
Millenium Challenge Account : Armenia Selects Timing Of Villages For Water-To-Market Training

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YEREVAN, AUGUST 15, ARMENPRESS: Millennium Challenge Account - Armenia (MCA-Armenia) has selected the timing during which villages will participate in the training component of the Water-to-Market Activity of the MCA-Armenia Program.

The Water-to-Market Activity, implemented by ACDI/VOCA, Arcadis Euroconsult, and their local partner VISTAA Plus, focuses primarily on providing training to help farmers transition to more profitable, market-oriented agriculture. The training programs within this activity will prepare 60,000 farmers over a period of five years.

MCA-Armenia has now identified the communities to be served in the next four years of the program following the completion of a pilot phase in September.

To ensure fairness and transparency, random selection of the communities was determined to be the best method. Mathematica Policy Research, a US based independent evaluator contracted by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), provided technical support to MCA-Armenia in developing a software program and making the actual selection.

Villages to be provided training in the second, third, fourth and fifth year of the program were grouped by Marzes and the Water User Associations in which they are members. 120 village clusters were selected for year 2008, 77 for years 2009 and 2010, and 80 for 2011. 69 village clusters were included in the pilot phase.

An additional 82 village clusters have been identified as currently having inadequate water; they will become eligible as water improves through irrigation rehabilitation efforts. (Village clusters are usually one, two or three villages grouped together based on geography and agricultural conditions.) Farmers in some of these villages will be surveyed as part of the MCA-Armenia Program evaluation.

The Millennium Challenge Compact, signed on March 27, 2006 with Entry into Force on September 29, 2006, aims to reduce rural poverty through a sustainable increase in the economic performance of the agricultural sector. Armenia plans to achieve this goal through a five-year program of strategic investments in rural roads, irrigation infrastructure and technical and financial assistance to improve the supply of water and to support farmers and agribusinesses.

The program will have a direct impact on approximately 750,000 people, or an estimated 75 percent of the rural population, and is expected to reduce the rural poverty rate and boost annual incomes.

The Compact includes a USD 67 million project to rehabilitate up to 943 kilometers of rural roads, more than a third of Armenia's proposed "Lifeline Road Network." When completed, the road network will ensure that every rural community has road access to markets, services, and the main road network.

Under the Compact, the Government of Armenia will be required to commit additional resources for maintenance of the road network. The Compact also includes a USD 146 million project to increase the productivity of approximately 250,000 farm households (34% of which are headed by women) through improved water supply, higher yields, higher-value crops, and a more competitive agricultural sector.

Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), a U.S. government corporation designed to work with some of the poorest countries in the world, is based on the principle that aid is most effective when it reinforces good governance, economic freedom, and investments in people that promote economic growth and elimination of extreme poverty.

Millennium Challenge Account-Armenia (MCA-Armenia), a State Non Commercial Organization established by the Government of Armenia, is responsible for overseeing the transparent implementation of the Compact signed between the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the Government of Armenia.
