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## PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF THE ALBANIAN AGRICULTURAL COMPETITIVENESS (AAC) PROGRAM



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# **Performance Evaluation of the Albanian Agricultural Competitiveness Program**

## **Final Report**

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAC	Albanian Agriculture Competitiveness (project)
ALL	Albanian Leke
AUT	Agriculture University of Tirana
BKT	Banka Kombetare Tregtare
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
DAI	Development Alternatives Inc.
DCA	Development Credit Authority
EMMP	Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plans
E.U.	European Union
FY	Fiscal Year
GAP	Good Agricultural Practices (Internationally recognized)
GIZ	German International Development Agency
Ha	Hectare
HICD	Human and Institutional Capacity Development
INSTAT	Albanian Institute of Statistics
IPA	Instrument Pre-Accession
IPARD	IPA Rural Development
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KASH	Albanian Agribusiness Council (Këshilli i Agrobiznesit Shqiptar)
L-NGO	Local Non-Governmental Organization
MADA	Mountainous Areas Development Agency
MIS	Market Information System
MOAFCP	Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Consumer Protection
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MT	Metric Ton
PMP	Performance Management Plan
RCI	Regional Competitiveness Initiative
SNV	Netherlands Development Organization
SOW	Scope of Work
SSECP	Site-Specific Environmental Compliance Plan
TTC	Technology Transfer Center
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a Performance Evaluation of the Albanian Agricultural Competitiveness (AAC) project, a 5.5-year activity (2007-2013) funded by USAID/Albania and implemented by Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI). AAC has three components: 1) strengthening producer capacity for competitive commercial farming; 2) strengthening capacity for market development; and 3) increasing access to, and use of, timely and reliable market information. It also uses cross-cutting mechanisms such as grants, credit facilitation, and policy and regulatory reform dialogue to stimulate a more competitive enabling environment.

AAC provides program services to more than 1,200 individual farmer-clients, farmer associations, traders, consolidators, wholesalers, and other stakeholders involved in the production and sale of high-value agricultural commodities such as greenhouse vegetables, melons, citrus, and apples, and selected open field crops (e.g., crucifer crops, potatoes and onions). To date, the program has trained over 7,000 participants in such topics as agricultural enabling environment, use of market information, and agriculture productivity. The program also provides services to, and coordinates with, key government institutions, particularly Albania's Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Consumer Protection (MOAFCP).

The major objectives of the AAC evaluation are to: 1) assess AAC performance and achievements to date; 2) identify best practices and lessons-learned from program implementation; 3) assess and recommend any other opportunities in the agriculture sector that should be considered for future funding; and 4) provide USAID/Albania with practical and implementable recommendations for core USAID support to the agricultural sector using host-country institutions.

The evaluation is structured around three broad topics: 1) program results, impact and major successes; 2) lessons learned from program implementation; and 3) recommendations for continued USAID support. The three major topics and the issues investigated within each topic follow the evaluation questions listed in the scope of work (SOW).

Using four criteria for selecting interventions – demand prospects in domestic and export markets, potential for growth, feasibility, and meeting development objectives -- AAC has focused on five strategic value chains and associated activities: 1) tree crops; 2) greenhouse crops; 3) open-field crops; 4) medicinal and aromatic plants; and 5) processed commodities. In implementing its program, AAC has targeted constraints and capitalized on opportunities throughout the entire value chain for the targeted commodities, from improved farm and postharvest technologies to trade facilitation in domestic and export markets.

### Findings

1. The effectiveness of AAC implementation strategies and approaches is demonstrated by its positive results as measured by its program indicators; its contributions to the country's performance in the agricultural sector; its successful collaboration with government institutions, other USAID projects and donor-funded activities; and beneficiaries' positive assessment of the AAC program as reported to the evaluation team.
2. Examination of AAC targets and actual achievements reveals that the project has met or exceeded its targets for all indicators since program inception. This result is worth

highlighting because program targets were adjusted upward twice -- for FY 2011 and for the period covering program extension.

3. AAC's contributions to Albania's performance in the agricultural sector are substantial. AAC beneficiaries' total production of the targeted commodities increased by an average of nearly 20 percent in FY 2008-FY 2011. Yield increased by an average of over 20 percent during the same period, suggesting that the increase in production was due not to expansion in area cultivated but to improved farming techniques and more intensive cultivation practices. Domestic sales and exports have soared as a result, suggesting a significant transition from subsistence farming to a market-driven agricultural economy. In FY 2009-FY 2011, total exports increased nearly threefold in volume and over fivefold in value, and covered 14 different markets in neighboring countries as well as in new markets in the U.S. and the E.U.
4. AAC collaboration with MOAFCP and its agencies at the national, regional, and local levels has been outstanding. And so was its collaboration with other donor-funded initiatives. A high MOAFCP official stated that AAC was the best agricultural project that had ever been implemented in Albania and that its collaboration with MOAFCP was the best he had ever seen. Representatives from other donors were equally enthusiastic in their assessment of AAC collaboration with their own project activities.
5. AAC launched a market information system (MIS) for agribusiness in Albania in January 2009. Its main objective is to provide reliable and timely market information to farmers, traders and other value chain actors. In July 2011, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between AAC and MOAFCP was signed. The purpose of the MOU was to transfer the MIS to the MOAFCP's department of statistics. The transfer was to be completed by the end of September 2011. However, AAC technical assistance to the department of statistics and monitoring of daily operations continued way beyond that date. Difficulties have also arisen regarding data collection, processing, analysis and dissemination in terms of data quality and timeliness of release to users. In addition, interviews with farmers and other value chain actors suggest that the use of the MIS data by the target audience remains quite limited, particularly when information is disseminated through SMS and the print and electronic media. There is also agreement among AAC program personnel and government officials at the national and regional levels that the sustainability of the MIS system has yet to be confirmed.
6. Five years into AAC implementation, the original assumptions of the program remain valid, particularly as they relate to the high potential for growth in the country's agricultural sector. Several factors account for such potential, including fertile soils and favorable climate conditions; agro-ecological conditions for early- and late-season production; comparatively low wage rates; a literate agricultural labor force; and a favorable geographic location relative to European Union (E.U.) markets. AAC original assumptions for the implementation of program activities are all the more relevant today because they are in line with E.U.'s instrument for pre-accession, a program designed to support candidate- and potential candidate-countries such as Albania in their gradual alignment with E.U. standards and policies.
7. Building on the success of the AAC program, a follow-up initiative is justified because:
  - The program has been involved in high-value horticulture and other value chains of strategic importance to the development of the agricultural sector in Albania.

- The program has made significant contributions to the development of the targeted value chains, yet much remains to be done to enhance the competitiveness of the country's agricultural economy. This is all the more critical because the agricultural sector in Albania faces enormous challenges in meeting future E.U. standards.
- There is very strong demand for AAC services from all stakeholders, ranging from MOAFCP to value chain actors at all levels.
- Discussions with the donor community in Tirana indicate that despite the demonstrated need to continue AAC technical assistance, no similar support will be available to AAC value chains in the near future.

