:** *A12 Extension service training for development of micro-interventions.*

**For pillar 4:** *A22 Good organic governance, A23 Advocacy training and C7 Government exchange programme.*

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Context and Background

The agricultural sector in Armenia is regarded as one of the most important sectors of the economy with contribution of about 20% to the country's GDP and 40% to employment in the country. The average farm size is rather small – about 1.48 hectares<sup>1</sup>. The sector needs to gain efficiency through promotion of production and marketing of agriculture products with high added value. The organic sector is one of those sectors and can greatly contribute to the development of rural areas and to the improvement of agriculture's profitability.

Organic agriculture development and promotion in Armenia was initiated about two decades ago. Several NGOs were formed to realize the idea of organic farming and to provide information about benefits of consumption of organic produce to consumers. As a result of the initial effort, the first organic campaign was held through the local TV channels, producers had access to organic inputs, the local organic certification body was established, and several organic producers could get access to export (mainly European) markets. However, the actions across the value chain were held within different projects and at different times, so that required synergetic effects did not occur.

The Organic Agriculture Support Initiative (OASI), a project funded by the European Union and co-funded and implemented by ADA, was launched in Armenia in 2015. The project aims at supporting successful transition from conventional to organic agriculture with further enhancing productivity and increased competitiveness in marketing organic products. In order to achieve sustainable development results, the OASI project planned a systematic approach in developing the sector. The project team is implementing simultaneous interventions in regulations of the sector, as well as in strengthening both the supply and demand of organic produce in the country. For a better result, the capacity development of sector stakeholders conducted in close cooperation with the institutions/organisations in Armenia is implemented. Within the scope of its activities in 2016, the OASI project directly supports about 50 farmers and processors with grants and input supplies. The project boosted the awareness of organic agriculture among farmers and will certainly result in increased production of organic goods on the Armenian market. Additionally, the infrastructure and regulatory support, as well as consumer awareness raising activities<sup>2</sup> will strengthen the demand in the organic market. In the present situation, it is very important to understand potential gaps of capacity in the organic sector in Armenia, and how they can be addressed.

### 1.2 Overview of the Organic Agriculture Sector in Armenia

The first interventions for organic agriculture were supported by HEKS-EPER (Switzerland) with SDC as its main donor in collaboration with USDA, USAID and EU through various projects.

Currently, the organic production of vegetables, fruits, cereals, berries, alfalfa, the collection of wild species as well as beekeeping are established in Armenia. The processing companies produce organic juices, nectars, concentrates, purees, quick frozen products, herbal teas, dried fruits and bread for the local and international market.

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<sup>1</sup> National Statistical Services (2014 agricultural census data) <http://www.armstat.am/en/?nid=82&id=1860>

<sup>2</sup> Austrian Development Agency - <http://www.entwicklung.at/en/ada/news/detail-en/artikel/organic-agriculture-support-initiative-oasi-proj-1/>

The number of certified organic farms and processing companies is increasing. If there was an area of certified organic agriculture of 1,500 hectares, including wild collection areas (8 certified organic farms and 6 certified organic processing and import enterprises) in 2009, in 2012, the area under organic management was 19 000 ha including wild collection and in conversion areas. The number of organic beehives was about 530 in 2013 with the total production up to 16 000 tons of honey<sup>3</sup>. Currently there are 46 certified organic agricultural operators in Armenia. The list includes 8 wild collection / processed food, 18 plant products, 10 processed food, 2 honey producing operators, as well as 7 beekeepers and one organic fertilizer importer <sup>4</sup>.

There are also increasing export opportunities for Armenian organic produce. Armenia started exporting organic products in 2008. The main exported organic products are fruit and berry products from organic agriculture and wild collection, such as IQF, juices, beverages, compotes and honey. The supply volume does not meet the demand of the international market. The main export markets are Russia and the European Union. It is expected that the markets will expand to the USA, Canada, and Asia.

The sector policy is developed by several agencies involved in policy-making; the Ministry of Agriculture, the State Forest Monitoring Agency, the Ministry of Nature Protection with its Bioresources Management Agency, as well as the Ministry of Economic Development and Investments. The MoA is in charge of developing policy and legislation on organic agriculture as well as for its enforcement. All other agencies are participating in review and they comment on the possible impacts of proposed policy measures.

Since 2002 the local certification body ECOGLOBE has been supporting the sector development. It offers organic certification under the “Green Caucasus” private standard for national, EU, and other export markets. ECOGLOBE is also accredited by DAKKS for EU, FOAG for Switzerland, USDA National Organic Programme for USA and Canada markets.

Organic agriculture is highly prioritised in the national agricultural and industrial policies. However, the government neither envisaged support for the organic sector development, nor provided any subsidies to the farmers to initiate conversion to organic production. Thus, the development of sustainable organic agriculture in Armenia is still challenging. As in the case with any new concept, it is important to motivate farmers to produce value added, healthy and environment safe organic produce, as well as increase awareness among the consumers about the benefits of those products and build trust towards organic producers. The retail market also needs to be educated and trained since its experience of selling organic produce is limited.

The concept of Participatory Guarantee System (PGS), which is promoted worldwide by IFOAM – Organics International is not well known in Armenia. The PGS concept is applicable to communities that establish a link with their customer groups. Producers and customers agree on common rules (standards) for production, processing and trade. They also agree how to verify compliance with the rules. PGS relies on social control and does not need third party certification but it is limited to non-anonymous markets.<sup>5</sup>

To summarize, Armenia has the potential for developing organic agriculture, and there are perspectives for the market development as well, but the local producers have to make continuous and strong efforts to become sustainable and competitive in the European organic markets. The government and foreign support are still needed to develop the sector.

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<sup>3</sup> Nune Darbinyan, Survey on Organic Products, within the scope of Grant program «Preparation of second Program 2 for competitiveness of community agricultural resources» (ECAPDEV No. TF05171), 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Ecoglobe website - <http://ecoglobeorganic.com/operators/> - list published on the 27.02.2017

<sup>5</sup> More information see <http://www.ifoam.bio/en/organic-policy-guarantee/participatory-guarantee-systems-pgs>



### 1.3 Relations to present policies and strategies

Due to the fact that the average farm size in Armenia is very small, and so achieving the economies of scale and competing on price is not always possible, the Government of the country adopted the strategy of promoting high value agriculture production. Organic agriculture is one of the main directions that are regarded as yielding high value.

The strategic importance of this industry is highlighted in the “2010-2020 Sustainable Strategy Programme for Agricultural and Rural Development”<sup>6</sup>. In particular, the development of national organic standards, the introductions of a wider variety of organic plant protection measures as well as processing of organic produce are prioritised.

During the last decade, the Government<sup>7</sup> adopted various regulatory documents:

1. RA Law on Organic Agriculture (2008)
2. RA Law on making amendments and supplements to the RA Law on Organic Agriculture (2012)
3. RA Law on Conformity Assessment (2004)
4. RA Government Decree on defining the procedure for keeping calendar records of organic farming entities (2008)
5. RA Government Decree on approving the procedure for marking and labelling organic agricultural products as well as products in transition to organic agriculture (2009)
6. RA Government Decree on setting list and application procedure for permitted and limitedly permitted substances in organic agriculture, including fertilizers means of improvement of soil structure and fertility, and plant protection means and disinfectants (2009)
7. RA Government Decree on setting a procedure for organisation of organic agriculture, production, organic processing. Packaging storage, transportation marketing and labeling of plants and plant origin products, agricultural animals and animal products (including apicultural products) (2009)
8. RA Government Decree on approving the procedure of issuing a conformity certificate in the field of organic agriculture and the forms of the conformity mark and conformity certificate of organic produce, and conformity certificate of organic agriculture production method (2009)
9. RA Government Decree on setting the duration and procedure for reduction or extension of conversion period to organic agriculture (2009)
10. RA Government Decree on approving the procedure for import and export of organic agricultural products and the form of organic certificate accompanying imported organic products (2012)
11. RA Government Decree on approving the procedure for issuing, and forms of accompanying veterinary documents, safety certificates, and conformity reference on import, export, transportation through the country of animals, animal products, raw product, feeds, complementary feed, feed mixtures, feed additives, food, materials contacting food, and active food and biological additives, and on revoking Decree N 1241-N of August 4, 2005 of the Government of the Republic of Armenia (2010)

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<sup>6</sup> ARLIS website, RA decree on activities to be implemented within the scope of “2010-2020 Sustainable Strategy Program for Agricultural and Rural Development” <http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=63109> (not available in English language).

<sup>7</sup> ARLIS website - [www.arlis.am](http://www.arlis.am)

12. RA Government Decree on approving the procedures and forms of accompanying phytosanitary documents for import, export and re-export of plants, plant products, and other related objects (2007).

In order to assure coherence and to simplify regulations, there is a need to refine and revise some of the regulations to enable a more stimulating legal environment for organic development.

## 2 Methodology

The OASI stakeholders' capacity development needs presented in the document are based on the results of semi-structured interviews and workshop round table discussions implemented by ICARE and IFOAM – Organics International. Interviews were conducted with 48 stakeholders from the following 4 groups:

- Ministries, including Agriculture Advisory Services;
- Non-Governmental Organisations;
- Education Sector;
- Organic producers and processors.

The first group of stakeholders included mainly decision makers and officials who participated in organic developments in Armenia from the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Nature Protection, National Institute of Standards, and the Agricultural Support Services (ASC-s, or GAMK) representatives. Total number of interviews for this group was 21 following the distribution below:

- Ministry of Agriculture – 6 interviews;
- Ministry of Nature Protection – 1 interview;
- Ministry of Economic Development and Investments – 1 interview;
- National Food Safety Service -1 interview;
- National Institute of Standards- 1 interview;
- Regional and Republican ASC-s – 11 interviews.

The NGO sector was represented by 8 organisations actively involved in the sector as well as the local certification body, an organic importer, organic store representative and an expert from the food safety laboratory (12 interviews).

The education sector survey involved Armenian National Agrarian University, two agricultural colleges in Armavir and Stepanavan, as well as American University of Armenia and Agribusiness Teaching Center of ICARE with a total of 4 interviews (the Armavir college representative was not able to complete the interview due to the lack of knowledge in the organic developments).

The fourth group (organic producers and processors) included 2 processing plants, one organic fertilizer producer, two farm cooperatives and 4 farmers (with the total number of 9 interviews).

In addition, two interviews were carried out with the private extension services representatives in the Darakert and Vedi communities.

