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AGRICULTURAL COMPETITIVENESS AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2014

OCTOBER 2014

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USAID Moldova - MCC Moldova

Agricultural Competitiveness & Enterprise Development Project

Supplemental Report for Fiscal Year 2014

October 1, 2013 – September 30, 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

REPORT SECTION	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION & SUMMARY	1
II. PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS	14
Component 1: Growing Moldovan HVA Sales & Exports	14
Activity 1.1: Develop & Expand Market Opportunities	
Activity 1.2: Upgrade Production to Meet Requirements	
Activity 1.3: Upgrade the Moldovan HVA Value Chain	
Activity 1.4: Improve the Enabling Environment for HVA	
Component 2: Enterprise Development in Transnistria	37
Activity 2.1: Build the Capacity of Business Service Providers	
Activity 2.2: Support the Development of Transnistrian MSMEs	
III. CROSS-CUTTING ACTIVITIES	45
Gender and Marginal Groups	45
Environmental Compliance	50
IV. DONOR COORDINATION	52
V. LESSONS LEARNED	58

I. INTRODUCTION & SUMMARY

The contract between USAID and Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI) for the Agricultural Competitiveness & Enterprise Development (ACED) project was signed on March 23rd 2011 and implementation of the project began in early April of 2011. The first six months of project activity (April - September 2011) were focused on start-up activities, which included staff recruitment, preparation of the initial Workplan, market survey work, and launching initial training activities. By the end of Fiscal Year 2011, the project team was in place and project deliverables were on schedule. During FY 2012 the project came into stride and full implementation of each of the project components, including the activities and sub-activities, were on schedule. During FY 2012 the ACED project also managed to launch Component 2 in Transnistria and by the end of FY 2012 this element was operating as intended.

FY 2013 marked an expansion of the level and scope of project activities, with each of the project elements implementing many more activities than they had during FY 2012. The Marketing activity completed its first major trade show in September 2012, the training activity was in full swing, the Value Chain support activity was providing assistance on financing and post-harvest handling and the Enabling Environment activity had provided new lab equipment to Moldova's national SPS lab. At this point the project had recorded some significant achievements and it was beginning to make progress on achieving the PMEP performance targets that were agreed to at the start of the project.

FY 2014 has seen another year of ambitious implementation for the ACED project, with a high level of activity for each of the project Components and all of the sub-components. FY 2014 also saw the implementation of a major Gender Program (Women in Agricultural Networks) which covered the entire country with five regional WAN networks being implemented by four separate sub-contractors. The performance of the project in FY 2014 relative to the targets contained in the project's PMEP was also very good, with the project meeting, or exceeding, most of the performance targets in the plan. Performance was particularly good in the critical performance targets of HVA Sales (102% of target), HVA Exports (121% of target), Producers trained (113% of target) and Firms assisted leading to HVA investments (118% of target). All of these life-of-project performance targets have been exceeded with 25% of project life remaining to be completed.

The following paragraphs in this section of the report will provide brief highlights of the activities and events that were organized by each component and sub-activity of the project. Further details of these activities and events will be contained in Sections II and III of this report. Information on Donor Collaboration and Coordination will be contained in Section IV and the Lessons Learned during FY 2014 are contained in Section V.

Activities for the First Quarter – October to December 2013:

Component 1 – Growing Moldovan HVA Sales & Exports

During the first quarter of FY 2014 the Marketing Team continued their extensive range of activities, with one important activity being the continuation of the Inward Buyer Visit program which brings foreign buyers into Moldova to meet prospective suppliers of fruit & vegetables. During the quarter the Marketing Team expected to host a number of foreign companies in Moldova with this program, but in the end only one visit materialized. Despite this, the visitor that did come in was a critical one as he is a buyer for the large retail chain ASDA in the UK. He spent two days in Moldova, covered the country with Lilian Cipriciuc and Peter White, and

left Moldova impressed with what he saw. He and some of his associates will make it a point to visit the Moldova booth at Fruit Logistica in February 2014.

The Marketing Team also planned for a busy time in the first quarter of 2014 when ACED will organize and implement three trade show booths in February. These shows include Fruit Logistica in Berlin, ProdExpo in Moscow and GulFood in Dubai. The booth for Fruit Logistica 2014 will have a new design, which will be clean and simple and which will put an accent on the fruit and other products on display. The image at the right shows the design that was chosen for the booth, and ACED will be using a new booth construction company for the 2014 show. With the other two shows there will only be basic booths, as these will be the first times that Moldova will have a booth at these shows and these are trial efforts for the project to better gauge the potential of the markets for these two shows.



During the first quarter the ACED Training Team continued to implement an ambitious program of technical seminars, focused on the key Value Chains covered by the project, and on additional new crops. The new crops include plums, peaches, sweet cherries and cucumbers. The Training Team also organized a number of Field Day Training sessions, at ACED demo sites. The Training Team has continued to design new demo activities, that will be implemented over the course of 2014, which will provide targeted farmers with tangible examples of how new and improved technologies can assist them to improve the quality of their production and obtain greater yields. As with the other demo activities that ACED has developed, these will also be used as sites for Farmer Field Days over the coming year.

On November 28th 2013 there were two important events in the history of Moldova – the EU Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius and the Regional Apple Producer's Forum in Edinet. The Apple Forum was an important event for apple producers from northern Moldova, and more than 125 farmers and traders came to Edinet to participate. The ACED staff prepared a busy schedule of presentations for the day, with staff presenting summaries of project activities and information on apple production and markets. Two demo activity partners made presentations to the group on their experiences with ACED demo activities, and local consultants made presentations on new technologies and equipment that are available for modern apple production. ACED also made time in the program for two presentations that were not on the schedule – one by the Regional Coordinator for the World Bank Agricultural Competitiveness Project and one by the Polish-Moldovan Chamber of Commerce.



Oleg Stiopca, ACED's Training Specialist, addressing the more than 100 apple producers at the Apple Forum.

The ACED Value Chain Team continued its work during the first quarter supporting producers and processors to upgrade their physical infrastructure to enable them to meet the market requirements in western countries. The main vehicle for this assistance is what is known as the Value Chain Support Center (VCSC), a web based grouping of local business service providers who have been pre-qualified by the ACED team and which are available to provide assistance to local HVA producers & processors. The **AGROCONNECT** web site is continuing to be refined and improved and during this quarter VC Team members continued to make contact with suppliers and consultants that will be listed on the site.



As part of the VC Team's program to create marketing groups, the Value Chain Team focused assistance on the development of the key producer associations in Moldova. During this quarter the VC Team continued its support for the newly formed Walnut Producers Group, and this group has gone through the entire assistance process under the "Support to Joint Marketing and Investment Initiatives" activity. The association has begun the process of becoming formally registered as an Association and the group has also hired an interim Executive Director. Additional meetings were organized with the ACED technical teams to coordinate the activities of the group for the coming year which will mainly focus on export marketing, post-harvest infrastructure development, and organic walnut production.

With Activity 4, Improving the Enabling Environment for HVA businesses, the ACED project continued following up on the CIBER analysis of regulatory constraints in the HVA sector. The ACED sub-contractor has now completed the preparation of the Regulatory Impact Assessments (RIAs) of the International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) and these documents were presented to the Minister of Agriculture in a meeting between the Minister and USAID Country Director Kent Larsen in early December 2013.

The Policy & SPS Team have continued to move ahead with plans for technical assistance and training for the central SPS laboratory and for the SPS field inspectors. Local firm EuroLab SRL, in collaboration with the Central SPS Lab in Romania, has completed a program of training and technical assistance that ACED contracted for with the SPS Lab and the SPS field inspectors. As part of the field inspector training program EuroLab provided a two-day training program to nearly 300 field inspectors in Moldova.

Component 2 – Enterprise Development in Transnistria

This component of the ACED project got off to a late start due to restrictions on access to Transnistria (imposed by the Embassy and USAID) and actual implementation of the program actually began in early 2012. Despite this delay the activities in Component 2 have now taken off and following the initial implementation of events and activities in FY 2013 the program was in full swing for the start of Fiscal 2014. The basic strategy for Component 2 is to expand and extend the HVA activities developed under Component 1 into the Transnistrian region, while maintaining select targeted activities to support micro, small and medium scale enterprises (MSMEs) and business service provider development more broadly. This strategy has worked well for Component 2 thus far, and the ACED project will be continuing this strategy for the remainder of the project.

Building on the momentum developed during the last two quarters of Fiscal Year 2013, the ACED project is continuing full scale implementation of the program in Transnistria. The two Regional Training Service Providers (RTSPs) in Transnistria are now on board and are fulfilling their obligations for assistance to the project capably and competently. ACED has also begun to implement demo activities in Transnistria, with the purchase of the equipment needed and the setting up of the demo activities taking place during this past quarter. The full implementation of these demo activities will take place over the course of 2014.

Cross-Cutting Activities – Gender & Marginal Groups

With the Gender activity, the implementation of the Women in Agriculture Networks activity began full implementation during the first quarter of FY 2014. Each of the implementing partners completed their individual annual plans for the five regional WANs, and in October 2013 each of the implementers began organizing seminars and other events for their regions. Each month will see the implementation of 10 to 12 individual activities as part of the WAN project, and the response from the women has been uniformly positive.

Communications & Media Activities

During the first quarter of FY 2014 the main public event for ACED was the project booth at the annual FarmerExpo show at MoldExpo. This is the third time that ACED has participated in this event, and as has been the case in past years there was a lot of interest in the ACED booth with many visitors asking questions about the project and about their problems with farming and fruit production. ACED had a good supply of Moldovan apples and table grapes on hand, along with many of the more popular publications the project has prepared. Staff that manned the booth had a hard time keeping the display racks filled with the publications, and the Apple Production Guide, the Table Grape Production Guide and the Safe Pesticide Use Guide were the more popular publications among visitors to the booth. ACED also had complete sets of Technical Bulletins and Innovation Bulletins on hand, and they were popular too. In addition to the booth itself, ACED organized a presentation on the newly launched **AGROCONNECT** web site, which was followed by a presentation by a German company that would like to market its tree fruit planting material in Moldova.

Activities for the Second Quarter – January to March 2014:

Component 1 – Growing Moldovan HVA Sales & Exports

The second of Fiscal Year 2014 was a very busy one for the ACED staff and project partners. ACED continued to organize domestic and international events that increase the visibility of the project and provide valuable assistance and information to the participating producers. As is usual for the first quarter of any calendar year the project implemented multiple international trade shows in February, with three shows taking place this year:

- Fruit Logistica Berlin Feb 4th to the 6th
- ProdExpo Moscow Feb 10th to the 14th
- GulFood Dubai Feb 23rd to the 27th

Needless to say the preparations for these shows, and the actual implementation of these events, kept the Marketing Team and the ACED Administrative Staff very busy during the final months of 2013 and the first weeks of 2014 leading up to the start of the shows. The pictures shown on the following page will provide readers with graphic images of the booths, the producers and the exhibits presented at these trade shows.

Also during January 2014, and despite the bad weather in Moldova, the Marketing Team, with assistance from other team members and in particular the Administrative staff, continued the feverish pace on preparations for the three trade shows in February. The preparations for the booths went relatively smoothly and by the end of the month the Marketing Team was confident that the booths would be finished on time and that they would have the look and appearance desired. Logistical arrangements for flights and hotels posed some challenges, as it is not a small matter to arrange for travel and lodging for 45 people travelling to three different international destinations over a three week period.

The final challenge was getting product samples to the shows in time for opening day of each show. The process for Fruit Logistica was relatively straight forward, as we had experience from the 2013 show. ProdExpo was not difficult either, because the samples were processed food products and these items are much easier to ship than fresh products. GulFood however was the real challenge. Not having shipped to the gulf before, and the fact that Dubai has some unique requirements, created headaches for the ACED staff. Fortunately, by the end of January everything was falling into place and the team was confident the samples would make it and they would be available for the producers at the show.

Fruit Logistica Berlin - Feb 4th to the 6th



ProdExpo Moscow - Feb. 10th to the 14th



GulFoods Dubai - Feb. 23rd to the 27th



These were the main high profile events for the second quarter of FY 2014, but they were not the only ones to take place during that time. In addition to the international trade shows the Value Chain Team organized two international events which included a study tour to Poland, and an international trade mission to Germany. These programs also took place during the month of February in addition to the full programs underway for the Training Team, Component 2 and the Women in Agriculture Networks program.



Members of the study tour to Italy discuss packaging and marketing with the managers from an Italian coop.

During the month of March the focus of the ACED project activities shifted to the other Activities (ie, not Marketing) and a high level of activity continued throughout the month. The main high profile events for the month were the Value Chain Team's international study tour to Italy (to look at cooperative organization in Italy for Table Grapes) and the Training Team's National Sweet Cherry Producers Forum in Chisinau. The Training Team also continued implementing the 2014 Training & Demo

Activity plan with the provision of nine training seminars and four demo field days. The highlight events for March were the following:

Between the dates of March 3rd and March 9th the ACED Value Chain Team sent a group of 14 people, including two ACED staff members, on a trip to the Bari region of southern Italy. This group was composed of table grape producers who are seeking to organize themselves into production and marketing cooperatives and the purpose of the study tour was to observe, and learn from, the table grape production coops that are very effective group marketing organizations for the farmers from the Bari region. The participants in this group were members of four farmer cooperatives that are in formation, and which are receiving organizational assistance from the ACED project, and they came away from the tour with a much better understanding of how farmer coops work and what are the roles and responsibilities of the members and the management of coops.

On March 27th the ACED Training Team organized a one-day National Cherry Producers Forum which had a formal technical session in Chisinau, followed by a field trip to Criuleni to observe new cherry production technologies being used in a farmer's cherry orchard. ACED brought in two international cherry experts from the USA for this event, Lynn Long and Marlene Long, and each of them made formal presentations in the technical session in the morning. More than 100 farmers, traders, input suppliers and representatives of ministries and the government participated in this event and it was a very productive and interesting day for everyone. Both Lynn Long and Marlene Long have visited Moldova in the past (both with the ACED project and with the CNFA implemented predecessor project) and ACED expects to bring them back again.



Lynn Long demonstrating "science based" pruning techniques to properly form the crown of a sweet cherry tree.

Component 2 – Enterprise Development in Transnistria

The winter weather that gripped Moldova in January and February of 2014 caused some delays in the implementation of project activities early in the year. One of the events that was delayed was the Field Day for the Double Wall Greenhouse demonstration activity planned for Fics, Ltd. in Parcani, Transnistria. This activity was planned for late January but in the end it took place on February 5th and despite the cold and wintry weather the event had a very good turnout of interested farmers. The greenhouse was complete, the micro-sprinkler irrigation system had been installed and everything was ready for the field day. A representative of the company that installed the greenhouse came out to the site to explain the construction of the greenhouse, and the purpose and functions of the double layer plastic film, and following his presentation there were many questions from the group and a number of individual discussions with interested participants. This particular company had not delivered any greenhouses to Transnistria before this demo activity installation, but based on the interest shown by the farmer at this event this one may not be the last that they sell on the Left Bank.



The representative from Lucchini Moldova explaining the double layer greenhouse construction methods.

Activities for the Third Quarter – April to June 2014:

Component 1 – Growing Moldovan HVA Sales & Exports

The third quarter of Fiscal Year 2014 has been dedicated to the ongoing preparations for a busy summer and fall schedule and to developing additional ideas and concepts for activities that can be added to the program to continue to support Moldova’s expansion into new markets. The marketing function has been an important area of focus, as support for trade shows provides a direct link to new sales opportunities and expansion into new markets. With a prospective increase in funding for project activities the ACED team has proposed a series of new and additional activities that were included in a “Workplan Annex” provided to the Moldova USAID Mission in April. The main activities and events that have been undertaken during the quarter are as follows:

The Marketing Team has continued with the preparations for the trade shows that were originally included in the Year Four Workplan, and has undertaken the preparations for the additional shows that have now been added into the schedule. As of the end of the quarter the trade show program for the Marketing Team over the remainder of Project Year Four includes five shows with exhibits and one show (SIAL) with an observational visit by qualified and export-ready producers. The table at the right shows the proposed schedule for shows for the period between September 2014 and February 2015, and as can be seen these months will be very active and busy for the Marketing Team. The Marketing Team have also been working on other marketing related tasks, such as a logistics study for shipments to the Gulf region and

Show Name	Location	September	October	November	December	January	February
World Food	Moscow						
SIAL (visit only)	Paris						
IndAgra Food	Bucharest						
Fruit Logistica	Berlin						
ProdExpo	Moscow						
GulFood	Dubai						

discussions with the European Business Association (EBA) regarding collaboration on export procedures (focused on EU markets) training seminars for fresh fruit & vegetable exporters.

The Training Team has had a busy quarter as well, with two high-profile events having taken place during the quarter – An International Study Tour to the Netherlands to study modern seedling production technology and a one-day Vegetable Production Forum which took place in Criuleni (one of the MCC CIS zones) and which gathered more than 70 producers to learn from ACED staff and input suppliers for the vegetable production industry. The Training Team also organized, in collaboration with



the sub-contracted Regional Training Service Providers (RTSPs), nearly 20 technical seminars which were attended by more than 500 individual farmers. The image at the right shows some of the participants on the study tour to the Netherlands examining a special piece of equipment used for planting and harvesting tree fruit seedlings. The participants also visited a Dutch Certification Institute that certifies the seedlings in the Netherlands.

