THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRIVATIZED AGRICULTURE IN ARMENIA

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Introduction
Armenia is a former republic of the Soviet Union about the size of the State of Maryland and with a population of 3 million people. The break-up of the former Soviet Union accelerated the collapse of Armenia’s industrial and agricultural production. As Armenia peacefully declared its independence, agriculture went from being a high output and export-oriented sector to one of subsistence level poverty. Stability in Armenia depends on a viable agriculture and with an engaged rural population.

The Presentation
The development challenge for assistance organizations like the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is not necessarily to help create additional public institutions but rather to promote a service and work ethic that will help to foster and sustain economic change. In post–soviet transition agriculture, numerous economic opportunities exist for starting agricultural services and technical assistance to small and medium sized agricultural enterprises. In Armenia, almost every village household has agricultural assets that are underutilized. With a little help, there is potential to develop successful farm entrepreneurs. There also exist knowledgeable and well-trained professionals who at one time did produce agricultural products for both domestic and export markets, and markets abroad do exist for Armenian products. The poster presentation will show how research and extension can be applied to produce quality products, to providing new or existing information for producers to find new markets for their products. The presentation features the use of U.S. Land Grant University specialists for training Armenian counterparts, in building a healthy agricultural sector. These specialists target agricultural commodities that have potentials and rebuild the market chain from producer to consumer. It will also address the challenge of making research and extension activities sustainable and non-dependant on continuous USDA and U.S. dollars infusions.

Purpose of Poster
The purpose of this poster is to describe a developmental approach used, by USDA in Armenia, for improving the agricultural sector in a developing country. It shows methods for creating successful agribusinesses, and building a structural framework that integrates education, research, and the private farming, food production sector that makes it a worthy emerging trends in Agricultural and Extension Education.

Major Points or Information to be Shared
The application of technical assistance and economic assets can lead to a successful private economic enterprise. These economic entities fuel the engine around which research and extension systems can be built. One example of this is the USDA dairy collection initiative and dairy marketing associations in Armenia. The improvement of dairy products by the Armenian Extension Service and university researchers has helped farmers find new markets such as the ice-cream, cheese, or yogurt manufacturers who need a high quality milk supply. The manufacturers, in turn, can develop better markets and export potential for their goods. This poster describes this specific initiative and other ag product areas, where a process has successfully been applied and replicated. By pairing technical expertise of U.S. university advisors to Armenian farmers and agribusiness owners, a process of experiential learning takes place which ensures the work continues after US partners leave. The American specialists from U.S. Land Grant Universities train Armenian counterparts during their 3 – 10 month tour of duty in Armenia. After returning to the US and to their University or Extension System jobs, specialists become part of an electronic resource base that continues to be available for technical help, information, and training.

Educational Importance
The presentation will provide a forum for professionals in agricultural development to hear and discuss an alternative method for research, education and extension capacity building. Sharing the success and failures of setting up and nurturing the Extension Service capabilities in a developing region, can help colleagues in other countries who are