Various stakeholders' needs were revealed as a result of the interviews and were then validated during the working group meeting held on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August, 2016. The needs were also ranked according to their priorities during the validation working group meeting.

The needs assessment was conducted following the ADA capacity development manual guidelines<sup>8</sup>. There were three main levels of needs separated and studied: individual, organisational and sector. Although different opinions on all three levels of needs were observed, many representatives of 4 stakeholders' groups shared some important common needs. Common organisational and sector needs included the need for professional skills, for improvement in organic regulations, for financial support, and for training/exchange programmes.

## **2.1 Semi structured interviews, focus groups discussions and assessments**

Semi-structured interviews provided very valuable insights on the current state of the sector, and highlighted main issues the stakeholders face, and revealed the needs they have. This was the main data collection tool that was complemented with focus group discussion, results validation workshop, and findings discussion during the OASI stakeholders meeting in fall. Interviews were conducted upon the preliminary agreement in the place that was more convenient for the interviewee. Each interview took 1 to 2,5 hours to complete.

Within the scope of the assessment, a focus group (FG) with organic producers in the Lukashin community was organised. Total 5 organic producers (dried fruit producers, organic fruits producers, and the organic grape producer) participated in the focus group discussion. The aim of the FG was to validate the results received through in-depth interviews, and to refine the individual needs of farmers.

The whole FG discussion lasted approximately 2 hours. The moderator guided the discussion following the format of the semi-structured interview, using the same questions as for the farmer interview. Certain discussion time was granted to the participants. Any external intervention by the moderator was eliminated. During the discussion all valuable information was written down.

There were a few attempts to record the interviews, but the participants were not very comfortable with that format, so the field group was complemented by another person who was only writing down the answers, while the interviewer was conducting the discussion.

## **2.2 Workshops and sector development dialogs**

As per proposal, after completing the interviews, a workshop for validation of the interview results was held with the interview participants. This format has proven to be quite effective in terms of idea generation, since the interview participants already know what the discussion is going to be around and there is no need to have any ice-breaking activities for efficient communication. In addition after the interview many participants had time to rethink the questions asked and were better prepared for the active brainstorming.

All the stakeholders who participated in interviews have been invited to the validation workshop. 26 participants attended it. The detailed agenda of the workshop is presented in Appendix 8.2.

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<sup>8</sup>[http://www.entwicklung.at/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Dokumente/Publikationen/Handbuecher/Kapazitaetsentwicklung/Manual\\_Capacity\\_Development.pdf](http://www.entwicklung.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Dokumente/Publikationen/Handbuecher/Kapazitaetsentwicklung/Manual_Capacity_Development.pdf)

During the validation process, all participants were grouped into the four groups as it was done for the interview process, except the ASC-s were seated with the representatives of the education sector, so the round table discussions were held with:

- Ministries' representatives, including ASCs;
- Non-Governmental Organisations;
- Education Sector;
- Organic producers and processors.

Moderators assigned to each group were provided with guidelines for validation process implementation. Moderators presented the needs of each group revealed during the interview process, and participants were asked to add additional needs that were not mentioned earlier. Then, both the needs revealed during the interviews and those added during the round-table discussion were prioritised according to their importance.

Each working group was also assigned to identify the gaps in the sector development and to list activities that aimed at covering those gaps. The activities as well were prioritised according to their importance for the sector development.

## 2.3 Synthesis

In general, it was noted that even within the main stakeholders there is a very limited knowledge of the organic production principles and very little appreciation of the organic produce. To follow the same format of the data collection the stakeholder groups synthesized the findings.

### **Ministries and the ASC-s**

The officials that deal with the organic agriculture policy making in the Ministry of Agriculture were well aware of the challenges the sector faces, but many did not well prioritise the organic production or processing, since the numbers of producers are limited and the volumes of production is very low to demonstrate high profitability. This was more visible on the results of the interviews with the ASC-s – bodies that are called to advise and teach the farmers. Many ASC representatives had very low awareness on organic production principles and could not advise the farmers. The information on organic agriculture was received by many ASC-s representatives mainly thanks to the financial support provided to producers within the scope of the OASI project, but the results of organic farming were not yet demonstrated in many areas of the country. Thus the organic production demo farms will be very useful for demonstrating the benefits of organic farming.

**Main needs for this group of stakeholders:** general information on organic production principles (highlighting the difference between organic and conventional), as well as organic means of plant protection and plant breeding (organic livestock/animal husbandry production is still challenging due to requirements in animal keeping set by EU and USDA NOP).

Specifically on **individual or organisational level** it is needed to:

- train 1-2 professionals from the respective departments of plant production, animal husbandry and food processing to understand organic concepts;
- Involve employees in exchange programmes to bring in the international expertise.

On the **sectorial level** it is needed to:

- Design and continuously implement training of trainers (both in terms of organic related, and general agricultural disciplines);
- Facilitate cooperation between the ministries (MoA, MoH, MoNP, MoEDI);
- Revise regulations on organic production;
- Establish university level education programmes and implement study methods update;
- Initiate state support for organic producers (including tax benefits, export support, inputs support);
- Develop an Armenian organic brand;
- Establish pilot organic farming and demo farms in each region for efficient farmers' training.

### **NGO-s.**

These sector representatives have had a very important role in advocating organic agriculture in Armenia as well as in supporting various farmers' groups in their organic endeavours. It can be noted that the achievements so far attained are mainly due to this stakeholder group. Eco-Globe NGO is actively promoting the organic production principles, Shen, Green Lane and CARD are supporting producers and supporting an enabling environment through improving the farmers' access to market. Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment (AWHHE) and NABU are promoting healthy lifestyle and benefits to the ecology attained via organic farming.

**Main needs for this group of stakeholders:** Capacity development in terms of training on innovative methods of production, that can be then passed on to the beneficiary farmers, as well as facility and infrastructure development.

#### **Individual needs**

- Training
  - Organic production
  - Marketing and promotion of organic produce
- Information on innovations in the organic field
- Successful cases of organic cooperatives operating in other countries

#### **Organisational needs**

- Trained professionals (agronomy, plant breeding) to work with farmers;
- Need for established partnerships (donor organisations, motivated organic farmers' groups);
- Improved Facilities and equipment;
  - Office space;
  - Technical equipment and vehicles;
- Participation in expos and exhibitions abroad to increase awareness about Armenian organic production.



### **Sectorial needs**

- Motivated and well prepared specialists in the agriculture sector as a whole;
- Further awareness raising on organic production both among consumers and producers;
- Access to market /availability of market (that can often be implemented through collaboration with the NGO sector);
- Need for internationally recognised accredited laboratories, that will enable organic produce lab testing in Armenia;
- Need for online organic platform that will support the activities of the stakeholders.

### **Education Sector**

This stakeholders' group demonstrates the biggest gap in the desired level of development and the current state. The organic subjects are not taught in the colleges and the Armenian National Agrarian University (ANAU). This implies that the future employees of the agricultural sector do not have the basic ideas about the differences of organic and conventional farming. ICARE foundation teaches a short 6 weeks module on organic agriculture, markets and trends in its Agribusiness Teaching Center for Bachelor level students; however that cannot be converted to the full-length subject until ANAU makes the corresponding changes in the curriculum. Currently ANAU and Vienna University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU) are developing a study programme for Master's degree in Organic Agriculture that will not be effective until 2021.

**Main needs for this group of stakeholders:** Curriculum development, instructors' capacity development, institution facility improvements to enable effective teaching (test fields, lab equipment).

#### **Individual and Organisational needs:**

- Capacity development;
  - Training on organic production principles, organic certification, organic produce marketing;
  - Curriculum development;
  - Facilities (lab equipment for soil analysis, etc.)
- Continuous involvement of teaching staff in research and business projects.

#### **Sectorial needs:**

- Continuous curriculum updates to respond to rapidly changing agricultural sector needs;
- Need for established partnerships (education sector and businesses, donor organisations, other local or foreign Universities);
- Further awareness raising on organic production, first of all among consumers, since the production and education sectors often respond to the increased demand for a certain product and corresponding specialties.

## **Organic Producers and Processors**

This group of stakeholders is well aware of the organic production basic requirements, but the awareness raising activities are still needed with the broader community of farmers who did not yet explore the possibility of converting to organic production. Those that have experience in the production and processing mainly need support for access to the market. The local consumers are not yet ready to pay the price premium for organically produced goods, and the fierce competition on export markets, as well as low volumes of the local production often makes export unfeasible.

**Main needs for this group of stakeholders:** Increased demand for the organic produce (can be achieved through awareness raising among consumers), support with access to foreign markets.

### **Individual and Organisational needs**

- Skills to apply for grant programmes to obtain additional funding for establishing or expanding organic production;
  - English language;
  - Proposal writing;
- Participation in exhibitions abroad;
- Training;
  - Organic production principles;
  - Commercialization of organic produce;
  - Successful cases of conversion to organic from different countries.

### **Sectorial needs:**

- Government support;
  - Subsidies for inputs for organic production;
  - Subsidies for certification costs;
- Support for market access;
- Access to certified organic inputs (seeds, fertilizers);
- Young motivated specialists;
- Enforced regulations on Organic/Eco/Bio labels.

### 3 Present capacities and capacity development needs

The study in the framework of this report reveals that a lot of capacity has been developed in the last decade. Nevertheless, there is consensus that the sector has not developed satisfactorily. Several reasons were mentioned including the lack of capacity on sectorial, institutional and individual levels.

Some of the most challenging issues and restrictions to development are the shortage of information and lack of local skills, including the lack of competent professionals in general. Both general organic agriculture expertise - including a uniting institutional and individual leadership and field specialist's knowledge - are necessary. The industry expressed a lack of organic production specialists such as agronomists; there is also a need for compliance information and oversight specialists.

All parties involved want to gain advanced knowledge of organic production and are ready to participate in own capacity development including on individual and institutional levels. Readiness to participate in training includes specifically trainings to assess and understand own involvement in production, marketing, and export. Main needs expressed includes regulatory issues and the support of infrastructure (e.g. organic storage/transportation availability, inputs supply, market access, additional Certification Bodies to address future capacities and volumes).

#### 3.1 The sector's capacities

Despite the small scale of organic production in Armenia, preliminary steps have been taken to boost this sector. Some developments in the organic sector in Armenia are well considered as a good start for further development. Armenia has its own certification body that provides organic certificates, which are recognised in the USA, Canada, EU and Swiss markets and in the Caucasus. Besides primary certification activities, Ecoglobe has been actively engaged in promoting organic agriculture in the country.