During the quarter the Value Chain Team was also busy with their program of assistance for farmers and producers wishing to upgrade their post-harvest handling and storage capabilities. Via the cost-sharing arrangement with the project's Value Chain Support Center, and the on-line link to farmers for the VCSC with the [AGROCONNECT](#) web site, ACED has assisted client producers to gain access to an additional \$1M of loan funding for these types of upgrades. This additional funding brings the total amount of HVA infrastructure funding to date to \$7.8M, which is more than 50% of the life of project target of \$15M. The Value Chain Team continues to work with the Costesti Table Grape Association on the implementation of their packinghouse project and significant progress has been made this quarter. In April 2014 the "Central" Regional Development Agency published an open

tender for the construction of the packing house building (with the construction costs to be covered by funds from the Regional Development Fund) based on the technical design prepared by the Association and the Costesti Primaria. Construction has begun and it is expected that the facility will be completed by May 2015. The photo at right shows the preparatory work on the building site, as the preparations are being made for the floor and foundations for the building.



The Enabling Environment Team has continued with their program of activities oriented towards improving the regulatory environment in Moldova and during the quarter the ACED sub-contractor for this advocacy work forwarded the ACED report - [Assessment of Plant Variety Registration in Moldova](#) - prepared by a Serbian consultant, to the Ministry of Agriculture accompanied by an appeal signed by all of the main stakeholders and industry associations requesting that the government make the necessary system improvements.

The Team is also continuing the program of assistance for the ISO certification of the Central Phytosanitary Laboratory, and during the quarter a sub-contractor, with assistance from

Romanian specialists, conducted an assessment of the status of the Quality Management System at the lab relative to the requirements of ISO 17025. The ACED Food Safety Specialist has continued to provide regular seminars and presentations on food quality systems and food quality standards, and during this quarter he has organized a number of two-day seminars on Food Safety & HACCP standards, one-day seminars on food quality standards (for specific crops such as cherries, plums, etc) and he provided on-site consultations to a number of processing firms that wish to implement new food safety and quality standards.

In collaboration with the National Food Safety Agency at the end of the quarter ACED organized four one-day seminars for phytosanitary inspectors on the requirements for issuing Phytosanitary Certificates. These were held in Edinet, Balti, Chisinau and Comrat.

Component 2 – Enterprise Development in Transnistria



Activities in ACED's Component 2 continued at a relatively fast pace during the quarter as work in the Transnistrian region has become easier with an increased trust on the part of the local beneficiaries. Turn-out for ACED seminars and events has increased as this trust and understanding of the program has grown. Farmers that have participated in the ACED events are now in the initial stages of developing and strengthening their own

cooperative group activities. There were also 16 cross-bank activities during the quarter, with each one continuing the building of trust and understanding on a person-to-person basis between people from both the Right Bank and the Left Bank of the Nistru River.

The Component 2 Team held two training events for local BSPs during the quarter, as well as continuing the ongoing Principles of Market Research course. The first event, on Consultancy & Training Methodologies in Agriculture, was targeted at Transnistrian BSPs and local consultants in Tiraspol. This seminar was presented by Dr. Oleg Stiopca, the ACED Training Specialist, who has already published a book on this topic and who has been trained in the USA on the best practices for agricultural extension as part of his graduate work. The image at the left shows Oleg with the participants at the seminar.

The second event was participation by a group of nine Transnistrian consultants (each of them working for regional BSPs) at the Sales and Marketing 360 training event which took place at the LeoGrand Hotel in Chisinau. The event included a series of "master classes" on various topics such as customer relations, sales, management and marketing. During the quarter the cross-bank group enrolled in the University of Georgia online course Principles of Market Research continued this program and completed their first proctored exam at the ACED offices on June 13th. All eight participants (four Right Bank, four Left Bank, 50-50 men and women) showed up for the test, and the exams have been sent to UGA for scoring.

ACED's Component 2 Activity 2 seeks to support the development of, and enhance the competitiveness of, Transnistrian micro, small and medium scale enterprises (MSMEs) within the targeted HVA value chains. To achieve this objective the Component 2 Team implemented a number of technical training activities on the Left Bank (Transnistria) during the quarter. Most of these events were technical training seminars, with seminars in the following topics, among others, being organized during the quarter:

- ✓ A one-day seminar on Growing Cucumbers in Greenhouses was held in Parcani on the 10th of April. A picture of this event is shown at the right.
- ✓ On April 11th ACED delivered a seminar on Greenhouse Vegetable Production Technologies for the Transnistrian Women's Agricultural Network members from the Camenca and Ribnita regions.
- ✓ On April 11th the first Farmer Field Day for the demo activity on weather stations and drip irrigation, titled Weather Station Use for Drip Irrigation in Apple Orchards was held in Tiraspol followed by a trip to the Calvil orchard.



- ✓ On the 7th of May a presentation on modern models of greenhouses, greenhouse heating, and materials for greenhouse construction was held in Parcani for the Energy-Efficient Techniques in Greenhouse Production demo field day event.
- ✓ On the 30th of May the Farmer Field Day presented calcium treatments in apple orchards as part of the Weather Stations, Calcium Treatments & Reflective Covers demo activity.
- ✓ On June 10th a seminar on Green Operations for Young Cherry Orchards took place in Carmanova, with the practical part taking place at the Rovnaia family farm.
- ✓ On Saturday the 21st of June ACED organized a seminar on Tomato IPM and Quality Standards in Parcani, with collaboration by the Transnistria RTSP Belyi Most.

As can be seen from the above list of activities and events that took place in Transnistria during the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2014 ACED's Component 2 is operating at full speed, it is having an impact on the farmers and producers on the Left Bank and it is fostering commercial linkages between Right Bank and Left Bank companies and farmers.

Cross-Cutting Activities – Gender & Marginal Groups

As with the other elements of the ACED project, the Gender Program has been very active during the quarter and the project has been steadily increasing its involvement of, and impact on, Moldovan women involved in agriculture. This quarter the number of women attending ACED activities represented 46% of the total discrete participants in all ACED events. The percentage has increased significantly because of the women from the Women's Agricultural Networks participating in the seminars, field days and study tours organized by the WAN program. The number of women adopting improved techniques and practices totaled 42 this quarter, representing 31% of total discrete adopters. The sales reported by women owned or managed business was \$1.3M, or 22% of the total sales this quarter. During the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2014 the Regional Organizations (ROs) continued to operate at full speed, organizing multiple events for the women members of the WANs in each region.

Activities for the Fourth Quarter – July to September 2014:

Component 1 – Growing Moldovan HVA Sales & Exports

The fourth quarter of Fiscal Year 2014 has continued with the focus on the preparations for, and the implementation of, the ACED project's ambitious program of marketing assistance for Moldovan producers. In addition there has been a full program of training activities for HVA farmers and the ramping up of the assistance program that will focus on farmers within

the MCC Compact irrigation zones. Activities have continued with the Value Chain assistance for the implementation of new Post-Harvest infrastructure investments, with new business plans and loan applications having been completed. ACED has also continued to support the Central SPS laboratory with its plans to become ISO 17025 certified and there has been continued assistance on the implementation of regulatory reforms.

During the month of July the ACED project continued to provide support to the USAID Mission and the Embassy to increase the coverage of American funded support for Moldovan agriculture. The highest profile event for the month of July was a **site visit by the US Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM), Kara McDonald**, to an apple orchard owned by a member of Moldova Fruct. During the visit DCM McDonald had a chance to have extensive discussions with the owner of the orchard, Petru Stratan, and to be interviewed by reporters from Radio Free Europe and a local TV station. The delegation also included other representatives from the US Embassy as well as Rodica Miron and Roman Purici from USAID. The photo at right shows the DCM examining apples in the orchard and discussing apple marketing issues with Petru Stratan.



Another significant event during the month of July was the **Beekeepers Study Tour to Serbia** that took place during the week of July 28th. Lilian Cipriciuc, accompanied by nine honey producers (four from the Left Bank and five from the Right Bank), spent five days in Serbia visiting apiaries, honey processors and exporters, honey equipment supply companies and the largest supplier of pharmaceuticals for the beekeeping industry in Europe. The group was very busy during the tour and spent long days on their visits to the sites that had been selected and arranged by Milos Stojanovic, a former employee of the USAID financed Serbia Agribusiness Project. The group returned to Moldova with a lot of new ideas for adoption in their own beekeeping activities, and useful contacts with new suppliers of equipment and supplies for their activities in Moldova. The picture at the right shows the beekeepers discussing hive construction and management with one of the Serbian beekeepers the group visited.



On the 25th of August the ACED COR accompanied the CoP and the Value Chain Specialist on a field trip to Hincesti and Costesti to visit the sites of two of the joint marketing groups that the Value Chain Team have been assisting over the past year or so. In Hincesti a newly formed farmer cooperative was visited which has six members and which is jointly farming about 70 hectares of land for apples, plums, cherries and other tree fruit. The group has come together much more seriously following their participation in a cooperative study tour to Poland organized by ACED earlier in 2014. **In Costesti the site of the RDA financed packinghouse building was visited.** This is expected to be used by the Costesti Table Grape producers group once complete. ACED has provided extensive assistance to this group over the past two years, and helped them to apply to the local Regional Development Agency office for assistance to establish a group owned table grape packinghouse operation.

During the month of September there were three significant events implemented by the ACED project – the first Farmer Fair for CIS zone farmers in Jora de Mijloc, an international Study Tour to Germany for a group of 15 plum producers and consultants and the Moldova exhibit at the annual World Food show in Moscow.

The ACED **Farmer Fair in Jora de Mijloc**, held on September 27th was a very successful event as it brought together many of the farmers who will be using the irrigation systems in the Lopatna and Jora de Jos irrigation zones for interactions with input and equipment suppliers, banks and other sources of finance, agricultural development agencies and projects and local government officials. To start off the event ACED organized a series of four technical presentations for the farmers to give them an introduction to the kinds of information they can learn from the technical seminars that the project will be organizing for the CIS zone farmers. The event continued with artistic and cultural presentations from the residents in the area, and wound up with a raffle for the participants to give away small gifts that had been provided by the input and equipment suppliers that participated in the event. One of the interesting elements of the event was a drawing contest for local school kids, with awards of sets of books being made for the best drawings depicting the importance of water and irrigation for life. The image at the right shows one of the drawings prepared for the event.



Between the 7th and the 13th of September a group of 15 plum producers and local agricultural consultants travelled to Oppenheim, Germany to observe and learn about modern plum production and processing technologies. The photo below shows some of the members of the group examining the tarps used in Germany to collect the fruit that falls from the trees. The program of this study tour was designed so that the participants would be able to see the entire value chain for plums, from the selection of rootstock, to soil care and field preparation, pruning, orchard maintenance, integrated pest management systems, harvesting and post-harvest management all the way through to plum processing and marketing. The participants in this tour were very pleased with the program that was provided by the contractor selected, and they learned a lot from the program.



From the 15th to the 18th of September ACED supported a ***Moldova – Taste makes the difference exhibit booth at the 2014 World Food Moscow trade show***. Despite the ban on Moldovan fruit imports imposed by Russian authorities the participants at this show were satisfied with the results and they were able to make significant contacts with buyers and importers from a number of potential new markets. Prior to the show the ACED project had made a special effort to develop an attractive and eye catching booth and this effort was successful. The booth was styled to look like a French café, so that it would be very inviting for guests to come in and chat with the Moldovan producers. The booth was the hit of the show and many people came over to take pictures or video of the booth. The picture on the following page shows the booth as it looks coming down one of the major aisles in the hall

where it was located. As can be seen the booth was very attractive in its appearance and it really stood out from among all of the booths at this particular show.

During July, **EUROFRUIT Magazine**, which is the largest circulation magazine in Europe for the fresh fruit industry, was contacted many times and based on discussions with the Managing Director ACED will run two half page advertisements timed to appear in the editions that will be distributed for free to participants at the World Food and Fruit Logistica shows



(September and February). The advertisement to be placed in the magazine is focused on Moldova, and its agricultural heritage, with an emphasis on HVA using the slogan **Moldova, taste makes the difference**. In addition to the advert, for the September issue EUROFRUIT included an interview with Peter White regarding his experience in Moldova and his views on the prospects for Moldovan fruit and vegetables. This interview also highlights ACED activities and provides information on the agricultural advancements that have taken place in Moldova over the past few years. As a follow-on to the article, and the advertisement, the Managing Director of EUROFRUIT has agreed to visit Moldova in October so that he can observe for himself the progress that Moldova has made with HVA production.

Component 2 – Enterprise Development in Transnistria

ACED continued to maintain a busy schedule of activities for Component 2 of the project, which focuses on assistance to farmers and producers in Transnistria and on the implementation of “cross-bank” activities which provide business people from both sides of the Nistru River an opportunity to interact and share their experiences. In addition, the project continued to implement the Women in Agricultural Networks activity this quarter, with this quarter being the final quarter for all of the sub-contracts signed for this program. Some final events for the WAN program will take place in the next quarter, as some of the implementers still need to organize the final round-tables and conferences for their programs. The following paragraphs provide brief descriptions of the more high profile events and activities that the ACED project implemented during this past quarter.

Communications & Media

On August 29th the ACED project participated in an event that was part of the **Days of the Diaspora festival** organized by the EU and other funding organizations in Moldova. For this event the festival brought together about two dozen organizations at the Arc de Triumph to provide information to Moldovans who have returned to the country and who need to find something new to do. ACED, and the other organizations, distributed technical materials and ACED staff explained the assistance the project can provide. The picture here shows the ACED table at this event. A significant number of project publications were distributed to interested visitors at our table.



II. PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Activities undertaken by the ACED project are organized under two Components, each of which has distinct goals and objectives. Component 1, which is the largest of the two (representing 85% of project funding), seeks to assist Moldovan farmers and processors to become more competitive with their High Value Agriculture (HVA) production and expand sales in new markets, particularly exports. Component 2 is focused on the Transnistrian region of Moldova (referred to as the Left Bank); activities in this component seek to foster development of private enterprises--particularly micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises--and create a network of private Business Service Providers (BSPs) within the Left Bank that can support the private sector.

The main accomplishments of ACED over the course of FY 2014 are listed below, organized by Project Component and Activity as laid out in the Project Contract.

COMPONENT 1: GROWING MOLDOVAN HVA SALES & EXPORTS

Component 1 provides market development support and technical assistance and training to help Moldovan producers and agribusinesses leverage Moldova's comparative advantage in HVA production, and to overcome fundamental constraints and obstacles they face in meeting buyer expectations and attracting private sector investment.

The work builds on past USAID assistance and also supports the \$102 million Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) investment in Moldova's Centralized Irrigation Systems (CIS). This support seeks to facilitate a transition to high value agriculture (THVA) by farmers operating in the rehabilitated CIS zones and to increase rural incomes.

Activity 1.1: Develop and Expand Market Opportunities

Based on guidance from USAID and anticipating the ban of Moldovan fresh fruit exports to Russia in the near future, the ACED Marketing Team stepped up implementation of international trade shows and other activities to promote Moldovan products to new markets.

Trade Show Highlights

Fruit Logistica, Berlin, February 4–6, 2014

This was the second year that ACED supported a Moldova booth at this prestigious event. Our new 39-square-meter booth under the banner "*Moldova—Taste Makes the Difference*" had a fresh and natural look and promoted Moldova and its rich agricultural heritage on a world stage for produce such as apples, table grapes, and dried fruit (apples, cherries-sweet and sour, aronia, plums, melons, grapes, and peaches). Results and takeaways:

- Commercial contacts included Carrefour Romania, which expressed interest in apples and was putting together a deal. Good requests came in from the Gulf region, specifically on red apples (Red Chief or Star Crimsons) if the sizing can be uniform with a preference for small apples.
- Good interest was shown in walnuts. There was a prearranged visit by Edeka, which then led to a dried fruit discussion.
- Observations to support a Moldova exhibit at Fruit Logistica in 2015:
 1. Producers need to show more commitment and energy in working the booth and interacting with customers, who expect booths to be driven by a commercial "buzz." For the 2015 show, we will require participants to share expenses, that is, "ante up."

2. Change the mix of producers and products to keep things fresh and expand. Exhibitors must spend at least 75% of their time in the booth so we have proper presence. In addition, we should have a logistics person in the booth at all times to discuss shipping with potential customers.
3. Products displayed should include apples, dried fruit, walnuts, and other fruit-based offerings--the largest range available in February. A select line of vegetables could also be shown. Seeing and tasting products is what gets new customers' attention.
4. The booth should entail a bigger closet, water cooler, and additional waste baskets. Signage was vibrant; the booth could be seen by everyone from afar with the drop-down four-sided sign.
5. At least five ACED staff members should attend with at least two women available to provide sampling continuously. There should be enough Moldova and company brochures.
6. Iurie Falla from Moldova Fruct will need to play a more active role in organizing the details and selecting the producers.

ProdExpo, Moscow, February 10–14, 2014

Results and takeaways:

- ACED committed relatively late and it was our first time there, yet the exhibit turned out to be very positive and productive.
- ProdExpo is mainly a processed-food show with processors making short-term deals for existing inventory as well as establishing future contracts.
- This marked the first time that ACED assisted food-processing companies. We partnered with three of the larger processors—Orchei Vit, Alfa Nistru, and Natur Bravo—with each having a booth ranging from 12 to 18 square meters. ACED also supported a common booth of 25 square meters shared by two companies from both the Left and Right Banks: Coval & Co, Fortuna Plus, Holpark LTD, and Agrotorginvest. Two smaller companies from Transnistria also visited.
- Smaller participants agreed that the support ACED provided encouraged them to participate but was not so much to attract companies that were not serious. Each said they strengthened relationships with existing buyers while introducing themselves to larger ones. While they had been calling and e-mailing these clients, each agreed it was advantageous to meet them, establish a personal connection, and socialize.
- The three larger companies (Natur Bravo, Orhei Vit and Alfa Nistru) said participation demonstrated that they are still players in the market and enabled them to establish new contacts, which is very important.
- Orhei Vit learned about Kazakhstan devaluing its currency; they export about 30% of their juice to Kazakhstan.
- Some Russian buyers were interested in selling products under Coval's brand of Petrusha since it is "made in Moldova."
- Compared to Fruit Logistica, our producers were more engaged due to the comfortable setting, common language, and overall market acceptance of Moldovan products.
- ACED recommends an exhibit at ProdExpo be supported in 2015 with revisions, perhaps a common Moldova booth under the banner *"Moldova - Taste Makes the*

Difference” with partitions that offer companies distinction and the privacy to conduct business.

