



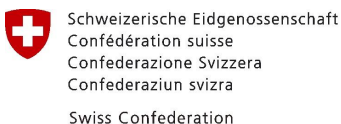
Photo: Elisabeth Katz

## OUR ADVICE IS YOUR SUCCESS

### The impact of advisory services on profitability of small farms in Kyrgyzstan

"Our advice is your success!" This is the slogan of the Rural Advisory Services (RAS) in the Kyrgyz Republic. The Rural Advisory Services have been built up by the Kyrgyz Swiss Agricultural Program (KSAP; funded by the Government of Switzerland and implemented by Helvetas) together with a range of partners over more than 10 years. An assessment of the outcomes of the RAS' services conducted in 2010 showed that the slogan is not empty publicity, but that the advisory services help rural people really to increase productivity and profitability of their farms.

RAS clients for example nearly doubled their potato yields, and increased their wheat yields to over 80% above the national statistical average. Women who changed to special egg breed chicken with RAS support nearly tripled their profits from poultry. They not only managed to increase egg productivity by nearly 30%, but due to the confidence gained from RAS training, more than doubled the number of chicken they keep.



Swiss Cooperation Office in the Kyrgyz Republic  
Кыргыз Республикасындагы Кызматташтык боюнча Швейцариялы  
Швейцарское Бюро по сотрудничеству в Кыргызской Республике



**HELVETAS**  
Swiss Intercooperation

**KYRGYZSTAN**

## CONTEXT

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, in the Kyrgyz Republic (KR) large collective farms were converted into numerous small family farms. People, who had previously been tractor drivers, teachers, accountants or yardmen, now had to survive on their own production. Agricultural productivity rapidly decreased in the first half of the 1990ies, with a parallel increase in poverty.



Photo: Elisabeth Katz

With 60 egg breed chicken an household can earn a side income that is higher than a full teachers salary.

Against this backdrop, SDC (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation) through a mandate to Helvetas . in 1994 initiated the Rural Advisory Services (RAS) in Naryn, a mountainous remote region of the KR. In 1999, the Rural Advisory Services were expanded to all regions of the country, in partnership with the World Bank, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic and others. The partners invested in intensive capacity and institution building and as well financed to a large extent the provision of advisory services.

Today, a network of six regional RAS operates in the whole territory of the Kyrgyz Republic with field advisers in each of the 40 Raions (districts). They support rural people through providing know-how, facilitating processes and building up links to other relevant players (e.g. markets, credit) required for more productive and profitable farm and other small-scale rural enterprises. The topics of RAS services are very wide . virtually all locally relevant crops and livestock types, soil and water

management, pasture management, small-scale processing (fruits and vegetables, milk, wool and hides), establishment and management of small businesses and income generating activities, business planning and credit access, improved marketing of farm produce, establishment of local service providers (e.g. Community Seed Funds and private seed farms, Artificial Insemination and veterinary points, agrovet shops, machinery services) etc.

There has been much anecdotal evidence of the benefits that farmers derive from the services of the RAS, and it can be assumed that the services contributed to the recovery of the agricultural sector in the country (averaging 3% annual growth since 1999). The findings of an assessment of the effectiveness of RAS services in terms of outcomes in the farmers' fields, stables and households conducted in 2010, now document the progress in farm productivity and profitability resulting from RAS services.

### Outcome assessment approach

- The focus was placed on results which are directly attributable to RAS services, such as yields and profits.
- Interviews with nearly 800 farmers of 70 villages in five of the seven regions of the country were conducted. Of these approx. half were women and half men.
- RAS clients as well as farmers who did not get any services were included in the interviews.
- Complementary control data (national statistics, data collected by other programs) were used to assess whether the information collected during the interviews is realistic.

The outcome assessment was conducted by a team consisting of an international consultant, independent local consultants and Helvetas staff members.

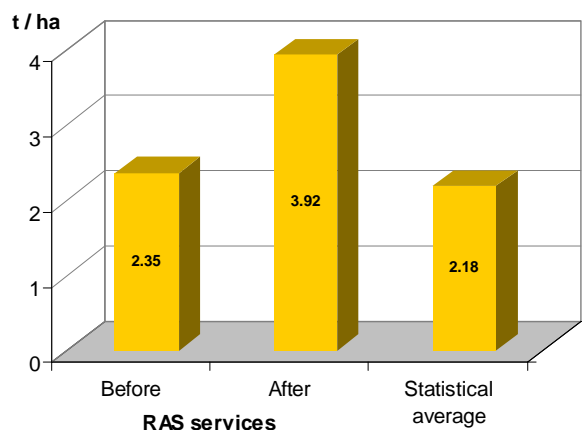
## RAS SERVICES ARE HIGHLY VALUED AND RESULT IN REAL

**Farmers apply knowledge gained from RAS services and consider the services highly useful.** 99% of the interviewed RAS clients reported that they apply what they learn from RAS. 70% rate the services of the RAS as highly useful and nearly 30% as fairly useful; less than 1% finds them not useful.