Along with Ecoglobe, a number of NGOs have been continuously working with international organisations to develop the organic sector in Armenia. These projects provided opportunities for local NGOs to explore the potential of the organic sector in Armenia, to establish collaboration with farmers and international experts and gain experience in organic agriculture. NGO-s such as Shen, Green Lane, and CARD Foundation, that have rich experience in the sector development, were able to establish organic producer groups, implement activities aimed at access to consumer market, providing training designed for individual producer's needs and capacities, or increase awareness about advantages of producing and consuming organic. The existence of Green Day – the organic shop, and non-certified organic market/box scheme operated by the Green Life LTD is an achievement. In addition, Green Life and Shen have established organic-production training centers, and they have developed a study programme for farmers who are interested in transitioning to organic production.

The state also has recognised the importance of diversification towards organic production while adopting the RA Law on Organic Agriculture in 2007 and other acts showing the capacity to develop together with the sector in the country.

The sector has developed, however it did not manage to reach over an infant stage, despite quite good external (financial) support. The main capacity restrictions can be identified with the following points:

- Coherent policy setting based on a **clear vision and strategy**, how the sector shall develop. There is a lack of capacity of uniting the stakeholders. Neither private nor government actors nor external supporters managed to build a **united sector**. The most obvious lack is the absence of a **national organic action plan**, which includes a common strategy, clear roles and actions with ownership and commitment of government and private actors;

- **Legitimized leadership** with strong participation skills that is recognised and able to sustain the vision and leadership over a long time;
- Building a **movement that is active, collaborative, supportive to all stakeholders and visible** so that it can build momentum and impress the society;
- Strong **positioning of organic in the local market** through active vision and case communication that is convincing consumers and citizens. There hasn't been the capacity to make a specific Armenian case of differentiation to conventional agriculture that justifies a premium for local consumers. (e.g. local farmer support, residues, animal welfare, product quality with special authentic taste, traditional products that are vanishing etc.);
- Building an **international brand** with a strong value chain of a few products that are demanded;
- **Enforcement of rules** outside of the reach of certification (certification is a particular strength of the sector) through government measures, the media and social action in the sector. Through that there were **little opportunities of the consumers to build trust**;

## 3.2 Institutional capacities

### Ministries and related agencies

Main state agencies involved in organic agriculture in Armenia include the Ministry of Agriculture with its State Food Safety Service, the Ministry of Nature Protection with its Bioresources Management Agency, and the National Institute of Standards. By the scope of operations, the National Food Safety Service is capable of providing regulatory services to the organic sector, especially concerning regulations of organic/bio labelling in the market, and monitoring organic production process, the National Institute of Standards can support with the creation of national organic standards and implement the operations oversight. Up until 2015, none of the mentioned agencies was involved in the organic sector. During the last two years, the national certifying body Ecoglobe and the National Institute of Standards jointly developed organic standards that are currently being published and will soon be available to producers and processors.

The Ministry of Agriculture, with its current capacities, is able to improve the legislative framework, aid in policy development, and provide infrastructure development or some direct farmer support for the sector development.

The Ministry of Economic Development and Investments, within the framework of its activities and with its current capacities is able to support the sector through establishing relationships with international organisations and via locating markets abroad for local organic producers.

Other bodies that can be directly involved in organic sector development are the advisory services in Armenia. There are two types of active extension services: State funded Agricultural Support Centers (ASC/GAMK) and private extension services - Farm Service Centers (FSC), administered through Center for Agribusiness and Rural Development (CARD, see NGOs).

It was intensively discussed during interviews that the state continuously cuts ASC employees and transportation means, which makes it difficult for ASCs to implement anticipated activities and to keep/develop staff capacities. The ASC evaluation of the ASC system in 2015 brought forward recommendations that are currently discussed. The current capacities of ASCs allow them to organise trainings, answer farmers' inquiries, provide consultancy on issues that arise in the process of agricultural production and the dissemination of information (via publishing newspapers and over the

web-page). The skills and expertise of the advisors need to be updated and some structural changes must be implemented to come up with more efficient methods of reaching out to farmers.

In comparison to other similar countries, the Armenian government's capacity to govern the organic sector is good. It managed to attract external help and to collaborate with the private stakeholders. A number of policies prove the commitment of the government. Development potentials to further develop the capacities can be summarized in the following points:

- **Simplification of legal framework** with fewer but better implemented policies and legal acts;
- **Leadership role for uniting the sector** and developing a **national organic action plan** with commitment and transparency (e.g. in possibilities and restrictions of resources allocation);
- Capacities to perform the function of a **competent authority**, that includes regulation setting and implementation, prosecution of fraud, international organic dialog participation etc.;
- **Extension methodology for effective farmer support** in organic conversion and enhancing livelihood building options;
- **Infrastructure development** (within the Ministry and in the relevant bodies) for supporting organic developments (e. g. availability of organic specialists in each relevant department of the ministry, as well as involvement of ASC-s in organic developments)

## **NGOs**

Main NGOs involved in the promotion of organic agriculture in Armenia are SHEN, Ecoglobe, NABU, Green Lane, CARD and AWHHE. The NGOs interviewed have been active in the field for a long time, which allows them to successfully cooperate with international organisations and bring organic agriculture development related projects to Armenia.

Ecoglobe has been established in 2002 with the support of Swiss Development Cooperation and Swiss Interchurch Aid. It is the only certifying body in Armenia in the organic field. It steadily increased the number of producers applying for organic certification, and has already established stable collaboration with international organisations to increase awareness of Armenian organic products abroad. Ecoglobe has a team of highly qualified specialists that provide comprehensive information about certification requirements to both big companies that have organic productions and farmer groups interested in organic farming.

Shen NGO was among the first organisations that established organic farmers groups and supported organic produce export to different countries. Along with other NGO-s who promoted the sector development, Shen originally started working with farmers, and realizing the need for improved value chain gradually expanded to the value chain development. Currently, Shen has established an organic training center and is supporting farmers on their attempts to participate in international trade fairs.

CARD Foundation, with its Green Day store (belonging to "CARD AGROSERVICE" Closed Joint-Stock Company (CJSC)), was one of pioneers of the Armenian organic movement. Serious steps have been taken to raise awareness in the local market and to establish relationship with foreign markets. CARD was the first organisation that ran an awareness rising campaign through a TV show, which could reach a very large consumer audience. The organisation employees update their skills continuously by participating in different expos and exhibitions. Currently, CARD runs the only organic food specialized store in Armenia, but does not maintain the former pace of organic produce development in Armenia, since organic agriculture is not the primary activity of the CARD Foundation.

Green Lane NGO is supported by farmers and researchers that are open to new endeavors in the organic sector. The NGO is active in the field of organic training and research, environmental protection,



and organic farming. Green Lane NGO also has non-formal farmers' cooperatives that produce non-certified organic food and sell through the Green Life LLC. Green Lane has also established the organic training center in Kotayk Region where farmers have the opportunity to learn and practice the organic farming skills.

The NGOs are the main drivers of the organic movements and demonstrated the capacity to develop their services and the sector. However, many of them are dependent on external support and don't have sustainable income sources through the generated business or through the support of their stakeholders. This puts a sustainability risk to mobilization, farmer support and ongoing training activities. We identified the following points in which capacity development would be valuable:

- **Leadership building and management of NGOs** including governance, strategic, financial and human resource management;
- **Stakeholder mobilization** and collaborative movement building with common visibility and case representation towards the sector, the media and the government with positive messages;
- **Mass communication** via classic and new social media. Designing suitable strategies to identify and spread the messages so that they are heard and create impact.
- **NGOs capacity development** to better implement the projects: necessary infrastructure and skills development

## **Producers**

There are very few organic producers in Armenia (details see chapter 1.2). The full list of operators can be found on the Ecoglobe website. The specifics of production are such, that mainly small producers are involved in the sector. The processing sector is not well represented in the organic production process. At the same time processors have difficulties to obtain the right quality and quantity of raw products.

Detailed needs of farmers are presented under the individual needs section. Institutional needs as a concept are specific for processing plants. There were two large processors and an importer surveyed within the scope of this assignment.

Detailed institutional needs are:

- **Access to market** (both local and international): Local market lacks awareness of benefits of organic production, while international markets are very competitive and hard to get into
- **Access to inputs** and stable supply from organic producers
- **Capacity development** to enable the organic producers/processors apply for additional funding; proposal writing skills, preferably in English are required for nearly all individuals and organisations in this stakeholder group
- **Access to skilled labour in organic production/processing**
- **Access to information** on commercialization of organic produce, as well as on innovations in the organic production/processing
- **Government support** for procurement of inputs and certification costs
- **Enabling environment** for differentiating organic or enforced regulations on Organic/Eco/Bio labels to gain the local consumer trust towards the organic production

## **Education Sector**

The Armenian National Agrarian University is the only higher education institution in Armenia that provides agriculture production related subjects. Also there are several agricultural colleges (Vocational education), Agribusiness Teaching Center (ATC, with BS and MS studies), and Acopian Center for the Environment) that has recently introduced the subject called Food. Out of all mentioned Universities, only ANAU has a subject related to organic soil management and ATC has a module on organic agriculture, markets and trends. The limited audience and short number of general classes are not contributing to knowledge transfer through education sector.

Some institutions interviewed do, however, have the capacity to assist in organic agriculture development. The Agribusiness Teaching Center is well equipped to involve international expertise through use of their Video Conference Room, and has a well-established network of international collaborators, Stepanavan State Agriculture College has the capacity to provide soil composition monitoring services, and the American University of Armenia is able to provide a vast foreign network.

Generally speaking the education sector needs a lot of advancement. The following points identify the biggest opportunities in capacity development:

- **Curriculum development** and prioritisation of organic education on the ministerial level.
- **Professional capacities** development /training of instructors
- **Collaboration with other stakeholders** (specifically those involved in training and extension) for increased information and efficient methods of training)
- **Participation of the education sector** institutions in organic production process and possibility of practical training
- **Infrastructure development**, including laboratories and facilities/ test land plots

### **3.3 Individual capacities**

The organic sector development in Armenia can be viewed as a result of a tight collaboration of a limited number of stakeholder groups each having very different organisational and individual capacities. This study is not assessing personal capacities of identified individuals, but reflects capacity and capacity development opportunities of individuals in Armenia in general.