GulFood, Dubai February 23-27, 2014

Results and takeaways:

- Four ACED staff members participated along with eight producers and a representative from both Moldova Fruct and MCC Moldova.
- Products displayed included walnuts (kernels and in shell), apples, honey and dried fruit offerings (apples, cherries, melons, dried whole plums) from Lefrucom and Monicol.
- Buyers from all over the world were ready to start the contract process, often discussing very large quantities.
- ACED should seriously consider GulFood 2015 with a bigger showcase and greater product range. This show provides a great opportunity to penetrate new markets, including for both ingredients and finished products.
- In 2015, we want a customized booth in a better location under the banner “*Moldova – Taste Makes the Difference.*” It is imperative to have a logistics person in the booth who knows freight rates and delivery options to key Gulf and Asian markets.
- Pricing matrices should be printed so that participants can convey knowledge and discuss potential deals with confidence. Samples should be enough to cover continuous sampling for the full number of show days.
- Our apple producers were not very vibrant and seemed overwhelmed when customers came to discuss huge deals.
- Casa Albeini did an excellent job and clearly displayed their desire to develop new business opportunities. Feedback and interest in their high-quality honey was extraordinary.
- In 2015, the arrangement for participant selection, training, and shared financial commitment needs to be changed. This show is too important for Moldova and the producers given the turnout at the booth and heavy interest expressed.

World Food Moscow, September 15-18, 2014

Results and takeaways:

- This year’s show took on a new character with the Russian ban in effect, as Russia previously accounted for approximately 85% of Moldova’s fruit exports.
- It was important for Moldova to maintain commercial continuity and demonstrate readiness to provide product, as well as to re-emphasize the taste of its products that is well regarded in the Russian market. The slogan “*MOLDOVA -- Taste Makes the Difference*” again played a strong role at the Moldova booth.
- Products displayed were limited due to the limitations to ship samples and included only apples, grapes, walnuts, and some dried fruit. The ACED team found Moldovan fruit in the market, stickered it accordingly, and boxed it in Moldova Fruct boxes that displayed favorably.
- Visitors from Belarus, Kazakhstan, India, Egypt, Peru, and North Africa expressed interest. The taste of Moldovan fruit, especially the apples, was received fantastically. Later in September, three visitors from Kazakhstan visited Moldova to look at apples and other fruit products.

- The ban made it difficult for the producers, who were reserved and not knowing if or how they could ship product into the Russian market without circumvention, which drives up the cost.

Upcoming Shows/Activities for FY2015:

INDAGRA, Bucharest, Oct. 29 – Nov. 2

World of Perishables, Dubai, Nov. 9–11

Fruit Logistica Berlin: Preliminary details have been discussed and booth parameters determined.

GulFood Dubai: The ACED Marketing Team secured an additional 21 square meters of booth space for a total of 57 square meters with improved positioning.

Gulf Region Transportation Study: We decided to not fund the proposed study of the logistics to ship products to the Gulf due to time and cost-benefit and will spend the funds on other commercial activities. We received basic information from a local logistics company which provided a matrix of costs of typical shipments from key ports to the destinations of interest. This will be used as a guideline for producers to help estimate costs.

Eurofruit Magazine: ACED arranged placement of two half-page, four-color advertisements in the World Food (September 2014) and Fruit Logistica (January 2015) editions. The ad (right) features Moldova's agricultural heritage. An interview with ACED's Peter White in the September issue emphasized the push to move to new markets while maintaining existing ones. Chris White, Managing Director of *Eurofruit*, visited Moldova and the project in October.

Moldova Fruct: ACED and Iurie Fala from Moldova Fruct are discussing the Quality Seal to create a better image for produce and eventually better pricing.

Trade Mission to Romania: A delegation of 15 Moldovan producers (apples, plums, table grapes and vegetables), plus Iurie Fala of Moldova Fruct and Ministry representative Mr. Vlad Loghin

moldova
taste makes the difference

Moldova's rich soils, abundant sunshine, and temperate climate enable its farmers to produce fresh fruit and vegetables that are renowned for their exceptional quality and great taste. In recent years, this small country, with a long-standing agricultural heritage, has focused on becoming a dependable international supplier for fresh produce with an emphasis on wholesome, natural products. Moldovan farmers are proud of the natural taste of their apples, plums, cherries, peaches, walnuts, table grapes, tomatoes, cucumbers, sweet peppers, berries, and other fresh produce. This natural taste is a result of Moldova's agricultural traditions being passed on through the years, combined with the adoption of more modern agricultural practices.

Generous international and significant private assistance investment has allowed Moldova to establish new super-intensive orchards and state-of-the-art greenhouses around the country. Moldovan farmers are ready to supply you with a variety of "tasty" fresh fruit and vegetables that are competitively priced. Look for the quality seal "Moldova - tastes makes the difference" that assures you the product will meet the demand requirements of customers in your markets.

Please visit the Moldova booths at the upcoming World Food Moscow, IndAGRA Bucharest, Fruit Logistica Berlin and GulFood Dubai trade shows.

Moldovan association websites:
www.moldovafrect.md – apples & fruit
www.apesm.md – table grape exporters
www.apicultura.md – honey producers
www.asociatianuciferilor.com – walnuts

The participation of Moldovan producers in international trade shows is supported by the Agricultural Competitiveness and Enterprise Development Project [www.aced.md] which is funded by the United States Agency for International Development and the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

visited Bucharest to identify market opportunities. Meetings with the agriculture ministry and key retailers benchmarked the competition and determined market requirements. Producers think there is potential for Moldovan products in Romania based on what they saw at retail locations and on the fact that the EU has increased Moldova's quota to 80,000 tons for apples. This will be further confirmed and emphasized with participation at the IndAgra show and B2B event in October 2014.

Serbia Beekeepers Study Tour: Lilian Cipciriuc from ACED, accompanied a group of Moldovan beekeepers on an international study tour to Serbia that proved to be very successful. Beekeepers from both the Right Bank and the Left Bank participated in this tour and they were able to exchange ideas on the benefits of working together.

Other Highlights—Expanding Market Opportunities:

- The ACED Marketing Team met many times with Iurie Fala, executive director of Moldova Fruct, regarding activities that ACED will support in collaboration with the association. With Project Year 4 being a transition year, ACED will work to have Moldova Fruct lead areas of trade show planning and organizing, such as in the selection of producer participants.
- We met numerous times with Dumitru Vasilescu from the UNDP Aid for Trade project to learn how ACED and UNDP can continue to work together. ACED looks forward to continuing this great collaboration in at least two international shows during Year 4.
- ACED met with Mr. Alexander Di Leonardo from MSC Moldova to discuss routing of Moldovan products to the Gulf region considering time, cost, handling, and the probability of good arrivals. We determined that MSC is best equipped to take care of dry shipments, but they would look into refrigerated container rates as well.
- ACED developed an RfP to assess the availability of transportation services for fresh and processed fruits and vegetables from Moldova to the Gulf region. The information will help prepare Moldovan producers for the next exhibit in the Gulf region.
- The ACED Marketing Team reviewed www.moldovafruct.md and advised on how to increase its functionality, attractiveness, interactivity, and commercial appeal.
- The ACED Commercial Group and Moldova Fruct together determined that the October 2014 IndAgra show in Bucharest—with its proximity and common language—would be excellent for exhibiting a range of products. Exporting to Romania and establishing long-term relationships would be key to using Romania as an entry point into the EU, especially with the EU increasing the non-tariff quota for Moldova from 20 to 80 thousand tons.
- Unfortunately, now that Moldovan producers are serious about seeking new markets, they will be competing with other European countries that have also had their exports banned by Russia.

Developing a Network of Buyers and Trading Partners

International Produce/ASDA UK: The ACED team in November hosted Ross MacDuff from International Produce, which was very positive. International Produce handles purchasing for ASDA UK and after visiting producers and cold stores Ross stated that he wanted to begin with purchasing two loads a week between September and December 2014. Ross emphasized that having consistent grading, firmness and brix, along with sturdy boxes in order to have good arrivals, were critical. ACED is working with producers (Mr. Gorashov and Constantin Furculita) to make another shipment to the United Kingdom as the

first shipment last year did not work out well. Distance is a concern. International Produce also expressed interest in dried whole plums and wine with ACED passing Ross's contact information to the CEED II project for follow-up. Also:

- During October, ACED's Marketing Team had several requests from companies looking for Moldovan produce, including importers from Moscow looking for apples, from Ukraine looking for plums, and from Belarus looking for grapes. ACED provided the contact details for key Moldovan producers to these importers and will follow up.
- The closing of the Povkrovka market in Moscow is a big development; retailers are now trying to make direct contact with producers, and the wholesale community landscape in Russia is changing quickly.

Promoting Domestic Partnerships

Activities implemented at Linella and IMC supermarkets have not realized their potential:

- At IMC, a plasma TV was set up in one store as a test to promote local apples and producers with a photo loop that ran continuously for three months. The results were not positive and IMC does not want to incur this expense any further.
- The merchandising/handling effort at Linella with its designee and the guide book concluded in February. Improvements were made at store we assisted, but the overall chain was not committed. ACED is discouraged but will continue discussions to change perceptions.



Other Moldovan HVA Marketing-Related Activities

High Interest in Moldovan Honey: The ACED Marketing Team met with Vitalie Popa from the Casa Albinei association who was recently visited by a well-known Italian company interested in buying at least 100 tons of honey. This buyer's overall needs are for 2,000 tons of honey as he is involved in the confectionary business. ACED worked with Vitalie Popa to set up a meeting at the Dubai show in February 2015 between he and the Italian company. The Italian buyer indicated he was willing to pay 50% up front.

For Vitalie Popa to fulfill this potential contract, he needs a homogenizer that would enable him to purchase honey from many beekeepers, combine it, and produce large quantities of the same quality and consistency. He does not have the funding to make the purchase. Vitalie Popa met with ACED's Viorel Leahu and discussed ways of donor support. Vitalie also visited with Minister Bumacov to explore support and funding alternatives for beekeepers. The Minister said he would try to have honey included in current and future foreign donor projects. Casa Abinei is the same company that recently won the gold medal honey award at a Kiev convention.

In related news, ACED met with beekeepers in Calarasi and Transnistria to discuss the benefits of forming small groups/associations and working together in areas such as bee health and group purchases of inputs. ACED is discussing assistance in this direction.

Other HVA Marketing Activities:

- In November 2013, ACED's Marketing Team provided producers in Transnistria with an overview of pricing and negotiating skills, covering key elements to establishing good working relationships with retailers and critical factors in price maximization for open-market sales.

- ACED gave a presentation on export requirements and certification to 20 producers in Transnistria, where Chamber of Commerce and Customs personnel gathered and verified the required procedures. ACED later distributed Export Guides.
- Also in November, an ACED Marketing Specialist presented an overview of assistance for HVA producers in exports and promotion during the Regional Forum for Apple Producers in Edinet.
- The ACED Marketing Team conducted a brief analysis of the export trade of Moldovan fruit with Belarus and Ukraine and developed an analysis of the non-tariff export trade barriers for Moldovan fruit destined for the Ukrainian market.

Activity 1.2: Upgrade Production to Meet Buyer Requirements

The objective is to increase Moldovan farmer HVA incomes by lowering production costs, increasing marketable output, increasing the quality of their production, and capturing better prices. ACED training and demonstration activities prepared producers, farmer-based groups, and cooperatives to respond competitively to market opportunities.

FY2014 Q1 Seminar Highlights

The *Regional Forum for Apple Producers from Northern Moldova* in Edinet town attracted more than 125 participants. In addition to apple growers, the Forum saw participation by input and equipment suppliers. A representative from the World Bank Moldova Agricultural Competitiveness Project discussed the support that project could give to the apple industry. Other activities:

- Seminars covering *Greenhouse Construction in the Republic of Moldova* brought together 44 growers from the Colibasi and Gura Bicului villages.
- Four seminars on *Plum Orchard Planting, Particularities and Preparation for Wintering* that attracted about 70 growers in the Nisporeni, Ungheni, and Edinet raions.
- With the RTSP, two seminars on *Peach Orchard Planting, Particularities and Preparation for Wintering* that attracted 55 peach growers from the Tudora and Burlacu villages.
- Three seminars on *Setting up New Sweet Cherry Orchards and Winter Preparations* with 60 participants from Navirnet and Olanesti villages and the town of Edinet.
- Two seminars on *Setting Up New Table Grape Vineyards and Winter Preparations* in Vadul lui Isac and Varzaresti villages with more than 50 growers.
- Three seminars on *Setting up New Apple Orchards and Winter Preparations* for 65 apple growers from Copanca and Ruseni villages and one in Soroca raion.

FY2014 Q2 Seminar Highlights

From January–March 2014, the ACED Training Team organized several seminars that attracted approximately 260 growers from different raions:

- Seminars on *Apple Tree Pruning in Intensive Orchards* organized in Ungheni, Zgurița, Șoldănești, and Comrat, and seminars on *Plum Tree Pruning and IPM* were organized in the Valcineti and Varzaresti villages. The pruning seminars were extended to other value chains, including sweet cherry. A technical seminar on *Sweet Cherry Pruning and Canopy Formation in Orchards* was organized in Cahul town.
- Seminars on *IPM and Fertilization Systems for Apple Tree Orchards* in Zgurița, Ruseni, and Soroca.

- Two seminars on *Tomato Seedling Production* in the Vadul lui Isac and the Meleseni villages. Two additional seminars on *Cucumber Seedling Production* were organized in the Colibași and Meleseni villages. These seminars attracted more than 100 vegetable growers.



ACED National Cherry Forum in Chisinau:

Held in late March, the Forum featured ACED consultants Marlene and Lynn Long from the United States. Professor Lynn Long from Oregon State University discussed the main varieties of cherries used for production to meet international market demand and presented canopy formation techniques that can reduce labor for orchard maintenance and picking as well as increase yield. Marlene Long from the Oregon Cherry Growers Cooperative presented on harvesting and post-harvest handling, stressing that when long-distance transport is needed to get cherries to markets, it is necessary to pre-cool the fruit using technologies based on hydro-cooling and/or forced air cooling.

National consultant Ananie Pesteanu shared his experiences from ACED study tours in Italy and Bosnia and Hertegovina, including practices and technologies that can be replicated with minimal additional inputs and expenses. During his STTA, Lynn provided direct technical assistance to 10 cherry producers who are implementing the canopy formations in their orchards. Lynn reviewed with the local-national consultant the contents of the Cherry Production Guide being developed by ACED. In addition, the ACED Training Team organized a seminar dedicated to cherry pruning and canopy formation techniques in Navirnet village attended by 24 cherry growers.

FY2014 Q3 Seminar Highlights

From April–June 2014, the Training Team in collaboration with the sub-contracted Regional Training Service Providers organized nearly 20 technical seminars attended by more than 500 farmers:

- Six seminars on *Green Operations in Table Grape Vineyards* attracted 189 table grape producers from Basareabeasca, Cietu village, and Cahul town.
- Five seminars on *Fertilization and IPM for Strawberries and Strawberry Varieties, Harvesting and Postharvest Handling* for 135 strawberry producers from the Anenii Noi raion, the Ungheni region, and Copanca village.
- Two seminars on *Tomato Production in the 1st Cycle* and *Tomato Production Technology in 2nd Cycle* for 68 growers from Vadul lui Isac village.
- Four seminars on *Cucumber Production in Greenhouses* and *Cucumber Production in Open Fields* for 94 vegetable producers from the Colibași and Gura Bicului villages.
- Seminars on thinning of flowers and fruit and chemical thinning, and growth regulator usage for 45 apple growers from Edinet and Zgurița.

The *Vegetable Producers Forum* in Criuleni town attracted more than 70 vegetable growers as well as input and equipment suppliers. The picture at the right shows participants at the Agromaxer greenhouses viewing intensive tomato production in an enclosed environment.

FY2014 Q4 Seminar Highlights

Germany Study Tour—Plum Production: The study tour to Germany on *Advanced Technologies in Plum Production* for 14 plum producers and national consultants featured modern production and post-harvest practices. The picture above shows the group at the Service Center for Rural Areas (DLR Oppenheim) with Peter Hilsendegen, who is a consultant at the center.



From July to September 2014, the ACED Training Team and our sub-contracted Regional Training Service Providers (RTSPs) organized five technical seminars attended by more than 130 farmers:

- *Fertilization, Quality Requirements and Post-Harvest Handling of Tomatoes* in Cahul, Vadul lui Isac.
- *Plums: Harvesting, Storage and New Cultivars* in Călărași, Vălcineț.
- *Harvesting Techniques and Quality Parameters for Table Grapes & New Varieties of Table Grapes* in Cantemir, Cîietu.
- *Harvesting Techniques and Quality Parameters for Table Grapes & New Varieties of Table Grapes* in Cahul.
- *New Varieties, Harvesting Techniques and Quality Parameters for Apples* in Zgurita, Drochia.

