

Press release

Second EU and AFD supported International Forum on Apple Value Chain was held in Georgia

June 9-10, 2022 Tbilisi – Two-day International Agribusiness Online Forum on “Situation and prospects of the apple value-chain in Georgia: Think and Act Together” was held in Tbilisi, to discuss the prospects, opportunities, as well as challenges in the country’s apple sector. The event was financed by the European Union NIF Programme, in partnership with the French Development Agency (Agence Française de Développement – AFD), and was organised by FinExCoop Georgia.

The Forum provided a unique opportunity for the stakeholders from the public and private sectors to exchange information about the hot topics in the apple value chain and extend recommendations for the sector’s development. The meeting focused on the ways for the apple sector modernization, development of the value-chain at the farmer’s level, promoting better access to inputs and equipment, as well as better access to financing and market opportunities.

In his opening speech, Mr Giorgi Khanishvili, the First Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia (MEPA), spoke about the MEPA’s strategy in support of the apple value chain in Georgia and underlined: *“There is a need to use resources for import and export, we need to continue our work to amplify local support, use the best practices on lower usage of pesticides and fertilizers to meet international market demands, work closely with labs and make analysis with quality to get high-quality products.”*

As Mr Georges Dehoux, Programme Manager for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Safety of the EU Delegation in Georgia noted in this opening address: *“Agriculture is going through major changes in the EU. The Green Deal, the Farm-to-Fork strategy and the new Common Agricultural Policy 2023-2027 all represent the demand of European consumers to have access to better quality, safer and more sustainable food products. This will also impact on the type and quality of food products that the EU will import in the future. With AFD and other Team Europe colleagues, we hope that initiatives like FinExCoop will allow Georgian agrifood products to reach a quality level that will allow them to access the EU market and make the most of the DCFTA facilities”*.

Following the keynote addresses, FinExCoop presented a video film and the testimonies of FinExCoop’s pilot farmers in the apple value chain, where they explain the main challenges faced by advanced apple farmers in Georgia.

Mr Raphaël Jozan, Director of the AFD Tbilisi Regional Office, underlined the importance of supporting the agriculture of Georgia and the role of the AFD in the process of contributing to the sector’s development. He noted: *“Ambition of AFD is to capitalize and scale up on the development and innovation. The main principle is to promote EU-integrated water and land management practices in connection to the development of climate-smart agriculture. Farmers need support in building a sustainable value chain and strengthening technical human capacity for water and land management. FinExCoop through its work is improving the value of all products produced in the area by organising much stronger value chain linkages between off-takers (agro-processors, modern retailers, exporters) and farmers. Ensuring that the*

increased value-added generated in the field is socially inclusive and largely kept by farmers through promotion of EU style cooperatives for consolidation and marketing of products."

The second day of the forum was devoted to the following topics such as how to produce Georgian apples with the best EU Green deal standards and how to put more value in Georgian apples. At the end of the forum participants shared their opinions with each other on what has to be done for the better development of the apple value chain in Georgia.

The second half of the day participants visited one of the meteo stations in the Shida Kartli region, Gori municipality. The on-site visit took place in Skra village at Mr Mirian Okroshvili's apple orchard. The visit was dedicated to apple orchard fields, meteo station and marketing of apples in Shida Kartli and the future development of a cooperative applying the best smart pest management from the EU. This field visit was an excellent opportunity for high-level representatives from the Government of Georgia, international partners (ambassadors, heads of development institutions) and other key stakeholders to get acquainted with progress in the strategic field of orchards in Georgia.

Finance, Extension and Cooperative Development for Georgian Farmers (FinExCoop Georgia) is funded by the European Union (EU) under the NIF Programme with a total budget of EUR 4 million and managed and coordinated by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD). The project aims at improving access to finance and agricultural extension services for small farms and cooperatives in Georgia.

Agence Française de Développement (AFD) implements France's policy on international development and solidarity. Through its financing of NGOs and the public sector, as well as its research and publications, AFD supports and accelerates transitions towards a fairer, more resilient world. It also provides training in sustainable development (at AFD Campus) and other awareness-raising activities in France.

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