## **Ministries and related agencies**

Representatives of the ministries and ASCs are well aware of governmental procedures and how the governmental system is operating including its strengths and weaknesses and how individuals perform to succeed. This includes capacity to draft policies and follow the process through political decision making. They are also aware about the possibilities and limits of interventions in the present overall political and infrastructure landscape and the possibilities/limits to invest by the government. Among all interviewed officials, the Deputy Minister of the MoA and the Plant Growing and Plant Protection Department Head had a clear understanding of the reality of the sector.

GAMK representatives have been in close collaboration with farmers and their big advantage is successful communication with farmers as well as existing good network of active farmers. Some GAMK representatives were quite knowledgeable about organic farming principles; this was mainly

achieved because of existing organic farming in their region. In addition, since much training for farmers is organised in the GAMK facilities, the advisors may have the opportunity to participate and learn something new. However, it needs to be mentioned that due to unattractive remuneration, motivated well prepared advisors do not accept positions within GAMK-s.

Further learning and increasing of understanding is desirable on the following points

*a) for persons in the administration:*

- Deepen the **understanding of the concept of Organic Agriculture** as a holistic system including the capacities to facilitate the creation of understanding (methodological skills) with stakeholders from inside and stakeholders from other disciplines;
- **Methodological skills** to get information from the sector and to translate them into improved political environment including strategic skills. Attitudes to facilitate the sector with participatory methods and with the goal to empower the private sector actor for the benefit of the society;
- **Advocacy skills** particularly with processing national and international experiences in organic agriculture into useful messages and conceptualising solutions that are relevant for the Armenian government;
- **Communication and representation skills**;
- **Monitoring and evaluation of political measures** related to promotion and to regulation of organic agriculture that are implemented;
- Individual capacity to **translate international experience into an Armenian context** (e.g. PGS experience applied domestically, or good practice of policy setting or conclusions on Organic 3.0 for the Government of Armenia).

*b) for extension agents:*

- **Methodological skills** of extension agents to facilitate conversion and management of organic operations;
- **Skills to acquire information** needed to solve day to day challenges of operations;
- **Networking capacities** along the (organic) value chain and the support services.

## **NGOs**

Mainly NGO actors are well aware of the sector trends, have the urge for learning and are well prepared to lead the tasks they are assigned. Being in close cooperation with farmers, NGO representatives find it necessary to continuously update their skills in organic agriculture in order to be able to address the issues of the beneficiary farmers in a proper manner. Some NGOs have an annual plan for professional development of their employees including trainings and exchange programmes abroad. This group of OASI stakeholder NGOs were the ones most open to collaboration among all interviewees.

Individual capacity development priorities can be identified as follows:

- **Collaboration skills and attitudes** between the NGOs. Collaborative action building and implementation;
- **Goal oriented strategy building** and implementation including monitoring and evaluation. Service design and assessment of marketability of NGO services. Project management skills;

- **Advocacy strategy building and implementation**, which is effective and satisfies policy makers and value chain;
- Web communication and graphic design.

### **Producers**

Considering the fact that there hasn't been any state support designed for organic producers, the farmers have successfully applied international experience and opportunities that came up through international and private sector support to enhance their production and enter the local and foreign markets.

Cases vary from producer to producer. Some have the network and financial means to enter the foreign market as well as market their production on the local market, but some rely heavily on state/international support to access markets, locate inputs for production, and seek support for acquiring certification.

The majority of interviewed organic producers have a clear vision of their future plans and are able to organise the production process. Some of them are self-educated individuals who have started investigating the organic sector on their own via internet articles, and are currently able to provide assistance and training to those who just plan to enter the sector. Some of the producers have used their networks to build up business partnerships, to export production and to bring awareness to their products. Comparably small producers suffer from inability to finance the investments.

The most important aspects, where skills and capacity development for producers would be conducive to development include:

- Principles of Organic Agriculture translated into **farming system building**. Finding suitable solution strategies in farm design and planning;
- **Solving organic production bottlenecks** e.g in plant protection, animal health, soil fertility, access to appropriate genetic resources etc;
- Help seeking for **system optimizing**. A toolbox for farm development mechanism such as Participatory Technology Development (PTD), farmer to farmer dialogue and diversification strategies;
- **Farm management tools** such as revenue and cash flow calculations and farm inventories. Evaluation of options to finance investments and operations;
- **Application of the right guarantee tools** including self-claims, PGS and third party certification depending on the farm situation;
- **Family vision building** and getting support for change facilitation and bridging conversion;
- Understanding **exports** requirements and skills how exports of organic produce can be organised.

### **Education Sector**

The education sector representatives have limited knowledge in organic agriculture, but they have good knowledge in agriculture in general. Some of the education sector representatives have been involved in several research projects on organic agriculture and related topics, as opposed to those colleagues

that have only very rough ideas what organic agriculture is. Therefore capacity development measures should address:

- Understanding of the **organic approach to farming** and the differences to conventional farming with all the consequences. This includes not only the knowledge but also the attitude and the way of holistic system thinking of the persons that are engaged in teaching;
- **Curricula development** for organic specific (teaching organic: usually to (future) organic sector specialists) and organic sensitive (teaching agriculture in general taking into account the specific way of thinking in organic: usually to (future) general agriculture specialists) teaching;
- **Methodological skills** in learner oriented teaching and facilitation of learning;



## 4 Assumed Sector Strategy

### 4.1 Endorsed strategic elements

Armenia has an organic movement, but it is not well united under an institutional structure. There is neither an explicit nor an implicit sector strategy that is endorsed by the stakeholders. Some stakeholders suggest an Armenian National Organic Action Plan<sup>9</sup>, but a development of such a plan has not been initiated yet. The legitimized strategic elements are those published by the government in policies, laws and decrees. Those elements are mentioned in chapter 1.3 and described in detail in the ICARE report: “Stocktaking of policies and legal framework for Organic Agriculture in Armenia”.

The Armenian Organic Agriculture Foundation (AOAF) was established by stakeholders in 2004 with the purpose to act as an umbrella body and legally exists. The foundation has been operational for some years, but is now inactive. This means that the sector currently consists of active organisations and individuals whose activities are not formally coordinated.

Even though there is no international formal assessment of the Armenian government’s understanding of Organic Agriculture (e.g. through a COROS assessment for the family of standards, a participation of a CB in IFOAM Accreditation, through using IFOAM definitions, principles and standards or through equivalence agreements with other countries) the ICARE report about organic policies in Armenia<sup>10</sup> concludes that the organic legislation is line with internationally accepted regulations (with the exception of animal welfare and processing).

There is a private regional standard (Green Caucasus) that is officially assessed against the EU legislation and recognised by the German Accreditation Body-DAkkS as being equivalent to the EU organic regulation. The Armenian organic operators are certified according to the Armenia Law on Organic Agriculture (which is Codex A based), most of them are also certified according to EU and/or US organic regulations, which are simultaneously recognised by Switzerland and Canada. There were also various studies and assessments<sup>11</sup> that made strategic suggestions and recommendations for the country’s organic sector development.

Generally, there is a common understanding that organic agriculture offers a high value strategy with lower inputs in order to improve the economics of farming and processing in a remote country that has opportunities particularly in horticulture, herbs, honey, wild collection and specialty products. It is a strategy to use agro-biodiversity for high value products and Armenia’s advantage of being one of the recognised world hot spots of biodiversity (more than 3500 plant species in an area of 29000sq km<sup>12</sup>).

There is also consensus that there is a big focus on export particularly to Russia, EU, Switzerland and USA, where the good reputation of Armenia (with the potential to improve particularly in EU and US) and the well-developed links of Armenians (not least through the big diaspora in all the target areas) shall be used. Armenia has the necessary infrastructure for organic exports to the EU and USA since the certification body Ecoglobe is accredited there. Canada and Switzerland also recognise organic products certified by Ecoglobe.

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<sup>9</sup> Nune Darbinyan, Survey on Organic Products, within the scope of Grant program «Preparation of second Program 2 for competitiveness of community agricultural resources» (ECAPDEV No. TF05171), 2014.

<sup>10</sup> “Stocktaking of Policies and legal framework for organic agriculture in Armenia” conducted by ICARE in 2015 for OASI internal use

<sup>11</sup> [http://unep.ch/etb/publications/green%20economy/organic%20agriculture%20%20eecca%20study%20on%20green%20economy/unep%20organic\\_eecca%20country%20study.pdf](http://unep.ch/etb/publications/green%20economy/organic%20agriculture%20%20eecca%20study%20on%20green%20economy/unep%20organic_eecca%20country%20study.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> «Coping with Climate Change: Principles and Asian Context» By Ramesha Chandrappa, Sushil Gupta, Umesh Chandra Kulshrestha, Heidelberg, 2011

However, exports alone are not attractive for farmers. The attention to the domestic market needs to be increased so that other crops in the rotation can be sold organically as well. Export products are usually very few so that the objective of diverse farms can only be achieved with a strong domestic market. Therefore, the strategy must include the development of the opportunities that are given in an increasingly aware population, in the expatriate community and in tourists.

Synergies with other strategic goals of the Armenian government (e.g. eco-tourism or income for remote areas) should be better used.

Other strategic elements such as the positioning of the organic sector, its institution building, the share of responsibility and leadership between private and public actors and the investment priorities are under discussion. We can't refer to widely agreed ideas on how to develop the organic sector. Therefore, we describe our assumptions on what would be an advisable strategy in the following chapters based on stakeholder statements, on some other studies and on international experience. These descriptions are necessary to draw a capacity development plan since the implementation of a strategic plan is the required or envisaged capacity/ability on sector level.

## 4.2 Development goals and objectives

Armenia aims at achieving **societal-level objectives** (focus on broader policy goals where organic makes a positive contribution) and at **organic sector-level objectives** (focus on the development of the organic sector). This underpins that organic is not an aim in itself, but a strategy to address national (and global) challenges.

### Goal

Organic Agriculture in Armenia contributes to the sustainable development of agriculture and to the health and wellbeing of people. The Armenian government, civil society and the private sector mainstream organic policies in agriculture. A particular emphasis is set on food sovereignty and food security on national, local and individual levels, while empowering the stakeholders, developing society, respecting nature and valuing cultural expression. Organic Agriculture contributes to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal 2: *End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture*, as well as to Sustainable Development Goal 3: Good health and wellbeing, to SDG 15 and to others.