Enhance Field Demonstration Plots

FY2014 Q1 Farmer Field Days

- The ACED Training Team organized three Field Day Training events covering *Installation of an Improved Design Greenhouse, Demo Activity Results Assessment, and Energy Conservation Techniques (Double Layer Cover Film)*. These were held in the Dubasarii Vechi, Taxobeni, and Singereii Noi villages and attended by more than 70 growers and farmers.
- Field Day Training on *Fertilization Particularities in Table Grape Vineyards* was organized at the ACED demo activity site in Burlacu village for 27 growers.
- Designed demonstration activities to be implemented: *Use of Artificial LED Lighting (Using the Red/Blue Spectrum) on Cucumber Seedling Production; Using Reflective Films and Chemical Thinning in Apple Orchards; and Using Weather Stations and Manual Thinning of Clusters in Table Grape Vineyards*. These were reviewed by the project's Environmental Specialist and submitted to the Mission Environmental Officer for approval before implementation.

Other Q1 Training Team Activities:

An ACED Moldovan consultant prepared new or updated training materials that were distributed to HVA grower trainees:

- PowerPoint on *Setting up New Apple Orchards and Winter Preparations*.
- PowerPoint for seminars on *Setting up New Sweet Cherry Orchards and Winter Preparations*.
- PowerPoint for Field Day Trainings on *Fertilization Particularities in Table Grape Vineyards*.

- Materials on *Peach Orchard Planting, Particularities and Preparation for Wintering* (in Romanian).
- Materials for Field Day Training on *Improved Greenhouse Design with Ventilation-Assessment the Production Season Results*.
- Power Point on *Greenhouse Construction in the Republic of Moldova*.
- Materials in Russian on *Plum and Peach Orchard Planting, Particularities and Preparations for Wintering*.
- New edition of the Cucumber Bulletin prepared and distributed to more than 350 producers.
- Training and Demonstration Activity Plan for 2014 prepared and reviewed by technical staff.
- In Transnistria, a technical seminar on *Plum and Peach Orchard Planting, Particularities and Preparations for Wintering* for eight growers.
- During ACED international berry fruit consultant Rick Dale's visit, two seminars on *Blueberry and Raspberry Production Technologies* in Chisinau and Chitcani village for 54 growers.

International/Local Study Tours:

The ACED Training Team organized Study Tours to Italy and Serbia for farmers from the Left Bank and Right Bank as well as national consultants with assistance with the Component 2 staff:

- In October, 14 participants traveled to Verona in northern Italy for *Advanced Apple Production & Post Harvesting Technologies and Infrastructure*, visiting various sites and covering production, harvesting, and post-harvest handling of apples.
- In November, 13 participants traveled to Serbia for *Cross Bank Study Tour for Vegetable Producers Interested in Cooperative Marketing Development*.

FY2014 Q2 Farmer Field Days

From January to March, the ACED Training Team conducted:

- *Cherry Tree Pruning and Canopy Formation in Orchards* in Făleşti, Năvirneț raion.
- *Plum Tree Pruning and IPM* in Edineț.
- *Apple Tree Pruning in Intensive Orchards* in Ocnîța, Bîrlădeni raion.
- *Apple Tree Pruning in Intensive Orchards* in Florești, Domulgeni raion.
- *Using Frost Buster Equipment Fruit Orchards* in Cotiujeni village.

These field demonstrations attracted more than 200 fruit producers.

Other Training Activities:

ACED's Moldovan consultants updated training materials which were distributed to HVA grower trainees:

- Materials for *IPM for Plum Orchards, Plum Tree Pruning, Tomato Seedling Production and IPM and Fertilization Systems for Apple Tree Orchards*.
- *Cucumber Production, Sweet Cherry Production, and Plum Production*.
- New editions of the *Stone Fruit and Apple Production* periodic technical bulletins.
- Revised editions of the *Tomato Production* bulletin.

FY2014 Q3 Farmer Field Days

From April to June, the ACED Training Team implemented these Farmer Field Days Trainings:

- Using weather stations as part of the IPM plan to determine optimal timing for interventions in apple orchards.
- Energy conservation techniques in combination with the use of double layer cover film greenhouses.
- Technological particularities for tomato production using cover film (mulch) with fertigation in open fields: equipment maintenance and plant care.
- Cherry harvesting techniques and presentation of new sweet cherry varieties for production.
- The importance of weather stations and green operations in table grape vineyards.
- Construction, use of, and advantages of greenhouses using double layer film construction.
- Production results with the use of improved greenhouse designs: ventilation and shade covers.
- Production results of using cover films (mulch), with irrigation, in open field tomato production.
- Modern cherry orchards, new varieties of sweet cherries, and the use of trellis systems.
- Installation and use of a pre-cooling system for freshly harvested fruit, including harvesting procedures in the field.
- Techniques regarding quality enhancement of table grapes using the gable system in the vineyard.
- Use of anti-hail systems and green operations in table grape vineyards.

These activities across Moldova attracted more than 350 participants.

Other Activities--Training Materials:

With assistance from national consultants, the ACED Training Team prepared and updated materials distributed to HVA grower trainees during the technical seminars and demo activity field days:

- *Thinning of Fruits/Flowers and Other Technical Aspects for Quality Apple Production.*
- *Fertilization and IPM for Strawberries.*
- *Tomato Production in the 1st Cycle for Transnistria (in Russian).*
- *Cucumber Production in Greenhouses (in Russian).*
- *Vegetable Production in Greenhouses (in Russian).*
- *Strawberries Selection and New Varieties.*
- *Tomato Production in the 2nd Cycle and IPM.*
- *Energy Conservation Techniques (for double layer cover film greenhouses).*
- *Cover Film (Mulch) with Fertigation in Tomato Production.*
- *Cucumber Production in Open Fields and IPM.*
- *Green Operations in Table Grape Vineyards.*

International/Local Study Tours

Zarechye, Ukraine: The Study Tour on Advanced Technology for Early Vegetable Production in Zarechye, Ukraine, included 24 participants, including two national consultants and two ACED staff members, who visited research demonstration plots established by the

Rikj Zvann company. The Moldovan producers also visited local farmers and observed technologies and practices used for the production of early cabbage and sweet pepper. Two consultants from Rikj Zvann led the group.

Netherlands: The major ACED Training Team event was the international study tour on Advanced Technology in Seedling Production in the Netherlands in May organized for 13 local seedling producers and consultants, including one producer from an MCC CIS Zone (Jora de Mijloc vlg). Participants visited more than 10 Dutch seedling production companies, testing laboratories, and certification bodies and saw the important production technology components of the fruit seedling material production industry.

FY2014 Q4 Farmer Field Days

From July to September 2014, the ACED Training Team implemented Farmer Field Days at the ACED demonstration activity sites established over the past year. Farmers Field Days this quarter:

- *The Specifics of Fruit Harvesting and Pre-Cooling along with a New Peach Variety Presentation* in Comrat, in the ATU Găgăuzia.
- *Energy Conservation Techniques: Using Double-layer cover film on greenhouses* in Puhăceni, Anenii Noi raion.
- *Plums: Harvesting, Storage and New Cultivars* in Edineț.
- *New Table Grape Cultivars and Using the V-Gable System in Vineyards* which took place at the demo site in Burlacu, Cahul raion.
- *Cucumber Production in Open Fields along with Using a Support System for Cucumbers* in Sîngerei, Sîngerei Noi raion.
- *Harvesting Techniques and Quality Parameters for Table Grapes along with a presentation of New Varieties of Table Grapes* in Colibași, Cahul raion.
- *Harvesting Techniques and Quality Parameters for Apples* in Bîrlădeni. Ocnîța raion.
- *Cucumber Production in Open Fields along with a presentation on Integrated Pest Management* in Sîngerei Noi, Sîngerei raion.
- *Harvesting Platforms and Quality Parameters for Apples along with a presentation on New Apple Varieties* in Edinet, Edinet raion.
- *Harvesting Techniques & Quality Parameters for Table Grapes along with a presentation on New Varieties and Preparing Anti-hail Nets for Winter* in Pelinei, Cahul raion.
- *Harvesting Techniques & Quality Parameters for Table Grapes along with a presentation on New Varieties, and the Results of Calcium Treatment and Girdling* in Vulcănești.



These events attracted more than 250 participants. The photo shows farmers at a table grape event. Mr. Mihov (with the grapes), owner of Terra Vitis company, discussed new varieties with other farmers at the Burlacu Farmer Field Day.

Publications, Bulletins:

ACED with assistance from national consultants completed two publications: *Plum Production Technological Manual* and *Cucumber Production Technological Manual*. The

Tomato Bulletin No. 7 was prepared and distributed to producers from the Meleseni and Vadul lui Isac villages. The *Stone Fruit Bulletin* was also prepared and mailed out to more than 600 producers.

Looking forward to FY2015:

In early FY2015, we will complete and publish the *Cherry Production Technological Manual* and plan to continue the technical seminar program coverings:

- Setting up new apple orchards and winter preparations.
- Setting up new table grape vineyards and winter preparations.
- Setting up new cherry orchards and winter preparations.
- New plum varieties, cultivation techniques and winter preparations.
- Greenhouse planning and construction.

Activity 1.3: Upgrade the Moldovan HVA Value Chain

The objective is to identify and support entities across targeted HVA value chains that will drive the upgrading of production and processing capabilities to ensure that high-quality produce is delivered to markets such as the EU. The ACED project created a Value Chain Support Center which provides technical assistance using local service providers on a cost-sharing basis for producers, producer groups, and agribusinesses considered ready to expand.

Develop the Value Chain Support Center (VCSC)

- The Value Chain Team met the most important suppliers of knowledge, technologies, and inputs for the prominent HVA sectors to explain the concept of the **AGROCONNECT** website and train staff on using the system. The **AGROCONNECT** content is continuously developed and updated, one focus being the chemical thinning and gibberellin technologies, and farmers are already using the system and implementing these technologies.
- ACED continued linking client value chain entities with local and international Business Service Providers (BSPs). Under the VCSC, ACED shares the cost of select consulting within the ACED scope. ACED co-financed the development of investment and business plans for 18 client companies, including two growers from the MCC CIS zones and another two from AAF-eligible areas.
- ACED international berry fruit consultant Rick Dale in November 2013 assessed the production potential in the MCC CIS zones and judged the climatic and soil conditions as adequate for a range of berry crops, and local and regional trends indicate great market potential. Rick also noted deficiencies in weed control, fertilization, and crop rotation. He provided assistance to Lolly Berry, which intends to establish the first blueberry plantation in Moldova. ACED plans to use the plot as a demonstration site.
- ACED and subcontractor AGROinform continued to develop economic models for 42 HVA and non-HVA crops. Each includes an investment and crop operational budget, price data points for exports and local markets, and export/import volumes for the last three years. These will support development of training programs for the Compact's CIS Zones and be useful for benchmarking data provided by financial institutions and investors when assessing loan applications and investment proposals. ACED will make these models available on **AGROCONNECT** so others can use them for planning.

- The availability of ACED technical assistance for HVA producers was actively promoted as part of the MCC Access to Agriculture Finance (AAF) outreach, as ACED supported 15 such meetings with producers. ACED expects at least 10 applications for assistance from the VCSC as a result.

Gibberellins Adopted:

ACED subcontracted researchers from the Agrarian University of Moldova to perform field trials of gibberellins (GA3 and GA4+7) on Apples and Table Grapes, part of an effort with the Moldova-Fruct Association, APESM (the Table Grape Association) and L. Gobbi (a gibberellin supplier from Italy) to obtain Moldovan registration for these agricultural chemicals. Worldwide, competitive table grape production is not possible without the use of gibberellins, which increase the berry size and color, and improves the bunch shape.

The official efficacy trials approved by the Government showed excellent results across several varieties. Following the ACED-supported registration of gibberellins (GA3 and GA4+7) for use on Apples and Table Grapes, the Value Chain Team organized workshops with the Moldova Fruct Association and Table Grape Producers and Exporters Association to disseminate the results of the trials and discuss pilot activities to enhance the adoption of these technologies. Assistance has been provided to eight apple growers and 10 table grape growers.

Improve Access to HVA Financing

The business plan cost-shared by the VCSC for "Mocan Com" SRL was approved by the Moldova AgroInd Bank branch in Anenii Noi and a long-term loan of 40000 EUR was issued under the MCC Access to Agricultural Finance (AAF) program for construction of a new cold store facility in Floreni. The ACED Value Chain Team will continue work with this client.

A plan for the Petru Maler Family Farm (FF) in Jora de Mijloc was also approved and a long-term loan of \$150,000 was awarded under MCC/AAF for expanding the cold storage unit and building a pre-cooling unit.

Additional business and investment plans cost-shared with the VCSC were developed by prequalified Investment Development Services Providers (IDSPs), including for:

- Constimax table grape grower for a table grape cold storage unit.
- Andridor-Grup table grape grower for adding on a grape packing area and for an extension of their vineyards.
- Caracas Petru apple orchard for the construction of a cold storage unit.
- Manole Vasile table grape grower for the construction of a cold storage unit.
- ACED will continue to assist these clients with their loan applications.

The ACED Value Chain Team working through the Value Chain Support Center (VCSC) also assisted:

- Manole Vasile GT to develop a business plan for a table grape cold storage facility; the loan application was submitted to an AAF-participating bank.
- Vulpe SRL (CIS zone) to update their business plan so it could apply for an AAF loan to build a cold store facility.
- Constimax Ltd in performing an environmental assessment, and in mitigation planning to complement the business plan developed earlier for a cold store facility.
- Igor Costeanu FF to prepare a business plan covering investments in greenhouses by two young brothers' family farm (with potential of applying for AAF funding).

- Plesca Sergiu FF to prepare a business plan that will include investments in new berry plantations.
- TerraVitis SRL to prepare a business plan for this table grape producer that addresses investment in cold storage.
- PronatAgro SRL to prepare a business plan covering financing to extend a berry plantation and develop infrastructure (pre-cooling chamber, drying tunnel).
- Orhei-Vit, a leading Moldovan cannery and juice processor, which requested assistance with implementation of an “IFS Food” quality and food safety program, and development of brands targeting local and export markets.

Cherry Pre-Cooling Demo: Installation of the sweet cherry pre-cooling demonstration activity at the Farm-Prod cold store in Olanesti, Stefan-Voda raion, was completed. The first Farmer Field Day with more than 60 growers and cold store operators was held on June 13. Best practices for cherry harvesting, pre-cooling and packing were demonstrated. The event was attended by Rodica Miron of USAID and Valeriu Cosarciuc of MCA Moldova.

Gibberellin Technology Applied: According to data provided by L.Gobbi, the Italian partner, through September 2014 the gibberellin technology was applied by 20 apple growers on an estimated 250 hectares, and by 18 table grape growers on an estimated 150 hectares. Field visits confirmed positive effects on fruit quality, and the results were demonstrated to the larger grower community during training events in September. National consultants are analyzing the data collected for a report on gibberellin use.

Business Models for HVA Value Chain Investments

During the quarter, several local study tours were organized for farmers to visit modern cold store and packhouse facilities established or upgraded with ACED support. For example, the table grape pre-cooler at Famir-Com (Manta, Cahul) hosted a visit by a group of women from the ACED Gender Program, while the peach pre-cooler at Ceteronis-ST (Doina, Cantemir) hosted a visit by two producer groups assisted by ACED.

Costesti Table Grape Packinghouse Project

The ACED Value Chain Team continued to support the Costesti Table Grape Packinghouse Project. ACED subcontractor BCI worked with stakeholders--growers, exporters, and the local Primaria, MAFI, and Regional Development Agency--to identify the best legal and contractual framework to organize the public-private partnership for managing the packhouse, which is to be owned by the local Primaria.

The proposal was presented in October 2013 at the final workshop of the EU Twinning Project for the Ministry of Regional Development and Construction. At the Ministry's December 20 meeting, the project was selected to be financed and in 2014 ACED continued assisting this group to maintain the momentum. Producers hoped the packhouse could be built and operational by Fall 2014 but this was very ambitious. The original plan was based on cost estimates from 2012 and inflation and changes in exchange rates may result in increased costs.

On August 25, 2014, the ACED COR and Value Chain Specialist visited Hincesti and Costesti. In Costesti, they visited the site of the future Regional Development Agency-financed packinghouse.

Related HVA Business Model Activities:

- In Hincesti, a newly formed farmer cooperative with six members is jointly farming about 70 hectares for apples, plums, cherries, and other tree fruit. The group came together following participation in a study tour to Poland earlier in 2014.
- STTA Marlene Long assisted Ceteronis-ST, a leading Moldovan sweet cherry grower, regarding the harvesting, cooling, and packing of its fruit. As a result, the company invested in a hydro-cooler—the first for cherries in Moldova—to achieve quickest cooling and enabling the company to meet the requirements of its buyers-retailers.
- Installation of the sweet cherry pre-cooling demonstration activity at the Farm-Prod cold store in Olanesti, Stefan-Voda raion, was completed. On June 13, the first Field Day for this demo activity attracted more than 60 growers and cold store operators. The event was attended by Rodica Miron of USAID and Valeriu Cosarciuc of MCA Moldova.
- The design of a sweet cherry packing and sorting demonstration activity in Gura Bicului, Anenii Noi was finalized with support from Marlene Long and showed the impact that proper sorting and packing in a dedicated packinghouse can make. Marlene noted that the world’s leading sweet cherry growers have proven that such a reorganization of work flow reduces picking costs and makes the product more appealing.



Petru Maler Farm Cold Storage: In September 2014, the ACED Value Chain Team organized a Farmer Field Day on “Peculiarities of Harvesting and Storing Apples and the Quality Requirements” in Jora de Mijloc, Orhei raion. This was held at the recently expanded cold storage facility of the G.Ț. Petru Maler farm. ACED supported this MCC AAF-financed facility by helping the farmer develop the business plan, and the refrigeration equipment supplier chosen by Petru Maler was intensively trained. Attending were 25 of the leading producers from an irrigation zone the MCC Compact has been rehabilitating. ACED demonstrated how using such a harvesting platform has increased productivity and reduced the incidence of bruised fruit.

