



## *Ecologically Safe Pastures*

Under Eco Awards 2010 Program, Rural Advisory Service (RAS) implemented a project aimed at reducing ecological risks through sustainable and effective management of pastures in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region. The project covered three villages of Adigeni, Aspindza, and Akhaltsikhe municipalities – Sholaveri, Rustavi and Tsnisi.

Samtskhe - Javakheti is surrounded by natural pastures, and as raising livestock is the main source of income in the region, the local population intensively use them. This, combined with the use of improper technologies, increases environmental risks for the region. Namely, due to



*Photo by: Rural Advisory Service*

overgrazing, certain flora do not have the full period needed to grow and pollinate, meaning that natural seeding does not take place and pastures are not naturally renewed, resulting in pasture degradation and soil erosion. The local population lacks information about the ecological risks of overuse of pastures and continues to use the old, environmentally unsafe, and harmful technology instead of an innovative one, which has been tested in many countries around the world.

### **Project Objectives:**

- To increase knowledge of local community on prevention of ecological risks through rational use of pastures;
- To improve the quality of pastures and ensure their effective management;
- To create reservations for useful insects and flora.

### **Implemented Activities and Results**

- Together with the local population, three demonstration plots were selected in target villages (one 3 hectare plot in each village). In September a mixture of seed grasses and legumes, consisting of eight components (pink clover, white clover, timothy-grass, English ryegrass, Italian ryegrass, bird's foot trefoil, orchard grass and meadow fescue), was planted with the use of an overseeder machine, an innovation technology of planting the grass seed through making superficial cuts in the ground, without turning the soil.



What makes the Overseeder method unique is the fact that sowing is done without preliminary ploughing, so that the structure of the soil is not disturbed. This reduces the risk of wind and water erosion. It also reduces costs by eliminating certain tasks such as ploughing. Such planting equipment has not yet been used in Georgia, but in developed countries it is widely used to improve pasturelands.

- The local communities were provided training on following the five topics:

*Photo by: Rural Advisory Service*

1. Ecological Balance
  2. Desertification
  3. Soil degradation and the ways for combating it.
  4. Innovative technologies of pasture improvement
  5. Pasture management and preservation of its ecological condition
- To preserve beneficial entomophages and flora three reservations (one in each village) were set up on 500 square meters of plots. The plots were fenced to guard the area from cattle.
  - It should be noted that since completion of the project RAS provided seeding service using overseeder machine to several farmers, indicating that innovative method attract interest of locals. At the same time, providing this additional service contributes to the sustainability of the organization. At the same time, following successful implementation of the project organization evidenced growing of sales of composite grass used in the project.
  - In the framework of additional award acknowledging successful completion of Eco-Awards Program 2009-2011, RAS renovated and updated its web-page [www.ras.ge](http://www.ras.ge), thus contributing to further popularization of the given initiative, its results and organization itself.

### Project Duration

July, 2010- September, 2011

### Donors and Partners

The project was implemented within the framework of the 2010 Eco-Awards 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).

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