### Vision

Armenian Agriculture adopts ecologically, socially and economically sound systems, based on the Principles of Organic Agriculture (Health, Ecology, Fairness and Care). It envisions:

- 100% truly sustainable farming, agriculture value chains and consumption.
- A well-organised organic movement and sector supported by the government serving the domestic and international markets

### Overall Objective and Benefits

The stakeholders – under the lead of a well-legitimized Armenian organic stakeholder forum and the Government of Armenia in public private partnership (PPP) develop the organic sector and grow the

market for organic Armenian products internationally and nationally. They aim at expanding the uptake of organic agriculture while continuously improving organic agriculture towards sustainability.

## Overall Strategy

The strategy rests on four pillars: 1) Effective and sustainable organic institutions<sup>13</sup> 2) Communication and promotion 3) Facilitation of innovation 4) Conducive political environment.

The sector builds the institutional infrastructure with full capacity to operate and grow, when approaching the targets. It describes how all the institutions work together in a national organic action plan that indicates the objectives/targets, the roles of the stakeholders and the actions by the government, the private sector and the civil society. Sustaining operations and growing implies that present farm and processing operations grow and that new operations open their business. It also implies that operations are assessed and improved to increase quality of the products. Reference to **strategic pillar 1: Effective and sustainable organic institutions.**

The sector unites and develops its narrative of organic farming in order to address societal challenges and producing high quality food and other agriculture products. The narrative is used to build the understanding of organic agriculture as modern, as innovative, as fair, as promoter of health and ecology and as typically Armenian. Organic food is positioned as trustworthy, sustainable, healthy and authentic. The sector actively communicates with the public through media, product promotion, public events and active marketing. It takes and develops positions in public debates (e.g. in GMO, climate change, food scandals, agriculture policy etc.) in order to underline its positioning. Reference to **strategic pillar 2: Communication and promotion**

The sector promotes innovation. Practice-oriented research for farming develops innovations to improve production, productivity and sustainability. Research addresses production challenges and provides information for communication and for facilitation of market growth. Agriculture advisory systems and business development services and available local certification facilitate the uptake of innovation. Reference to **strategic pillar 3: Facilitation of innovation.**

The Government creates an environment conducive to organic agriculture and promotes the uptake of organic agriculture in close collaboration with the sector representatives. A simplified effective legal framework, enforcement of rules and participation in communication promotes the uptake of OA. Policy measures include the recognition and promotion by high-level officials, it includes an enabling legal framework and it includes a subsidy policy with the aim to reward positive external effects (e.g. ecosystem services) and to use the polluter pay principle for negative external effects of agriculture operations. Reference to **pillar 4: Conducive political framework**

## Specific Objectives and the strategic pillars

To reach the overall goal, the united Armenian organic strategy identifies four specific objectives, with their specific strategic plans:

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<sup>13</sup> **Institutions** are "stable, valued, recurring patterns of behavior." As structures or mechanisms of social order, they govern the behaviour of a set of individuals within a given community. Institutions are identified with a social purpose, transcending individuals and intentions by mediating the rules that govern living behavior. (Wikipedia definition)

### **Specific Objective 1: Effective and sustainable organic institutions**

The institutions are capacitated to exploit the organic opportunities and to reach the societal and sector development goals.

**Pillar strategy:** Create a national umbrella forum with the purpose to build united positions and develop leadership and public presence, strengthen leadership capacities in all organisations and strengthen the institutional capacity to increase demand and operator's production capacities. The implementation of a broadly owned multi-stakeholder national organic action plan sets the development frame.

**Indicators:** Institutional landscape and its performance

### **Specific Objective 2: Communication and promotion**

Consumers in Armenia and importers in target markets (Russia, EU, US, CH) share the narrative of the Armenian organic sector and appreciate the offered values. Government institutions recognise the public value and organic contribution to societal challenges.

**Pillar strategy:** Participatory development of the narrative, find stakeholder endorsement and creatively translate it into public communication via various channels (classic media, social media, sales promotion). Create attractive communication and marketing tools (e.g. point of sale information, product packages etc.) for the use of communicators and operators.

**Indicators:** Consumer and producers perception on organic key issues (trust, value, purpose, readiness to pay premium, organic costs versus conventional, etc.)

### **Specific Objective 3: Facilitation of innovation**

Production constraints and opportunities for conversion and production development are addressed through research and capacity development for farmers, processors, traders and supporting services (e.g. certification, extension).

**Pillar strategy:** Facilitate research by farmers and by scientific institutions. Results need to be made available to practitioners through demonstrations, publications, events and other extension methodology to increase productivity, profitability and sustainability of production. Apart from optimizing production methods, system description, evidence and impact research supports the institutional development and the positive public perception of the national organic sector.

**Indicators:** Uptake of Organic Agriculture (producers, ha), productivity, profitability and sustainability

### **Specific Objective 4: Conducive political framework**

Operators find good production and marketing conditions in terms of transparent, realistic and enabling production requirements and external effects of production are internalized.

**Pillar Strategy:** Operators have easy to apply conditions to produce for the local markets with a national standard that is well adapted to the needs of Armenian producers and the Armenian consumer priorities. International equivalence of this standard is not a priority. For the export markets, the standards of the target market or an equivalent private standard (such as Green Caucasus) apply. Subsidies are paid for conversion, ecosystem services (organic area payments) and promotion.

Subsidies creating negative externalities are abolished. For direct marketing until a certain threshold (in the US it is 5.000 US\$<sup>14</sup>) certificate may not be needed and Participatory Guarantee Systems are an option for non-anonymous domestic markets.

**Indicators:** Development of the uptake of organic agriculture production (area, producers, production) and processing (production). Domestic organic consumer purchases and exports (value)

### Targets and main indicators

**Production:** By 2025, Armenia increases the area under organic cultivation to 10.000 ha (presently 1 000 ha) crop production or 0,5% of agriculture land (from 0,1%) or 2% of arable land and to 50.000 ha wild collection areas (2%). 75% of it is third party certified.

**Producers:** By 2025, 1000 farmers produce organically, either certified or non-certified, fully converted or in conversion.

**Processing and Trade:** By 2025, 100 companies (processors and traders) are organically certified.

**Markets:** By 2025, the volume of the domestic organic market is 8 billion Dram (5 mil US\$). The exports account to US\$ 10 million.

### 4.3 Stakeholder roles and missions

*To resume this strategy each stakeholder has to develop its role:*

**Government:** Governance, communication, lean export conditions, enforcing organic regulation for the domestic market, promoting policies, finances for institutions. Partner with the National Organic Movement.

Lead for pillar 4, support stakeholders in all other pillars

**National Organic Movement:** Forum for all stakeholders to agree on common positions and strategies. Partner with the Government to support an environment conducive to organic development; representing the sector stakeholders, lead for pillars 1&2, advocacy to pillar 4, facilitate for pillar 3.

**Education sector:** a) Capacity development on individual and institutional levels for the sector b) specialized organic training courses (e.g. organic vine production, export requirements and procedures, organic promotion and communication etc.) c) bsc/msc university courses with organic specialization and mainstreaming organic in agriculture education d) mainstreaming organic awareness in school education.

Participate in pillars 1-3.

**Agriculture Extension and NGOs:** a) counselling for farm conversion and production b) farmers group building and organic demonstration/development c) facilitation of value chain building and information

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<sup>14</sup> USDA website - <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/organic-certification/need-be-certified>



flow for innovations d) mobilization of the sector e) mobilization of consumers and awareness creation f) advocacy for organic concerns.

Participate in pillars 1-3.

**Support services:** a) research for innovation and development (public and private mandates) b) certification services and PGS facilitation c) media services (sector mandates) d) scientific services (lab tests, expertise, assessments etc., private mandates), operational and logistics services (private mandates).

Support pillars 2&3

**Farmers:** Agriculture production and ecosystem services with market orientation. Target of pillar 3, stakeholder in all others.

**Processors and traders:** Product development, processing and marketing. Input supply for farmers. Target of pillar 3, stakeholder in all others.

## 5 Capacity development strategy

The capacity development strategy is a contribution to the sector strategy described in chapter 4, assuming that the needed knowledge, skills and attitudes are those that are required to implement the overall plan. This chapter describes the needs for capacity development in order to reach the goal, objectives and targets and it does not limit the activities based on available resources or the scope of certain programmes and projects such as OASIS.

We differentiate between sector, institutional and individual capacity, between the strategic pillars (see chapter 3) and the following forms of capacity development:

### A. Formal capacity development of stakeholders

This includes formal training and events that are outside the normal workflows. These events take place in classrooms, in operators' facilities or in the field. Governmental or private institutions including extension services, universities, consultancy services or event organisers can provide those courses.

### B. Coaching of stakeholders for individual/institutional/sector development and implementation

Coaching is based on support contracts with service providers with the purpose to achieve certain goals. Coaching is supporting stakeholders directly in their organic operations.

### C. Networking, linkage and knowledge exchange building

This form of capacity development includes collaborative actions and learning between stakeholders about organic agriculture.

Since training is oriented to individual persons, there is always an individual learning component included even if the primary purpose is institutional or sector capacity development. Group capacity development efforts always have an institutional effect even if they are directed to sector development. We have put some efforts to assure that the suggested capacity development measures include the sectorial, institutional and individual needs. For the sake of simplicity we don't build categories of events on those three levels. Rather, we categorize in terms of the contribution to the strategic objectives that are explained in chapter 3. Sometimes, the suggested events support more than one pillar (e.g. leadership building). In that case they are mentioned only once.

The Strategy suggests implementation of 44 capacity development measures A1 – A23, B1 – B12 and C1 – C9 as listed here and further detailed in chapter 6. Implementers may pick those measures one by one or by building a package of several measures with synergies. It is recommended that OASI temporarily keeps an overview and a coordination function until this can be handed over to a stakeholder legitimized umbrella forum.

### 5.1 Pillar 1) Effective and sustainable organic institutions

**Contribution to the situation that:** the institutions are capacitated to use the organic opportunities and to reach the societal and sector development goals.

**Capacitating stakeholders to do:** Create a national umbrella forum with the purpose to build united positions and develop leadership and public presence, build leadership capacities in all organisations and build the institutional capacity to increase demand and operator's production capacities. The

implementation of a broadly owned multi-stakeholder national organic action plan sets the development frame.

