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**ALBANIAN AGRICULTURE  
COMPETITIVENESS**

# **ALBANIAN AGRICULTURE COMPETITIVENESS PROJECT**

**Contract No. EDH-I-00-05-00004-00**

**DAI**

## **QUARTERLY REPORT**

**April - June 2008**

This report was prepared by DAI for review by USAID.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

AAC's momentum and pace accelerated significantly during the third quarter resulting in considerable progress towards achievement of its first year targets.

Component one, Strengthen Producer Capacity for Competitive Commercial Farming, achieved substantial results with most targets met or exceeded. Component two, Strengthen Capacity for Market Development, also saw a quickening of its activities, especially through program coordination with EDEM. Component three, Increase Access to and Use of Timely and Reliable Market Information, saw steady progress towards meeting first year targets.

The impressive gains achieved in Components 1 and 2 are due, in large part, to the development and implementation of strategic and pragmatic plans of action for each of the four high value products. Several training sessions, field trials and meetings aiming to establish linkages between producers and buyers in local and export markets were organized to achieve project objectives for the abovementioned components.

AAC continues to explore effective ways of working to develop profitable farm business models for the four products through the outreach programs in the three field offices. Lushnje and the Northwest areas with large coastal areas and favorable growing conditions offer the greatest options for working with the entire value chain for the four products. Korce, located in a mountainous region with a different set of growing conditions, has fewer options for working with all of the value chain products on a competitive basis.

## **COORDINATION EFFORTS**

Engagement with value chain actors and their public and private support network is viewed as crucial to expanding AAC's enterprise development model. To this end, AAC staff continue to meet regularly with the main commercial actors in the agricultural value chain, Albanian government officials, donor organizations, and donor-supported contractors. Indicative of the important role AAC is playing in the sector, AAC is seeing a shift in who is requesting meetings. Increasingly it is AAC partners who are asking to meet and discuss involvement in project activities.

Some of the organizations AAC has met with this quarter include: SNV, Spanish Aid, FAO, EBRD, World Bank and U.S. Peace Corps, who have expressed interest in volunteers providing support to AAC clients. Meetings with Albanian Government included staff from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection at the national, regional and commune levels. These meetings were related mainly to Components #1 and #3.

## **OPERATIONS**

During this period, AAC underwent other changes in project management.

- Ed Reinauer began his assignment as the AAC Chief Of Party on April 1, 2008.
- Bronwyn Irwin, HO Technical Associate was replaced by Ingrid Arsoedijero.

Support staff was hired to assist the AAC professional staff .

- Three professional drivers hired for the three offices Tirana, Lushnje and Korçe, they joined the AAC team on May.

The staffing pattern for the third quarter of the AAC Project follows<sup>1</sup>:

## **PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

Ed Reinauer Chief of Party

### **Component #1**

#### **STRENGTHEN PRODUCER CAPACITY FOR COMPETITIVE COMMERCIAL FARMING**

Paul Sommers- Tirana  
Ilir Pilku- Tirana Grants Manager  
Ilir Mehmeti-Northern Region (based in Tirana)

#### **Lushnje Office**

Piro Rapushi  
Josif Liko  
Luto Goga  
Kostandin Koço (Saranda)

#### **Korçe Office**

Lefter Turtulli  
Mehmet Pupa  
Pellumb Tuxhari

### **Component #2**

#### **STRENGTHEN CAPACITY FOR MARKET DEVELOPMENT**

Ed Reinauer - Chief of Party Tirana  
Paul Sommers - Tirana  
Piro Rapushi- Lushnje Office  
Lefter Turtulli- Korçe Office  
Ilir Mehmeti- Northern Region

Component #3

INCREASE ACCESS TO AND USE OF TIMELY AND RELIABLE MARKET INFORMATION

Bled Hodobashi-Tirana  
Monika Thimo-Korçe  
Majilinda Qorri-Lushjne

Administration

Merita Janushi - Tirana

Support staff - Drivers

Kujtim Kertalli - Tirana  
Vangjel Tanku - Lushnje  
Shpetim Goxhaj - Korçe

## **SUCCESS STORIES**

### **RAPID SOIL TESTS IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY FROM THE GROUND UP**

Most of Albania's competitive growers have one thing in common: they have never had their soil analyzed. The reasons are about the same: the time involved going to and from the government laboratory, high cost, and understanding how to interpret the scientifically written results. The AAC Project is showing scores of growers the value of soil testing, through a user friendly hands-on technique, as a first step to improving productivity.

#### **Why soil testing?**

Commercial fertilizer prices are heading in one direction: straight up. Prices have increased between 50-100% in just one year. If applied *correctly* fertilizers can boost yields and quality. AAC has determined most growers are not in this category. If applied *incorrectly* it can increase cost, reduce yields, increase pest problems, create soil and water pollution, and affect quality. In AAC's assessment most growers are in this category.

#### **What tests are done?**

AAC used the highly popular and easy to understand Rapid Test Kits made in the USA. The kit analyzed four elements: Nitrogen, Phosphorous, and Potash, and soil PH. The results are color coded so the grower can see instantly the fertility condition of the soil.

#### **How are they done?**

The AAC outreach team visit their clients, take soil samples from around their plots, make the preparation and do the test right on the site in partnership with the farmer. In a short period of time the grower is able to see before their eyes the situation of their soil. The AAC Outreach staff then share a chart which indicates the approximate amount of fertilizer needed to attain a status of normal for that crop.

Said one grower, "the color in the test kit got so dark it went over the "sufficient" color mark. I clearly saw that I was applying way too much phosphorous. I was throwing away money!"

Another grower saw the very light color indicating that potash is very deficient. Without adequate potash the fruit would not reach the quality needed for sale as a high value product.



*Training growers on soil test kits use*

### **Impact**

Growers who have tested their own soil under guidance of the AAC Team have either reduced or increased the amount they apply. Some growers have significantly reduced the amount they use by as such as 50%.

A growing number of input supply dealers have seen the value in the kits and plan to use them with their clients. Said one dealer, "each year the growers are expecting better quality service from their supply dealers. Fertilizer purchases are a major expense for them and a major sales item for us. These soil test kits will help both of us to improve our competitiveness in the marketplace."

## **APPLE THINNING TAKES ON NEW MEANING FOR KORCA'S APPLE GROWERS**

The June practice of thinning surplus apples to improve productivity is well understood by Korca's commercial apple growers. As part of AAC's technical improvement package the outreach team guides growers directly in their orchards on why and how to thin so that they retained just the right amount of premium apples while insuring a good crop for next year through good bud formation and differentiation.

While growers understand the value of thinning the amount of thinning varied from farm household to farm household. Some are more risk averse retaining more apples on the tree just in case something goes wrong.

