EXPERT’S INSIGHT - KYRGYZSTAN

In the 2010 planting year cotton had an intensive revival with Kyrgyz farmers due to increasing world market prices. The organic movement in Kyrgyzstan is growing strongly as farmers feel the environmental and social impacts of organic farming and especially value the protection it offers against the problems of the world market.

The two local organizations Agricultural Commodity and Service Cooperative (ACSC) and Bio Service Public Foundation (BS) had to deal with turbulent times in their initial years, with a world economic crisis and a revolution and ethnic conflicts in Kyrgyzstan. They matured and are well prepared for further expansion and professional provision of their services in Kyrgyzstan and the Central Asian region. They have solid growth strategies and are forward planning.

The Bio Cotton Project (BCP) of Helvetas facilitates the growth of organic and Fairtrade production and trade in and from Kyrgyzstan. There are many positive results from the organic movement in Kyrgyzstan:
- 1000 contracted organic farmers in 2010, 25 percent of them women
- 10 percent lower yields, but a 20 percent higher price for the farmer
- 8 percent lower production cost; but a 27 percent higher net profit
- Better access to financial credits (less need for farmers to sell livestock in emergencies)
- Cotton oil for cooking and press cake as animal feed are valuable and highly appreciated by-products of organic cotton production
- Significant improvements in health conditions due to consumption of organic food and cotton oil, and no need to use dangerous chemicals.
- Almost all farmers perceive an improvement of soil fertility & water holding capacity
- 91 percent of organic farmers would convert again

Organic, Fairtrade and in conversion cotton fiber production has grown from 166 mt in 2007 to 380 in 2010. For 2011 and beyond the organic movement in Kyrgyzstan foresees continued growth in the number of farmers, area under organic and Fairtrade production and sales of organic cotton and rotation crops. This will go hand in hand with a diversification of target markets - entering North American markets, exploring Japanese and Russian markets as well as strengthening local markets.

As organic production implies a rotation system for growing a range of crops, other value chains, for rotation crops such as cereals, pulses and Medicinal and Aromatic Plants will be established. These will cover inputs through growing and processing to selling locally and abroad.

Building the institutions that foster organic farming will be the core aim of Helvetas, who stay committed to organic farming in Kyrgyzstan until at least 2014. This means enhancing capacities, especially developing human resources and building up capital. We look forward to continued growth in our organic movement.

Shaknoza Kurbanalieva, Bio Cotton Project, Kyrgyzstan