## **Recommendations**

The above findings indicate that the following key elements should be considered after AAC ends in January 2013:

1. Additional USAID support will be needed to guide the transformation of agriculture in Albania into a modern sector.
2. To increase productivity and improve quality of produce, promotion of new production technology should continue, particularly through IPM training, better use of agrochemical inputs, and improved farm management.
3. Greater emphasis should be placed on postharvest technology and market development.
4. In the immediate future, the domestic and regional markets should receive priority consideration. This recommendation reflects the fact that exports of AAC commodities to neighboring countries represent the bulk of Albanian exports.
5. Continued efforts to improve food-safety standards and higher product quality will eventually enable Albanian exporters to further improve their competitiveness and gain access to the largely untapped E.U. and U.S. markets.
6. Extending the current AAC contract beyond January 12, 2013 or awarding a new contract on a competitive basis are not viable options due to a procurement process that would extend beyond January 12, 2013. Working with a local non-government organization (L-NGO) remains the only feasible alternative.
7. Preliminary indications are that no existing L-NGO with proven capability to sustain AAC legacy is available. For this reason, AAC has proposed setting up a new L-NGO. Benefiting from USAID funding for up to three years, it would offer continuity; demonstrated success; knowledge of what remains to be achieved; strong and relevant technical expertise; and successful working relationship with private- and public-sector stakeholders at the national, regional and local levels. It must be noted, however, that sustainability after USAID funding ends would undoubtedly remain a major challenge facing the nascent L-NGO. To maximize the new L-NGO's sustainability potential, it is recommended that initial USAID funding be accompanied by technical assistance in human and institutional capacity development. Such technical assistance would focus on building the new organization's institutional vision, mission, goals, and strategies; technical focus; leadership and general management structure and practices; financial management systems; financial and technical reporting to USAID during the funding period; institutional performance measurement systems; and financial sustainability.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background and Project Description

Agriculture is a major component of Albania's economy. With appropriate policies, support, and a suitable regulatory and legal framework, it has the potential to become an engine for the country's economic growth and competitiveness in international markets. However, the agricultural sector in Albania faces significant challenges such as a large number of very small and fragmented farms; poor rural infrastructure; outdated production practices; low labor productivity; and limited technological innovation.

For these reasons, only a limited number of competitive agribusinesses are moving into commercial farming or exports. According to a World Bank report, agribusiness exports in Albania had stagnated at 8 percent of total exports in 2007, compared with 16 percent in Macedonia, and 20 percent in Serbia, while agricultural food imports represented 18 percent of total imports, compared with 14 percent in Macedonia, and 7 percent in Serbia.

Recognizing the importance of agricultural and agribusiness development in Albania, USAID has funded several initiatives and programs over the past two decades, leading to AAC project.



AAC focuses on providing technical assistance to producers and other stakeholders to promote sustained growth of Albania's agriculture, and stimulate its competitiveness in domestic and international markets.

AAC is a 5.5-year project (2007-2013) implemented by DAI. It has three components: 1) strengthening producer capacity for competitive commercial farming; 2) strengthening capacity for market development; and 3) increasing access to and use of timely and reliable market information.

The project operates through three offices (Tirana, Lushnja and Korça) and two outposts (Shkodra and Saranda), as shown in the map to the left. AAC provides program services to more than 1,200 individual farmer-clients, farmer associations, traders, consolidators, wholesalers, and other stakeholders involved in the production and sale of high-value agricultural commodities such as herbs and spices, greenhouse vegetables, melons, citrus, and apples, and selected open field crops (e. g., crucifer crops, potatoes and onions). The program also provides services to, and coordinates with, key government institutions, particularly MOAFCP.

### 1.2 Evaluation Objectives and Methodology

#### 1.2.1 Objectives

The major objectives of this evaluation are to:

- Assess AAC performance and achievements to date
- Identify best practices and lessons-learned from AAC implementation
- Assess and recommend any other opportunities in the agriculture sector that should be considered for future funding support

- Provide USAID/Albania with practical and implementable recommendations for core USAID support to the agricultural sector using host-country institutions

### 1.2.2 Methodology

Field work for this evaluation was conducted in Albania during a two-week period in June-July, 2012. Key project documents were reviewed in preparation for and during the field trip. A detailed outline of the evaluation was submitted to USAID as part of the workplan. Major findings were discussed in an exit meeting with USAID/Albania. Comments made during the exit meeting in Tirana and written comments on the draft document were incorporated into the final report.

Data for this evaluation were collected from available documents such as: AAC SOW and deliverables; AAC annual workplans, progress reports, consultant reports, and performance management plan (PMP); AAC self-assessment report; and USAID/Albania's country development cooperation strategy (CDCS). Other data collection sources included program managers (USAID and implementing contractor personnel); government officials; local institutions with relevance to agriculture and agribusiness development in Albania, including universities and collaborating organizations; other donor programs with relevance to AAC activities; and AAC direct beneficiaries, including individual farmers, individual traders dealing with AAC commodities, and farmer and agribusiness associations. (A complete list of people interviewed, by organization and geographic location is provided as Annex II.)

Rapid appraisal methods were used to collect information. Rapid appraisal techniques offer systematic low-cost ways to gather data in support of managers' information needs, particularly regarding program performance. Three rapid appraisal techniques were mostly used for this evaluation: 1) direct observations; 2) focus-group interviews; and 3) thorough interviews with individual stakeholders.

**Table 1: Number of AAC Stakeholders Interviewed, by Category of Stakeholders**

Organization/individual	Number
USAID	4
AAC	9
Government	12
International organization	2
Agricultural universities and technology transfer centers	15
Representatives of farmer associations	5
<b>Farmers</b>	
Korca	7
Saranda	8
Shkodra	8
Lushnja	29
<b>Total farmers</b>	52
<b>Other value chain actors</b>	7
<b>Total individuals interviewed</b>	101

Source: Annex II

Table 1 above shows the categories of individuals interviewed for this evaluation. As can be seen in the table, interviews were conducted with USAID personnel; AAC staff in Tirana,

regional offices and outposts; international organizations; government officials at the national and local levels; agricultural universities and technology transfer centers; and farmers and other value chain actors. The evaluation team interviewed a total of 101 stakeholders, including 12 government representatives; and 64 farmers, farmer association representatives, and other value chain actors. Seven separate focus-group interviews were conducted in the four regions visited, for a total of 37 individual farmers. In addition, 18 farm visits and 5 visits to collection centers and processing facilities were made for direct observation.

Focus-group and key-informant interviews are qualitative, in-depth interviews of individuals selected for their first-hand knowledge of the program. Key informants include program managers, host-government officials, donor organizations, and beneficiaries. The objective of the interviews is to probe for information about program activities to identify successes and shortcomings, and help formulate recommendations to improve program performance.

Various interview guides are provided as Annex III to this report. These guides served as a checklist to ensure that a given category of respondents could provide information on the same topics and are based on the evaluation questions most relevant to those respondents. The guides do not use rigid questionnaires as these inhibit free discussions. Each guide is designed in the form of an outline that covers the topics to be discussed, allowing flexibility to ask supplementary questions for clarification or pursue unanticipated but relevant issues. The proposed guides cover all major stakeholders so that divergent interests and perceptions can be captured.