However this year there is an added incentive to do the right thing and thin apples. The AAC team has facilitated a new value added component to apple thinning. They have established a new source of revenue for the apple culls that usually remain on the soil to decompose or worst serve as a host for pests. This year Korca's thinned apples are destined for the fragrance industry of France.

AAC has linked growers, selected clients in three communes Mollaj, Proger and Dvoran with consolidators from Pogradec, the nearest city, who have bought over 188 tons so far this year from 106 apple growers. The immature apples are dried and packed for export to France.

"This is a new and very important source of new revenue for us" says apple growers. What was a waste product has now become a value income source especially at a time when cash flow is very limited. With this new revenue stream we can now purchase the inputs required to produce a quality apple product."

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

### **COMPONENT I**

#### **STRENGTHEN PRODUCER CAPACITY FOR COMPETITIVE COMMERCIAL FARMING.**

##### **Task I – Consolidating Production**

##### **Identify key growers groups**

###### **NORTH Region**

Contacts and relations established with the North region clients, vegetable and melon groups of growers, part of “Natyra” association, located in Vukatana and Ganjoll villages of Shkodra district; other vegetable and melon growers in the districts of Lezha; Durrës and Tirana contacted.

Several field visits organized to monitor the vegetable growth cycle and constraints faced by selected clients/groups in Vukatana, Kosmac, Ana e Malit in Shkodra district and Torovice, Fushe-Kuqe, Gurrez and Gramez in Lezha district.

Baseline data on their commercial profile collected.

##### **Identify key services to members**

###### **NORTH Region**

Soil test analysis kit were demonstrated to melon and vegetable growers/producers group as follows:

- Torovice / Lezhe on April 23
- Gramez / Lezhe on April 8
- Vukatana / Shkoder, April 15
- Ana e Malit / Shkoder May 6
- Kosmac / Shkoder May 9 and 22
- Fushe Kuqe / Lezhe, May 15

Based on test results of soil fertility plots, fertilization schemes were recommended to 7 watermelon growers.

22 clients, the main melon and vegetable growers/producers in Vukatana, Ana e Malit, Kosmac, and Fushe Kuqe, Gurrez, Torovica were assisted on Integrated Pest Management control methods.

28 vegetable and melon growers were visited to:

- link producers with technical assistance offered through ACC to improve quality and increase yields through new improved production practices;

- form producer groups for marketing and post-harvest management;
- reduce costs of inputs and transaction costs in accessing services.



*Open field watermelon growing – Adriatik Laç*

## **Cooperatives capacity building**

### **NORTH Region**

AAC North region organized 5 special meetings with key vegetable and melon grower associations/groups. The necessity of their cooperation was the focus of discussions. Feedback information and on-going contacts maintained in order to plan next steps/interventions for their strengthening.

### **LUSHNJA Region**

AAC has provided on going support to the groups with cooperative forming sessions explaining the legal status to date and the procedures they should follow for legalization. Respective sessions are held with the groups of producers in Hysgjokaj (Lushnje) and Velmish (Fier).

The Actual situation with the initial group setting in Hysgjokaj may be described as follows:  
The group has already:

- held the initial meetings;
- compiled and signed the list of the initial members;
- prepared all the papers required for legalization.
- is under the registration process in Tirana Court House

## KORCA Region

A group is identified in Devoll area (Tren village) with the possibility to organize an apple growers group. First, they want to share information on technology issues and later going on with selling together. They plan to build a storehouse for extending the post-harvest period of apples.

Some efforts are going on to link Korca farmers and Kosovo apple growers associations and share experiences with them, especially on how to use storage facilities and sell together.

### **Cooperation with the institutions of public extension service.**

## LUSHNJA Region

To strengthen collaboration with public extension service of Fier, Berat and Saranda the Regional Office in Lushnja has invited them to participate in every training provided to AAC clients on production as well as in the field days organized for the demonstration of the new technologies.

In addition various meetings are organized with the aim of discussing MIS needs. Discussion has been focussed on the MIS efficiency, where to set it up and how to use the system.

### **Task 2 – Improving Production Practices**

#### **Develop commodity specific technical training packages**

## NORTH Region

The technical package and 2008 training plan for North clients was drafted and approved. Client needs considered based on the area, groups, technology and commodities. Local experts for training recruited and approved.

5 following monthly workshops were organized during the last quarter:

- Greenhouse vegetable growing – Vukatana, Shkoder – April 15 – 20 participants
- Greenhouse vegetable growing – Ana e Malit, Shkoder – May 5 – 22 participants
- Greenhouse vegetable growing – Kosmaç, Shkoder – May 9 – 24 participants
- Open field watermelon growing – Fushe-Kuqe, Lezhe – May 15 – 23 participants
- Open field watermelon growing – Kosmaç, Shkoder – May 22 – 25 participants

One monthly workshop on planting calendar, varieties, organic and mineral fertilization, pruning, drip irrigation use, air and thermic systems etc. was held in:

- Kosmac – Shkoder on June 25 with participation of 26 growers from Kosmac, Vukatana and Ana e Malit.

An exchange visit was organized on May with participation of 22 northern vegetable and watermelon growers from Shkoder and Lezhe districts. They visited and exchanged experience with growers from Goriçan and Poshnje villages in Berat district. Main topics of discussion were:

- new model of pepper pruning for earliness and better pricing,
- role of white plastic sheet as mulch,
- new tomato varieties,
- watermelon growing technology and fresh produce marketing – Lushnja wholesale market was visited.

Feed back and discussion held with 22 above mentioned growers.



*Northern vegetable and watermelon growers from Shkoder and Lezhe districts during their exchange visit with AAC clients in Berat.*

## LUSHNJA Region

In efforts to accomplish the task of developing commodity specific technical training package and also to better assist the clients for the new planting season, AAC in Lushnja organized four meetings with seedling producer companies; three were hold with “Bruka seedling” and one with “Agrokoni”. Meeting discussion was focussed on the following topics:

- quality of seedlings,
- market driven varieties,
- cost of the seedling and
- appropriate planting time.

### Vegetables in greenhouse (Tomatoes Cucumbers Peppers)

During the value chain analysis of vegetables in the greenhouse and also in the round tables farmers raised the issue of chemicals' overuse and sometimes incapability to manage pests, thus AAC entered in its plan of activities and certainly judged as appropriate to provide farmers with technical assistance and appropriate knowledge on Integrated Pest Management. These sessions were facilitated by AAC and the expertise from the Tirana Agriculture University Dr.Harallamb Paçe with a total number of attendees 85.

- IPM training Velmish held on 03/29/2008 attended by 16 participants
- IPM training Gorican held on 04/05/2008 attended by 30 participants
- IPM training Hysgjokaj held on 04/12/2008 attended by 26 participants
- IPM training Goricaj held on 04/24/2008 and attended by 13 participants.

