



International Center for Agribusiness Research and Education



REPORT

On trip to the USA for strengthening the relationships with partner universities, existing donors and supporters and establishing new relationships

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Background information

During the period of September 17 – October 6, 2016 the ICARE Director visited Penn State and Virginia Tech accompanying the Rector of the Armenian National Agrarian University Prof. Arshaluys Tarverdyan. The trip was planned in the scope of InnovATE Armenia project. The following work plan items were touched:

- 1.1.1.2 Formalize new certificate in Food Safety Systems Management
- 2.2.2 Identify and contact existing and potential donors
- 4.2 Explore Options for Double Degree Programs
- 2.4.2 Promote funding for student sponsorship

Goal of the visit

The objectives of the visit were to strengthen ICARE's institutional linkages and establish formal relationship with Penn State University, to formalize the upcoming professional certificate program on Food Safety Systems Management, to explore options for Double Degree programs with Virginia Tech.

September 18-21, 2016

State College, Pennsylvania
Penn State University

On September 20, 2016, during the first phase of the visit, Rector Tarverdyan, Dr. Urutyun and Dr. Richard Rousch, the Dean of the College of Agriculture, Penn State, signed a Letter of Intent. It covers a wide range of cooperation including: curriculum development and reforms, student and faculty exchange, and joint research activities to benefit both universities. In particular, Penn State, ANAU, and ICARE agreed to launch a Food Safety Systems Management certificate program to be taught at the Agribusiness Teaching Center of ICARE starting from January 2017. ICARE views this as an unprecedented opportunity in the Armenian higher education system to finally provide informed solutions to many critical issues concerning food safety in the country. Food Safety certificate from Penn State will be the second international certificate program suggested by ATC, with the third one suggested by another ICARE-run project EVN Wine Academy jointly with Geisenheim University.

Penn State is one of the consortium member US universities led by Virginia Tech and cooperating with ICARE and ANAU within USAID funded InnovATE/Armenia project. This Memorandum was preceded by efforts from Cathy Cutter, Professor of Food Science from Penn State University and Joseph Marcy, Head of the Food Science and Technology Department of Virginia Tech in designing a curriculum for the program.

Signing of MOU was preceded by a series of meetings and discussions with Tracy Hoover, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education; Rama Radhakrishna, Assistant Dean of Graduate Education; William Kleiner, Associate Director of Penn State Extension; Jon Emigh, Associate Director of Business Operations; Bob Roberts, Head of Food Science and others (See Annex 1).



September 21-23, 2016

**Blacksburg, Virginia
Virginia Tech**

On September 21 Dr. Urutyán and Prof. Tarverdyan left Pennsylvania for Virginia to visit Virginia Tech University. They met with the President of Virginia Tech Tim Sands and other representatives of the university's top management and department heads, in particular, at the Center for Instructional Development and Educational Research (CIDER) and Office of International Research, Education, and Development (OIRE). Angela Neilan, Director of InnovATE/Armenia, made every effort to make the visit an absolute success for the ANAU rector and ICARE Director. This was a follow up on the MOU signed in Armenia between Virginia Tech, ANAU and ICARE in 2014.

The meeting with the Virginia Tech President Tim Sands took place on September 22. President Sands, Rector Tarverdyan and Dr. Urutyán agreed to go on with implementing the provisions of the mentioned MOU which covers quality assurance, accreditation, curriculum revisions, double diplomas, faculty evaluation, financial management, and the roles/function of deans and department heads. As reported by Virginia Tech (<https://vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2016/10/outreach-armeniauniversity.html>), Rector Tarverdyan suggested to make ANAU a “partnership hub and a gateway” for Virginia Tech to the Caucasus and Central Asia regions. Thus, Virginia Tech can go far beyond its current role of a consortium leader helping Armenia to improve the quality of agricultural and agribusiness education and training and expand its mission in the larger region. Moreover, as stated by ICARE Director Vardan Urutyán, “there is nothing that could threaten” this well-established tripartite partnership to expand and develop even after the InnovATE/Armenia project ends in 2019.