More activities to bring groups together:

ACED and subcontractors AGROinform and Promo-Terra continued implementing the “Supporting the Creation of Joint Packing and Marketing Activities in Moldovan HVA Value Chains” via the following activities:

- Training and local study tours were organized for groups of table grape growers from Vadul lui Isac, Cahul, and beekeepers from Calarasi and Straseni.
- A business plan was developed for a group of plum growers from Rezina.
- Two producer groups supported by ACED—Fruva Natural Coop from Varatic, Riscani, and the BasanAgro Coop from Cimislia—applied for financing for packhouse projects to the World Bank-funded Moldova Agriculture Competitiveness Project. The BasanAgro Coop expected to finish the main construction by September 2014.
- Between September 22-27, ACED supported the Moldova-Fruct Association on a

study tour to Poland on the harvesting, storage, and packing of apples. The 17 participants observed leading Polish growers and cooperatives.

- ACED supported adoption of simple fruit maturity assessment techniques by client apple farmers. The picture at the right shows Andrei Cumpanici, ACED's Food Safety Specialist, demonstrating the technique that uses ordinary iodine to staff from the Petru Maler and Filip Beiu farms.

In September, USAID's Kent Larson and Rodica Miron visited the apple orchard and cold storage of Domulterra SRL, a prominent member of the Moldova-Fruct association, and discussed with owner Ms. Aliona Mandatii the impact of ACED assistance on her business and potential future interventions. The picture shows Kent Larson sampling one of Domulterra's apples while having discussions with Aliona (on the right).

Association Development for Value Chain Entities

ACED and subcontractors AGROinform and Promo-Terra continued implementing "Supporting the Creation of Joint Packing and Marketing Activities in Moldovan HVA Value Chains." Training sessions and consultancy meetings were held with eight groups; assistance to three groups was put on hold as the members evaluated next steps, while the walnut producers group completed the entire subcontracted package of assistance.

During November 2013, the walnut producers group began registering as an Association and hired Mr. Stefan Novac as their interim Executive Director. Ensuing meetings focused on export marketing, post-harvest infrastructure development, and organic walnut production.

Several producer groups, such as the Budesti and Cimisia table grape growers, passed the feasibility analysis. A local study tour was organized to two well-designed cold store facilities in Cantemir raion. Decisions will be taken by members on their acceptance of the feasibility analysis and willingness and ability to contribute the capital needed, be it for a cooperative or limited liability company.

ACED provided consulting and legal assistance to two Moldovan fruit associations focused on apples regarding options for merging. Both organizations had participated in ACED study tours, in a common booth at a trade fair, contributing greatly to their communication. At a meeting December 19, 2014, the two organizations agreed to merge and form a single association for the apple industry.

Other Activities to Support Association Development:

- Twelve apple growers took a one-week Study Tour in Poland to see how growers there organize into cooperatives and farmer associations, with managers explaining how their groups are organized to better meet market demands.
- On a tour to Italy, 11 table grape growers representing four producer groups learned about public sector support for creating and developing producer marketing organizations.
- In February 2014, the ACED Value Chain Team supported a group of tree fruit nursery material producers on a Trade Mission to Friedrichshafen and Karlsruhe, Germany. The nursery producers met with Artevos, an important German producer of seedling material for the tree fruit industry and discussed propagating Artevos



seedlings in Moldova. The group also participated in an international tree fruit technical fair in Friedrichshafen.

In Spring 2014, training sessions and consultancy meetings were held with 12 groups. The Basan-Agro table grape cooperative from Cimislia obtained a long-term loan of six million Lei (\$450,000) from Moldova AgroInd Bank and began construction of a table grape and stone fruit cold storage facility. The picture at the right shows early work on the facility.



ACED continued work with the Costesti Table Grape Association. In April 2014, the "Central" Regional Development Agency published an open tender for the construction of the packinghouse (with the construction costs to be covered by the Regional Development Fund) based on the technical design prepared by the Association and the Costesti Primaria. The contract was awarded to Romanian company Horeco Impex and its Moldovan partner Frigoclima. Construction is expected to be completed by May 2015.

Activity 1.4: Improve the Enabling Environment for Moldovan HVA

The objective is to improve competitiveness and increase access to markets by creating a market-responsive local policy environment. Challenges include restrictions on the imports of new plant varieties, tariffs applied to important inputs for the HVA industry, and restrictions on the use of surface and ground water for agricultural irrigation. Previous donor work in this area has been extensive, so ACED targeted a few tangible high return policy refinements. In the interest of building local capacity and ensuring sustainability, ACED works with HVA producer associations, responsible government agencies, and other stakeholders to effect change and turn high-potential, high-return policy concepts into real reforms.

Activities to Improve Enabling Environment:

Enabling Environment -- FY2014 Q1

- Rick Ernst, an ACED international consultant on policy and regulatory issues and developer of the Competitiveness Impacts of Business Environment Reform (CIBER) tool, advised and assisted on regulatory analyses, proposed policy reform agenda, and the Regulatory Impact Assessments being prepared by the Business Research Company (BRC).
- In October 2013, a workshop on access to water for irrigation from basins and internal lakes and on issues of access to the electricity grid was organized at the Ministry of Agriculture & Food Industry (MAFI). Many important agricultural producers took part. The local NGO AID presented its economic analysis and findings on these issues.
- Mr. Philip Santens, Team Leader from the EU technical assistance program for Budget Support on Economic Stimulation in Rural Areas (ESRA), along with BRC and AID representatives, discussed possible revisions and improvements to the system of plant variety registration.
- Ms. Ivana Dulic-Marcovic, an ACED short-term consultant from Serbia, began preparing an Analysis on Plant Variety Registration comparing the Moldova and EU systems.

- In December 2013, Ms. Dulic-Marcovic offered a presentation to Minister of Agriculture and Food Industry Vasile Bumacov and others, convincing Mr. Bumacov that MAFI and the State Commission must improve and simplify the system of plant testing and registering, particularly for fruit and grapes, by removing the requirement for the VCU test, as well as legalizing fruit varieties already in production in Moldova.
- ACED would work closely with Tamara Roznerita, Head of the Phytosanitary Department at MAFI.
- Materials for the eight international standards for phytosanitary measures (ISPMs) were delivered to Minister Bumacov, who thanked USAID's Kent Larson for the Mission's support and the quality of the materials prepared by ACED. The Minister asked for continued assistance on these reforms and underlined the importance Central Phytosanitary Laboratory certification with ISO 17025.



ACED staff participate in a meeting between Kent Larson and Minister Bumacov about the RIAs for ISPMs.

Enabling Environment -- FY2014 Q2

- The Business Research Company (BRC) was selected to develop Regulatory Impact Analyses and legal drafts for the 14 ISPMs. ACED intended to launch this activity in early April.
- Ms. Dulic-Marcovic submitted her final report, which was reviewed, improved, and translated into Romanian. Local NGO AID collected signatures from stakeholders and association representatives to submit to the Ministry, accompanied by Ivana's report, recommending changes to the plant variety testing and registering system.
- In March, the final version of the Horticulture Development Program (HDP) was presented by Mr. Mihai Suvac, head of the Ministry's Horticulture Department, to the Horticulture Commission members and representatives of large HVA producer organizations. The group decided to send the HDP to the Government for approval and implementation.
- ACED and the European Business Association (EBA) organized a March 20 workshop on agricultural product export and import barriers with the European Union. Inga Ionesii, Director of the Trade Policy Department, offered a presentation on the expected consequences of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement on HVA products. Representatives of the Ministry and nine agriculture producers/exporters took part.

Enabling Environment – FY2014 Q3

- The final Assessment of Plant Variety Registration in Moldova prepared by Ms. Dulic-Marcovic was submitted to MAFI, which also received an appeal developed by the NGO AID and signed by the main stakeholders and industry associations.
- At an April 11 workshop, ACED and the European Business Association (EBA) discussed export phytosanitary certificate procedures and export quotas for specific agricultural products. About 15 agricultural producers/exporters participated.

Enabling Environment – FY2014 Q4

- In July, a meeting on development of RIAs and ISPMs requested by the Ministry of Agriculture was organized at the BRITE project office. Corneliu Rusnac, the USAID

project manager standing in for Rodica Miron, and members of RIA Secretariat also attended. We reviewed if the methodology and Level of Effort (LOE) for these tasks as proposed by BRC were correct and reasonable.

- After much debate, it was agreed that the financial offer and LOE would remain but BRC, at its own cost, will organize a two-day training seminar on RIA development for civil servants from the Ministry of Agriculture. This activity was put on hold until discussion with MAFI on the necessity to move ahead with the additional RIAs for the 14 ISPMs.
- ACED DCoP Ion Perju met with representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture's Phytosanitary Department on the ISPMs. Ms. Tamara Roznerita related that the legal drafts, to harmonize them with relevant ISPMs, were submitted for approval to several ministries. These also had to be harmonized with several EU directives. The Moldovan Government and Parliament were expected to approve these modifications by December 2014.
- Moldovan Prime Minister Mr. Iurie Leanca convened a meeting on the Russian ban on the import of Moldovan fresh fruit and presented plans being developed by the Government to support agricultural producers and processors. He asked the donor community and international projects to support promoting Moldovan agricultural products on the EU market.
- ACED, IFC, and BRC organized a public-private dialog on the constraints facing the berry value chain. Representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Horticultural Research Institute played an active role. The berry producers' concerns related to access to new berry varieties, water for irrigation (particularly to groundwater), and certain kinds of fertilizers.
- Ion Perju met with Gheorghe Gaberi, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, on the testing and registering of new plant varieties. A presentation offered by Italian experts confirmed that the Moldovan system was constraining agricultural development. Ion Perju and Mr. Gaberi agreed to organize an additional workshop to find the best way forward.
- During August, the Ion Perju and ACED Food Safety Specialist Andrei Cumpanici attended a seminar on post-harvest processes organized by the U.S. Embassy and USDA at MAFI. Mr. Cumpanici offered a presentation on quality requirements for fruit and vegetables and required phytosanitary certifications. Attending were MAFI specialists and ACED beneficiaries. The U.S. Embassy representative thanked ACED for helping organize this important training.

Establish SPS Systems & Procedures to Support Exports

- Based on the contract between ACED and BioLab SRL, three Romanian experts provided six seminars of two days each to Moldovan SPS Field Inspectors regarding harmful organisms, parasitic plants, and other contaminants whose introduction and spread in Moldova is under quarantine. The training seminars in Edinet, Briceni, Balti, Orhei, Hincesti, and Chisinau attracted 170 inspectors (66 women and 104 men).
- An additional seminar for inspectors from Gagauzia provided with Russian translation took place in Chisinau on December 10-11.
- ACED leadership and National Food Safety Agency (NFSA) director Mr. Gaberi and agency specialists discussed training for the phytosanitary service and Customs checkpoint inspectors as well as distribution of ACED-supplied equipment for border

checkpoints. All equipment was officially transferred to the NFSA and ACED specialists were monitoring its integration.

- A Scope of Work for the elaboration and Implementation of a Quality Management System based on the ISO 17025:2005 requirements within phytosanitary laboratories was developed for the Central SPS Laboratory, along with at least one validation method per department (Mycology, Entomology, Bacteriology, Virology, Nematology and Molecular Biology).
- ACED met with new NFSA director Mr. Ion Sula and agency specialists about phytosanitary service and Customs checkpoint training.
- Andrei Cumpanici, the ACED Food Safety Specialist, organized a technical seminar on GlobalGAP Food Safety standard Implementation in Chisinau February 18-21 attended by 24 participants, including eight women. A field trip was organized to Edinet to visit the Victor Scutaru FF to see good agricultural practices/cold storage practices being implemented in accord with international standards.
- ACED organized a meeting at the Ministry of Agriculture on May 29 about procurement of new testing equipment for the Central Phytosanitary Laboratory. It was chaired by Deputy Ministry of Agriculture Sergiu Ghetiu and attended by USAID representative Rodica Miron, Second Secretary of Romanian Embassy Artur Raducan, and representatives of the Central Phytosanitary Laboratory, National Food Safety Agency, and the Ministry phytosanitary department. We discussed funding for and procurement of new pesticide residue testing equipment (a liquid chromatograph) for the Laboratory with a proposed Romanian Government contribution of approximately \$200,000. The Romanian funds, which will be matched by Norwegian funds, will be passed through the Ministry of Agriculture for this purchase.
- ACED SPS and Food Safety Specialist Andrei Cumpanici provided training and guides on April 10–11 on Implementation of Food Safety and HACCP Systems at the Labor Institute in Chisinau attended by 26 participants.
- Andrei organized consultations with producers Farm-Prod Ltd and Andridor Ltd about implementing GlobalGAP requirements on May 15–16 in Chisinau that was attended by 16 participants from diverse companies and organizations. He gave presentations on quality requirements for sweet cherries on May 27 in Navarneț and for strawberries on May 23 and May 29 in Copanca village and Ungheni.
- BioLab Com finished evaluating laboratory documents; in June, Romanian experts Elena Leota and Filofteia Manole evaluated the laboratory's QMS procedures and implementation.
- On June 23, 25, 27 and 30, training on phytosanitary certification and requirements was organized in four regions—Edinet, Briceni, Balti and Orhei—for field and border inspectors in collaboration with the NFSA.

Media Activity—Talking Trade:

On May 30, Ion Perju participated in the TV Channel 2+ weekly talk-show "Tema Saptamanii" (Subject of the Week). Ion is pictured second from the left. The discussion focused on the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) with the EU and recent protests organized by farmers. The DCoP described how the main activities of ACED were oriented toward



increasing the competitiveness of Moldovan HVA in the context of the DCFTA.

Summer 2014 SPS Activities:

- In July and August, ACED organized seminars on phytosanitary certification and the requirements for inspection and certification for NFSA staff in seven regions: Briceni, Edinet, Balti, Orhei Hincesti, Comrat and Chisinau. NFSA experts Svetlana Lungu, the head of internal quarantine department, and Viorel Chetrari, coordinator of the phytosanitary and veterinary custom control points, and Andrei Cumpanici, the ACED SPS expert, provided detailed presentations for the 173 inspectors who attended.
- To finalize the Laboratory's preparation for the ISO 17025:2005 accreditation, meetings were held to discuss the BioLab report. A Scope of Work that may lead to an RfP was developed for consultations to address where Laboratory staff need additional assistance. ACED is discussing the contract with Dr. Leaota, head of the Romanian Phytosanitary Inspectorate and Central Phytosanitary Laboratory.
- Ion Perju visited regional phytosanitary control offices at Customs terminals to monitor the installation and utilization of equipment donated to the NFSA by ACED and determined that the equipment at these particular offices was correctly installed and being used for product testing. ACED will continue monitor.
- The ACED Food Safety Specialist organized consultations with producers (Farm prod Ltd, Domulgeni, Vitalitifrukt Ltd, Andridor Ltd) over the implementation of GlobalGAP requirements.

Activity 5: Sequencing with the MCC Compact THVA

For project Years 4 and 5, the ACED team will add a fifth "Activity:" sequencing with the MCC Compact Transition to High Value Agriculture (THVA). An important part is ACED support to farmers in the MCC Central Irrigation Systems (CIS) zones transitioning to HVA production. The first two rehabilitated zones (Lopatna and Criuleni) will be coming online in late 2014, and ACED will implement a focused program of assistance to farmers there.

Essential was identifying and hiring someone to coordinate and guide the subcontractors hired to implement training, demo activities, and other events. The CoP and Training Specialist offered the position to Oxana Borza, the current ACED Office Manager. Oxana has been with the project for nearly three years and was promoted from her initial position. She transferred to the new position in June 2014.

The first CIS Zone Program event was *Vegetable Producers Forum*, organized by the ACED Training Team in Criuleni town for more than 70 participants. The main attraction was presentations by input and equipment suppliers about services they are providing for HVA value chains. The picture at the right shows participants listening to a representative of Irrigata Crops regarding seed selection available to Moldovan farmers. There were also presentations by greenhouse suppliers, irrigation equipment suppliers, cardboard box suppliers, and a company that supplies heating systems for greenhouses. Participants also saw intensive tomato production in an enclosed environment and sampled different varieties.

More Activities – Sequencing with the MCC Compact:

- To promote activities within the Lopatna, Jora de Jos, and Criuleni CIS Zones, ACED held meetings with authorities from the Criuleni and Orhei districts and the Jora de Mijloc commune, as well as with management from Water User's Associations Jorile, Agro-Rufeni, and Criuleni.

- The first Farmers' Fair in Jora de Mijloc on September 27, 2014, included 10 equipment and input suppliers, 10 banks and ag development projects, and 10 local producers who exhibited and sold their products. ACED distributed more than 1,000 copies of the project's technical publications related to fruit and vegetable production, irrigation, and soil management, and performed 70 tests on water samples brought by participants. The event was attended by 500 community members and by local and raional administration representatives, including the Local Mayor and Vice President of Orhei raion, Sergiu Muravschi.
- ACED announced a tender to select the RTSPs that will support implementation of training and demonstration activities. WUA "Jorile" was selected to support training and demonstration activities in the Lopatna and Jora de Jos CIS Zones, and WUA "Criuleni" to implement training and demonstration activities in the Criuleni CIS Zone.
- Three national consultants assisted ACED staff to development content for the technical bulletins and training materials related to soil quality, irrigation water quality, soil management, water management, and irrigation systems; these will be mailed to all farmers that ACED has been able to identify in these CIS zones.
- ACED will integrate CIS zone farmers into ongoing project activities. Mr. Claudia Savin, manager of Rusmiliud Ltd (a planting material company located in the Jora de Jos CIS Zone), was selected to participate in the Study Tour to Germany dedicated to Advanced Plum Production.
- Seven CIS Technical Bulletins were prepared for 1,320 farmer beneficiaries and included information on soil quality and management, irrigation water quality, water management, irrigation systems, and support systems for orchards. Regular technical bulletins that ACED produces (*Apple Bulletin*, *Tomato Bulletin*, *Table Grape Bulletin*, and *Cucumber Bulletin*) were also made available to CIS farmers.