Green house airing and light regime is considered as a key point in the quantity, quality and overall managing of the work in the greenhouse. For this reason, again in cooperation with Agriculture University of Tirana - Dr. Prof. Astrit Balliu; AAC is providing technical support to its clients and other farmers in the area with qualified expertise related to this issue. To date three training sessions are held:

- Importance of light and airing regime in the greenhouse in Gorican Berat on 5/10/2008 attended by 16 participants;
- Importance of light and airing regime in the greenhouse in Velmish 05/17/2008 attended by 12 participants;
- Importance of light and airing regime in Gajde 05/24/2008 with an unexpected number of attendees around 39.

Although the participation of both genders is considered important by the Lushnje Regional Office staff, still number of women participants is very low.

### Oil & Table Olive

During May IPM training sessions are developed with both oil and table olive growers in different areas covered by Lushnja region. Such session will be on going in other olive areas within the Lushnja region.

- IPM Olive in Dushk - Lushnje held on 05/16/2008 attended by 17 olive growers.
- IPM Olive in Cakran – Fier held on 06/16/2008 attended by 20 olive growers.
- IPM Olive in Novosele - Vlore held on 06/23/2008 attended by 25 olive growers.

### KORCE Region

Four Training Sessions were held on Sprays/IPM (total participants 80 (5 females). In these training sessions, the focus was on using all necessary means before applying the chemical sprays. In this way the cost of production is controlled and the environment is better protected.

- IPM training Vranisht on 04/30/2008 attended by 19 participants
- IPM training Voskop on 05/12/2008 attended by 13 participants (1 woman)
- IPM training Dvoran on 05/14/2008 attended by 24 participants (3 women)
- IPM training Erseke on 05/16/2008 and attended by 19 participants (1 woman).

To report on Training Follow-Up and Application Results [% adapting new technology], the completion of fertilizing process is waited for having the final data from the farmers.

Five group trainings took place focused on summer pruning and apple thinning. Actually, both approaches (group and individual trainings) were tried, as the growers were busy not only with apples but also with cherry harvesting and services to vegetables. Aiming the apple quality for this season and avoiding periodicity for the next one, the advices and technical assistance provided to 76 growers (14 females) by the AAC outreach specialists made possible the implementation of a new technology in 23 ha. Out of 76 participants, 41 were primary clients, and the others farmers from the region as follows:

• Vranisht	June 3, 2008	5 participants (2 females)
• Polene	June 3, 2008	10 participants (3 females)
• Zvirine	June 4, 2008	6 participants
• Vranisht	June 5, 2008	6 participants (2 females)
• Bilisht	June 6, 2008	7 participants
• Dvoran	June 10, 2008	14 participants (2 females)
• Maçurisht	June 10, 2008	5 participants (2 females)
• Zemblak	June 12, 2008	8 participants
• Kapshtice	June 16, 2008	4 participants (2 females)
• Hoçisht	June 18, 2008	3 participants
• Verlen	June 20, 2008	3 participants (1 female)
• Cangonj	June 23, 2008	2 participants
• Erseke	June 24, 2008	3 participants



*Summer pruning and apple thinning workshops*

## **Demonstrate new technologies**

### **NORTH Region**

Two field trials were established and are under monitoring in northern area:

- The model of grafted seedling as part of intensive watermelon growing technology is already transferred in Torovica (7 ha) Lezha.
- The effects of mulching sheet and drip fertigation systems in intensive watermelon growing in Gurrez, Lezha. Watermelon comparative field trial with 10 varieties. Seedless varieties versus normal, grafted versus un-grafted, black plastic mulching sheet and perimeter trap crop method are implemented.

The current stage of watermelon growth in both farms is promising for yield increase.



*Grafted seedling - intensive watermelon growing technology in Torovica Lezha (7 ha)*

AAC project introduced farmer logbook for detailed recording of expenses aiming to calculate production costs.

The following activities were also organized during the last quarter:

- Monitor the results of 3 on farm tomato comparative trials in Vukatana (7 varieties, 1st crop)
- The nematode control trial methodology was discussed and finalized with local expert and clients (finding the infested greenhouse, check the right *Marygold* species = *Tagetia spatula* or *erecta* = and its availability in the country, due to late time and paper constraints of import from DAI/USA, local availability of nematocides and appropriate thickness of solarization plastic sheet) to establish a test on their effects in infested greenhouse of Kosmac/Vukatana aares in Shkoder.
- Use and regular checks of perimeter trap crop to minimize cucumber beetle sprays in open filed watermelon in Fushe Kuqe and Gurrez
- Look for window nets to try effects of bumble bees use in early tomato pollensation in plastic greenhouses of Vukatana and Kosmac, Shkoder.

## LUSHNJE Region

### Water melon field days

Thirteen field days for three trials in three areas are organized with the aim of presenting and spreading the new technology to other farmers.

- Plastic tunnel held on 04/10/2008 and 06/06/2008 in Divjaka, Lushnje, attended by 31 participants - Nasi Shurdhi parcel.
- Double drip irrigation line held on 05/19/2008 and 06/14/2008 in Divjaka, Lushnje, attended by 30 farmers - Gjergj Todi's parcel.

- Grafted seedling held on 04/07/2008 and 06/16/2008 in Samatice, Berat attended by 14 participants - at Gramoz Vrapi parcel (0.3 ha).
- Plastic tunnels held on 04/04/2008 and 06/06/2008 in Samatice, Berat attended by 14 participants. at Myrteza Oshafi parcel.
- Double drip irrigation line held on 05/28/2008 in Samatice, Berat attended by 10 participants - Nurce Oshafi parcel (0.5 ha).
- Grafted seedlings held on 05/14/2008 in Sarande attended by 15 participants - at Lluka Kote parcel (0.3 ha).
- Plastic tunnels held on 05/03/2008 and 06/04/2008 in Sarande attended by 15 participants - at Aleks Buzuqi parcel (0.5ha).
- Double drip irrigation line held on 06/14/2008 in Sarande attended by 15 participants - at Hysen Kakaci parcel (0.3 ha).



*Watermelon field day – Divjaka*

Field days and leaflets are prepared for grafted seedlings, thermoplastic tunnels and double dripping irrigation system to present and spread the new technology to other farmers in all the areas.

#### Vegetable field days

Eight field days were also organized during the last quarter for vegetables in greenhouses as follows:

- Vegetable technology - held on 06/11/2008 and 06/23/2008 in Goricaj, Lushnje
- Vegetable technology - held on 06/20/2008 in Hysgjokaj, Lushnje
- Vegetable technology - held on 06/03/2008; 06/10/2008 and 06/25/2008 in Goriçan, Berat
- Vegetable technology - held on 06/12/2008 in Poshnje, Berat
- Vegetable technology - held held on 06/20/2008 in Velmish, Fier

A total of 100 participants, greenhouse vegetable growers attended the abovementioned events. The aim was to teach farmers how to implement new growing technologies that were prepared by professional staff during the previous quarter.