**Capacity development measures:**

- A1. **Organic leadership course:** Leadership training for persons resuming sector level leadership and responsibility. This include in the short term about 15-25 persons in Armenia<sup>15</sup>;
- A2. **Armenian National Organic Action Plan (ANOAP) course:** National Organic Action Plan building training
- A3. **Stakeholder seminars for umbrella building and participation in ANOAP:** Capacitate for knowledge, skills and attitudes to build collaborative spirit in the institutions and for bottom up building of the organic umbrella.
- A4. **Organic operation management course:** Focus on the management skills for the organic organisations (operators and support services)
- A5. **Mainstreaming OA in Universities, agricultural colleges and schools:** Curricula development in universities and schools
- B1. **Coaching ANOAP:** support for a group in charge of development, approval, implementation and monitoring of a well-legitimized multi-stakeholder Armenian National Organic Action Plan.
- B2. **Mentoring the umbrella:** supporting a well performing multi stakeholder organic umbrella organisation with focus on institutional sustainable management (business case building and business plan) and collaboration/ownership building
- B3. **Supporting advanced market research:** Coach a group to do an in-depth market research that will reveal consumer preferences and attitudes of both the local and international markets.
- B4. **Business development services:** Advise to organisations managers, where to get help and support for management and business development.
- C1. **Multi stakeholder international study tours** to other emerging and well established organic sectors and e.g. to BIOFACH Germany
- C2. **Public annual national forum** for the Armenian organic movement (conference, exhibition and festival)

## 5.2 Pillar 2) Communication and promotion

**Contribution to the situation that** consumers in Armenia and importers in target markets (Russia, EU, US, CH) share the narrative of the Armenian organic sector and appreciate the offered values. Government institutions recognise the public value and organic contribution to societal challenges.

**Capacitating stakeholders to do:** Participatory development of the narrative, find stakeholder endorsement and creatively translate it into public communication via various channels (classic media, social media, sales promotion). Create attractive communication and marketing tools (e.g. point of sale information, product packages etc.) for the use of communicators and operators.

**Capacity development measures:**

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<sup>15</sup> Curriculum of IFOAM Organics International is available

- A6. **Communication strategy development course:** Basics skills of communication and narrative development and organic campaign implementation
- A7. **Day to day communication training:** (organic/non organic) communication professionals get the specifics of Organic Agriculture to use in their jobs.
- A8. **Organic modules in education:** Mainstreaming organic in education
- A9. **Organic lifestyle events** for the public
- B5. **Mentoring communication:** The umbrella organisation is enabled to develop and implement a communication strategy.
- B6. **Coaching export campaigns:** campaign to foreign importers of Armenian key organic products (herbs, fruits, berries, honey: fresh and processed)
- B7. **Coaching national consumer campaigns:** capacity to implement organic information campaigns to consumers
- B8. **Coaching the annual media conference:** supporting organisers in the organic umbrella that prepare the event, the statistics, the inspiring stories and latest trends etc.
- C3. **Linking organic media:** Capacitating persons with organic communication in their job descriptions (e.g. journalists, promoters of retailers, government media services, NGO communicators, consumer magazines etc.) to exchange with each other (forum building) about basics of organic.

### 5.3 Pillar 3) Facilitation of innovation

**Contribution to the situation that** production constraints and opportunities for conversion and production development are addressed through research and capacity development for farmers, processors, traders and supporting services (e.g. certification, extension).

**Capacitating stakeholders to do:** Facilitate research by farmers and by scientific institutions. Results need to be made available to practitioners through demonstrations, publications, events and other extension methodology to increase productivity, profitability and sustainability of production. Apart from optimizing production methods, system description, evidence and impact research supports the institutional development and the positive public perception of the national organic sector.

#### **Capacity development measures:**

- A10. **Research agenda setting workshop:** A seminar of research agenda setters to mainstream organic in their research for organic specific and organic sensitive research;
- A11. **Extension programme workshop:** A seminar for extension service managers and the extension agenda setters on organic agriculture;
- A12. **Extension service training for development of micro-interventions:** enabling extension agents to foster farmers' innovation;
- A13. **Organic innovation facilitation course:** for scientists, extension and practitioners;
- A14. **Fair/organic trading practice training:** how to form agreements between processors and farmers;
- A15. **Seminar on access to grants:** Enable producers/organisations to access grants with relation to organic production;

- A16. **Organic training programmes for field specialists**
- A17. **Sector specific (e.g. herbs, vine) organic processing and marketing courses;**
- A18. **Usage of organic fertilizers:** a training for producers;
- A19. **Vocational education for future organic farmers:** a dual system for farmer education;
- A20. **Organic marketing course**
- A21. **Organic producers' cooperatives, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and PGS**
  - B9. **Field demonstrations by extension services:** Capacitate extension to showcase innovations on site.
  - B10. **Coaching innovation facilitators.** Advise to rural service providers on organic innovations.
- C4. **Rural Service Provider platform:** Social bonding and knowledge exchange for rural service providers
- C5. **Market appraisal and export supply chain assessment trips:** Capacitate exporters to assess conditions to fulfil for exports of organic products
- C6. **Experience sharing with international organic research**

#### 5.4 Pillar 4) Conducive political environment

**Contribution to the situation that** operators find good production and marketing conditions in terms of transparent, realistic and enabling production requirements and external effects of production are internalized.

**Capacitating stakeholders to do:** Operators have easy to apply conditions to produce for the local markets with a national standard that is well adapted to the needs of Armenian producers and the Armenian consumer priorities.

**Capacity development measures:**

- A22. **Good organic governance:** a one-year on the job course for government officials about best practice of promoting and regulating the organic sector;
- A23. **Advocacy training** for representatives of the organic industry sector including farmers, processors/traders and consumers;
- B11. **Support for accreditation services for organic CBs:** facilitate the building of a governmental CB accreditation service;
- B12. **Policy development and organic competent authority:** coaching the organic competence of the ministry of agriculture. Market oversight, regulation, policy building/implementation and rule enforcement;
- C7. **Government exchange programme:** ministers and competent authorities of Armenia and other countries meet for assessing the conduciveness of the Armenian organic sector.
- C8. **Organic policy update information events** for civil servants and private sector;
- C9. **Annual organic strategic policy dialogue:** A high level meeting of government and sector

## 6 Capacity development action options

This chapter lists the details of the capacity building activities that are suggested in chapter 5. Each activity is described with the main competence gained, the participants, the duration and the priority of the action. The list is like a menu to pick from depending on the needs, priorities and possibilities of those ready to invest in capacity in the organic sector in Armenia.

### 6.1 Capacity development of pillar 1: Effective and sustainable organic institutions

#### A1 Organic Leadership Course:

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term <sup>16</sup>	Remarks
Leadership development for persons resuming sector level leadership and responsibility	Origin of OA, Organic Landmarks, farming systems, organic statistics, GM/pesticides/misconceptions, processing/trade, markets/marketing, organic guarantee, supporting structures, advocacy and policy setting, communication, leadership and management, participatory methodology, organic 3.0  Own development plan building	20-25 from all institutions	2 times one week and 10 Webinars	Very high mid-term	International tuition and national experts. Detail curriculum and experience available at IFOAM Organics International. Language barrier to be take into account.

#### A2 Armenian National Organic Action Plan (ANOAP) course:

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Course for a well legitimized working group that develops ANOAP and monitors its implementation	ANOAP purpose, process, ownership and momentum building, resource mobilization, structure, SMART objectives/ indicators/ plan building, organic strategies, decision making, monitoring, implementation. Comprehensive information on organic agriculture best practices	Ca. 10, official working group members	3 times 3 days	Very High, short-term	Orgap.org platform has content.  Training/ group performance separate but interlinked  International tuition

<sup>16</sup> Short term can be seen as <1 year, mid term 1-3 years and long term >3 years. This refers to the impact that can be expected.



**A3 Stakeholder seminars for umbrella building and participation in ANOAP**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Regional seminars implemented jointly for all groups of stakeholders on umbrella building	Ownership towards sector development in the country. Basic OA positions and national structure building with participatory approach. Organic advocacy position building and development priority setting. ANOAP participation	All groups of stakeholders in the regions	1 day each in various regions	High. Short to mid term	Precondition is a trustful and capable umbrella. Supports A2, B1 and C2.

**A4 Organic operation management course**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Course for organic management of farms, processing & trade units and support services	Basics of OA, institutional and self-management. Application of management tools such as planning, budgeting, reporting, staff management, strategic planning etc.	Persons in management positions in the organic industry	One year on the job with monthly 1 – 2 days trainings	High Short to mid term	Demand assumed, complements A1 with different level& content

**A5 Mainstreaming OA in universities and schools**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Course for OA curriculum development in ANAU, AUA, and the 4 agricultural colleges across the country	Basic knowledge and familiarity with OA practices, curricula options for OA awareness. Availability of specialists on the subject for teaching	ANAU, ag. Colleges, ICARE, AUA curricula developers and leading teachers	2-3 days course including an excursion	Medium Short term	No cost for ANAU instructors (incorporated in organic curriculum project with BOKU).

**B1 Coaching ANOAP**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
A min. one-year on the job coaching for the working group in charge of ANOAP development.	Supervision on ANOAP development, Reflection on practical bottlenecks and procedures including possible conflict resolutions on personal and content	Chair/secretary of the working group with interactions with the whole ANOAP working group	1 day per month and more if needs arises	Very high, short term	Links to A2 and A1 National coach with internat. backstopping recommended.