The evaluation team jointly interviewed representatives of key organizations involved in AAC activities, including key implementing-contractor staff and government officials in Tirana. While in the field, three separate teams were formed to collect information from AAC direct beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

For internal communications and recordkeeping, team members prepared meeting notes to summarize individual meetings. They met on a regular basis throughout the evaluation to share findings and discuss major conclusions and recommendations. The evaluation team spent the last few days in Tirana to finalize key findings, conclusions, and recommendations for presentation to USAID, and to discuss how the draft and final reports would be completed.

Due to time and resource constraints, no surveys were conducted to analyze the evaluation questions and only rapid appraisal methods were used to collect data from program stakeholders. The limitations of the methodology used for this evaluation reside in the inherent and well-known limitations of the rapid appraisal methodology over more conventional methods.

Rapid appraisal methods have limited reliability and validity for several reasons:

- Informal sampling almost always leads to non-representative samples. Hence, the lack of quantitative data from which generalizations can be made for the entire population. For instance, rapid appraisal may show that many value chain actors have limited access to credit, but not the percentage of those value chain actors.<sup>1</sup>
- Lack of unambiguous validation procedures
- Researchers' inability to go beyond what is reported by informants

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<sup>1</sup> In this context, any attempt to tabulate interview results obtained during this evaluation and show them as percentages representing the beneficiary population would be both misleading and inappropriate.

- Individual biases of the informants
- Individual biases of the evaluators
- Difficulties in recording, coding, and analyzing qualitative data

The evaluation team has used different methods (individual interviews, focus groups and direct observation) to lessen bias and strengthen validity of findings from rapid appraisal methods. The conclusions presented in this report should, nonetheless, be examined with the usual caution associated with results that have not been derived from more-rigorous evaluation methods.

### 1.3 Organization of the Report

The report is divided into four major sections. Following this introductory material, program results, impact, and major successes are discussed in Section 2. Section 3 presents lessons learned from program implementation. Recommendations for continued USAID support are presented in Section 4. Sections 2-4 and the topics discussed in each of those chapters follow the evaluation questions listed in the scope of work (Annex IV).

## 2.0 PROGRAM RESULTS, IMPACT AND MAJOR SUCCESSES

### 2.1 AAC Contributions to Albania's Performance in the Agricultural Sector

There is evidence to suggest (see, World Bank 2007, MOACFP 2007a, MOACFP 2007b) that future growth in agriculture in Albania is likely to come from further intensification of production through commercialization of farms, and a focus on high-value products. In particular, comparisons with neighboring and E.U.-15 countries suggest significant potential for further improvements in yields with greater intensification. Such evidence suggests that Albania should focus more on its apparent comparative advantage in fruit and vegetables, medicinal and aromatic crops, and other high-value commodities where it performs well compared with neighboring countries (in contrast to cereals, for instance, where its performance is much lower).

As will be detailed elsewhere in this report, AAC has focused on five strategic value chains and related activities with the most potential for growth: 1) tree crops (olives, apples, citrus); 2) greenhouse crops (pepper, tomato, cucumber); 3) open-field crops (melon and watermelon, crucifer crops, onions, potatoes); 4) herbs and spices or medicinal and aromatic plants (fresh, dried, essential oil); and 5) processed commodities (processed fruits and vegetables, olive oil).

AAC's contributions to Albania's performance in the agricultural sector are substantial. The increase in production and domestic sales as a result of AAC assistance is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Production and Sales: AAC Targeted Crops (\*), by Year (% Change Over the Baseline)**

	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011
<b>Production</b>	8.4	46	6.4	18.7
<b>Yield</b>	10.7	26	20.4	28
<b>Domestic sales</b>	6.4	38.4	16.4	54.4
<p>(*) Tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, watermelon  (**) The large increase in production in 2009 (relative to the 2007 baseline) is due to farmers' shift to pepper production away from watermelon production, which was associated with weak sales in the previous year.</p>				

Source: AAC

Total production increased by nearly 20 percent on average in FY 2008-FY 2011 and by as much as 46 percent in 2009. This increase was mainly due to improved farming techniques and more intensive cultivation practices. As can be seen in the table, yield increased by an average of over 20 percent between 2008 and 2011.

AAC has facilitated over 7,000 transactions to stimulate both domestic sales and exports. As a result of this effort, total domestic sales increased by nearly 30 percent between 2008 and 2011 and by more than 50 percent in 2011 (Table 2).

As shown in Table 3, total exports exceeded 30,000 metric tons (MT) in the past three years, for a total value of nearly \$13 million. During the same period, export volume and value increased nearly threefold and fivefold, respectively.

**Table 3: Total Exports of AAC Target Crops, by Year (2009-2011)**

	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	Total	Percent change (2009-2011)
<b>Volume (000 MT)</b>	4.32	9.81	17.22	31.35	298
<b>Value (million dollars)</b>	8.30	3.10	8.30	12.77	506

Source: Calculations Using AAC Data (See Annex II)

## 2.2 AAC Contributions to Market-Driven Production

AAC contributions to market-driven production are based on strategic interventions to increase competitiveness of the targeted commodities along the entire value chain, from improved production and postharvest technology to trade facilitation in domestic and export markets.

Table 4 (next page) provides a detailed presentation of improved production technologies adopted by farmers as a result of AAC assistance. For instance, AAC introduced greenhouse vegetable seedlings to local farmers, allowing them to transition from low-technology vegetable production models based on traditional varieties of farm-grown seedlings to commercially grown seedlings for crops with higher yields and considerable market potential. Another example is the introduction of a new cabbage variety to a group of farms in the Maminas-Durres area. The new variety was selected in response to international buyers' preferences in terms of seasonality, size and color.

AAC has set up demonstration plots and field days to promote adoption of new production technologies. For example, a field day was organized in collaboration of MOAFCP in Korça. The event was attended by over 60 growers, including members of the onion growers associations in Miras and Menkulas, input suppliers, consolidators, and representatives from MOAFCP, the local government, the extension service, the technology transfer center, and Korça University. A demonstration plot for citrus involved improved planting material to increase yield, extend the production season, broaden the range of available produce, and better respond to consumer demand in terms of size, color and taste.

The majority of farmers and other value chain actors interviewed for this evaluation stated that demonstration plots have played a critical role in promoting farmers' adoption of the new production technologies.