### **Identify lead farmers and input suppliers to conduct farmer field trials**

#### **NORTH Region**

One farmer in Gurrez Lezhe selected, comparative trial in watermelon implemented. On-going monitoring.



*Multifactorial watermelon field trial in Gurrez, Laç*

#### **LUSHNJE Region**

Nine lead farmers identified in three areas Lushnje, Berat and Sarande.

Three types of field trials per each area are implemented and staff is continuously monitoring them during quarter.

#### **KORÇE Region**

Details are being completed on combining the fertilizer provision with the drip irrigation. As the drip irrigation is already known to our farmers, adding the fertilizing in tandem with irrigation would help crops to better use nutrients and the growers could reduce the production costs.

### **Encourage consolidators and input suppliers to invest in private sector extension**

#### **NORTH Region**

Keep update information on the ongoing results of the tomato varieties trial done by “AgroKoni” company and a visit of its new greenhouse seedling facility done with participation of USAID CTOs and AAC director on June, 2008.

## LUSHNJE Region

Within the framework of cost share grants it is being looked at the possibility of encouraging a consolidator from Kavaja to invest in setting up a collection point for vegetables in Gorican.

Several meetings were held with Mr. Saimir Biti, consolidator, owner of BITI-MO Company. He is looking to invest in constructing a new building (surface of 1,000 square metres) install cooling equipment and a processing line, sorter and packaging included for carrots. The Lushnja team offered him technical assistance and provided a lot of information related to the following:

- post harvesting processes
- offers and sources for processing lines
- establish relations with vegetable growers

### **Build the capacity of existing public and private sector extension staff to provide technical services to farmers**

## NORTH Region

Statistical data on vegetables/melons in North region (Shkodra and Lezha districts) were collected, they will be used for Commodity Development Plans.

Five meetings were hold with regional directorates of AFCP in Shkoder, Lezha regions to update them on AAC project activities and coordinate activities with their extension staff in project intervention areas.

2 meetings were hold to involve private sector extension services (agro-inputs suppliers) with vegetable growers groups in Shkodra.

The use of rapid soil test kits was introduced to 3 local input suppliers (AgroBlend, AgroKoni, Agroinput) suppliers of vegetable and melons growers.

A visit to "Agrokoni" field trial in Dushk –Lushnja was organized on May 23, 2008 with northern growers. New tomato hybrid varieties in plastic greenhouse are tested by Agrokoni. Northern farmers discussed with Agrokoni on best varities to use for their second crop structure.

Two visits organized to Shkodra vegetable wholesale market.

2 meetings were organized (Shkoder and Lezha) with the public extension department at AFCP directorates. Discussion focussed on current situation of this infrastructure and its possible involvement with AAC Market Information System (MIS).

## LUSHNJE Region

Specialists from Public Extension Services under AFDCP-s and Technology Transfer Centers from Fier and Vlore districts have been invited to participate in all training sessions and workshops organized by the Lushnja Regional Office during the last quarter.

## KORCE Region

The use of rapid soil test kits was explained to the University “F. S. Noli” Korce. The students were told how the kits work to have a quick result regarding the situation of main nutrients in soil and how to build the right dose of fertilizing based on factors like manure provision, expected yield, age of crop, etc.

Six (6) Specialists of MAFCP participated in the IPM, summer pruning and apple thinning workshops. This cooperation is helping them to strengthen the relations, meet and discuss with growers.

One input supplier visited the Devoll farmers (in cooperation with the AAC outreach specialist) for assessing the impact of chemicals he provides to farmers.

Cooperation with the UNDP project; They built a Center for disease forecasting in Vranisht (Devoll). They are interested to cooperate with our outreach specialists for interpreting the data on temperatures and moisture giving the message about the possible diseases and insects supposed to become a problem.

The Regional Agriculture Directorate in Korca in cooperation with SNV organized a coordination meeting with all the institutions and projects dealing with agriculture. The idea of the meeting was the creation of a linkage between all agriculture institutions, organizations and donors in order to coordinate their activities and avoid overlapping. The director of RAD made a presentation of the activities of this institution and also pointed out some of the cooperation points with other actors in the region. Then the representatives of different organizations and projects made some essential points of their main activities. AAC project in Korca made a short presentation of its activities and stressed out the idea of cooperation between institutions and organizations stating that AAC is open to joined activities.

A Peace Corps volunteer is invited to share his experience with our growers (especially on financial issues). We are also planning to cooperate with another Peace Corps volunteer (and his wife) on gender issues. Female farmers are active in Korca region, but a better involvement of them in decision making process will give results in improving apples quality.

## **Collaboration with MoAFCP Technology Transfer Centers**

### NORTH Region

One meeting was organized with TTC in Lushnja to know their activity planning in North with vegetables. Another visit was made with participation of Mr. Kristaq Jorgji - USAID CTOs and the AAC project director in TTC of Fushe Kruja. Discussion focussed on coordination of efforts in Northern area of AAC activities.

## LUSHNJE Region

Collaboration and cooperation with MoAFCP and TTC have been frequent and both institutions have participated in the commodity specific technical training package provided to the primary clients and groups of producers of the four commodities: vegetables in greenhouse, water melon, oil and table olives.

Three meetings with Lushnje Technology Transfer Center and two others with Vlore Technology Transfer Center were hold. Discussion was focussed on ways of cooperation and combination of efforts. Action Plan for 2008-2009 was compiled for the main activities like training programs, field trials and open field days by commodities. All the abovementioned activities for the new year will be developed by professional staff of both TTC and AAC Project.

## KORÇE Region

TTC representatives delivered to our project two proposals dealing with chemical apple thinning and balanced fertilizing. As we mostly know the importance of experiments on balanced fertilizing, chemical thinning is crucial in taking out about 60% the quantities of apples that should be thinned. For the growers, this operation is very demanding (in labor and time); therefore, to apply this new technology would help apple growers improve apple quality and reduce the production cost.

**Provide cost-share grants to lead farmers to demonstrate new technologies and methodologies that address specific constraints in the production of one of the AAC commodities.**

## TIRANA OFFICE

The Grant Manager has provided training to the AAC Field Offices related to Grant procedures on the following:

- How to write a Grant proposal;
- Forms of Grant proposal;
- Grant ideas development (concept paper).

Data collection was performed during this quarter on the agriculture sector by areas of project activities such as: type of crops, yield per ha, technology used, etc. in order to use them for grant proposals.

After the approval of the AAC grant manual, steps were undertaken toward grant applications and work done with potential applicants proposed by AAC Field Offices to develop viable and high-impact grant proposals. In this regard, a series of field visits to the target areas were undertaken by the Grant Manager and the Outreach Specialists to potential individual farmers or groups identified by AAC Outreach Specialists.