**RAS clients are more successful in improving their farms.** Over the last 10 years, many farmers in Kyrgyzstan were able to improve their farming operations. However, RAS clients experienced more improvements in terms of profitability, as well as productivity of livestock and crops, than their fellow farmers who do not use RAS services. The majority of RAS clients who received services in several areas increased the overall profits from their farms by 25 to 100%.

**Contribution to food security.** Wheat is one of the crucial crops for food security in Kyrgyzstan. RAS clients increased their wheat yields on average by two thirds from 2.3 to 3.9 t/ha (compared to the national average of 2.2 t/ha). Kyrgyzstan imports between around 20 and 40% of its annual wheat requirements. If the RAS recommendations were applied to 60% of the wheat cultivation area in the country, the production would equate food sufficiency. RAS services thus would constitute an effective instrument to achieve food security policy goals.

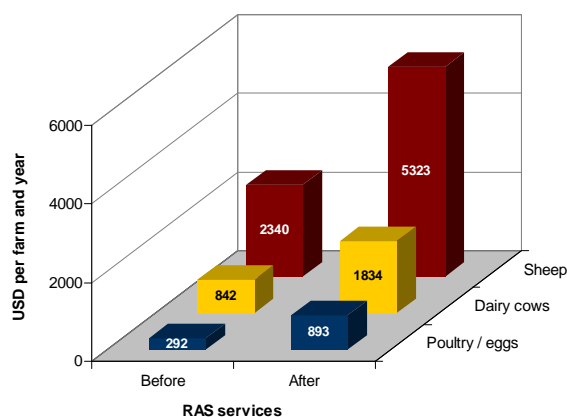
### Effect of RAS services on wheat yields in comparison with average yield



**Confidence in livestock management results in higher productivity and numbers of animals.** Kyrgyzstan is to a large extent mountainous and a livestock country. Its sheep population is higher than the human population. Livestock is a key element of nearly every household economy. The interviewed RAS clients could more than double, and in the case of poultry even

triple the profits from animals. The increase in profits comes from a productivity increase

### Effect of RAS services on profits from livestock



by around 1/3, and from more than doubling the number of animals kept.

**RAS services are not only effective, but generate also a high return on investment.** Based on the additional profits generated by the main RAS services and the costs of providing these services, the Return on Investment, i.e. the value generated in the farmers' pockets per USD invested in RAS services was roughly estimated:

**ROI of main RAS services:  
23.5 USD per USD invested**

Comparative data from other sources are rare. However, it can be safely said that such a ROI is remarkable, and at the higher end of the values available from other studies.



Photo: Elisabeth Katz

Introducing meat breed rams into the sheep flocks is the key for profitability increases in the current times of low wool prices.



**From RAS Naryn I learnt to grow carrots and other vegetables, which we now sell in the local market. This increases our income a lot.**

Abdykerimov family from Ak Talaa (Naryn Oblast)



Photo: Elisabeth Katz

**Great that now the effectiveness of our services is confirmed by an independent study.**

Erke Iskenova, Janybek Beyshenaliev and Adilet Jumabekov, Raion Advisers of RAS Chui-Talas



Photo: Elisabeth Katz

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The Rural Advisory Services of the Kyrgyz Republic achieved the following:

- Creation of a new function and profession in the rural knowledge system of the Kyrgyz Republic - rural advisor.
- Intensive capacity building of all levels of staff of the RAS from field advisers to managers and steering bodies, including around 350 field advisors.
- Introduction of advanced agricultural practices and new types of rural businesses to Kyrgyzstan.
- Coverage of over 70% of all communes and over 50% of all villages.
- Trained on average 55000 people per year . in total during 10 years nearly 560000.
- Reached over 10 years an estimated 30% of all farms and had in total around 50000 permanent clients (nearly 20% of farms).

## OUTLOOK TO THE FUTURE

Over the last 15 years a pluralistic agricultural extension landscape has evolved, not least because of the substantial investment of Swiss Development assistance, which spent more than 20 million CHF. At the end of 2010, the Swiss support to the Rural Advisory Services was completed. Time will show whether the institutional sustainability of the RAS system has been reached. Thereby the priority, which the Kyrgyz government attributes to agricultural extension, is a decisive factor. But already today one can safely say that sustainability has been achieved through the development of human resources on the level of farmers, advisors and organisations. Together they are now capable to further develop the agricultural knowledge system in the Kyrgyz Republic.