**Table 4: AAC Improved Production Technologies (FY 2009-FY 2011)**

Production technology	Farmers	Area (ha)	Region
<b>FY 2011</b>			
Applied antifreezer covering for cabbages to protect them from frost	7	3.4	Lushnja
Applied fertilization based on soil test	39	66.5	Korça
Completed soil test analysis	13	2.57	Lushnja
Applied improved practical greenhouse technology	26	5.29	Lushnja
Applied olive tree pruning	41	22.3	Lushnja
Applied nets for preventing Tuta Absoluta pest;	93	21.25	Shkodra
Applied warming of the potatoes before planting	29	47.85	Korça
Applied high density and super high density olive production systems	39	9.1	Lushnja
Applied plant's nutrition elements content evaluation	51	18.145	Lushnja
Applied IPM control, management of tomato borer and other disease management	85	18.02	Lushnja
Land preparation for citrus new plantings	2	2	Lushnja
Applied citrus fertilizing schemes based on the soil tests	8	20.8	Lushnja
Applied yield enhancing technologies (fertigation & nematode)	30	5.69	Lushnja
Applied citrus agro technical services	12	12.4	Sarande
Applied cultivation technology of new citrus plantings plot	2	3.5	Sarande
Applied determination of correct time & quality level to harvest apples	27	27	Korça
Applied the solarization in the greenhouse	16	3.7	Lushnja
Applied antifreezer covering for cabbages to protect them from frost	7	3.4	Lushnja
Applied fertilization based on soil test	39	66.5	Korça
<b>FY 2010</b>			
Applied IPM	33	15.65	Korça
Applied new methods of fertilization	39	34.54	Korça
Applied IPM; solarization for management of nematode & pheromones to protect the tomatoes from Tutta Absoluta	219	67.94	Lushnja
Integrated pest management in Citrus	25	41.9	Saranda
<b>FY 2009</b>			
Applied Winter Pruning	10	13	Korça
Inflated Greenhouse	4	0.4	Lushnja
Thermo plastic tunnels	3	1.5	Lushnja
Grafted Seedling	3	0.3	Lushnja
Bee pollination	1	5	Lushnja
Personal size watermelon "Guliver"	1	6	Lushnja
Demonstrative plot with 14 new watermelon varieties	1	0.5	Lushnja
Drip irrigation system for Arbequino olive orchard	1	0.6	Lushnja
Grafted seedling, thermo plastic tunnels and double dripping irrigation.	1	15	Lushnja
Grafted seedling, thermo plastic tunnels and double dripping irrigation.	8	44.5	Korça
Pruning	10	6.8	Korça
Fertilization	6	6.3	Korça
Pruning/Fertilization	11	18.8	Korça
Solarization in greenhouse	16	6	Lushnja
Pruning	1	0.2	Lushnja
Thinning	26	26.42	Korça
Thinning and IPM	4	6.8	Korça
Fertilization and thinning	7	14.1	Korça
Fertilization, IPM and thinning	1	1.8	Korça

Source: AAC

Achievements as a result of these and similar market-driven interventions include the following (AAC 2012):

- About 4,000 farmers have been trained in short-term agricultural productivity training.
- Over 1,000 ha of AAC program clients are under improved technologies or management practices
- Nearly 50 producer organizations, trade and business associations have received repeated technical assistance (168 times).
- Nearly 200 agriculture-related firms have benefitted directly and repeatedly (374 times) from AAC assistance.
- A market information system for major agricultural commodities and markets has been established to enhance the efficiency of market transactions (see details in Section 2.6).
- Over 7,000 domestic and exports transactions facilitated.
- Local traders are now the main suppliers of produce to supermarket chains in Albania.
- As detailed in Section 2.1, exports have expanded steadily in terms of quantity, value and market coverage.

### 2.3 AAC Contributions to Enhanced Quality of Produce

AAC contributions to enhanced quality of produce for the targeted commodities span the entire value chain for each of commodity, including introduction of improved varieties, cultivation techniques, and postharvest technology.

Improved varieties include new seeds and seedlings to increase yield and enhance quality. As detailed in Table 5, improved cultivation techniques include: applied fertilization based on soil testing; management of greenhouse technology; tree pruning; integrated pest management (IPM); new methods of fertilizer application; drip irrigation; grafting; and bee pollination. For instance, several IPM trainings were delivered to farmers for selected commodities and regions to protect plants from pests and disease. Several farmer groups, including Divjaka 07 group and others in the Lushnja region, have been trained in GlobalGap, an internationally recognized set of farm standards dedicated to good agricultural practices (GAP). Similarly, as affirmed by farmers, farmer groups, and input suppliers, bumble-bee pollination methods have increased yields while improving fruit size and shape.

Improved postharvest technology was another major instrument AAC has used to enhance quality of produce. The AAC postharvest technology program is discussed below.

### 2.4 AAC Contributions to Enhanced Postharvest Handling and Other Market Practices

As shown in Table 5, AAC has implemented an extensive postharvest technology improvement program since 2008.

**Table 5: AAC Postharvest Technology Program, by Type and Location (FY 2008-FY 2012)**

Item	Location	Year
Rakip Muso, cool store	Korça	2008
Blerim Becolli, cool store	Korça	2008
Engjell Dervishi cool store	Korça	2008
Artur Veshi, cool store	Korça	2008
Arben Licollari, cool store	Korça	2008
Gaqo Arapi, cool store	Korça	2008

**Table 5: AAC Postharvest Technology Program, by Type and Location (FY 2008-FY 2012)**

Item	Location	Year
Ferdinand Ali, cool store	Korça	2009
Henrik Mati, cool store	Korça	2009
Gaqo Arapi, cool store	Korça	2009
Mersin Lika, cool store	Gose/Kavaje	2009
Biti & Mo, cool store	Divjake	2009
Kostandin Danga, collection point	Mursi/Lushnja	2010
Nurce Oshafi, collection point	Samatice/Lushnja	2010
Collection point	Gorican, Lushnja	2011
Drying and packing facility for medicinal and aromatic plants	Koplik	2011
Xhuvi Kostandini, cool store	Polene/Korça	2012
Ferdinand Ali, extension of cool storage space for placing automatic sorting machinery	Dvoran/Korça	2012
Andrea Thomai, collection point	Goricaj/Lushnja	2012
Nurce Oshafi, extension of collection point	Samatice/Lushnja	2012

Source: AAC

Implemented through grants or in collaboration with other donors, the program included a range of interventions focusing on upgrading equipment and/or construction, extension or improvement of existing collection centers and cool stores. Three interventions merit particular mention: 1) the establishment of new facilities for greenhouse-produce collection in the Lushnja region; 2) collection and drying facilities for medicinal and aromatic plants in Koplik; and 3) new cold storage facilities for apples in Korça through both a grant and bank loan facilitation.

The postharvest grant program and other direct technical assistance have enabled the installation of modern cold storage facilities for apples and the procurement of electronic sorting and grading equipment, resulting in improved accuracy and consistency, and reduced sorting and grading cost.

AAC broad coverage of postharvest activities has included a range of commodities such as apples, onions and potatoes. For instance, several training sessions in the marketing standards for apples according to Commission Regulation (EC) No 1221/2008<sup>2</sup> were conducted at cool stores in Korça. Similarly, AAC has introduced food safety principles to prevent the contamination of fresh produce by physical hazards, harmful chemicals and human pathogens.

All beneficiaries of AAC's postharvest technology program interviewed for this study (including an oil producer, an exporter of fruits and vegetables, and two exporters of medicinal and aromatic plants) were quick to credit AAC support with an appreciable increase in the efficiency of their business operations.

To complement the AAC postharvest improvement program, study tours and training events have been organized, including: a 2010 study tour in several states in the U.S. for apple growers and consolidators through the Cochran Fellowship program; a 2011 postharvest management training program in Sarajevo; a 2011 citrus study tour to Italy; and a 2012 study tour in Bordeaux and Toulouse, France (see Table 6, next page). To build local capacity in postharvest technology, AAC organized through USAID's Regional Competitiveness Initiative the participation of a specialist of the technology transfer center in Korça, and a lecturer at the

<sup>2</sup> This legislation provides for a general marketing standard for all fresh fruits and vegetables and repeals specific marketing standards for 26 products. The legislation also lays down provisions for fruit and vegetable mixes and official checks on conformity with the marketing standards.