Farmer interviews were made in order to know better the constraints and opportunities of their businesses. Based on the abovementioned, the following grant ideas were developed by the Regional Offices as follows:

#### KORÇE Region

1. Apple boxes - Improving marketing for apples through use of packaging . The lack of packaging materials obligate growers to sell their product in a hurry direct from orchard. The use of boxes will help for storing apples after harvesting time and selling them some months later, when the demand and the price of apple is higher. Impact - quality and price increase.
2. High Tech. Spraying Pump. Impact - Technology improvement and cost reduce for chemical treatment.
3. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) trial. Impact – Use of IPM practice, will reduce the number of chemical sprays, as a result costs will be reduced too.
4. Pilot cold store. Impact – Apple quality increase, market sales outside normal season, higher prices, increase of farmers' incomes.
5. Apple warehouses (traditional type). Use of bales of straw in building temporary storage facilities for apples in order to sell in a later season (successful in Armenia). Impact – Extend selling period, increase incomes.
6. Center for Disease Forecasting. Impact - Reduce number of pesticide sprays and cost of production, Environment protection.
7. Drip irrigation system. Impact – Reduce costs, increase production, proper water use.
8. Mother rootstock nursery. The establishment of a “mother” nursery for the production of rootstocks and scions will help farmers having free-from-disease material for the production of quality and clean seedlings and also will bring the reduction of cost for the creation of new orchards. Impact – Produce apples varieties for high market and consumer demand, increase of sales and incomes.

A study was completed regarding the Giant Beans production in Kreshpanja village (Korca region). Based on its production cost, some conclusions were drawn on the future interest for working with this crop.

#### LUSHNJA Region

1. Cooling equipment and processing line for carrots. Impact - Quality increase, higher price, export markets - income increase.
2. Improvement of water irrigation through use of sun energy – group of farmers. Impact – cost reduction, reduce of environment pollution.
3. Double plastic cover for greenhouses. Impact – season extension, incomes increase.
4. Use of sun energy in greenhouses. Impact – cost reduction and reduce of environment pollution.
5. Collection point for apples; packaging and branding according to EU standards – Impact - season extension; marketing improvement; sales increase; higher profit..

### **Task 3 – Strengthening Farmers’ Access to Finance**

#### **Assist PSHM and other microfinance firms**

##### TIRANA OFFICE

The Grant Manager organized series of meetings with the Agriculture Development Projects and Financial Institutions. The purpose of these meetings was to inform other implementers about AAC goals and objectives, discuss specific events for potential cooperation and synergies to leverage additional assistance resources to the benefit of project clients.

Continuous meetings were held with Raiffeisen Bank officials, Ms. Ensuela Hysnelaj - Head of SME Division, Ms. Holta Kasemi - Quality and Processing Manager, Mr. Enio Jaco – Head of VIP Banking, aiming cooperations between the Bank and AAC Project.

Several meetings were organized with Mr. Renato Vasili – Credit Product Manager at the PROCREDIT bank. Active relationships established with PROCREDIT bank during the series of workshops in the North area. The Procredit Bank representative for the North (Shkodra) made a brief presentation at the AAC watermelon workshop in Kosmac, informing farmers about PROAGRO loan package.

Several meetings were held with PSHM, respectively with Mr. Denis Derralla - Operation Director, Mr. Artan Male – Corporate Resp. Director, Ms. Dudie Guri – Lushnja’s Agriculture Loan Officer, Mr. Skender Gjoni – Fushekruja Loan Officer, Mr. Fisnik Decaj – Shkodra Branch Manager. Mr. Pirro Ceta, PSHM Loan Officer in Korça branch was met, discussion was focussed on the possibility to extend the collaboration and move forward with other financial training steps such as Agro-financial literacy training (8 weeks – 6 times – 2hrs each).

The USAID STA in DC, Ms. Anicca C. Jansen, was accompanied in field and assisted to get the information related to the financial support in the agriculture sector, the current situation of agriculture loans in country was introduced to her, and several meetings with financial institutions operating in the agriculture sector were organized. The AAC Grant Manager attended the “Financial Opportunities for Agriculture Support” meeting organized by USAID.

A meeting was also held with Mr. Jeremy Parker, Peace Corp Volunteer. The focus of discussion was collaboration with AAC. The Peace Corps volunteer expressed his willingness to join AAC Korca staff during the training sessions, farmers’ visits, preparing business plans for farmers, training on how to use the AAC farmers' log book.

Meeting hold with World Vision, Mr. Ildir Proseku, Economic Development Manager. Given their focus in the North West area, we talked about collaboration in financial support to the agriculture sector and develop different trainings for farmers.

The AAC Project activities related to microfinancing were introduced at both General Assembly Meetings of Jehona and Haba Credit Unions. Series of meetings held with Jehona credit unions, focuss of discussion were ways of support for AAC clients.

#### **KORCE Region**

Regular meetings were held with PSHM during May.

For every PSHM client who has taken loan in collaboration with AAC a file was established with all the necessary information. In this file the farmers contacts are included, the amount of money they have loaned, a short description of the purpose of the loan and also information about the fruit orchards and varieties of apple they have.

At the same time, the outreach specialists have made visits to these clients.

#### **LUSHNJE Region**

The Regional Office of Lushnja has continuously provided support and assistance to the AAC clients, vegetable growers in order to facilitate their access to microfinancing.

Contacts are maintained with two microfinancing operators in the area, PSHM and credit unions.

#### ***Loan Facilitation***

##### *PSHM Loans*

AAC is continuously providing assistance to PSHM in increasing its outreach to agriculture sector and by linking finance institutions to producers. Two new clients assisted by Lushnje office received loans at the total amount of 2,000,000 lek.

##### *Albania Development Fund Loans*

The only client with ADFL is in progress.

##### *JEHONA Credit Union Loans*

Monthly follow up meetings are on going with CU. Clients are paying back on time and no delays at the moment. Other clients are assisted. During this quarter 12 new clients supported by AAC Lushnje team received loans totaling 5,250,000 lek.