**B2 Mentoring the umbrella**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
A two years on the job support for the umbrella board and leading staff	Transferring the knowledge in uniting the movement, strong emphases on day to day problems and on methodology of participation, advocacy, governance, strategy, operational management, fundraising, financial management, public reporting and communication	Board and leading staff of umbrella organisation	1 day per month and individual coaching meetings	High, short term if momentum exists, otherwise long term	Precondition is a committed institution (not there right now)  Participation in A1 is precondition, international backstopping recommended

**B3 Supporting advanced market research**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Coach a group that has a mandate for an in-depth market research of both the local and international markets.	Market study methodology, Organic market specifics (domestic and international), access to relevant networks and information databases, digestion of existing studies (e.g. UNEP/IFOAM studies)	Economists with the mandate to make a market study	1 day per month and individual coaching for duration of study	Medium, short term once mandate exists	Only if market study is mandated by somebody

**B4 Business development services**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Individual advice to managers to get support for management and business development.	Self analysis of own business, landscape of business development services in Armenia and internationally. Methods to obtain support.	Manager in the operations, same target as in A11	One time half day	Medium, Short to mid term	A continuous offer to managers placed in the umbrella organisation

**C1 Multi stakeholder international study tours**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Study tours for producers and ministry officials to visit organic production in	Comprehensive information on organic agriculture/ processing best practices, ability to understand strategies and factors of	Export oriented producers. Sector leaders,	1-2 weeks plus various preparation and	Low to medium, mid - term	Only if there is demand and cost recovery. Ideally timed with BIOFACH

leading European countries (e.g. Moldova, Ukraine, Romania, Austria, Switzerland)	success and failures. Transfer the knowledge in sector policy making (private and government) and coaching to other agencies. High level network building	MoA	digestion days		Nuremberg and/or Organic World Congress
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**C2 Public annual national forum**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Annual national organic event with conference, exhibitions, assemblies and festival for sector and consumers	National networking, experience transfer and national organic sector identity and ownership building.  Science, sector and consumer discussions, exhibitions and celebrations. National policy dialog and inspiration of stakeholders	All groups, 100 - 200 experts/guests and several hundreds public visitors (increasing year by year)	1-2 days	Very high, annual.	Precondition is a capable, inclusive organiser  Many exampl. in other countries  Various event concepts are possible  Can be joined with the Green Lane annual harvest festival

**6.2 Capacity development pillar 2: Communication and promotion****A6 Communication strategy development course**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Course for communication strategy development	Skills of communication and narrative development and campaign implementation	NGO-s, MoA persons with authority to make comm. strategies	2 times 4 days in 3 months	Very high  Medium to long-term	Integration of international tuition  No cost will be incurred if incorporated within the Ministry of Agriculture capacity development activities (ENPARD)

**A7 Day to day communication training**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Course to train individual communication skills	Communication skills in various situations (writing, visual and oral). Organic messaging for corporate comm., campaigning, crises comm. etc.	Comm. professionals	3 times 3 days over 6 months	Medium Long term	Tuition with comm and with organic background  No cost will be incurred if incorporated within the Ministry of Agriculture capacity development activities (ENPARD)

**A8 Organic modules in education**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
An organic module in various versions that can be used in Universities/ schools etc.	Basics of OA for citizens and consumers. Multiple benefits for consumers and society. Versions from very short (1') to a series of lessons (weekly during a semester)	Pupils and students	1 h to various lessons	Medium Long term	Link to A5

**A9 Organic lifestyle events**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Training a group of persons that want to organise public organic lifestyle events	Basics of OA, event management, organic lifestyle/LOHAS, cooking/catering, celebrities and organic	Organisers of such an event	2 days	Low Long term	Precondition is that an organisation wants to make organic lifestyle events happen

**B5 Mentoring communication**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Day to day on the job support	Problem solving, message finding, crises communication	Comm professionals	1 day per quarter	Medium	Connection with A4, A5 and

and supervision of comm specialists in small group	and linking to information and supporting networks		group coaching	Long term	B2
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**B6 Coaching export campaigns**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Coaching campaigns to foreign importers of Armenian key products (herbs, fruits, berries, honey etc.)	Feedback to plans that are developed by Armenian exporters/export promotion from an importer perspective  Opening access to campaign addressees.	Campaigners from exporting companies, umbrella and MoA	Meetings various times before and during the campaign	Medium Mid term	On demand if such a campaign is launched, link to B3 and C1, international perspective required

**B7 Coaching national consumer campaigns**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Coaching awareness raising campaigns for OA promotion nationwide	Positioning OA and translating the positioning in agency briefs, reflection of agency proposals including participation of stakeholders and campaign decision making	Implementer of a national consumer campaign (umbrella, operator, retailer etc.)	Meetings various times before and during the campaign	Very high Short term	On demand if there is an initiative for consumer campaigns

**B8 Coaching the annual media conference**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Coaching of the event preparations	Preparations of the event, the statistics, the inspiring stories, the advocacy messages/latest trends the media network, the logistics etc.	Umbrella organisation	Various meetings to prepare the annual media conference	High Short term	Precondition is that an umbrella organisation takes the responsibility for annual media conferences

**C3 Linking organic media**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Annual prestigious	Progress of sector	Journalists,	Evening	Medium	Link with C2,

network events of organic/non organic communicators to exchange with each other about basics and actuals of organic	development in Armenia and worldwide. Actual topics including crises and breaking news. Linking OA and lifestyle. Inspiring keynotes and celebrities.  Annual media conference	promoters of retailers, government media services, NGO communicators, consumer magazines	event	Mid term	A3, A4, B4 and B6
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### 6.3 Capacity development pillar 3: Facilitation of innovation

#### A10 Research agenda setting workshop

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
A seminar of research agenda setters	Organic specific and organic sensitive research. Increased information on organic production/benefits/statistics, Capacity to formulate convincing organic sensitive objectives, strategies and research methodology.	Universities, research agenda setters, MoA, NGO-s,	1-2 day	Medium Mid-long term	The WS addresses experienced participants in research agenda that only need to learn the specifics of organic

#### A11 Extension programme workshop

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Seminar for extension service managers and the extension agenda setters	Specifics on organic sensitive extension agenda setting, multiple benefits of OA, methodology of extension of organic content, participation and extension messaging	Advisory Service Managers, NGOs, Ministry	2 days	High Short term	WS addresses persons that have the power to do extension service agenda setting

#### A12 Extension service training for development of micro-interventions

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
A course for interested extension agents for facilitation of micro-interventions at farm level	Basics of OA and OA system building, participatory research and extension methodology, integrated farm development approach, micro-interventions of extension in planning, implementation and	Interested extension agents (private and public)	Over 9 months, 2 times 1 week and several 1-2 days	Very high Short-mid term	IFOAM OI has curriculum for such training. International involvement recommended



	evaluation. Potential micro-interventions include low cost greenhouses, on farm fruit processing or innovative varieties and crops.		meetings		
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**A13 Organic innovation facilitation**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Various courses of interaction between science and practitioners for key themes	Actual topics with high interests such as conversion, farm planning, plant protection, animal health, soil nutrition/fertilization, certification, farm management etc.  Specific interest in: Greenhouse production, non traditional crop/diversification, post harvest/on farm processing  The course includes a personal counseling of participants with their plans	Science, extension and producers	3-5 days each	High Mid term	This is a regular series of training offered by a rural training center

**A14 Fair trading practice training**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority / term	Remarks
Development of fair agreements between the producers and processors	Workshops to develop fair and clear terms of trade for producers and processors  Product specifications, quality, price building, aspects of fairness (reliability, long term, price building, communication)	producers and processors	1 - 2 day	High Mid term	WS are product specific

**A15 Seminar on access to grants**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Workshop to facilitate acquisition of grants from international organisations	Grant opportunities and conditions. Does and don'ts in formulation of applications. Turning ideas and realities into concepts that comply with donor criteria	Producers and organisations	2 days	Low Short term	Inviting donors to understand potential grant receiver to increase efficiency

**A 16 Training programmes for field specialists**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Send specialists to international training on organic - plant protection - plant nutrition - organic inputs - veterinary - food processing in high potential products (fruits, herbs, dairy, honey)  As training of trainers	Deep specialized subject knowledge including ability to teach/counsel in the 5 fields	2 specialists for each topic that are available for training and expertise in Armenia for government, extension services and operators.	1 year	High mid term	May be combined with master study

**A17 Sector specific (e.g. herbs, vine) processing and marketing course**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority / term	Remarks
Sector specific courses master classes for high potential products	Processing and marketing of high potential products (fruits, vine, herbs, honey) for exports.	Entrepreneurs, (future) industry employees, specialists from MoA Agro-Processing Department		Medium mid term	ICARE has wine business classes.

**A18 Foster the usage of organic fertilizers**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Course for using organic fertilization by extension services	Options of fertilization and production of organic fertilizers, experiment and evidence building of effectiveness.	Farmers	4 times 1 day	Medium Mid term	Decentralized. Can be combined with A12

**A19 Vocational education for future organic farmers**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Vocational education of young farmers. Dual system with practical	Whole organic farm design and management including all production techniques in sufficient scale for a decent	Future organic farmers	2 years apprenticeship 6 months	Medium Long term	Shen training center or Green Lane training

apprenticeship on organic farm	livelihood		classroom training		center
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**A20 Organic marketing course**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Training on organic production marketing to boost sales of organic produce, successful marketing approaches for organic produce promotion.	General marketing techniques, briefing of OA positioning, organic brand promises International successes and failures Marketing of specific products, promotion of organic produce	(potential) retailers Entrepreneurs, (future) industry employees, specialists from MoA	1 week and 2 days (after 10 months)	Medium Short term	Local and international expertise need to be combined  Specialists of "Green Day" Organic store as potential trainer

**A21. Organic producers' cooperatives, CSA and PGS**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Training on building and developing organic producers' cooperatives and PGS groups	Producers' cooperatives and community supported agriculture, PGS and social processes.	NGOs (Shen, Green Lane) and community development agents	2 training for 5 days during one year with various coaching meeting in between	Medium mid term	International experience from Germany is asked

**B9 Field demonstrations by extension services**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Demonstration of good operations for high potential crops/products	Design and management of high potential crops/ products on good sites	Producers in a region	Various 1 day demonstrations over the season	Medium Long term	In combination with A12 and A18 and A19

**B10 Coaching innovation facilitators**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Extension agents that act as innovation	Addressing day to day issues in facilitation of innovations including for technical,	Extension agents, industry	Quarterly group meetings and	Medium mid term	In combination with A12 and

facilitator (including farmers group/PGS) get the opportunity for personal counselling	managerial, methodological and institutional issues	consultants and farmer group facilitators (NGOs)	individual meetings/ phone calls on demand		A21
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**C4 Rural Service Provider platform**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Rural service providers share a social/ knowledge platform for knowledge exchange	All kind of knowledge/ experience concerned by extension agents including factual knowledge and for building social capital and motivation. Face to face events (e.g. at national forum (C2) support virtual interactions.	Rural Service providers	permanent	Medium mid term	IFOAM OI maintains such a platform in various countries (MAAN platform), in combination with A12

**C5 Market appraisal and export supply chain assessment trips**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
(Rapid) Market Appraisal along value chain of high potential product. Study tour to target market	Appraisal of bottlenecks of selected supply chain including quality requirements, certification and other legal requirements, cost calculations and competitiveness analyses. Network and customer trust building.	Methodological experts and industry representatives	2-3 weeks dependent on complexity of the market	High Mid term	BIOFACH is an opportunity. Link to B3

**C6 Experience sharing with international organic research**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration		Remarks
Study tour to international organic research institutes (e.g. FiBL) and research networks (eg. TIPI)	Visit international research institutes, get familiar with research on organic products, especially research on organic berries	Researchers and NGO specialists (Green Lane)	1-2 weeks	Medium Mid term	Organic World Congress and TIPI science days at BIOFACHs are an opportunity

## 6.4 Capacity development pillar 4: Conducive political framework

### A22 Good organic governance course:

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
A one-year on the job course for government officials about best practice of promoting and regulating the organic sector. Option to include a study visit to other competent authority e.g. in Austria	Basics of OA, best practice of organic governance including sector development, promotion and regulation. Does and don'ts in policy setting and coherence in regulation/enforcement. Opportunities and potential pitfalls of government interventions in the Armenian context. Consumer trust building measures.	National and local government representatives	2 times 4 days and monthly meetings	Very high Mid to long term	IFOAM literature and expertise available International tuition

### A23 Advocacy training

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Best practice in Advocacy course for Armenia.	The policy context in Armenia, political processes and participation options offered by the political system. Advocacy methodology and strategy. Organic industry interests. Multiple societal benefits of OA. Messaging and media work. Trust and respect building in advocacy.	NGOs, farmers, processors, traders, consumers representatives media	4 times 4 days over a year with meetings in between.	Very high mid term	Synergies with A21 if picked at the same time.