Agricultural University of Tirana department horticulture, in a short course in postharvest technology by the University of California at Davis held in Sarajevo in 2011.

## 2.5 AAC Contributions to Reducing Market Risk and Procurement Costs

AAC interventions to reduce production and market risk for value chain actors comprise a variety of activities related to improved production and postharvest technology, an extensive market information system, and establishment of strong connections with buyers in domestic and export markets. Detailed information on the market information system, and improved production and postharvest technology is presented elsewhere in the report (see Section 2.4 and Section 2.6) and will not be repeated here. The discussion of AAC contributions to reduced risk will be limited to a description of the study tours and market fairs that AAC has organized to identify new buyers and align domestic supply with market expectations in terms of quantity, quality, and shipment schedule.

AAC has organized a variety of domestic agricultural fairs in Tirana, Berat and Korça. However, it has placed more emphasis on international destinations. Table 6 lists AAC international trade fairs, study tours and trade missions in FY 2008-FY 2012 by destination and number of participants. A total of 14 countries were visited: Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Kosovo, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Serbia, Spain, and the U.S. The combined share of Germany and the U.S. in terms of number of events and number of participants was nearly 50 percent and 40 percent, respectively. Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia were also popular destinations.

**Table 6: AAC International Trade Fairs and Study Tours, by Year, Destination, and Number of Participants (FY 2008-FY 2012)**

Event	Destination	Year	Participants
Business study tour	Macedonia and Kosovo	2008	18
Fruit logistica fair	Berlin, Germany	2009	4
Olive study tour	Spain	2009	4
International trade fair	Kosovo	2009	11
Fruit logistica fair	Berlin, Germany	2010	4
Biofach fair	Nuremberg, Germany	2010	4
Fancy food show	New York, USA	2010	6
Cochran fellowship program	Several states, USA	2010	4
Fruit logistica fair	Berlin, Germany	2011	4
Biofach fair	Nuremberg, Germany	2011	4
International agriculture fair	Novi Sad, Serbia	2011	16
Trade mission	Prague, Czech Republik	2011	2
Fancy food show	New York, USA	2011	6
Postharvest management training	Sarajevo, Bosnia Herzegovina	2011	4
Citrus study tour	South Italy	2011	5
Trade mission	Vilnius, Lithuania	2011	2
Fruit logistica fair	Berlin, Germany	2012	6
Biofach fair	Nuremberg, Germany	2012	10
Adriatic food fair	Budva, Montenegro	2012	2
Apple study tour	Bordeaux, France	2012	10
Trade mission	Krakow, Poland	2012	2

**Table 6: AAC International Trade Fairs and Study Tours, by Year, Destination, and Number of Participants (FY 2008-FY 2012)**

Event	Destination	Year	Participants
Study tour	Sofia, Bulgaria	2012	7
Fancy Food Show	New York, USA	2012	6

Source: AAC

It should be noted that most of the participants in these trade fairs and study tours interviewed for this evaluation noted that the trips to neighboring countries were associated with the highest results in terms of their positive impact on their export operation, and that trade fairs and study tours to the U.S. and E.U. countries yielded significantly fewer direct results but were valuable because they enabled participants to discover the daunting challenges of exporting to those countries.

Production cost for AAC targeted commodities relative to the baseline decreased by 9.6 percent in 2008, 6.6 percent in 2009, 30.6 percent in 2010, and 23.2 percent in 2011 (AAC figures) – reflecting higher yields, better farming practices, and more-judicious use of fertilizers and other inputs. No figures are available for other costs such as collection, transportation, storage and shipping costs.

## **2.6 Short-Term Impact of the Market Information System and its Long-Term Sustainability Potential**

AAC launched the market information system for agribusiness in Albania (MIS, or SITA by its Albanian acronym) in January 2009. SITA’s main objective is to provide reliable and timely market information to farmers, traders, and other value chain actors. SITA initially reported wholesale and retail price information for five major commodities.

Price information is disseminated using seven different platforms:

- E-mail: Price information on wholesale and retail prices is disseminated daily (Monday-Friday) to 208 recipients. On Fridays, weekly prices and charts for 10 domestic seasonal commodities are also included.
- Online: Daily prices are uploaded onto two websites ([www.greenmarket.al](http://www.greenmarket.al); [www.keshilluesibujqesor.al](http://www.keshilluesibujqesor.al)). The two websites also feature historical data in chart or spreadsheet format.
- TV:
  - Prices broadcast after 10:30 a.m. on Top News.
  - Prices broadcast at 12:00 p.m. on Scan TV; Albanian Public Television; Albanian Screen Television; TV 4Plus (local TV in Lushnja); and TV Shkodra.
- Radio: Radio 4Plus in Lushnja.
- KASH newspaper: biweekly analysis for 10 major commodities.
- SMS: Price delivery via SMS includes minimum, average, and maximum prices for domestic and imported commodities, by variety.
- Market information boards: These are located in major markets in Tirana, Lushnja, Korça and Fier. There is also a market information board in Xarrë, Saranda.

In December 2010-January 2011, AAC conducted a survey on its MIS usage and effectiveness, and users’ willingness to pay for MIS services. Survey results suggest that there is general

satisfaction among users in terms of helpfulness and reliability of the information, and that the KASH newspaper and the SMS are used the least.

In July 2011, a MOU between AAC and MOAFCP was signed. The purpose of the MOU was to transfer the MIS to MOACFP's department of statistics.

AAC's responsibilities included: adapting the MIS to MOAFCP's data information systems; providing technical assistance to MOAFCP's specialists as the system is being transferred; providing the necessary equipment for system operation, including a computer and a color printer; preparing an awareness campaign to inform the public on the new MIS platform; and providing the necessary funding to ensure continued dissemination of market information through June 2012, at which time MOAFCP would assume this cost.

MOACFP's responsibilities included: providing data collection personnel at designated locations; processing and disseminating daily or weekly market data through established platforms such as television, radio, websites, newspapers and SMS broadcasting; and assuming all technical and operational costs no later than June 2012.

The transfer was to be completed by the end of September 2011. However, AAC technical assistance to the department of statistics and monitoring of daily operations continued way beyond that date. Difficulties have also arisen regarding data collection, processing, analysis and dissemination in terms of data quality and timeliness of release to users. The challenges were compounded by the transfer of the statistical reporting system to INSTAT, MOACFP's new department of information. Discussions are still ongoing on how these constraints can be alleviated.

The above review of MIS suggests that AAC's effort remains associated with two major challenges:

- As confirmed by several interviews conducted for this evaluation with AAC beneficiaries, including farmers, traders and other value chain actors, the use of the MIS data by the target audience remains quite limited, particularly when information is disseminated through SMS, and the print and electronic media. It should be, however, noted that MIS has played a very useful role in enabling policymakers to use its data to analyze price data across regions and over time, and perform other data analyses with relevance to domestic and export market behavior.
- AAC has completed its tasks of setting up the MIS and handing it over to MOACFP before the end of the project. However, there is consensus among AAC program personnel and government officials at the national and regional levels that the sustainability of the MIS system beyond June 12, 2013 has yet to be confirmed.