**Table 1. Loans provided to clients with AAC assistance**

<b>Nr.</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>INSTITUTION</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>
1	June	Fitim Plaku	500,000	JEHONA C. U.	Tapi/Kuçove	Greenhouse
2	June	Kadri Subashi	500,000	JEHONA C. U.	Arrez	Greenhouse
3	June	Zyra Ndreu	500,000	JEHONA C. U.	Kutalli	Greenhouse
4	June	Gjysho Hoxha	500,000	JEHONA C. U.	Goriçan	Greenhouse
5	June	Mynyr Xhahili	500,000	JEHONA C. U.	Goriçan	Greenhouse
6	June	Ferdinant Vesho	500,000	JEHONA C. U.	Goriçan	Greenhouse
7	June	Andi Begaj	500,000	JEHONA C. U.	Ura e Kuçit	Greenhouse
8	June	Bujar Begaj	500,000	JEHONA C. U.	Ura e Kuçit	Greenhouse
9	June	Agim Goga	500,000	JEHONA C. U.	Goriçan	Greenhouse
10	June	Elton Tomorri	500,000	JEHONA C. U.	Velmish	Greenhouse
11	June	Albert Xhahili	250,000	JEHONA C. U.	Goriçan	Greenhouse
12	June	Vullnet Cjapi	150,000	JEHONA C. U.	Arrez	Greenhouse
13	May	Hysen Dervishi	500,000	PSHM	Sheqqaj	Vegetable processing
14	June	Xhevdet Kashari	1,500,000	PSHM	Goriçan	Greenhouse

## **Build the capacity of AAC partners for basic financial planning**

### **TIRANA OFFICE**

Continuous work with Regional Offices for cost benefit analysis per each commodity in different areas. Cost analysis will provide an effective tool for target farmers and farmer associations to use in evaluating options for current operations and future investments. It will help determine changes that may be undertaken to achieve greater profitability and competitiveness.

Ongoing work with watermelon growers identified by the North Outreach Specialist (Mr. Ndoc Bluta in Torovica and Mr. Spahi Jahja in Fushekuqe), who changed the technology. Prepare the cost benefit for the new technology applied.

Assistance offered to a new consolidator (apple) identified in Korca on the following:

- Organize meetings with cold store companies to find the best offer.
- Assist with loan application at Raiffeisen Bank (\$300,000) in order to get credit for working capital to collect (buy) 400 ton apples.
- Prepare the cost of production and cashflow analysis.

Training offered to two farmers in the North region (Mr. Bluta and Mr Spahia) on use of farmer log book.

## **COMPONENT 2**

### **STRENGTHEN CAPACITY FOR MARKET DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Task 1 – Linking Producers to Buyers**

##### **KORCE Region**

In the framework of the access to new markets, several meetings were organized with a future consolidator Mr. Engjell Dervishi who is building a new refrigerator in Cangonj village. He is already an apple grower and is working to extend his business by building a refrigerator with a capacity of 500Tons; 100 tons will be his own production and 400 of them it is thought to be bought from the farmers. In this point the AAC project will try to link our primary clients to this new consolidator.

AAC assistance would consist also in the way how to store these apples in the best conditions.

Another important point is marketing of these apples with the help of MIS.

The AAC project can also make some linkages between the consolidator and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry – Korca for the usage of “Korca logo”.

There is ongoing market research for apples picked after the thinning process. There are some buyers using this kind of apples at the medicinal sector. If the farmers will find market for thinned apples, they will be more willing to respect this important aspect of technology that helps not only to harvest qualitative apples but also avoiding the periodicity in the next season. Apples got from the thinning could be picked, dried and exported. A link is searched as they gather thinned apples and send them in Durres and Rrogozhina. A price was mentioned (6 leke/kg) but we hope to know more when the relevant persons will be contacted and met.

A list is being prepared with the AAC apple growers to tell where the producer is (contact numbers); quantity of apples available, variety, distance from markets and highways, etc. This list would be completed around end of July far before the harvest begins.

Details are being discussed for participating at KASH Fair. It would be a good opportunity for our growers and clients to meet other business representatives and contact more buyers for their products.

##### **LUSHNJE Region**

In attempts to link producers with buyers AAC Lushnja has facilitated eight meetings between buyers and producers of watermelon Frakull (Fier); Kutalli (Berat); Xarre (Sarande); Divjake (Lushnje) and vegetables in greenhouse as follows:

- Mr. Mersin Lika consolidator with greenhouse vegetable growers in Velmish and Goriçan villages;
- BRUKA SEEDLINGS and BITI-MO with Divjaka watermelon growers;

- ARIS Co. with Berati, Fieri and Saranda watermelon growers;
- GORREA 07 represented by Rako Gorrea, establishing the relations with Korça apple growers – GORREA 07 is looking to buy around 600 tons apple.

The outcomes of these meetings are the accomplished sales for the domestic market and export. Figures may be listed as follows:

**Watermelon total sales: 5,909 TONS**

Divjaka watermelon sales – total of 2,367 tons

- Macedonia 644 tons
- Montenegro 368 tons
- Kosovo 690 tons
- Croatia 138 tons
- Serbia 391 tons
- Bosnia 136 tons
- Local market 690 tons

Berati watermelon sales – total of 552 tons

- Switzerland 52 tons
- Kosovo 360 tons
- Local market 140 tons

Fieri watermelon sales – total of 170 tons

- Kosovo 100 tons
- Local market 70 tons

Saranda watermelon sales – total of 2,820 tons

- Kosovo 450 tons
- Macedonia 290 tons
- Bosnia 140 tons
- Italy 100 tons
- Croatia 65 tons
- Serbia 50 tons
- Local market 1,725 tons

**VEGETABLE TOTAL SALES: 750 TONS**

Berati greenhouse vegetable sales – total of 750 tons

- Bosnia 150 tons
- Local market 600 tons

Four other meetings are organized in collaboration with EDEM, AAC, DAFCP and TTC in Lushnja.

## **Quick-start activities working with suppliers of existing EDEM partners**

### **KORÇE Region**

AAC-Korca with EDEM are trying to link better apple growers with the traders, especially after the apple thinning is completed and a better picture is created about the expected yield.

### **LUSHNJE region**

Four meetings with EDEM – AAC and public sector of extension service MoFACP and TTC. EDEM presented the potential capacities of both parties regarding production and processing.

### **Task 2- Facilitating Access to New Markets**

#### **Work with EDEM tourism team to link producers to new market opportunities**

##### **LUSHNJE Region**

Attempts are being made to link EDEM consolidators with AAC water melon producers. Two meetings are held with Korca consolidator, Tirana consolidator. More successful is considered the contact with Fieri consolidator, Artur Rrushi, a co-partner with an Italian Company in the wholesale market in Fier. The anticipated market is export in Italy. For this case the contract is finalized and the Italian company is preparing the package.

### **Task 3 – Increasing the Supply of High-Quality Product**

##### **NORTH Region**

Three seedless watermelon varieties in large scale comparative trial accompanied with intensive elements of growing technology were introduced during the last quarter. (Watermelon field trial in Gurrez, Laç).

The sugar content was monitored on 3 seedless watermelon varieties and square/rectangular shape boxes were introduced to two growers of Fushe Kuqe and Gurrez (AAC trial and open field).

Work has been done to combine better the watermelon calendar of production with market demand in three northern areas: Fushe Kuqe/Adriatik, Torovica (in Lezha) and Kosmac (Shkodra) to increase product sales and price.