Following the warm and friendly meeting with President Sands, Rector Tarverdyan and Dr. Urutyany met with other upper level Virginia Tech leaders including: Dr. Karl Markgraf, Associate Vice President for International Affairs; Dr. Peter Doolittle and staff at CIDER; Dr. Van Crowder, Executive Director of OIRED; Susan Sumner, Associate Dean and Director of Academic Programs; and others (See Annex 2).



September 24-26, 2016

Washington D.C

USDA Headquarters

The final chord of the visit was at the USDA headquarters in Washington, D.C. Rector Tarverdyan and Dr. Urutyany met with some of their old partners whose personal efforts have been instrumental during the last two decades in development of the Armenian agriculture, agricultural education, agribusiness, and extension. Fred Johnston, Lev Kushevski, Clemen Gehlhar, Alex Chinh and Mary Ensich from USDA Foreign Agricultural Service were impressed by the results of the visit and the agreements acquired. They, in particular, mentioned the importance of teaching Food Safety Systems Management at ATC and ANAU based on a world class curriculum and the intentions to work on double degree programs.



September 28 – October 4, 2016

LA and Fresno, California

During the trip to Fresno ICARE Director visited Dr. Annette Levi, Head of Agricultural Business Department at Fresno State University. It was agreed to explore opportunities for cooperation in the area of student and faculty exchange, study visits and joint research and publications. It was proposed to start with the signature of MoU. Fresno State was the very first American partner university for ANAU (called Armenian Agricultural Academy during the years of partnership with Fresno State in mid 90s). It's been several years there is no partnership and ICARE/ATC initiated new partnership areas with Fresno State University.

Mr. Urutyán also visited Fowler Packing and met with the president Dennis Parnagian. Mr. Parnagian is planning to visit Armenia in May/June 2017 and would like to visit ICARE/ATC. This cooperation is promising. Mr. Parnagian expressed interest also supporting Armenian students to spend a few months at Fowler Packing as interns.

Mr. Urutyán also arranged a meeting with one of the BT members of George Ignatius Foundation, Mr. Michael Amerian. The link was established during the visit in April. The Ignatius Foundation is providing scholarships to Armenian students. Upon return ICARE Development Office provided all necessary documentation and information about the giving and naming opportunities.

Conclusion

Overall the recent trip to the United States was momentous in many ways. The LoI signed with Penn State and the collaboration arrangements made at Virginia Tech signify new milestones in students and faculty exchange, curriculum development, and other upcoming academic and cultural achievements under the USAID-funded InnovATE/Armenia project. In keeping its commitment as a locomotive of development and change, particularly, in the education system of Armenia, ICARE used this opportunity provided by InnovATE/Armenia to open a new phase of fruitful cooperation between the Armenian National Agrarian University and world class U.S. universities - Penn State and Virginia Tech.

Annex 1. Agenda at Penn State

SUNDAY September 18

2:00 pm Rector and Party arrive in State College
2:45 Check into Penn Stater Hotel
Free time to relax/explore

Night 1

MONDAY September 19

11:30 am Meeting with Tracy Hoover (30 mins)
Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education
101 Ag Admin Building

12:45 pm Lunch with Dean Roush at NLI (1 hour)

2:00 Meeting with Dr. Rama Radhakrishna (30 mins)
Assistant Dean of Graduate Education
217B Ag Admin Building

2:45 Meeting with Bill Kleiner (30 mins)
Associate Director of Penn State Extension
323 Ag Administration Building

3:30 Meeting with Dr. Jeff Hyde (30 mins)
Assistant to the Director for Special Program Initiatives
336 Ag Admin Building

4:15 Jon Emigh (30 mins)
Associate Director of Business Operations
228 Ag Admin Building

5:30 Dinner at with Henry Sahakian

Night 2

TUESDAY September 20

10:00 am Meeting with Mary Seaton (30 mins)
Assistant Director of College Relations and Communications
229 Ag Admin Building

