

Dried food production is a centuries-old tradition in Armenia, hence about 5,500 dried food producers all over the country. Majority of dried fruit producers are not legal entities to this date, but households, who have inherited the tradition of drying fruits and vegetables from their ancestors¹. Given the necessary factors in Meghri for high quality dried fruits from natural climate conditions to abundant sunlight, dried fruit production has long become the most essential part for fruit producers of this region.

Lusineh and Hasmik are home-based dried fruit producers from Meghri. A vast majority of women in Meghri are mainly engaged in home-based food production activities, which are more often than not the only source of income. Women in Meghri and in the Armenian society as a whole, assume different roles, i.e. as breadwinner of a family, unpaid family worker, service providers in the communities and mother/care-taker of the family. Hasmik and Lusineh were mainly using the traditional methods of drying fruits. These old-fashioned methods have not once proved to be time- and efforts, labor-consuming. Moreover, the quality and hygienic circumstances, as well as the quantity they could achieve by hand did not meet the requirements consumers have nowadays. After acquiring an electrical drying machine and embarking on drying fruits in a closed circle with new technologies, the overall process improved. This gave rise to the production in terms of both quality and quantity.

The project has so far provided comprehensive trainings, including coaching in production. Thanks to the project a small quantity of naturally dried fruits has been packed and distributed to the supermarkets in Yerevan by these women. In 2014 they could produce around 100 kg of dried persimmon, fig, apple, pear, peach and even pomegranate. Also, recently, they could participate in the Christmas Fair in Yerevan Municipality. This production is also envisioned to be exported abroad. Upon the project's support, Hasmik is establishing and testing a new way of drying in greenhouse which would be a "natural" safe and clean dryer during summer time and greenhouse for vegetable production in winter time.

¹Assessment of the Armenian Dried Fruit and Vegetable Chain, BSC Business Support Center LLC, 2012

DRIED FRUIT PRODUCTION IN MEGRHI REGION

From Home-based Production to New Technologies