## **2.7 Effectiveness of AAC Implementation Strategies and Approaches**

Using four criteria for selecting interventions – demand prospects in domestic and export markets, potential for growth, feasibility, and meeting development objectives -- AAC has focused on five strategic value chains and associated interventions: 1) tree crops; 2) greenhouse crops; 3) open-field crops; 4) herbs and spices or medicinal and aromatic plants; and 5) processed commodities. In implementing its program, AAC has targeted constraints and capitalized on opportunities throughout the entire value chain for the targeted commodities, from improved farm and postharvest technologies to trade facilitation in domestic and export markets.

To implement its program, AAC selected the most suitable geographic areas in terms of climatic conditions, soil fertility, population density, infrastructure and public services, and access to markets. AAC operates through three offices (Tirana, Lushnja and Saranda) and two outposts (Shkodra and Saranda), and has data collection centers in five wholesale markets. Such a structure has enabled AAC personnel to work hand in hand with value chain actors, and in close collaboration with MOAFCP officials at the national and regional levels.

AAC has used a variety of technical assistance instruments, including training, demonstration plots, and participation in trade missions and study tours. The project has also awarded competitive grants to 139 beneficiaries to promote adoption of improved production and postharvest technology, enabling value chain actors to participate in regional agricultural fairs in Tirana, Berat and Korça, as well as organized trade missions and study tours in 14 countries to expand domestic and export markets.

The effectiveness of AAC implementation strategies and approaches is demonstrated by its positive results as measured by its program indicators (Section 2.10), by its close and successful collaboration with MOACFP institutions (Section 3.3), other USAID projects and other donor-funded activities (Section 3.4), and by beneficiaries’ positive assessment of the AAC program as reported to the evaluation team.

## 2.8 Gender Considerations

Women employment in agriculture is about 10 percent higher than in the rest of the economy (JICA 2010). The difference may be explained by the large male migration to urban areas and neighboring countries in search of more remunerative employment. This has resulted in increased responsibility for rural women who, in addition to their child care and household tasks, have to work harder and longer hours on the farm.

Reflecting this pattern in labor force participation, the SOW for the AAC program gives gender considerations a critical role in project design, implementation, and evaluation. AAC’s SOW specifically states that “strong emphasis will be placed on women, as they play a crucial role in agricultural development. The issue of gender in development, which has been one of the major foci of the USAID’s economic growth program in Albania, will continue to receive special attention under this project and will be integrated into the design, implementation and evaluation of the activities.”

Although no AAC interventions have been specifically targeted to women in designing and implementing its interventions, AAC has provided technical assistance to both men and women, especially in its technical, management, and MIS training. As can be seen in Table 7, gender-disaggregated data were reported when applicable.

**Table 7: Element-level Performance Output Indicators: Gender-Disaggregated Results (\*)**

Indicator	2008	2009	2010	2011
Number of public and private institutions undertaking capacity/competency strengthening	16	9	0	36
Number of individuals who have received short-term agricultural enabling environment training	153 (11)	115 (15)	276 (22)	688 (52)
Number of policy reforms implemented	1	0	1	1
Number of producers/processors who have received credit	55 (3)	45 (9)	91 (8)	89 (5)

**Table 7: Element-level Performance Output Indicators: Gender-Disaggregated Results (\*)**

Indicator	2008	2009	2010	2011
Number of producers and traders trained in the use of market information for strategic planning, farm management and business decision making	31 (6)	96 (18)	282 (8)	232 (55)
Number of additional hectares under improved technologies or management practices	209	208	160	290
Number of producer organizations, trade and business associations assisted	17	17	15	65
Number of individuals who have received short-term agricultural productivity training	505 (31)	300 (46)	671 (32)	1480 (105)
Number of agriculture-related firms benefitting directly from AAC assistance	11	25	109	142
Number of new markets identified (geographical areas, new products and new buyers)	11	43	127	66
Number of transactions completed (contracts signed and/or repeated sales)	358	1467	3333	1345
Numbers of farmers/firms who have access to new environmentally sound technologies that enhance productivity, production, quality	144 (0)	54 (0)	302 (9)	530 (6)
Number of additional functioning post-harvest handling facilities in country	6	9	2	2
(*) Figures in parentheses are for women				

Source: AAC

## 2.9 Environmental Reporting

The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, sets forth general procedures to ensure that the environmental consequences of USAID-financed activities are identified and considered by USAID and the host country prior to a final decision to proceed and that appropriate environmental safeguards are adopted.

AAC has conducted a broad range of development activities with potential impact on the natural or physical environment, most particularly the use of fertilizers and pesticides as part of project activities to improve farm productivity, and site-specific activities associated with its small-grants program. This evaluation notes that environmental reporting under AAC has been adequate in both areas.

### Grants

AAC has issued grants to selected partners based on USAID regulations. Those grants have been individually examined for their potential environmental impact. A positive determination or a negative determination with conditions will require submission of a site-specific Environmental Compliance Plan (SSECP) to ensure that sub-award activities are in compliance with 22 CFR 216, USAID's implementing regulations for the National Environmental Policy Act.

This SSECP is used in conjunction with an Environmental Report or Environmental Assessment and their associated Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plans (EMMPs) for the primary project under which they are implemented. Site-specific ECPs provide for an additional safeguard to ensure that activities covered by Environmental Reports, Environmental

Assessments, and EMMPs will not result in significant adverse effects on the environment. Site-specific ECPs are forwarded to the Bureau Environmental Office for approval through the COR.

### **Pesticide Evaluation Reports and Safe Use Action Plans**

AAC has submitted to USAID a Pesticide Evaluation Report and Safe Use Action Plan (PERSUAP) on an annual basis since 2007. The annual updates are based on a thorough review of AAC activities in previous years.

AAC PERSUAPs follow several rigorous guidelines, including the following:

- AAC does not make any pesticide recommendations directly to project beneficiaries
- AAC provides specialized technical assistance to the relevant government personnel through expert consultants
- Preventive integrated pest management (IPM) practices are first considered
- Recommended pesticides must comply with their relevant regulations
- Recommendations are made by personnel from the Government of Albania's crop protection agencies through AAC training
- If AAC personnel find that certain farmers are using inappropriate pesticides purchased with farmers' own funds, more appropriate pesticides are recommended based on cost and farmers' experience

### **2.10 Assessment of AAC Objectives and Expected Results Relative to its Overall Budget and Human Resources**

Examination of target results and actual achievements reveals that the project's budget (a total of about \$10.5 million) and human resources have been adequate to meet program objectives. As can be seen in Tables 8, 9 and 10 (see page 18, 19 and 20), targets have been met or exceeded for all indicators since program inception. It is worth noting that program targets were adjusted upward twice, for FY 2011 and for the period covering program extension.