The watermelon production calendar/harvesting schedule was prepared for the three abovementioned areas to provide with it potential buyers.

A short guideline (3 pages) of basic rules for harvest, handling and transportation of fresh produce towards was also prepared and delivered to watermelon growers.

## **COMPONENT 3**

### **INCREASE ACCESS TO AND USE OF TIMELY AND RELIABLE MARKET INFORMATION**

Work done under Component 3 has intensified during this quarter due to the arrival of the new Chief of Party and the freeing up of resource time on the part of the MIS Specialist. More progress is noted on Activity 1 and 2 as presented below.

#### **Activity 3.1: Identify Information Needs of Target Groups**

The objective of this activity is to ensure that the Market Information System is built around meeting the needs of farmers, traders and processors. To this end, a series of meetings, field visits and individual interviews has been carried out during this quarter.

#### **Meetings<sup>2</sup>**

Two meetings between AAC (Chief of Party and MIS Specialist) and the Head of Extension and Information Department of the MoAFCP, the Statistics specialist, and the GTZ project coordinator were done. Part of the aim was learning more about what information needs can the MIS meet and how we can coordinate efforts between institutions.

Although the MoAFCP HQ does not have direct contact with farmers or traders, the Department of Extension and Information revealed that price information is absent at the farm level and that the Ministry by itself is not able to provide.

Several other meetings were carried out at the regional level between the AAC MIS specialist and regional managers, and the Regional Agricultural Directorates. During these meetings the link between the RADs Statistical offices and wholesale markets and farmers were discussed.

#### **LUSHNJE Region**

Several meetings in different areas are held to identify issues on MIS, logistic needs and infrastructure, human resource capacities and planning of the follow up activities. Amongst the main stake holders contacted on MIS needs may be mentioned: DoAFCP in Lushnja , Fier and Berat, wholesale markets in Lushnja and Fier and communes (Divjake, Krutje, Kemishtaj and Hysgjokaj)

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<sup>2</sup> Meetings and other activities carried out with the MIS STTA Bob E. Lee are not included in this report. Please refer to the report submitted by Mr. Lee about those activities.

## **KORÇE Region**

Several meetings were organized for the establishment of MIS. These meetings were held with SNV representatives in Korca, at some information centers in villages, and also by meeting the marketing specialist in the wholesale market in Korca.

In the meeting with SNV Korca, different possibilities were discussed for cooperation concerning MIS. One of the directions that SNV is working on at the moment is agriculture sector. They were willing to coordinate and work together mainly focused on training aspect. After a training schedule is prepared by AAC, another meeting will be arranged with SNV in order to see what kind of training could be held by them. The SNV can support training related to the scope of MIS and how to use this system.

### **Field Visits**

A series of visits in the three regions where AAC works were done by the MIS specialist with the aim of identifying the needs of wholesale traders (in the respective wholesale markets) and farmers (AAC clients). The visits were targeted at the wholesale markets of Lushnja and Korça, and the Information Centers at several communes which are part of the MoAFCP's extension structure. Valuable insight was gained about the type and timing of market information both traders and farmers need.

Among traders price information is required in real time therefore distribution should take place more frequently than for farmers. Traders who rent spaces in the wholesale centers hardly need information on domestic product prices as the majority of them deal with import products. On the other hand, traders who own vehicles but do not rent space, are those who deal with domestic products and who need information on these products. Both parties revealed that updated electronic information boards set up on the wholesale market centers would greatly benefit them.

Information centers at commune level (Lushnja, Korça, Northwest) revealed that they are unable to provide market information to farmers. The managers of these centers welcome the opportunity of receiving price information for the farmers they cover. However, they are not able to process it and customize it but only distribute it.

### **Interviews**

Five client interviews were carried out in Lushnja and Korça areas in order to find out in-depth about what, when and how farmers view their information needs. The outcome of the interviews is that information needs to be customized rather than presented in comprehensive tables. These farmers produce between one and three various products therefore the information package reaching them should include only those products.

The interviews revealed that in addition to price, farmers need weather and climate information (both for Albanian and regional neighbours) in order to avoid production-related problems and to respond to regional market demand.

### **Activity 3.2: Establish a System to Collect and Disseminate Wholesale Market Prices**

The purpose of this activity is the core of AAC's MIS work for Year I. The price collection mechanism at the MoAFCP has to be revitalized and expanded in order to reach market actors. During this quarter AAC has researched ways of improving the collection and dissemination of information at wholesale level.

After meetings at MoAFCP and wholesale centers in Lushnja, Korça, and Vlora, it is clear that traders and farmers who use the wholesale centers, are not receiving the price information that would help them make business decisions. The format produced by the MoAFCP does not match the wholesale traders needs as it is too crowded and too small to be viewed or read in a busy market place.

Traders pointed out to the fact that they do not even refer to the prices posted by MoAFCP (whenever they were posted; that is not the case in all markets) because they arrive too late, they are not readable, and they are not reliable. Wholesale market management, traders and farmers, agree that a real-time electronic system would provide them with much needed price information that they can use.

AAC has looked at introducing an electronic board system to at least 5 wholesale market centers. The system will be controlled centrally by the AAC MIS unit in conjunction with the Statistical office at MoAFCP and will allow wholesale price information to be sent simultaneously to all market places within the network. All traders and farmers in the marketplace will be able to view regular updated information from other key markets and about relevant products.

AAC is currently looking at the most cost-efficient ways of introducing such a system and arranging for agreements to be made with the management of each wholesale market.

#### **KORÇE region**

An ongoing process is that of collection of information for the wholesale market prices; twice a month a list is elaborated with the wholesales market prices for the main AAC commodities. The information includes the prices for domestic and imported commodities. All the needed information is collected at wholesale market in Korca. Part of this information is also a price list for the main inputs.

### **Activity 3.3: Build the capacity of value chain actors to understand and use market information**

Through meetings, field visits and interviews, it has become evident that farmers need to understand the basics of price information, the relationships between price and quantity, and cost-price analysis, before they can successfully use the information provided by AAC's MIS.

A major part of the MIS STTA was to identify capacity among market actors on how to use information. A basic module is being prepared and will be accomplished on the second MIS STTA by Mr. Bob E. Lee. The module will focus on wholesale price information use and will initially be offered to farmers who are in contact with wholesale market centers.

After three meetings with SNV, the Netherlands Development Organisation, AAC has secured their cooperation in jointly organizing training and capacity-building activities for farmers and traders. SNV is looking for ways of supporting the agricultural sector in Albania and their advantage lies in capacity building.

## **MONITORING & EVALUATION**

### ***M&E Activities Report***

#### **KORÇE Region**

It was completed the data collection for the baseline information. All the information for our 47 primary clients is collected and is available in hard copy. For every client there exists an identification number and a file with all the needed information.