COMPONENT 2: ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT IN TRANSNISTRIA

The objective of this component is to support the development and competitiveness of Transnistrian micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in the HVA and non-HVA value chains. This component is also designed to integrate Transnistrian enterprises into the broader Moldovan economy by establishing linkages and/or relationships between Left Bank and Right Bank MSMEs and Business Services Providers (BSPs).

Activity 2.1: Build BSP Capacity to Improve MSME Competitiveness

Training seminar for Transnistrian BSPs and HVA companies on the procedures for the sale and export of HVA products from Moldova:

ACED introduced its guide *How to Export From Moldova*, for which companies continue to request copies. It proved particularly useful for consulting companies such as Novi Gorizont, Capital Consulting Company, and the Transnistrian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, as well as companies which recently planted super intensive orchards and will have fruit available for export in the



Oleg Stiopca and participants at the Consultancy in Agriculture training course in Tiraspol.

coming year, such as Calvil and EvroRostAgro. One producer who recently went through the process of beginning to export and getting registered described her positive experiences with the Moldovan Customs authorities in areas such as completing paperwork.

Sales and Marketing 360: On April 4, nine Transnistrian consultants from regional BSPs participated in *Sales and Marketing 360* training at the LeoGrand Hotel in Chisinau. The “master classes” featured topics such as customer relations management, sales, management, marketing, and marketing mistakes. Participants thanked ACED staff multiple times during the day.



Three of the Transnistrian participants at the Sales and Marketing 360 training in Chisinau.

University of Georgia’s Principles of Market

Research online course: On January 17, a cross-bank group (four Left Bank participants and four Right Bank participants—four men, four women—plus ACED’s Adrian Cojucaru as mentor/facilitator) committed to the course. They received a live demonstration of how the online course works from the University over videoconferencing. The group then signed their MOUs and the course officially started on January 30. The aggressive calendar with both online and proctored exams throughout the 11 modules, and two advanced textbooks, must be completed within one year. Notably, the head of the EU/UNDP’s business school in Tiraspol, Ms. Anna Mickolsina, is one of the participants.

The first of two proctored exams was given at the ACED office on June 13. All eight participants took the exam, which were sent to UGA for scoring. The 88 questions covered the first four course modules, including in-depth content on research design, sampling, and data collection methods. The course and its exams proved much more challenging than originally expected, but the students are keeping at it.

Consultancy and Training Methodologies in Agriculture: Twenty-five Transnistrian BSPs and local consultants attended this April 17 event in Tiraspol. The diverse group included university professors, a teacher from the agricultural college, and many BSP representatives. Our targeted audience gave glowing feedback on the event and was thankful for the course. The seminar was presented by Dr. Oleg Stiopca, the ACED Training Specialist, an author on this topic who trained in the United States on the best practices for agricultural extension work.

Activity 2.2: Support the Development of MSMEs in Transnistria

FY2014 Q1 Select Transnistria MSME Activities:

- October 17, the third Strawberry demo field day on *Fertilization and Fall Operations in Strawberry Farms*, in Crimenciuc village, presented by National Consultant Gavrilov and organized by local RTSP Belyi Most, with 25 participants.
- November 8, technical training on *Peach and Plum Orchard Planting Particularities and Preparation for Wintering* in Tiraspol at CCC (one of ACED's RTSPs in Transnistria), led by ACED National Consultant Dr. Manziuc.
- November 20, *Selling and Exporting HVA Products* with presentations by Peter White, Lilian Cipciruc, and Andrei Cumpanici.

On November 21, ACED consultant Rick Dale facilitated a Right Bank *Honey Production Roundtable* for 24 participants. Rick showed slides of production and packaging, mostly from his own farm. Discussion was followed by three site visits. Rick was impressed with local production but said farmers' practice of selling honey in granular form needed to be upgraded in order to export. He said traveling beekeepers could provide pollination services for select crops, which adds a distinct and marketable flavor to the honey. Adrian Cojucaru also participated and noted that the Right Bank and Left Bank producers use different drugs and that Left Bank producers travel much more than their Right Bank beekeeper counterparts.



ACED Consultant Rick Dale (center) on a site visit with one of the honey producers from the Left Bank.

On November 22, Rick presented *Blueberries, the Market, Production, and Varieties*, which included discussion of raspberry production and post-harvest handling. A broad mix of Transnistrian farmers attended, including the larger farm Calvil that sent three staff members since they are interested in planting blueberries. Thirty-five participants attended.

- December 13, *Orchard Protection in Apple Production*. Many of the 21 participants personally thanked ACED expert Buciuceanu for his useful information. Copies of the ACED produced *Advanced Apple Production* guide in Russian were distributed for the first time.
- December 20, National Consultant Manziuc from the Ag University provided a seminar on *Apple Pruning Particularities for the 2014 Season* in Tiraspol.

International Study Tours (cross-bank participants):

- **Northern Italy, *Advanced Apple Production & Post-harvest Technologies & Infrastructure*, October 27-November 3:** Ten Left Bank participants (plus one Right Bank farmer, national consultant Pesteanu, and ACED Expert Eugeniu Gudumac). One Transnistrian producer expressed his strong desire to become GlobalGAP certified and another medium sized, women-led, producer expressed interest in bringing a group of orchards together for sorting and packing operations. Several producers looked at various potential investments, including one producer who set up a separate meeting to look at seedlings and others who prepared some calculations on equipment purchases. All reported having gained something very useful from the study tour.



- **Serbia, *Cooperative Development for Vegetable Producers*, November 11–15.** Attending were five Left Bank growers from the Bely Most small farmer's association, three Right Bank vegetable cooperatives that sent five representatives, and two ACED producer group subcontractor BSPs. We examined with our Serbian hosts how and why to cooperate with other small farmers. We also explored production of vegetables and strawberries with site visits, as well as the EU pre-accession process.



More Transnistria MSME Support:

- Three Transnistrian apple producers attended the Apple Producer's Forum that ACED organized in Edinet for producers from the Northern regions, including a new producer from the Left Bank now actively engaged with ACED.
- Launching of the regional women in agriculture network activity in partnership with the Transnistrian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The Transnistria Women in Agriculture Network (WAN) held roundtables in each of the Transnistrian Raions between November 1–15.

FY2014 Q2 Select Transnistria MSME Activities:

Several new demo activities were put into place and the first field days with these activities were organized. The Transnistrian WAN began operating with eight events organized and managed by ACED sub-contractor the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Transnistria.

Highlights

- January 24, Transnistria WAN seminar on *Mini Processing Technologies for HVA* and visit to the Camenca Cannery.
- January 31, *Apple Plant Protection* delivered in Tiraspol by national consultant Ghenadie Buciuceanu covering pest management in intensive apple orchards.

- January 31, WAN seminar on “mini-processing” in Tiraspol by TPP with field visit to Holpark’s facility in Parcani.
- February 5, *How to Construct a Double Layer Greenhouse* Farmer Field Day. A group from Chitskani heard from staff from the greenhouse supplier Dinamica Tur Ltd. assisted by national consultant Nicu Bejan.
- February 13, *How to Construct a Double Layer Greenhouse*. Repeated for a group from Parcani and led by Nicu Bejan, which was followed by a field visit to the Fics Ltd. double layer greenhouse in Ternovca. The first event organized by Belyi Most, the RTSP for the Parcani/Ternovca area. Thirty-four participants, including several women from the WAN.

From February 10–14, ACED supported four Transnistrian companies to attend ProdExpo—two as exhibitors under the booth *Moldova: Taste Makes the Difference*, and two walking the show for leads, contacts, and learning. Participants were very positive about the contacts they made and the information they gathered. After the show, Holpark (Parcani) shipped a container of canned vegetables valued at \$19,000 to Israel, a new market them, as a result of their contact from ProdExpo. The other Transnistrian company displaying at the booth reported establishing many leads.

More Highlights:

- Transnistria WAN: Seminars in February on marketing, computers, taxes/accounting.
- March 1, *Cabbage Family (Cruciferous Vegetables) Quality Standards and Quality Production*, with ACED Food Safety Specialist Andrei Cumpanici and national consultant Alexandra Bragas.
- March 1, *Plum Pruning and IPM* by National consultants Manziuc and Braghis.
- March 14, soil testing seminar was offered in conjunction with the RTSP Belyi Most in Parcani with a joint group from Parcani and Chitskani, presented by national consultant Lidia Catarau. Twenty-five farmers submitted soil samples and received detail soil test results as well as instructions on how to prepare their soil.
- March 21, *Chemical Thinning and Weather Stations for Apple Production* demo activity on the use of weather stations, held at Agrostil Ltd. in Parcani with the logistics organized by RTSP CCC and presentation from national consultant Buciuceanu.
- March 22, *Peach Pruning and IPM* with Manziuc and Braghis, organized by the RTSP CCC in Tiraspol.
- March 28 *Apple Production with Weather Stations, Reflective Covers and PHH* Field Day in Camenca, logistics organized by RTSP CCC, with national consultant Buciuceanu presenting at Livada Servis Ltd.

Technical Activities:

- *Vegetable Seedlings in a Double Layer Greenhouse* demo under way with a greenhouse installed in Ternovca at the host farm of Fics Ltd.
- Demo activities on use of weather stations: *Weather Stations and Calcium Treatment*, *Weather Stations and Chemical Thinning*, *Weather Stations and Drip Irrigation in an Intensive Apple Orchard*, and *Anti-Hail Nets in an Intensive Apple*

Orchard with a Weather Station. Vendor selected and installations completed in February.

- February 7, ACED visited the Colomicenco Family Farm with national consultant Iurie Calin who provided a design and cost estimate for their proposed cold storage facility.
- ACED Expert Petru Vizitiu visited Agrostil to start preparing a strawberry plantation development plan.

Andivita Ltd. requested technical assistance for a business plan on mushroom production through the ACED VCSC. The winning bidder was Transnistrian company Noviy Gorizont (New Horizon). The business plan was completed in March and Andivita presented it in a competition funded by the EU's Confidence Building Measures project. Andivita was awarded \$15,000 to help implement their business plan.



USAID COR Rodica Miron presenting the fruit pressure tester to the Calvil agronomist.

FY2014 Q3 Select Transnistria MSME Activities:

- April 10, *Growing Cucumbers in Greenhouses*, in Parcani presented by national consultant Omelciuc at the NGO Radolubets office. This seminar included a good practical visit to the farm of Roman Gratilov in Chitskani, who has invested in a boiler and double layer greenhouse for his cucumbers after visiting Serbian greenhouses on an ACED organized study tour. Two participants set up plans to return a week later for more consultations.
- April 11, *Greenhouse Vegetable Production Technologies*. National consultant Nicu Bejan presented for Transnistrian WAN members from the Camenca and Ribnita regions on tomato and cucumber production techniques, including appropriate varieties, planting methods, irrigation, fertigation, and plant protection. The women visited a modern greenhouse with cucumbers being grown and marketed for a healthy shoulder season profit.
- April 11, *Weather Station Use for Drip Irrigation in Apple Orchards*, in Tiraspol, the first Farmer Field Day for the demo activity on weather stations and drip irrigation, followed by a trip to the Calvil orchard. The USAID COR participated and presented a fruit pressure tester to the host.
- April 29, *Growing Tomatoes in the First Greenhouse Cycle* in Parcani with national consultant Nicu Bejan. After the seminar, six women from Parcani stayed and discussed with Bely Most and ACED staff how the project could attract more Parcani farmers. An option would be to start seminars at 3 p.m. when farmers finished selling their seedlings at the market. One woman volunteered to accompany Larisa Colmicenco from Bely Most to the market to personally invite Parcani farmers.
- May 15–16, an HACCP training seminar in Chisinau in the Russian language. Andrei Cumanici, the ACED Food Safety Specialist, invited a number of companies to participate from Transnistria and Gagauzia. Participants reported the seminar was extremely useful.



Host farmer Roman Gratilov explaining operations in his greenhouse.

Farmer Field Days

May 7—Energy-Efficient Techniques in Greenhouse Production

National consultant Nicu Bejan presented modern models of greenhouses, greenhouse heating, and materials for greenhouse construction for 23 participants in Parcani. Afterward, farmers visited Fics Ltd., where the father and son team (both named Vitali Grecu) discussed the ACED demo activity *Vegetable Seedling Production in a Modern Greenhouse with Double Layer Film*. Vitali Grecu Jr. told the group that after the ACED study tour to Zareche, Ukraine, he convinced his father to invest in



National Consultant Pesteanu demonstrating Green Operations at Ludmila Rovnaia's Family Farm

heating (a boiler) and double layer films for greenhouses. Farmers asked if they can install double layer film in their older style greenhouses and what kind of heating is better for different crops. Nicu Bejan emphasized quality of the film for the greenhouse as now there are high-quality films which provide much light to seedlings, which is preferable.

May 15—Chemical Thinning for Apples at Agrostil

National consultant Ananie Pesteanu detailed the chemical thinning mechanism, including the specifics of working with different apple varieties. He gave examples of his years' of experience utilizing chemical thinning in Right Bank apple orchards. After this, farmers visited Agrostil's apple orchard and saw the first results of chemical thinning, the first in Transnistria.

May 30—Weather Stations, Calcium Treatments, and Reflective Covers

National consultant Ghenadie Buciuceanu gave a comprehensive description of calcium treatments. These help apple farmers produce high quality fruit with fewer bruises, but only works when agronomists follow the requirements of particular varieties' specifics, and in specific combination with other chemicals, with the correct timing. There were a lot of questions from farmers. Buciuceanu showed photos of a Right Bank company in Edinet that has used Calcium treatments for several years with good results.

Seminar Highlights:

- June 6, *Berry Production*, for women from the Transnistrian WAN in Camenca. National consultant Sava Parascovia presented at the Sanitorium Dnester, then the women traveled to a berry farmer on the Dnester river south of Camenca. Women from as far south as Ribnica came to this event by bus. Organized by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Transnistria, more than 30 women attended and gave glowing feedback.
- June 10, *Green Operations for Young Cherry Orchards* in Grigoriopl Raion, in Carmanova, with the practical at Rovnaia family farm. National Consultant Pesteanu presented cherry varieties, green operations, and lessons learned, and identified a magnesium deficiency in the orchard.

Berry Farm host showing his blackberries to women's network event participants.



- June 13, *Open Field Cucumber, Tomato and Vegetable Production*, with a field visit in the Grigoriopol raion organized by TPP and trainer Oleg Didligul.
- June 21, *Tomato IPM and Quality Standards* in Parcani with collaboration by the Transnistria RTSP Bely Most. ACED expert Andrei Cumpanici and national consultant Braghis presented and provided consultations as arranged in advance.

FY2014 Q4 Select Transnistria MSME Activities:

Study Tours

Cross-Bank Study Tour to the UK on *Advanced Strawberry Production in Covered Structures* September 15-20. The group included four Transnistrian producers, four Right Bank producers, and one Right Bank national consultant. Afterward, each scored the study tour at straight fives on all factors. Each noted the variety of techniques and practices and planned to implement them. The tour included site visits to packhouses, greenhouses, high tunnels, nurseries, the East Malling Institute, and an all-day technical seminar, which included practical exercises such as learning how to dissect crowns at regular intervals to predict how many kilograms of fruit each plant would produce.

Left-Bank Study Tour on *Maintaining Quality Parameters and Innovative Technology for Apple Production in Moldova* July 17. A visit to Darurile Basarabiei in Malinovscoe, Riscani, a very advanced apple orchard with the most modern innovations. Participants observed anti-hail nets, French-sourced seedlings, infrastructure of a super-intensive orchard, Frostbuster anti-frost system, chemical thinning, harvesting platforms, and modern tractors. Equipment input supplier (for the Frostbuster, harvesting platforms, and tractors) presented the equipment and prices. The host covered all aspects of production, including discussions of each variety and how orchard management thinking has evolved (e.g., to source French seedlings and move away from Italian ones).

After lunch the group visited the Victor Scutaru Family Farm, which is GlobalGAP certified. The sons of Victor Scararu openly discussed the lessons they have learned about farm operations and showed the group their cold store. Local consultant Ghenadie Buciuceanu organized and led the tour. All 24 participants provided very positive feedback. This tour was a good example of how internal study tours can also have a positive impact.

Training Seminars

The August 15 ACED Farmer Field Day on the *Use Of High Tunnels For Growing Strawberries Out of Season*, organized in conjunction with the Bely Most Small Farmer's Association, was attended by 30 participants. National consultant Gavrilov made a presentation, and participants saw a PowerPoint on strawberry production in Parcani. They traveled to Chitskani by minibus to see newly installed high tunnels with strawberry seedlings at the Pavel Gangan Family Farm.

Other Transnistria MSME activities:

- July 18, Andrei Cumpanici visited Fkusnyashki to follow up on consultation on food safety requirements, recommending new food safety procedures be implemented and documented according to the Codex Alimentarius and Moldovan legislation.
- July 25, *Sweet Pepper Production in Greenhouses and New Varieties* with Transnistrian RTSP Bely Most organizing the logistics. The seminar in Parcani featured technical presentations national consultant Omelciuc.
- July 27 to August 2, study tour to Serbia for *Beekeeping and Honey Production Technology*. Nine honey producers (four from the Left Bank, five from the Right Bank) visited apiaries, honey processors and exporters, honey equipment supply

companies, and the largest supplier of pharmaceuticals for the beekeeping industry in Europe.