**Table 8: AAC Program Element-level Indicators -- Agricultural Enabling Environment: Targets and Results (2008-2011)**

Indicator	2008		2009		2010		2011(*)			
	Target	Result	Target	Result	Target	Result	Target	Result	Adjusted Target (cumulative)	Result (cumulative)
2.1. Number of public and private institutions undertaking capacity/competency strengthening	2	16	5	9	10	0	10	36	38	61
2.2. Number of individuals who have received short-term agricultural enabling environment training	20	153	30	115	50	276	50	688	600	1,232
2.3. Number of policy reforms proposed	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	4	4
2.4. Number of producers/processors who have received credit	20	55	30	45	100	91	50	89	200	280
2.6. Number of producers and traders trained in use of market information for strategic planning, farm management, and business decision-making	50	31	100	96	200	282	250	232	550	641

(\*) The adjusted targets for FY 2011 represent new (higher) targets proposed by the AAC program based on results achieved through FY 2010

Source: AAC

**Table 9: Program Element-level Indicators -- Agricultural Sector Productivity: Targets and Results (2008-2011)**

Indicator	2008		2009		2010		2011			
	Target	Result	Target	Result	Target	Result	Target	Result	Adjusted Target (cumulative)	Result (cumulative)
3.1. Number of additional hectares under improved technologies or management practices	138	209	55	208	110	160	110	290	800	867
3.2. Number of producer organizations, trade and business associations assisted	15	17	25	17	35	15	40	65	55	114
3.3. Number of individuals who have received short-term agricultural productivity training	250	505	350	300	550	671	750	1,480	1,850	2,956
3.4. Number of agriculture-related firms benefiting directly from AAC assistance	10	11	25	25	30	109	35	142	150	287
3.5. Number of new markets identified (geographic areas, new products and new buyers)	15	11	30	43	50	127	75	66	200	247
3.6. Number of transactions completed	30	358	50	1,467	80	3,333	110	1345	6,000	6,503
3.7. Number of farmers/firms who have access to new environmentally sound technologies that enhance productivity, production, quality	200	144	200	54	200	302	200	530	800	1,030
3.8. Number of additional functioning postharvest handling facilities in country	2	6	6	9	5	2	4	2	17	19

Source: AAC

**Table 10: AAC Output Indicators (FY 2008- FY 2011)**

	Target 2008	Actual 2008	Target 2009	Actual 2009	Target 2010	Actual 2010	Target 2011	Actual 2011
1.1 Percentage change in production of targeted agricultural products	2%	8.40%	5 %	46.01%	10%	6.40%	15%	18.60%
1.2 Percentage change in domestic sales of targeted agricultural products	5%	6.42%	10%	38.45%	15%	16.40%	25%	54.40%
1.3 Percentage change in export sales of targeted agricultural products	2%	n/a	5%	n/a	15%	162.75%	20%	198.5%
1.4 Number of rural households whose income have increased	250	n/a	350	152	550	499	750	902
1.5 Change in non-farm jobs (input supply, processing, consolidators)	20	30	35	80	75	142	125	158
1.6 Annual per household income from sales of targeted products	5%	10.20%	9%	28%	15%	45%	24%	46%
1.7 Yields of targeted products per hectare	6%	10.74%	10%	26.00%	14%	20.40%	16%	28.00%
1.8 Production cost per unit of output	-2%	-9.62%	-4%	-6.64%	-6%	-30.60%	-8%	-23.20%

Source: AAC

## 2.11 Assessment of AAC Original Assumptions for the Implementation of Program Activities

The major assumptions in the 2007 AAC SOW include: the importance of agriculture in the national economy; land fragmentation; limited use of improved on-farm and postharvest technology; and limited access to domestic and international markets.

Five years into project implementation, the validity of those assumptions remains high:

- Albania is largely an agricultural economy.
- The rural population is 50 percent of the total population.<sup>3</sup>
- The agricultural sector represents 17 percent of GDP and employs 60 percent of the labor force.
- The total number of farms in Albania is about 350,000. The average size of the household farm is 1.2 ha, with an average of 4.5 parcels. At 0.26 ha, the average parcel is the lowest in Europe.
- With an average of 4.5 parcels per farm, land fragmentation is remarkably high.
- Although significant progress has been made in recent years (as illustrated throughout this report), use of improved on-farm and postharvest technology remains limited. Similarly, despite the major contributions AAC has made, major

<sup>3</sup> All figures in this section are from MOACFP 2012.

challenges are still facing traders' ability to expand domestic sales and meet export market requirements.

The program's assumptions as they relate to the high potential for growth in the country's agricultural sector remain equally valid. Several factors account for such potential:

- Fertile soils and favorable climate conditions, especially in the coastal low lands and low-hill country.
- Agro-ecological conditions for early- and late-season production.
- Relatively high population density, particularly in the coastal areas where most high-value agriculture is produced.
- A favorable geographic location relative to the E.U.
- Comparatively low wage rates.
- A literate agricultural labor force (96 percent of farm holders has attended secondary school, and many of them have worked in other European countries).
- The ability of Albanian farmers to adapt rapidly to changing circumstances.

Responding to those challenges and capitalizing on those opportunities, AAC has focused attention on three major areas: strengthening producer capacity for competitive farming; strengthening capability for market development; and increasing access to, and use of, timely and reliable market information.

As a high level MOACFP official noted, AAC original assumptions for the implementation of program activities are all the more relevant today because they are in line with the European Union's instrument for pre-accession (IPA), a program designed to support candidate- and potential candidate-countries in their gradual alignment with E.U. standards and policies. The objective of Axis 1 of IPA-Rural Development or IPARD is to improve competitiveness through higher market efficiency and implementation of Community standards, and more specifically to set-up producer groups and provide farms and the food industry with support for restructuring and modernization to upgrade to those standards.

### **3.0 LESSONS LEARNED FROM AAC IMPLEMENTATION**

#### **3.1 Assessment of AAC Technical Approaches and Products**

AAC technical approach is based on three closely related steps:

- Identify strategic value chains based on the following four selection criteria
  - Market prospects: in domestic and export markets.
  - Competitiveness: commodities with the most potential for growth.
  - Meeting development objectives: commodities with the most potential for meeting program objectives (e.g., increasing income for value chain actors, geographic distribution of benefits, gender equity).
  - Feasibility: commodities the project can work with and see results (e.g., value chain actors' buy-in, likelihood of achieving results within the program's timeframe).
- Conduct a detailed value chain analysis to identify key actors, and major opportunities and constraints for each value chain selected. The value chains and

associated activities selected are: greenhouse crops; tree crops; open-field crops; medicinal and aromatic plants; and processed commodities.

- For each commodity selected, design and implement a value chain development plan to achieve AAC objectives

AAC’s approach in the implementation of its value chain development plans is based on a series of specific interventions ranging from pilot activities and demonstration plots to coordination among farmers, traders and processors to market fairs and study tours to meet market requirements.

All interviews conducted for this evaluation with value chain actors at all levels (see Annex II) indicate that -- with the exception of the MIS, whose usefulness use and sustainability remain questionable (see Section 2.6) -- AAC’s approach has been highly successful in terms of its relevance to their activities on the farm and all along the value chain all the way through to the end market.

### 3.2 Beneficiaries’ Adoption of AAC New Technologies and Management Practices, and Their Impact on Their Businesses

The relevance of AAC interventions, the appropriateness of the new technologies it has introduced, and the economic viability of its recommendations are also demonstrated by increased yield, reduced cost, increased sales in domestic and export markets (as detailed elsewhere in this report) -- as well as by beneficiaries’ responsiveness to AAC’s technical assistance. It is not possible to quantify how much of these gains are attributable to AAC with a high degree of confidence without a rigorous impact analysis extending beyond the scope of this evaluation. However, the qualitative results of the interviews suggest that AAC’s role has been far from negligible.

