

Russia

Farmer-to-Farmer Program (FtF)



Since 1992 ACDI/VOCA has implemented numerous projects aimed at improving Russian agriculture and increasing the sustainability of agricultural enterprises. Through the Farmer-to-Farmer (FtF) program in Russia, ACDI/VOCA taught new skills to farmers and enterprises and fostered partnerships to encourage the development of the agriculture sector.

ACDI/VOCA's FtF program in Russia ended in 2008. In a consortium with Land O' Lakes and Winrock International, ACDI/VOCA focused on strengthening five components of the producer-to-market agricultural system in Russia: farm production, post-harvest handling, intermediate and final processing, retail and wholesale sales, and local and regional markets. Short-term FtF volunteer consultants advised local farmers on technology transfer, quality control, product diversity, business strategy and human resources management, among other agribusiness issues. FtF improved the quality and viability of agricultural support institutions and financial institutions that provide much-needed resources to the agricultural sector.

FtF provided volunteer experts to 514 host organizations in Russia.

U.S. volunteer consultants helped Russian agribusinesses develop over 631 new bakery, dairy and meat products and support services, and the program was instrumental in establishing a long-lasting partnership between the Moscow State Agricultural Engineering University and several U.S. universities, including Pennsylvania State University and the University of Maryland.

In addition, FtF volunteer consultants were instrumental in expanding agricultural support mechanisms such as farm extension services. ACDI/VOCA established partnerships with the Association of Mushroom Growers and the Moscow Mushroom School, which has become a leading technical assistance provider for substrate production in Russia. FtF collaborated with the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service as well as with the USAID Mission in Russia to coordinate technical assistance.

FtF also focused on strengthening rural finance in Russia. Credit cooperatives received training in monitoring and credit risk management. With volunteers' help, FtF helped address the lack of access to credit for rural people. For example, ACDI/VOCA developed a unique relationship over the course of eight years of partnership with the U.S. Farm Credit Administration (FCA), bringing bank examiners to Russia as FtF volunteers to help the FtF consortium set up



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a monitoring system based on FCA principles. In addition, FtF provided farm credit system experts who helped improve policies and procedures across scores of individual rural credit cooperatives.

ACDI/VOCA has seen the results of its successes with numerous Russian small and medium-sized enterprises. One such agricultural cooperative used an FtF volunteer's recommendations to increase milk production by 10 percent from 1,095 MT to 1,204 MT and improved average milking yields from 3,910 kg to 4,300 kg. Another Russian FtF host was able to achieve a 12 percent increase in total grain yield from 5,000 MT to 5,600 MT and a 20 percent increase in net revenue from \$58,725 to \$70,680. FtF's unique people-to-people approach focuses on helping the Russian people develop their agribusiness sector and achieve prosperity.

ACDI/VOCA concentrated on providing technical assistance to the dairy and meat sectors and cooperative development. The dairy sector was targeted because there was a low average milk yield per cow in Russia, and thus, not enough milk for domestic consumption. ACDI/VOCA partnered with agricultural universities to conduct trainings and extensions for dairy businesses and cooperatives to increase their production levels.

Over the life of the Russia project, FtF gave technical training to over 514 host organizations, including 36,304 direct beneficiaries who received hands-on training from our 571 volunteers and an estimated 533,425 indirect beneficiaries who benefited from ACDI/VOCA's assistance.

Follow-up surveys with hosts found that almost 98 percent implemented volunteer recommendations, leading to increases in net profit and growth in their sales by

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\$72,007,914. Additionally, through the technical assistance received through ACDI/VOCA's FtF program, rural loans increased by \$23,360,507 with hosts' equity increasing by \$9,764,572 and memberships in rural credit cooperatives growing by 73.2 percent.