- August 12, *Fertilization of Tomatoes in the Second Cycle*, in coordination with the RTSP Bely Most, in Parcani. National Consultant Lidia Catarau presented the materials to the 14 participants.
- September 12, *Anti-Hail Net Demo Activity Farmer Field Day* at EvroRostAgro. Vitality Fruct sent a representative and Andrei Cumpanici presented sorting and grading quality standards, and demonstrated how iodine can be used to test for ripeness. Local RTSP CCC organized the logistics.
- September 15–19, Mr. Gurduz from Agrostar joined the fresh fruit exhibit that ACED supported at the World Food Moscow trade show.
- September 24, the final *Livada Servis Reflective Covers Demo Activity Farmer Field Day* led by national consultant Pesteanu, where participants compared the uniform color of apples that ripened with the aid of reflective covers and those that did not. They also saw the difference made in harvested apples treated with calcium earlier in the season (with the dosage indicated by their weather station) compared to apples which had not.

III. CROSS-CUTTING ACTIVITIES

Gender and Marginal Groups

The Women in Agriculture Network (WAN) subcontracts produced events that fostered teaching, networking, and inclusiveness for women across Moldova. The subcontracts ended on September 30, 2014, but since September is busy for harvesting and marketing, some of subcontractors requested no-cost extensions through November to conduct year-end roundtables and other activities. ACED regional sub-contractors were tabulating the results of their respective WAN activity, as well as surveying participants on the benefits, changes, and impact produced.

ACED partners designed the WAN bulletin (right), the second of which was recently published by ACED and mailed directly to the homes of 468 WAN beneficiaries.



Following are some activities from FY 2014 in the WAN regions:

Northern and Central Regions WAN (implemented by AGROinform)

AGROinform first held organizational meetings with Network Advisory Group members, who established appropriate dates for events to ensure the highest attendance, aligning certain events with the most appropriate seasons and stages of production. Highlights included:

- Seminars on the Creation and Operation of Joint Producer Groups in Balti (north) and Chisinau (center). Each convened more than 20 women and promoted cooperation and association. Attendees learned rules for forming producer groups. ACED and the World Bank MAC-P projects were presented as resources.
- Seminars on Farm Management in Glodeni, Orhei, Nisporeni, Falesti, Edinet, Singerei, Calarasi and Anenii Noi, each hosting around 15 women. Discussion on what constitutes business costs, and how to calculate costs, income, profits and cash flow, necessities when deciding which crops to grow and for applying for a loan.
- Business Planning Seminar in Chisinau, where WAN members became familiar with the contents of a business plan, SWOT analysis, and how to identify competitors and plan sales.
- Seminars on Farm Management in Donduseni, Drochia, Hincesti, and Telenesti. Between 20-25 women participated at each.



Central WAN members at the sub-regional meeting on Family Conflict Resolution in Hincesti

- Seminars on Business Planning in Balti and Chisinau, where 24 women trained on planning, presenting their company, SWOT analysis, analyzing competitors, and identifying appropriate markets.
- Income Report Preparation workshops in Edinet, Riscani, and Drochia with presentations from Fiscal Inspectorates. Nearly 50 women learned how to fill out income reports, calculate taxes, and file by deadline. The women found the workshops practical, and they were conducted in time for income tax filing.
- Interregional meetings for members from Hincesti, Nisporeni, Orhei and nearby raions for women to discuss, socialize, and exchange experiences.
- Women from Hincesti visited a quail farm to learn about the business and were surprised and impressed, and several were interested in starting their own.
- Seminars in Riscani and Edinet on Essential Skills for Internet Use such as information searches, e-mail, and Skype.
- Seminar in Riscani on Accident Prevention in Agricultural Enterprises.
- Workshop on Alternative Energy Sources in Balti. This well attended event saw the UNDP Energy and Biomass Project specialist present the project and speak about the advantages of using briquettes and pellets as an alternative source of energy. A successful producer of briquettes, Liliana Abramciuc, shared her experiences.
- Roundtables on the *Legal Aspects of Water Used for Irrigation* and the permissions and applications needed to secure approval to use water for irrigation. It is rare that rural people know the laws or rights that they have on technical topics.
- Practical training on *Greenhouse Technology for Tomato and Cucumber Production* in Carpineni village, Hincesti Raion, including soil preparation before planting, maintenance work, diseases and pests.
- In May, AGROInform workshop on rose hip (a small fruit that looks like a berry that is often used for tea) production technology for women in the Calarasi and Nisporeni districts who heard that the soil in their zone is suited for this crop.
- Sub-regional informal meetings for networking and experience exchange purposes in Nisporeni, Orhei, and Hincesti.
- In late May, women from Orhei and Hincesti districts visited the modern greenhouses in Braviceni, Orhei. The host owns three hectares of greenhouses and has more than 10 years of experience in growing vegetables, recently focusing on sweet peppers.
- On June 6, field day training on Organic Agriculture in Balti at the Research Institute



Central WAN members at the study visit in Braviceni village, Orhei district

“Selectia,” where Dr. Boris Boincean showed the Institute’s fields where they grow and test organic crops.

- Visit to Pocrovca village of Donduseni district, which is famous for raspberry production and where traders and consolidators come and buy products directly from the farm gate..
- On July 4, an Experience Exchange Study Visit to central Moldova for the Transnistrian WAN members.
- On July 25, visit to the family farm of Raisa Ghimp, a member of the Central WAN who has grown blackberries since 2006, to see her well-maintained, four-hectare blackberry plantation.
- On August 4, visit to Fructul Ltd, which grows flowers in greenhouses as well as vegetable seedling materials in large quantities. The 14 participants exchanged contacts with the company for further potential cooperation.
- Basic Computer Skills Development courses in Cahul, Causeni, Leova, and Stefan Voda in cooperation with Novateca, IREX Moldova, Gates Foundation, DVV International, and Life Learning Program.
- Fiscal Reporting and Modifications in Fiscal Legislation roundtable in Cahul, where an expert from the Fiscal Inspectorate discussed reporting requirements, forms use, due dates, and the importance of keeping good records.
- Study visit on table grape cold storage techniques with a small group in Manta, Cahul. Women were shown the chambers where the table grapes are stored and impressed by their appearance and good quality. A lot of discussion on production, contracting, and marketing.
- Accounting seminar focused on general principles, the legal framework, primary documents, and accounting records.
- Seminars on Women’s Leadership in Leova and Cimislia. The women learned about different styles of management, team leadership, and decision making and got to know each other through practical group exercises.
- Workshop on Access to Finance in Cimislia, where 35 participants heard ACED Technical Assistance Specialist Adrian Cojocarui present the financial resources that could easily be accessed by agricultural producers to finance their businesses.
- Mentorship activities in Leova and Stefan Voda, planned to coincide with some of the most important production stages for the crops involved.
- Regional partner Contact-Cahul hosted *Moldova’s Association Agreement with the EU*, where participants learned about the opportunities, benefits, and risks related to Moldova’s association with the EU versus the Eurasian Union and how association with one or the other could affect a typical family from the rural areas.



- On July 11, visit to two ACED demo sites in Puhaceni village, Anenii Noi to see new varieties of cucumbers, tomatoes and sweet peppers grown in greenhouses. Most women said techniques like mulching, double layer films, fertigation, and new varieties could be applied at their family farms.



- On August 15, workshop on *Production of Pellets and Briquettes from Agricultural Waste* where a UNDP expert discussed the production process, necessary equipment, marketing, and benefits.

Gagauzia Region (implemented by the Association of the Women of Gagauzia)

- Women's Leadership Skills training in Comrat for 20 women who learned to deal with stressful situations, increase self-confidence and improve behavior regardless of the situation. The women shared personal experiences from their day-to-day entrepreneurial work.
- Basic Computer Skills Development courses in Comrat and Ceadar-Lunga for 20 women. Feedback was extremely positive in terms of usefulness and understandability.
- Farm Marketing seminar in Comrat where more than 20 women learned basic marketing, farm marketing, and how to make the products marketable and attractive.
- Access to Finance workshop in Comrat for 20 participants delivered by ACED Specialist Adrian Cojocaru on resources targeting the agricultural sector.
- Tomato Seedling Production seminar in Comrat and delivered by ACED consultant Nicu Bejan. More than 15 small- and large-scale vegetable producers attended.
- Cucumber seedling production seminar in Comrat presented by Nicu Bejan, with heavy interest in fruit and vegetable production and greenhouse construction.
- On July 11, the Association of Women of Gagauzia hosted the Experience Exchange Visit and WAN members from Transnistria.
- On July 26, visit to a blackberry family farm in Tipala village, Ialoveni.
- Mentoring activities on agricultural business management in Comrat and Ciadir-Lunga.
- On September 6, field visit to a company specialized in wine and table grape production from Tomai village, Comrat district to supplement a prior theoretical seminar on table grape production.



Transnistria Region (implemented by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Transnistria)

- First meeting of the network advisory group members in Tiraspol, where members reviewed the plan and decided on topics and crops for seminars. They also asked for a seminar on cereal cultivation, while postponing livestock to 2014.
- Seminars on Planning and Personal Growth, with each convening more than 20 women who learned how to establish and achieve goals. They planned to start businesses in agriculture such as planting orchards or setting up greenhouses and applying SWOT analysis.
- Seminars on the Development of Mini-Processing Facilities for Fruit and Vegetables in Ribnita and Tiraspol that included visits to a cannery in Camenca and mini-processing facility of Holpark.
- Three-day course on the development of small businesses in rural areas, including seminars on legal issues, marketing of agricultural products, accounting and taxes, and basic PC skills that averaged 22 women participants per topic.



Women from Transnistrian WAN visiting a berry producer in Iantarnoie village, Camenca district

➤ In early April, roundtables in Ribnita and Tiraspol on *Women in Agriculture: Reviving Their Initiative, Efficiency and Confidence* that brought together women managing successful businesses with women who are less confident but interested in starting a business.

➤ In April, ACED consultant Nicu Bejan delivered *Greenhouse Vegetable Production Technologies* for Transnistrian WAN members from the Camenca and Ribnita regions. The women visited a modern greenhouse with cucumbers being

cultivated and marketed for a healthy shoulder season profit.

- In June, *Berry Production* with ACED National Consultant Parascovia Sava presenting the technical materials, followed by a trip to a family berry farm (blackberries, raspberries, currants, gooseberries).
- Seminar on *Vegetable Production in Open Fields* in Tiraspol delivered by Diligul Oleg, a local consultant, with a visit to “Agricol PPC” Ltd in Malaesti village in Grigoriopol district.



Women from Transnistrian WAN on a visit to a company which grows open field vegetables

Transnistria WAN Visits Central and Gagauzia WANs: On July 4 and July 11, TPP organized successful Experience Exchange Visits to the Central and Gagauzia regions of Moldova, where women from the Transnistrian WAN

exchanged experience with their counterparts. In central Moldova, the women visited modern greenhouses in Braviceni village and the fruit (cherry, apple, apricots and plums) orchards in Malaesti village in Orhei district. Additionally, the women spent some networking time enjoying the Curchi monastery and the surroundings.

In Gagauzia, the women from Transnistria enjoyed the same networking experience with their counterparts, visiting peach orchards in Cioc-Maidan and a greenhouse vegetable production business near Comrat. The visiting guests also visited a painting exhibition and went sightseeing in downtown Comrat.

Both events were hosted by AGROInform and AWG, the ACED sub-contractors for the Central and Gagauzia WANs, respectively.

Other Gender-Related Activities:

- In October, ACED co-financed the Forum of Women Leaders from Rural Areas held at the Codru Hotel in Chisinau. The event was organized by Soros-Moldova, AGROinform, and ACED. It gathered approximately 70 participants from the rural areas, one-third being women from the economic sector, mostly from agriculture. Attendees shared success stories and common issues. The economic session focused on business startups, development in rural areas, and women's limited access to finance, information, and networking. Proposals from the forum will be monitored in the lobbying process and tracked for implementation by a group of five women suggested by participants.
- In November, ACED's Gender Specialist participated at the National Forum of Young Entrepreneurs organized by Winrock in Chisinau and gave a presentation on ACED activities, including of the regional WANs, as an opportunity for young entrepreneurs specialized in high value agriculture.
- In February, the ACED Gender Specialist presented the WAN development activity at the annual conference of the MCC/MCA Irrigation System Reform Activity. ACED used this opportunity to publicize WAN.

Environmental Compliance

In FY2014, ACED updated its PERSUAP and expanded and deepened our environmental compliance activities. It was decided with the Mission Environmental Office that not all activities would need an Environmental Review. Instead, ACED would prepare a description of environmental mitigation measures being taken for each activity, with the MEO and BEO deciding which would require an ER.



Select ACED FY2014 Environmental Compliance Activities:

- Updated designs for production and postharvest activities and finished relevant environmental documentation for closed-out activities. The Environmental Specialist prepared a list of factors that helped in identifying five future, suitable demonstration sites in Transnistria.

- Updated contract language for Regional Training Service Providers for 2014 to include more detailed environmental monitoring requirements.
- Continued preparing new demonstration activity designs and implementation of approved ones. Each MoU signed between ACED and the demonstration activity partner included an annex with the environmental monitoring and mitigation plan. The host is informed of the requirements and expected to implement its part.
- ACED Environmental Specialist reviewed all procurement requests so that demonstration activity documents included approved environmental requirements and highlighted the needed documentation to be presented by the vendor or service provider. In FY2014 Q2, for example, ACED assisted in the procurement for seven demonstration activities, five in the Transnistria region, and in Q3 assisted in 11 procurement actions, including in areas such as printing, machinery, events, and business plan development.
- ACED staff and the contracted RTSP performed monitoring visits at demonstration activities documented by completion of the Environmental Monitoring Checklist. In FY2014 Q3, for example, environmental monitoring visits were performed by ACED staff and ACED RTSPs at 16 demonstration activities.
- ACED prepared and submitted to USAID a new PERSUAP Amendment to include blueberries, cabbage, gooseberries, raspberries, and walnuts, and updated information on pesticides approved by USAID for ACED. Since the Moldovan Government improved its legislation this year, the new PERSUAP Amendment included the updated list of Moldovan legislation in environmental protection, crop production, fruit and vegetables processing, human safety during work, and other ACED-related fields.
- In FY2014 Q4, ACED reviewed four demonstration-activity designs and with the contracted RTSPs performed 10 environmental monitoring visits at demonstration activities.

IV. DONOR COORDINATION

ACED cooperates and collaborates with most projects and donors in Moldova involved with agriculture and food production. These important efforts from FY 2014 bring added value to all of these programs and people and will continue apace.

Some notable examples from Q1:

- The ACED Marketing Team and UNDP Aid for Trade (AfT) program agreed to continue sharing expenses for Fruit Logistica 2014 and selecting producers to go to the show.
- The ACED COP participated in the Transnistrian Donor Coordinating Meeting for the first time on October 11, 2013. Due to meeting dynamics, one participant suggested future meetings should have two agendas, one focusing on political issues and the second on development issues.
- On October 25, the ACED CoP and Communication Specialist Aurel Stratan met at the USAID Mission to discuss support for the Orhei Field Day in early November.
- Early in November, the ACED CoP and Food Safety Specialist visited the Romanian Central SPS Lab and RENAR, the agency which will certify the Moldovan SPS laboratory in the ISO 17025 standard to discuss training and the certification process for the Moldovan lab.
- On November 15, the ACED COP met with Charles Davis from the USAID Mission in Kiev to review the ACED project and discuss sustainability. ACED's extensive use of local subcontractors and consultants is developing and reinforcing their capabilities to deliver services.
- On November 28 at the ACED Apple Forum in Edinet, ACED provided opportunities for other donor-funded activities to present their programs to the assembled apple farmers from Northern Moldova:
 - Mr. Dumitru Croitoru, Regional Coordinator for the World Bank's Moldova Agricultural Competitiveness Project (MAC-P), made a presentation on its grants program, the application process, requirements to receive funding, and contact information.
 - Mr. Tomasz Vogtman, President of the Polish-Moldovan Chamber of Commerce (PMCC), presented its activities and interests, including the facilitation of joint ventures between Polish and Moldovan companies in agriculture.
- In December, the ACED CoP and Component 2 Manager participated in the Transnistria donor committee meeting, which focused on planning and implementing activities. A follow-up meeting was set up with the Manager of the UNDP program for Transnistria to discuss coordination and collaboration. The meeting cleared the air between the two projects on perceived conflicts and created a good environment for moving forward.
- On December 17, the CoP and DCoP participated in the quarterly Ag Donor coordination meeting. Olga Sainciuc from MAC-P updated attendees and expressed an interest in visiting the Fruit Logistica trade fair in February.
- The ACED CoP and Gabriel Popescu, Commercial Attache from the U.S. Embassy in Bucharest discussed possible Romanian participation in the World Ag Expo in Tulare, California in February.