#### **Baseline information**

After completing the data collection and hard copy of baseline information, all the information is entering in TAMIS. Now a complete profile of 47 primary clients in Korca Region is going to be very soon available in TAMIS. This will be very helpful in the process of monitoring and evaluation.

#### **LUSHNJE Region**

Hard copies of client profiles are already completed and checked with M&E manager. Soon clients profile will be added in Tamis provided that it works ok.

All activities are recorded in the system, despite cases of improper system functioning, which has prevented staff from adding full lists of participants in the training or meeting forms.

As soon as system allows, further data on new technologies demonstrations, will be added for some primary clients.

## **OTHER ACTIVITIES**

### **NORTH Region**

Two field visits organized to welcome the USAID high rank officials in Vukatana vegetable growers association, Shkoder on 21 April 2008, demonstrating AAC project implementation in North West.



*USAID high rank officials visiting the greenhouse of Mr. Isak Bajrami – NATYRA association member*

The AAC participated and Facilitated the Olive Oil Sensory Assessment training organized by EDEM project with olive oil processors, AOA members to assess olive oil samples for 2008 olive oil competition (16 – 20 April 2008). AAC project also participated in the Awarding ceremony of best local Olive Oil Producers delivered during Olive Oil Day in Himara, 25 May 2008.

Another round tour field visit was organized to welcome USAID CTO-s and AAC project director in three geographic locations of AAC watermelon growers (in Fushe Kuqe, Gurrez, Torovica) and make them known/demonstrating AAC/North West technical assistance provided so far by the outreach specialist (June 19, 2008).



*Visit to a watermelon grower in North Region*

Another visit was organized at the Agrotal olive processing factory located in Ndroq-Tirana (June, 08) with participation of USAID officials and AAC team.

### LUSHNJE Region

AAC has contributed in strengthening the relationship between producers and local government in Divjaka, through frequent contacts with the municipality authorities with focus on some key constrains such as:

- solutions for irrigation
- improvement of secondary rural roads to facilitate safe and quick transport of the production to the collection point.

During May Lushnja AAC has also been involved in some other activities and missions coming from either Tirana or USAID.

- Exchange visit of watermelon producers from Kosova in Divjaka. Farmers were presented with the technology of watermelon cultivation they were also introduced with the grafting techniques. It was attended by 29 participants.
- Exchange visit of the producers from Kosova in Dushk(Lushnje) and Gajde (Berat). The visit aimed at exchanging experiences about the cultivation of vegetables in greenhouse participated by 10 guests.
- USAID High rank Officials visit to Divjaka



*USAID high rank officials during their visit in Divjaka.*

### KORÇE Region

#### Cost calculation

During May, there were collected all data necessary for cost calculation. In these bases there were calculated the cost of apple production for 24 primary clients. In this cost calculation there were taken in consideration the variable cost that is agro chemicals usage, mechanical operations and also cost labor, as well as fix investments for plantation establishment and farm machinery used.

For some of the clients it was calculated also the cost benefits, that is the cost after the AAC intervention.

#### Student's contacts

A group of students from Korce University were interested in elaborating a project for helping farmers. The idea was to have a group of young people to help farmers (their families) to better market their products, to help them participate in fairs and also deal with consolidators.

For this reason they had a meeting with AAC project staff. The first step for helping them was the linkage with the Junior Achievement Association, a youth association financed by USAID.

## **CONSULTANT SERVICES and TRAINING**

Four STTA-s provided assistance to the AAC project during the quarter:

#### ***Ms. Bronwyn Irwin – Home Office Technical***

- Management support related to project policies, and preparation of Sows for upcoming STTA-s;
- Developing and implementing the marketing strategy including meeting with local potential buyers;
- Assisting the market information system team in developing the design of the system;

#### ***Ms. Suzanne Carroll – Home Office Associate***

- Review and analyze project administration policies, personnel files, and financial files to ensure integrity of documentation;
- Ensure strict administrative and financial compliance with DAI/Bethesda and USAID regulations and policies;

#### ***Mr. Robert Mitchell – RDI subcontractor***

- Review of current land laws in Albania;
- Evaluation of the land rental and sale markets;
- Assessment of the impact of the highly fragmented land situation on AAC activities and clients; and,
- Gender component, looking at the relative impact of land tenure on men and women;
- Recommendations for AAC activities.

**Mr. Robert Lee – LOL subcontractor**

- Finalize capacity and needs' assessment of potential host institutions and partner organizations;
- Recommend strategies for the long-term collection and dissemination of broader market information (beyond price);
- Provide recommendations for an initial structure to disseminate market information (including prices).

Two training sessions were held during the last quarter:

**GATE TRAINING**

On April 2008 the AAC project staff attended the training "Addressing Gender Issues in Albanian Agriculture and Agribusiness" organized by GATE (Greater Access to Trade Expansion) project.

**Training Goal 1**

The first goal of the training was to explain the concept related to gender analyses and Integration. Organizers presented and discussed together with the AAC staff their findings on Albanian gender issues. The framework for gender analysis in agriculture was introduced and discussed through use of case studies and other exercises.

**Training Goal 2**

The second goal was strongly related to integration of gender analysis into project / program cycle, value chain approach included. Analysis of the current AAC work plan were performed (group work) with the aim of integrating gender analysis into the AAC project work plan.

**AAC STAFF MEETING**

AAC staff meeting was held on June 26-27, 2008. AAC staff from Tirana, Lushnja and Korçe Offices participated, Michael Brown and Sabah Sena from EDEM project were present too. Goals of the meeting were the following:

**Retreat Goal 1**

The first goal of the workshop was to take stock of the program to date and discuss as a team. The main issues of discussion were Market and Market Information System development. Agreements with AAC Project Clients and Grants Ideas / Proposals and Procedures were also discussed.

## **Retreat Goal 2**

These final goal of the retreat was to look ahead to Year 2 indicators, commodities, market development and MIS. Discussion was focussed more on Component two and three of the AAC activities for the next year. Regional Offices will work to compile the draft work plan for second year of project activities which will be discussed and approved in the next AAC staff retreat.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE**

- Completed AAC staff – Three professional drivers hired for three AAC Offices respectively:
  - ✓ Kujtim Kertalli – Tirana Office – Start date: May 5, 2008
  - ✓ Vangjel Tanku – Lushnja Office – Start date: May 12, 2008
  - ✓ Shpetim Goxhaj – Korça Office – Start Date: May 1, 2008
- Three project vehicles Model MITSUBISHI Pajero, one per each office, Tirana, Lushnje and Korçe arrived.
- Continuous work with Internal Communication System TAMIS (local offices and Home Office communication)
- Produced and submitted financial reports to USAID
- Produced and submitted weekly calendar plans
- Produced and submitted quarterly reports to USAID