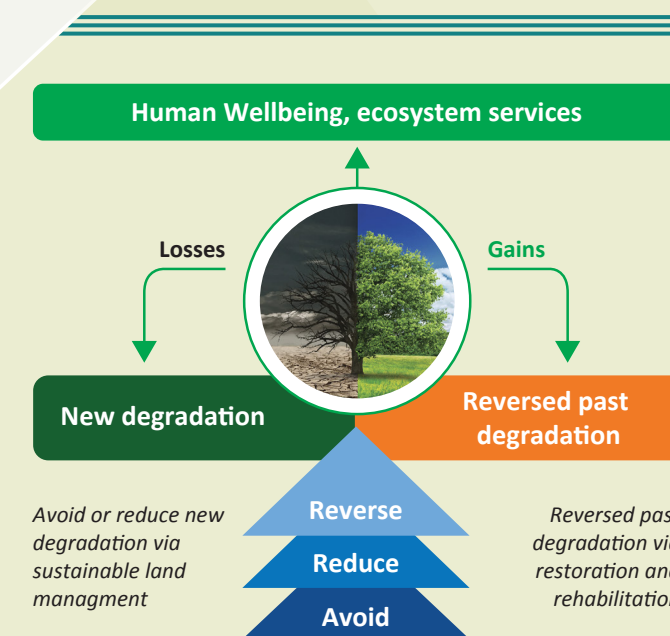


Management of natural resources and safeguarding of ecosystem services for sustainable rural development in the South Caucasus (ECOserve)

Diversity for a better future

Commissioned by: German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Partner organisations: Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development in Armenia, Ministry of Agriculture in Azerbaijan, and Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture in Georgia
Current commissioning period: December 2018 to November 2021
Budget: EUR 13,100,000.
Countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia



◀ An example of our work:

Soil erosion is a major problem in the mountainous regions of the South Caucasus. Agricultural land, pastures and forests are experiencing increasing degradation and becoming less productive. In light of this situation, experts and land users from the three countries came together to discuss how this problem can be solved at a conference in late 2018. They shared their experiences of how erosion can be prevented or at least controlled through, for example, better pasture management. At the event, delegates engaged in dialogue with leading experts from Europe, Central Asia and the Himalayas. The invitation to the conference was issued by the ECOserve programme together with the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus (RECC). Back in their home countries, participants are now using their experiences to help ensure that nature can continue to sustain the lives of future generations in rural communities.

◀ Challenges:

The dominant land-use systems in the three South Caucasus countries (grazing land in Armenia, agriculture in Azerbaijan, and forests in Georgia) are subject to progressive degradation. Moreover, energy supply in rural parts of Armenia and Georgia is based on the unsustainable use of natural resources. There is a lack of robust data, rules, practices and expertise at all levels. Holistic approaches to the sustainable and biodiversity-friendly use of natural resources are also lacking.

◀ Objectives:

Together with our partners, we are improving conditions for the sustainable and biodiversity-friendly use of natural resources in the dominant land-use systems (grazing,

agriculture and forest) in the South Caucasus. In doing so, we are taking into account the energy security of the rural population, which often relies heavily on natural resources.

◀ Activities:

We are advising our partners on how they can gather and make available reliable data to facilitate sustainable management of natural resources. We are supporting the development of digital information systems for processing environmental data and the adaptation of legal frameworks to enable natural resources to be used in a sustainable manner. We are demonstrating what better management of forests, agricultural land and pastures might look like. And since there is little awareness of the importance of the environment, we are helping to improve information and educational services. We have also supported the exchange of information among experts in the three countries.

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Diversity for a better future

Our contribution in Armenia

Commissioned by:

Partner organisations:

German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development (lead executing agency), Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Nature Protection, the municipalities of Tsaghkahovit and Aparan, as well as other municipalities in selected pilot regions (implementing partners)

◀ A country- specific example

Natural meadows and pastures cover around 40 per cent of Armenia's land area. These areas are at risk of advancing soil erosion and degradation caused by over-grazing. The sector's productivity is feeling the effects of poorly organised pasture use, and little use is being made of any potential to harness synergies with the country's nature conservation goals. Armenia has begun developing an agricultural geo-information system as a monitoring tool and to better analyse existing trends. To this end, ECOserve supports the mapping of grasslands and pastures and the linking of this information with existing databases on, for instance, endangered species. This is leading to improvements in drafting and implementing land use and management plans at the local and national level. This support enables partners to export environment-related information from the system, interpret it and incorporate it into political strategy processes. Moreover, users receive training on how to keep data up to date.

Results

Climate-adapted and bio-diversity-friendly management methods have been introduced on 12,000 ha of forests, agricultural land and pastures in pilot regions in the three countries.

The main reform processes in the three countries (territorial reform in Armenia, agricultural reform in Azerbaijan and forestry sector reform in Georgia) are actively supporting the protection and sustainable use of natural resources.

Binding plans will be developed for the dissemination of marketable products for the efficient use or substitution of firewood and manure as a source of heat energy.

The governments of the three countries will make policy decisions about the use of natural resources on the basis of better data.

Young people in particular in the three countries will be more committed to protecting and using natural resources in a sustainable manner.

Universities and vocational schools will offer education and training on issues related to the sustainable management of natural resources.

Field of activity 1 – Data collection and management

- » Development of methods for collecting data on forestry, pasture, farming, and biodiversity
- » Consolidation of databases, especially on pasture farming and biodiversity
- » Training for users and employees on these data systems
- » Undertaking of socio-economic studies on trends in resource needs, including firewood.

Field of activity 2 – Regulatory framework

- » Provision of advice on strengthening the legal framework for biodiversity-friendly, sustainable use of natural resources
- » Identification and evaluation of gaps in existing regulatory frameworks for biodiversity and energy efficiency
- » Provision of advice on pasture management and integration of ecosystem services into planning in enlarged municipalities.

Field of activity 3 – Pilot activities

- » Analysis of the lessons learned from pilot projects on sustainable agriculture, (re)planting forests and rural energy efficiency measures.
- » Cost-benefit analyses and identification of scalable approaches to climate-friendly resource management
- » Identification of market potential and support for the development of business models for energy efficiency and the sustainable use of natural resources

Field of activity 4 – Training and PR

- » Identification of qualified training and PR organisations
- » Analysis of education and training needs in the areas of sustainable use of natural resources and energy efficiency, and development of content for new and updated courses and training measures
- » Strategy development and awareness-raising campaigns on sustainable agriculture, forestry and energy efficiency, especially for younger people