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Kyrgyzstani Orchard Farmer Shares What She Learned From Farmer-to-Farmer Volunteer

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Fruit production employs more than 35,000 people in the Kyrgyz Republic's Issyk-Kul Oblast, where more than 1,000 hectares of land is covered by orchards. The export potential of this industry is considerable. But many farmers lack basic knowledge of pruning and grafting, organic farming, and pest and disease prevention.

To close this knowledge gap, Ross Penhallegon, an orchard expert from Springfield, Oregon, conducted his twentieth volunteer assignment with [ACDI/VOCA's Farmer-to-Farmer Program](#), funded by the United States Agency for International Development. In March, Ross traveled to the Kyrgyz Republic to deliver trainings in seven villages surrounding Bishkek, the country's capital city.

One of those trainings took place in the village of Maevka, where Ross met Chinara Kamchibekova. Chinara is an orchard farmer, head of the local women's council, a former accountant, and a graduate of the Moscow Commercial Institute.

"Before, I thought: more branches, more fruit," Chinara said. After learning from Ross, she understood how pruning the branches led to more fruit production.

She has already seen the results of Ross's training on her four-hectare family orchard. Small apples have started to grow. Once, her apple trees suffered from pests. Now, when she picks a leaf and holds it up to the light, there are no signs of damage.

Ross also donated pruning tools to Chinara's family, which Chinara lends out to her neighbors. Community members come daily to lease the pruning shears for use at their own orchards.



Chinara Kamchibekova, an orchard farmer in Maevka, shared what she learned from the volunteer with her neighbors via WhatsApp videos.



"We are seeing fruit trees that are producing more fruit, which means more money in the small villages. More money means the people in small villages have a better life." — Ross Penhallegon, a volunteer from Oregon

As a community leader, Chinara also saw the importance of sharing the techniques she learned from Ross with farmers in her village. She decided to take videos of Ross's trainings and share them with neighbors through the popular messaging application WhatsApp. Neighbors who could not attend his trainings, or just needed a refresher, could study the videos and apply the techniques to their own

orchards.

Ross's support inspired Chinara to invest in her orchard. She applied for and won a Dutch grant to receive saplings, which she then distributed throughout her community.

Being a former accountant, Chinara created a detailed distribution list of those receiving saplings. She is confident that, armed with new saplings and orchard management skills, her community will blossom and grow just like her fruit trees.

Learn more about [how to volunteer with ACDI/VOCA](#).

Learn more about our [Farmer-to-Farmer Program in the Europe, Caucasus, and Central Asia regions](#).

Learn more about our work in [the Kyrgyz Republic](#).