### B11 Support for accreditation services for organic CBs

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Counselling support for the building of a government accreditation service of Organic CBs	Accreditation standards (e.g. ISO 17065 or IFOAM Accreditation Requirements) accreditation audit implementation. Advise to government when setting up an accreditation body in planning, regulation, setting up and performance. Communication to media	Persons in charge of accreditation unit and staff	Various meetings over 2-3 years	Medium-low Long term	Strong growth of operators and CBs is a precondition, demand of government required. International expertise e.g. by IOAS

**B12 Policy development and organic competent authority**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Coaching of competent authority of Armenia	TOR of competent authority and best practice of day-to-day operations. Coaching persons in charge by addressing their questions for performance and problems solving	Staff of organic competent authority of Armenia	Monthly coaching meetings	Medium-low Long term	Formal demand of MoA required International expertise required

**C7 Policy update information and exchange events**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
Annual information events for policy updates	Public information about organic policy setting and recent developments	Public	2 hours	Very high mid term	Potentially clustered with C2 and Annual media conference

**C8 Government exchange programme**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
International exchange events with other Governments e.g. in the CIS	Regular coordination of organic competent authorities in the CIS possibly with outside guests (e.g. target markets). Visits of operations and understanding of their problems.	Competent organic authorities in CIS	1-2 days biannually	Medium Mid term	IFOAM Euro Asia as potential partner

**C9 Annual strategic policy dialogue**

Description	Curriculum/gained competence	Participants	Duration	Priority/term	Remarks
High-level meeting of ministry and sector (umbrella organisation) to assess conduciveness and coherence of policy environment.	Sector and policy situation assessment including stage of implementation of ANOAP and policy, regulation coherence.	High-level ministry and organic umbrella. Max 10 persons	Half day	High Short term	



## 7 Conclusions

Capacity development of all stakeholders at the different levels (individual, organisational and sector) is an important aspect in the OASI project. The comprehensive capacity needs assessment in this study revealed the existing capacity needs, challenges and gaps in the organic sector.

The main gap in organic development is the lack of leadership and coordination for a united movement. A participatory developed Armenian National Organic Action Plan that is owned by all stakeholders and led by a well-legitimised umbrella organisation together with the Government provides strategic clarity and enables action in priority areas.

A major challenge in Armenia is the absence of a good market for Armenian organic products. According to the survey results, this is due to the low level of awareness and trust towards Armenian organic products among consumers. The importance of awareness raising campaigns for consumers should not be underestimated. Activities to that end include, but are not limited to TV programmes, tastings, seminars, organic agro-tourism trips (for establishing producer-consumer bonds), books, brochures for schools, kindergartens and farmers, organic school lunches. For a greater impact, regulation for consumer rights protection regulation on organic labels can be developed and enforced.

In order to expand the recognition for Armenian produce abroad, coaching campaigns to foreign importers of Armenian key products (herbs, fruits, berries, honey etc.) should be done. Potential markets for the export of Armenian products should be investigated. Information on organic farming areas, production and processing volumes must be made available.

The further major problem in the OA sector is the lack of appropriate specialists. In order to come up with a proper solution with this gap, several crucial steps should be undertaken. Organic training manuals must be elaborated with short-term modules, educational materials. Training for NGO, agriculture extension specialists, as well as private sector professionals must be organised and implemented (necessary training lists for different stakeholders are presented in Section 6 of this Report). For gaining international experience exchange programmes might be useful.

Periodical training for lecturers, creating educational programmes based on the international standards for bachelor and master programmes must be taken into consideration. As an optional subject, this module can be introduced in university programmes. Regular hands-on training and demonstrations of best practice of organic agriculture must be organised; experience sharing and best practices on organic horticulture at organic orchards (oldest ones are located in Argina, Lusakn and Shenik communities) in Armenia must be implemented.

Apart from regular training and seminars, interests of organic producers and processors should be represented with respect to access to market and inputs. Organic development projects especially in the early stage of development must be under the state support and donor funding can be obtained for additional backing. As far as non-certified farming goes, information is to be shared regularly with non-certified organic farmers (and shared among other stakeholders too).

In order to considerably improve product awareness and loyalty towards Armenian organic produce, special trainings on PGS (Participatory Guarantee System) are envisaged. It is also planned to provide consultancy and support at applying for organic certificate to interested farmers and processors on the choice of the best mode of certification such as individual certification, coupled certification with the procurer (cost of certification covered by the procurer/processor), Group Certification – Internal Control System (specially for cooperatives), etc.

## 8 Appendices

### 8.1 References

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## 8.2 Workshop agenda

### **Validation workshop on the results of the Organic Agriculture Support Initiative (OASI) stakeholders' needs assessment**

*29 August at 13:30*

*DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, 3rd floor, Milano hall*

*Address: Grigor Lusavorich Street, 4/2*

#### **Agenda**

13:30 - 14:00	Registration
14:00 - 14:30	Opening and welcome address <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• David Muckenhuber, OASI</li><li>• John Barker, EU Delegation to Armenia</li><li>• Armen Harutyunyan, Ministry of Agriculture of the RA</li><li>• Markus Arbenz, IFOAM Organics International</li></ul>
14:30 - 16:00	OASI stakeholders need assessment interview results validation <i>industry experts working in groups with moderators</i>
16:00 - 16:20	Coffee Break
16:20 - 16:45	Presentation of group results by rapporteurs
16:45 - 17:15	Sector development Case Study <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Markus Arbenz, IFOAM Organics International</li></ul>
17:15 - 17:45	Questions and Answers, Participants' Suggestions on next steps, closing remarks

Simultaneous translation ARM/EN was provided.

### 8.3 Questionnaires

The Questionnaire for the Ministries is presented as a sample below, the questions were adjusted for 6 different questionnaire versions – for Ministries, ASC-s, NGO –s, Education sector, Producers/Processors and Certifying Body.

#### Ministries

1. Do you think there is a demand for organic produce in Armenia (Please justify your answer)?
2. What organic commodities produced in Armenia may have high potential?
3. Please state what issues farmers may have while doing organic production?
4. How to motivate the farmer to produce organic?
5. What difficulties do farmers face in certification process?
6. Where can you buy organic produce and where can farmers sell organic production?
7. How to induce consumers to consume organic?
8. Please state what options will best work for organic agriculture promotion?
9. Please indicate the gaps in expertise and skills which strictly hinder the organic sector development in the country in general?
10. What additional skills or professionals might your organisation need to contribute more efficiently to the development of the organic sector in the country?
11. Please discuss the institutional needs of your organisation to better contribute to the development of organic sector.
12. Are you aware of any planned policy changes that will contribute to development of organic sector in Armenia? If yes, please provide details.
13. What can be improved in current policies (legal, regulatory, export) and in terms of infrastructure (facilities, labs, export promotion hubs) *read the options only if the respondent is having difficulties addressing the question* to foster the development and trade of the organic sector in Armenia.
14. Could you please provide your opinion on State advisory services capacity to serve as organic extension agents?
15. Please rank the importance of each body for development of organic sector.  
(1 signifies that the option is totally unimportant and 5 signifies that the option is very important. The numbers in-between represent intermediary levels of importance to you).

	Not Important			Very Important			
							What should be the role of these bodies in the process of organic sector development?
Government Institutions	1	2	3	4	5		
NGOs	1	2	3	4	5		
International Organisations	1	2	3	4	5		

Farmer Cooperatives	1	2	3	4	5	
Education Sector	1	2	3	4	5	
Others	1	2	3	4	5	

16. Please rank these factors according to their importance to organic market development in Armenia.

*1 signifies that the factor is totally unimportant to you and option 5 signifies that the factor is very important to you. The numbers in-between represent intermediary levels of importance to you.*

	Not Important			Very Important	
	1	2	3	4	5
Strong consumer demand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
High degree of involvement by food companies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sales through conventional supermarkets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Government funded special research programmes on organic agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organic price premiums	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nationwide active promotion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Well qualified professionals with expertise in organic agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education on organic agriculture at schools and at universities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Notes



**Funded by:**



European Union

The European Commission is the EU's executive body. The European Union is made up of 28 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders.

**Delegation of the European Union to Armenia**

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Austrian engagement in Armenia dates from the severe earthquake in 1988, when it provided humanitarian aid. Since 2011, Armenia has been a priority country of Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC). It focuses on developing agriculture, aims at promoting economic activity by improving general conditions and seeks to contribute to modernizing and raising agricultural production through know-how transfer.

**Austrian Development Agency**

Zelinkagasse 2 1010, Vienna, Austria  
Phone: +43 1 90399 – 0

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**Government Counterpart:**



The Republic of Armenia Ministry of Agriculture is a republican body of executive authority, which develops and implements RA government's policies in the field of agriculture and forestry management.

**Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Armenia**

Government Building 3, Republic Square, Yerevan 0010  
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**OASI Project:**



The Organic Agriculture Support Initiative (OASI), a project funded by the European Union and co-funded and implemented by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the operational unit of the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC), aims at further developing organic agriculture in Armenia. The project will contribute to the expansion and marketing of Armenian organic production on domestic and international markets by improving the legal and regulatory framework and providing comprehensive marketing support. The total budget is EUR 3.3 Million.

**Organic Agriculture Support Initiative**

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