Coordination with Other Donors – FY2014 Q2

- ACED hosted MCC Washington representative Kristin Penn and MCC contractor Andy Keller at the ACED office on January 20 to discuss rehabilitation of the two lower Prut CIS zones (Chircan-Zarnesti and Cahul), as well as training and technical assistance to farmers there beyond the MCC Compact.
- The ACED CoP met again with Kristin, Andy and Gary Merkley from the ISRA component of the Compact to discuss continuing support for the WUAs linked to the Compact. MCC provided USAID with a concept paper for an additional five years of technical support at approximately \$2.5M.
- At an internal MCC/MCA Sustainability Planning meeting, Kristin Penn presented the key risks regarding sustainability of the CIS component of the Compact. The ACED CoP provided comments and suggestions based on current and future ACED activities.
- On January 23, the ACED CoP and DCoP participated in an event hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture on the Eastern Partnership program for EU expansion. Representatives from many EU member states were present. Discussions centered on challenges for prospective members such as Moldova and expectations for EU support.
- The ACED CoP and DCoP met with Mariana Rufa from the European Business Association and discussed collaboration. Mariana invited ACED to participate in the EBA Annual Event on February 19 at the National Museum of Art. Potential collaboration on seminars for training on export requirements were discussed.
- The ACED CoP and DCoP, along with Rodica Miron and Doina Nistor, met with the new Director of MIEPO on February 10 to discuss collaboration during ACED's Project Year 4, most likely the participation of ACED staff in a planned national forum on exporting procedures hosted by MIEPO.
- On February 11, ACED hosted colleagues from MCC, MCA and USAID to review needs for training and technical assistance for farmers in the CIS zones. ACED later presented MCC/MCA representatives with a draft of the ACED activity plan for the CIS zones.
- On February 18, ACED met with the new Director of the USAID People In Need (PIN) project and discussed collaboration. There appeared to be potential for cross-participation in seminars and training events with the ACED Women in Agricultural Networks (WAN) initiative. ACED will also inform PIN of upcoming international study tours that might be of interest.
- On February 20, the CoP, Oleg Stiopca, and Elena Brinza participated in the Annual ISRA Irrigation Conference at the VisPas hotel and presented the ACED 2014 training plan and activities being undertaken by ACED WANs.
- On March 4, the ACED CoP, DCoP and USAID representative Rodica Miron met with new National Food Safety Agency (NFSA) director Mr. Ion Sula. We discussed capacity building for the phytosanitary service and Customs checkpoint inspectors, as well as pending decisions on the distribution of ACED-supplied equipment for the checkpoints and border stations.

- The ACED CoP and Component 2 Manager Andrea Chartock, along with Kent Larson, Jeff Bryan and Rodica Miron from USAID, participated in the Transnistria Donor Coordination Meeting for March. Andrea presented on ACED in Transnistria and our experiences there and we had a productive Q&A.
- On March 12, ACED hosted project and donor representatives from USAID, MCC/MCA and the UNDP to discuss the trade shows ACED supported in February. The group agreed that continued participation is essential for expanding exports but that producers must make a greater financial commitment to secure their fuller commitment and participation.
- On March 17, the ACED CoP with Finance and Admin Manager Veronica Vladiuc met officials from the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM) to discuss an IOM conference and workshop for returning migrants later in 2014. ACED has agreed to present at the event.
- Also March 17, ACED technical leads met with reps from MCC/MCA to discuss the Project Year 4 workplan regarding training and technical assistance for CIS zone farmers, particularly farmers in the Lopatna and Criuleni zones.
- On March 27, ACED participated in the Phase Two launch of the Gates-funded Novateca program, which will expand to cover almost all the libraries in Moldova. ACED staffers shared technical materials and manuals we have been providing Novateca libraries.

Coordination with Other Donors – FY2014 Q3

- On May 6, ACED and other USAID projects participated in a Field Day in the city of Singerei to present to the public the activities undertaken by USAID in Moldova and give citizens a chance to interact with projects' staff. At right, ACED's Eugeniu Gudumac hands out ACED technical publications.
- On April 8, the CoP and some technical leads met with Elizabeth Markovic from Winrock International to share ACED's experiences with local Business Service Providers and NGOs.
- On April 9, key ACED staff met with Rodica Miron and a representative from the Romanian Embassy to discuss funding for the Costesti Table Grape Association packhouse.
- On April 15, the ACED CoP, DCoP and Food Safety Specialist met with Matt Brown from the EU Twinning Project to learn about its upcoming activities.
- On April 24, the CoP and key technical leads met with Jeff Goveia and Andrei Stratulat from MCC/MCA to review support farmers in the MCC CIS zones.
- On May 28, ACED CoP Jim Herne, USAID COR Rodica Miron, and Kristin Penn from MCC Washington reviewed activities and progress on training and technical assistance for MCC CIS Zone farmers. Kristin and others from MCC/MCA expressed appreciation for ACED's creativeness and flexibility in designing and implementing CIS Zone activities.



Agricultural Competitiveness and Enterprise Development Project

- On May 29, the ACED CoP and Eugeniu Gudumac organized a visit to a demo activity in the Criuleni CIS zone for Kristin Penn and MCC/MCA staff. The picture at the right shows Kristin discussing the canopy formation process with Eugeniu and Mr. Cojocar. Accompanying Kristin were Leslie McCuaig (the Country Rep for MCC in Moldova), Cynthia Berning from MCC Washington, and Andrei Stratulat from MCA Moldova.
- On May 29, the CoP, DCoP and Marketing Team met Mariana Rufa, Executive Director of the European Business Association in Moldova. There are good prospects for collaboration between ACED and the EBA, particularly for implementing technical training seminars for exporters.
- During the week of May 26, ACED Market Linkage Specialist Peter White organized informal meetings with Kristin Penn from MCC and Stefanie Budzina from USAID.
- On May 30, the CoP and Peter White, accompanied by Rodica Miron, met with Diana Lazar at the CEED II office, where Diana reviewed CEED II activities to promote Moldovan wine internationally and discussed lessons learned and possible collaboration by the two projects.
- On June 2, the ACED CoP and Gary Merkley of the Irrigation Sector Reform Activity (ISRA) discussed CIS zone rehabilitation and the progress of forming the Water User Associations. Potential collaborations include ACED first providing ISRA with 50 sets of technical materials for the WUA general meeting in Chircani-Zarnesti on June 21.
- On June 9–10, the ACED CoP and Environmental Specialist met with the E&E Bureau Environmental Officer from Washington and USAID Mission Environmental Officer from Kiev. ACED organized a field visit to a demo activity site on the Nistru River so they could see the application of environmental requirements by ACED.
- On June 17, COP Jim Herne and COR Rodica Miron traveled to Crocmaz to participate in the visit of USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah to Moldova (photo right). The gathering included Mission Director Kent Larson, Minister of Agriculture Vasile Bumacov. The COR and CoP gave Administrator a short overview of the ACED project.
- On June 18, the CoP and Jeff Goveia from MCC discussed ACED activities in the CIS zones and related topics.
- On June 20, the CoP and Lilian Cipricu traveled to Ciroescu to brief 16 newly arrived Peace Corps Volunteers on Moldovan agriculture and the ACED project.



Coordination with Other Donors – FY2014 Q4

- On July 15, the ACED CoP made a presentation on the ACED project at USAID headquarters in Washington, D.C. Participants included Thomas Gillis, the Moldova Desk Officer, and Thomas Rhodes, the Economic Growth Office Director for E&E. On July 16, the ACED CoP presented at MCC headquarters in Washington, D.C. Kristin Penn, who is responsible for the Moldova Compact, organized the meeting, which included Ben Campbell, Director of the Department of Compact Operations, and two other MCC Washington staff members.
- On July 3, the ACED CoP participated in the U.S. Ambassador's Fourth of July event and met representatives of projects and donors.
- On July 10, the CoP and the DCoP met at the BRITE project office with representatives the RIA Secretariat about the RIAs and legal drafts for the 14 ISPMs.
- On August 4, the ACED CoP and CEED II CoP discussed Russian importban and possible collaboration to address the issue. The ACED CoP also met with ISRA's Gary Merkley and an international consultant providing assistance to ISRA on reporting and documentation to discuss ACED's current and future activities.
- On August 11, the CoP and ACED Market Linkage Specialist met with Moldova Fruct and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Moldova on the proposed common booth at the upcoming IndAgra trade show and joint social event at the U.S. Ambassador's residence in Bucharest.
- On August 12, the CoP and ACED Market Linkage Specialist went to the USAID office to discuss marketing activities. The CoP provided the USAID staff with a candid assessment of prospects for expanding markets for Moldovan produce.
- On August 15, the CoP invited British Ambassador Phil Batson and Jeff Goveia and Kristin Penn from MCC to have dinner with Peter White and discuss the ACED marketing program and prospects for Moldovan fruit producers candidly.
- On August 18, key ACED staff and the Director of Moldova Fruct met with representatives from the CCI and UNDP to discuss collaboration on IndAgra. CCI and ACED agreed it was best this time to organize separate booths.
- On August 26, the ACED CoP and the DCoP participated in a public event organized by Expert Group Consultants to present their findings regarding potential new markets for Moldovan fruit. The analysis presented was very superficial and used broad trade data. The ACED CoP commented that the main issue facing Moldovan producers is aligning their product with what is being asked for in Western markets (e.g., seedless grapes vs. seeded grapes).
- On August 29, the CoP met with the Commercial Attache from the Canadian Embassy in Bucharest, who also covers Moldova. He was looking to increase bi-lateral trade between Moldova and Canada and we exchanged ideas such as a seminar on export procedures.
- On September 2, the ACED CoP joined Adrian Cojocar and representatives from the HEKS foundation who train small-scale table grape farmers in Moldova to discuss collaboration.
- On September 19, ISRA's Gary Merkley visited the ACED office to meet with the CoP and Activity 5 Team to review the Farmer Fair to be held on September 27.
- On September 24, ACED organized a coordination meeting between USAID, MCC/MCA and ACED to discuss World Food Moscow and additional activities to

support expansion into new markets. The group also reviewed plans for the September 27 Farmer Fair in Jora de Mijloc.

- On September 24, the ACED CoP organized a CoP monthly lunch with project managers from Novateca, ISRA, ROLISP, and LGSP, who enjoyed a broad-ranging discussion on projects and doing business in Moldova.
- On September 27, the first regional Farmer Fair to benefit farmers from rehabilitated CIS zones in Jora de Mijloc and Lopatna included technical presentations by ACED, displays by CIS zone farmers and farm input suppliers, and other activities.

V. LESSONS LEARNED

The ACED project has now completed three and a half years of its five year life, and the ACED staff and the farmer & producer clients, have learned much from the intensive level of activities and events over the past 42 months. The level of activity has continued to be high throughout the second and third years of the project (Apr '12 to Mar '13 and Apr '13 to Mar '14) a high level has been continued throughout the first half of the fourth year of project implementation. A high level of activity will continue throughout 2015, with a gradual tapering off of the level of activities towards the end of 2015 and into early 2016. Based on experience to date, ACED's management and technical staff have collected the following items as the "Lessons Learned" from the first three and a half years of the project:

- ✓ Now, more than ever, Moldovan HVA producers need to diversify the markets they sell their products into, to reduce the extreme dependency on the Russian market. In 2014 the Russians placed a ban on imports of Moldovan fresh fruit and vegetables (except for table grapes) and other food products and this event seems to have led to a much greater sense of urgency on the part of the producers.
- ✓ Despite the ban, and an increased sense of urgency, many producers have found ways around the ban (by trans-shipping product through Belarus or Tajikistan) and this has tempered the willingness of the producers to take bold moves. Very few producers seem to be willing to stick their necks out and take a risk on shipping product to a new customer in a new market, such as Dubai, Egypt or India or even to the UK.
- ✓ New markets imply new ways of doing things and in response the producers need to be open to learning about, and adapting to, these new requirements. In many of these markets packaging is different (packed by count instead of by weight) and customers are looking for specific sizes, colors and varieties of apples. These customers will not accept a loosely packed box with apples of many different sizes.
- ✓ Payment terms are another major impediment to venturing into new markets. Most non-Russian customers work on the basis of Letters of Credit (LCs) and not on a cash basis as the Moldovans are used to. No customer from these new markets will provide 100% payment up front, but will only make a partial payment via LC when the goods are shipped and the balance when, and if, the goods arrive in good condition.
- ✓ The preparations for, and the shipping arrangements themselves, are another new factor for the Moldovan producers. For shipments to the Gulf and India the goods will be in transit for three to four weeks and insuring that the goods are packed properly and that the cold chain is maintained is essential for good arrivals. This is an area where the Moldovan's need continued guidance and learning from experience.
- ✓ The quality of the packaging for the fruit is a continuing problem for the Moldovan producers. The carton material that is available for boxes is usually not up to the job of getting the products to distant markets (even to markets in the EU) in good condition. Further assistance will be needed to insure that the producers have access to, and know how to use, appropriate packaging for long distance transport.
- ✓ The ACED project needs to continue to transfer more of the costs, and responsibility, for the trade shows to the producers and the producer associations, if Moldovan participation in these trade shows is to continue. In Year Four this process has begun (with no ACED coverage of producer costs) and it will accelerate in Year Five.

- ✓ ACED has had a good response from farmers and producers who attend the project's training events and there is a good adoption rate for new approaches and techniques that have been presented at these seminars. Producers still have a poor awareness of the latest advancements in production technologies and continuing assistance (via the use of foreign consultants or international study tours) will continue to be important.
- ✓ There seems to be an increasing interest on the part of farmers and producers to join together and associate as a group, either as an association or a cooperative. ACED has had some success fostering the creation of some new producer groups and this effort should continue. For most farmers in Moldova the only way forward is through association and jointly marketing and branding their fruit and vegetables.
- ✓ With the imminent arrival of irrigation water at some of the MCC irrigation zones the farmers in those regions will need to move quickly if they are to take advantage of the opportunity that will be presented to them. It seems that the larger farmers, who already have significant investments and operations, are well placed to make use of the irrigation systems but the smaller farmers may not be able to catch up.
- ✓ Moldova needs continued improvements to the regulatory environment to achieve the ambitious plans it has for making HVA the economic engine it can be. While there seems to be some progress on the issue of variety registration, in reality the situation has not changed at all since the ACED project began. This will continue to be a drag on the development of HVA, and the adoption of new, improved, varieties.
- ✓ ACED's experience with farmers and producers on the Left Bank (Transnistria) has been generally positive and the farmers there seem even more eager to learn about new things than the farmers on the Right Bank. The Cross-Bank activities implemented by the project seem to be particularly effective ways of fostering good interpersonal and business relations and these efforts should continue.
- ✓ The Women in Agricultural Networks program that the ACED project implemented in 2014 seems to have been very effective in awakening the desire on the part of rural women to associate and learn from each other. The responses to this program have been extremely positive and the women are now making plans for new events and activities over the course of 2015. This is an effort that should continue.

Over the remainder of the project's life management should continue to promote and foster a greater sense of team work and internal collaboration to continue the smooth operations of the project and to insure that the impact of project activities are maximized. As with any large project, with multiple components and activities, it is easy for staff to become wrapped up in their own sub-program and miss out on potential internal collaboration that could have an important leveraging effect. Continuing the weekly meetings, organizing regular retreats and events outside of the office and fostering greater casual and informal communication processes in the office will be the key to addressing this issue.

The ACED Project will also need to continue to seek out, and develop, collaborative and cooperative relationships with other donors and international projects. The links with the UNDP Aid for Trade project are a good case in point and these need to be further developed as the UNDP develops new agricultural projects. ACED should also work more closely with appropriate government agencies, and undertake collaborative activities that advance the mutual objectives of the project and these agencies. These should include the National Food Safety Agency and MIEPO, the Moldovan trade and investment promotion agency.

As is true with any development project, the management and staff of the ACED project also need to remain flexible and creative to take advantage of unexpected opportunities that come about from time to time. The appearance of a new potential client organization, new methods of promoting Moldova and Moldovan producers and products and new, perhaps not previously considered, market opportunities should be given due consideration and follow-up if warranted. Some examples of the continued willingness of ACED's management and staff to undertake new types of activities are the following:

- ✓ When the ACED team learned that Moldova Fruct had been offered a small, no-cost, booth at the IndAgra trade show in Bucharest in October, the Marketing Team immediately offered to partner with Moldova Fruct on this show and to use ACED resources to make this a more important event for the association. As of the end of FY 2014 Moldova Fruct and ACED had reached an agreement on arrangements for this show and a joint booth of 52 m² will greatly increase the potential for impact.
- ✓ With the commitment to expand the booth at IndAgra the US Embassy in Romania offered to assist ACED to organize a reception for the Moldovan producers with an offer to hold this event at the American Ambassador's residence in Bucharest. This offer appeared to make good sense for ACED and Moldova Fruct as it would provide an opportunity to heighten the visibility of the Moldovan producers in Romania and give them an opportunity to meet face-to-face with Romanian buyers. Plans are underway.
- ✓ Following on some initial contact between Peter White from ACED and Chris White from EUROFRUIT magazine, Chris suggested that ACED give some consideration to having a booth at the World of Perishables trade show in Dubai in November 2014. Chris says this show is much more focused on fresh fruit and vegetables than GulFood and it would be a good showcase for the Moldovan fresh fruit producers. At the end of FY 2014 plans were underway to have a modest (36 m²) booth at this show.
- ✓ As with the World of Perishables show Chris White has suggested that the Indian market may be a good one for Moldova to investigate as their apple imports are expanding rapidly and India is becoming one of Washington State's most important international customers. To follow up on this the ACED project will participate in the Fresh Produce Mumbai conference in April of 2015 to further investigate the potential in India.
- ✓ ACED has also begun to be more creative in its efforts to support trial shipments by producers to new markets. As opportunities appear ACED has been cost-sharing some of the costs of these efforts by picking up select cost elements (such as purchasing fiber trays for apple cartons and plastic bags for grape bunches) which can defray some of the costs producers will have to try and enter new markets.

These are only a few examples of the ongoing efforts by the ACED staff to seek out new and creative ways of doing things and new activities and events that the project can implement to continue to expand Moldova's markets for fresh produce. This process will continue for the remainder of the project and additional new and creative approaches, not only for the marketing effort but across the board with all project activities, will be explored and tried with the encouragement and support of ACED's USAID COR.