



From Kolchoz systems to fee-based private agricultural extension: Achievements with a client-oriented training and advisory concept as support for private farming in Azerbaijan

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Abstract

State initiated land reform and privatization processes in Caucasian Azerbaijan, which were designed to boost the agricultural sector, resulted in the creation of farmers without farming tradition and with insufficient skills to engage in own farming. Since 1999, the private Agro Information Centre (AIM) strives to bridge this gap by implementing a situation-specific, client-oriented training and advisory concept. AIM has trained 210 private, village-based agricultural advisors (AAs) and introduced fee-based extension to meet farmers' demands. Between 2000 and 2004, various training and educational programs on production techniques, communication skills, and

<http://www.e-conference.elewa.org/agriculture>.



farm entrepreneurship were conducted that combined lectures, field visits, on-the-job-training, and tailor-made coaching. The 210 AAs served 13,185 farmers/clients and concluded 3,247 verbal and written contracts with a total value of 213 Million Manat[†] (ca 43,500 USD), which amounted to an annual average income of ca 215 USD. After four years, reference farmers (without access to extension) had less farm capital, less knowledge of production technologies, and were more dependent on off-farm income than contact farmers (with extension). It is argued that the implemented fee-based privatization concept may be a *panacea* for countries with similar transitional economic backgrounds.

Key words: AIM, land reform, privatization, participatory agricultural extension, demand-side funding, former Soviet Union, economic transition countries.

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[†] Beginning January 2006, the Azeri currency changed to the current Azerbaijani Manat (AZN), however all values are given in the former currency and in USD.