

Minimizing Environmental degradation caused by overgrazing in Tetrtskaro region

Under Eco Awards 2011 Program, Association Caucasus Genetics, together with Farmers' Organization Algeteli 2008 and Imprescon Partners, implemented a project aimed at minimization of environmental degradation caused by overgrazing in Tetrtskaro region by introducing sustainable pasture management methods to the local farmers. The project was co-funded by Mercy Corps.

In Tetrtskaro region almost all low-land pastures and 80 percent of mountain pastures are seriously overgrazed. Cattle and sheep overgrazing increases soil erosion. Quite

Overgrazing leads to a vicious cycle, where pastures produce less nutrition, animals produce less milk and, therefore, farmers need to increase the number of animals to receive the same amount of milk, causing even more overgrazing. . According to international experience, even a simple pasture rotation system can decrease soil erosion as much as 15 percent during the first year and additional five percent annually in the next five years. At the same time, the biomass and its nutritional value can increase over 20 percent, decreasing the need for overgrazing and creating a good sustainable cycle.



Photo by: Association Caucasus Genetics

Project Objectives

- Reduce environmentally harmful overgrazing in selected villages of Tetrtskaro region.
- Improve pastures through demonstrating the benefits of rotational pasture management system and facilitating its practical implementation in project villages.
- Increase income in project communities through economically feasible usage of local cattle breeds in rotational grazing systems.
- Replicate sustainable pasture management models firstly in other parts of Tetrtskaro, and later in other districts of Kvemo Kartli and regions of Georgia.

Implemented Activities and Outputs

- For introducing the project goals and objectives, various village meetings were organized with key farmers and village elders. After this direct communication period, 28 hectare pasture, needed for the experiment, was selected in Jorjiashvili and Bogvi villages.

The communities participating in the project were supported with all the necessary equipment: a grass mower for grass and hay cutting, sufficient amount of pasture seed mix, solar panel-powered electric fencing equipment and cattle watering and shading system with insecticide skin flaps.

- The pasture was evaluated three times by the project specialists during the experiment and relevant recommendations were proposed on how to improve the soil composition. The pasture was cleaned from the existing plants, rubbish and stones, followed by cultivation and seeding, using the seed mixture of the plants that the pasture flora lacked.
- The pasture land was divided into six paddocks by solar panel electric fencing; insect repellent ropes were installed and watering and shading systems were organized to each paddock. The rotation cycle of paddocks varied from seven days up to three weeks depending of the paddock's growth status. The paddock was given a rest period when majority of grasses still had two to three leaves left uneaten. This way the plants could start rapid recovery and the pasture was quickly available for new grazing cycle.
- In total 13 trainings, field school workshops, and seminars were organised for participating farmers but three of the events were targeted also to other stakeholders outside the participating villages. The final seminar at the end of November presented project findings, conclusions and recommendations to 28 interested livestock experts, agronomists and experts from all parts of Georgia.
- Two leaflets were prepared under the project on avoiding environmental degradation caused by overgrazing. First leaflet focussed on introducing rotational grazing systems and the second leaflet described the economic model for starting and running rotational pasture management. The latter provides detailed data for implementing possible replications of the project.
- In the framework of the additional award, acknowledging successful completion of Eco-Awards Program 2009-2011, the association will purchase soil analysis kit that will enable the organization to properly evaluate the true potential of pastures. This need was identified while implementing the given project.

Project Duration

April, 2011 – December, 2011

Donors and Partners

The given project was implemented within the framework of the Eco-Awards 2011 Program. Eco-Awards Program is initiated and financed by BP, on behalf of its oil and gas co-venturers (BTC Co. SCP Co.) and administered by Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF). Pasture equipment and promotion materials were granted by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) financed Alliances project implemented by Mercy Corps.

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