11:00 Meeting with Dr. Bob Roberts (30 mins)
Head of Food Science
206 Rodney A. Erickson Food Science Building

11:30 Creamery Tour with Dr. Bob Roberts

12:45 pm Lunch at Blue Chip Bistro with Cathy Cutter (Business Building)

2:30 Meeting with Dr. Cathy Cutter and Dr. Siroj Pokharel (60 mins)
Assistant Director of Food Safety and Quality Programs
443 Rodney A. Erickson Food Science Building

4:30 pm Tour & Tasting at Happy Valley Winery (Cathy will drive)

6:00 Dinner
Pack

Night 3

WEDNESDAY September 21

9:00 am Cultured Dairy Products Short Course with Kerry Kaylegian

12:00 pm Check out of Penn Stater Hotel

1:30 pm Arrive at State College Airport for 2:40 pm flight to Roanoke

Annex 2. Agenda and VT

Wednesday, September 21-Welcome to Virginia!

- 6:56 pm Arrive at Roanoke Airport and claim checked luggage
- 7:00 pm Angela will meet you at Roanoke Airport
- 8:00 pm Check into Main Street Inn, Blacksburg; Dinner on your own

Thursday, September 22-Blacksburg, VT Campus

- 8:00 am Light breakfast on your own
- 8:30 am Angela will pick you up at Main Street Inn
- 9:00 am Coffee and donuts with Dr. [Van Crowder](#) and Dr. [Karl Markgraf](#)
Director of OIRED and Associate Vice President of International Affairs
- 9:45 am Walk to President Sand's office/campus tour (*Weather permitting*)
- 10:00 am-10:30 am Meeting with Dr. [Timothy D. Sands](#)
Virginia Tech President
210 Burruss Hall
- 11:00 am Meeting with Dr. Karl Markgraf
Associate Vice President for International Affairs
Gateway Center, Suite 120
902 Prices Fork Rd
- 12:00 noon Lunch on your own at Owens Dining Hall- Farms & Fields locally sourced foods
- 1:30 pm Meeting with Dr. [Peter Doolittle](#) and staff
Executive Director and Associate Provost for Teaching and Learning, Center for Instructional Development and Educational Research (CIDER)- sponsor of annual Conference on Higher Education
111 Hillcrest Hall
- 2:30 pm Meeting with Dr. [Rick Rudd](#)
Community Viability Chair of Excellence, Professor and Department Head, Department of Agricultural, Leadership, and Community Education
214 Litton-Reaves Hall
- 3:30 pm "Meet and Greet" Reception with refreshments and brief visitor presentation
OIRED Conference Room
- 5:00 pm Return to Main Street Inn
- 6:30 pm Dinner at the Summit Restaurant hosted by Dr. Van Crowder with [Valerie Ragan](#)-Veterinary Medicine, Dr. [Joe Marcy](#)-Food Science and Technology, and OIRED Staff- Gene Ball, Jim Foreman, John Lipsey

Friday, September 23-Blacksburg, VT Campus

- 7:45 am Breakfast on your own
- 8:30 am Check out of hotel; Angela will pick you up at Main Street Inn
- 9:00 am Meeting with Dr. [Lance Matheson](#) and Dr. [Khaled Hassouna](#)
*Associate Professor, Pamplin College of Business-Business Information Technology (BIT); Associate Director for Curricula Development, OIRED
BIT Conference Room- 1007 Pamplin*
- 10:00 am Meeting with Dr. [Ken Smith](#)
*Vice Provost for Resource Management and Institutional Effectiveness (Accreditation)
OIRED Conference Room*
- 12:00 noon Dutch Treat Lunch in Owens Dining Hall with locally sourced foods
- 1:30 pm Meeting with Dr. [Susan Sumner](#)
*Associate Dean, Academic Programs
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
1070 Litton-Reaves Hall*
- 2:30 pm Meet with Dr. Joe Marcy
*Department Head, Food Science and Technology
22A Food Science and Technology Building*
- 4:30 pm Leave for airport- 7:50 pm flight to DC
- Bon Voyage!