The AAC annual report for FY 2011 indicates that about 900 ha were under improved technologies or management practices. As shown in Table 11, nearly 600 farmers adopted improved agricultural techniques as a result of AAC assistance in FY 2009-2011, and the area cultivated using the new technology has exceeded 500 ha.

**Table 11: Adoption of New Technology as a Result of AAC Assistance in Albania**

Item	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	Total
Number of farmers	115	316	520	<b>591</b>
Area (HA)	174	160	290	<b>524</b>

*Source: Team Calculation from Data Provided by AAC*

As detailed in Table 4, the new technology ranged from applied improved practical greenhouse technology in Lushnja to applied nets for preventing Tuta Absoluta pest and planting high-quality commercial seedlings in Shkodra to grafted seedling, thermo plastic tunnels and double dripping irrigation in Sarande to applied winter pruning in Korça.

As can be seen in Table 12 below, the impact on beneficiaries has been substantial. While production has increased significantly, production costs have declined by as much as 30 percent in 2010 and 23 percent in 2011. The increase in domestic and export sales as well as annual household income from those sales has also been substantial.

**Table 12: Impact on AAC Beneficiaries, Selected Indicators for FY 2008 – FY 2011 (percent change over the baseline)**

Indicator	2008	2009	2010	2011
Production of targeted agricultural products	8.4	46	6.4	18.6
Domestic sales of targeted agricultural products	6.4	38.4	16.4	54.4
Export sales of targeted agricultural products	--	--	162.7	198.5
Annual household income from sales of targeted products	10.2	28	45	46
Production cost per unit of output	-9.6	-6.6	-30.6	-23.2

Source: Table 8

### 3.3 What Geographic Area(s) Has /Have Shown the Most Progress in Developing Market-Driven Production and Why?

The Lushnja, Saranda and Shkodra areas have shown the most progress in developing market-driven production, especially of greenhouse vegetables, watermelon, citrus, and medicinal and aromatic plants.<sup>4</sup> Producers in these areas have adapted their farming practices to market requirements in terms of quantity demanded, quality of produce, and harvest schedule to capitalize on higher price opportunities in period of relative scarcity in the domestic and export markets.

Several factors have contributed to AAC’s success in the Lushnja, Saranda and Shkodra areas: favorable climatic conditions, soil fertility, population density, better infrastructure and public services, and easier access to markets. It is evident that a similar response is unlikely to occur in the mountainous North and North East, where those factors are in short supply.

### 3.4 Identification of Successful Collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture

All interviews conducted for this evaluation with MOAFCP and its agencies at the national, regional and local levels indicate -- without any exception -- that AAC collaboration with MOAFCP officials has been outstanding. The following examples given by interviewees or confirmed by them during the interviews, illustrate AAC’s high level of collaboration with MOAFCP and its affiliated institutions.

- As detailed in Section 2.6, AAC has transferred the market information system to MOAFCP for sustainable operation.
- Exporters had to travel to MOAFCP regional offices to obtain phytosanitary certificates. As a result of the close collaboration between AAC and MOAFCP, truck drivers and exporters are no longer required to travel to regional offices: phytosanitary certificates are now issued at the loading location.
- Close collaboration between AAC and customs authorities has sped up custom clearance procedures for fresh produce exporters.

<sup>4</sup> These three regions have major advantages over Korça. Shkodra’s medicinal and aromatic plant production plays an important role in Albania’s agricultural balance of trade (55 percent of total agricultural exports in 2011). Saranda has a comparative advantage in citrus production for both the export and domestic markets. Lushnja produces a wide range of high-value commodities (year-round for many) for both the domestic and export markets -- in contrast with Korça which produces a limited number of lower-value open-field crops (mainly potatoes and onions) and fruit crops (mainly apples) during a certain period of the year.

- The same collaboration has led to improved irrigation infrastructure in certain areas where the need for such improvements was critical.
- Discussions with several representatives from MOAFCP’s technology transfer centers reveal a close coordination between the two parties, including the joint organization of demonstration plots, training farmer groups in activities associated with the introduction of new technology, soil testing, interpretation of results and their technical implications for improved farming.
- AAC collaboration with MOAFCP has been instrumental in extending the subsidy program to producers of early watermelon, and medicinal and aromatic plants.
- AAC and MOAFCP have shared the cost of beneficiary participation in regional and international trade fairs.
- As noted in Section 2.9, implementation of the PERSUAP was carried out in close collaboration with MOAFCP personnel in the field.

### **3.5 Identification of Successful Collaboration and Synergy with Other USAID and Other Donor-Funded Activities**

Interviews with SNV, GIZ, MADA and AAC staff who interacted with the USAID FORECAST and RCI projects (see below) confirm that collaboration and synergy with other USAID- and donor-funded activities have been equally strong. The following examples illustrate such collaboration and synergy.

- AAC has collaborated with SNV in Korça, to supply apple grading equipment to two apple consolidators, cold room operators and apple traders. The two programs also joined efforts in Koplík to establish a collection and dehydration center for a farmers’ group engaged in the production of medicinal and aromatic plants. SNV is an international not-for-profit development organization. Established in the Netherlands more than 40 years ago, it now works in 36 developing countries worldwide.
- The Mountain Areas Development Agency (MADA) joined AAC and SNV in the establishment of the collection and dehydration center in Koplík. Established as a non-profit and autonomous foundation, MADA works as a specialized agency to encourage sustainable economic development in Albania’s rural mountain areas.
- AAC and the Swiss Cooperation office in Albania joined forces to finance the participation in the BioFach trade show of selected Albanian producers of medicinal and aromatic plants, and extra virgin olive oil. AAC partnered with the FORECAST program to finance a study tour for AAC beneficiaries under the Cochran study tour program. FORECAST is a USAID initiative to strengthen the skills and knowledge of individuals so they can play a leadership role in the long-term development of their countries.
- AAC has collaborated with USAID’s Regional Competitiveness Initiative (RCI) to train extension officers and progressive farmers in greenhouse-management techniques, and introduce regional exporters and food processors to the challenges of exporting to the EU. RCI is a regional USAID initiative to improve competitiveness across Europe and Eurasia by engaging the bilateral efforts of USAID Missions, USAID projects and other local stakeholders in selected sectors, including other donors, and public and private organizations.

## **4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONTINUED USAID SUPPORT**

### **4.1 Identification of Activities, Associations, and Crops Most Likely to Develop With Limited Support**

AAC has focused on five value chains and related activities: 1) greenhouse vegetables (peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers); 2) open-field crops (melon and watermelon, crucifer crops, onions, potatoes); 3) herbs and spices (fresh, dried, essential oils); 4) tree crops (olives, apples, citrus); and 5) processed food (processed fruits and vegetables, olive oil). AAC areas of interventions may be broadly classified as production, postharvest technology, and market development.

Interviews with AAC technical and management staff in Tirana, Lushnja, Korca and Saranda, as well as several representatives from universities, technology transfer centers (TTCs) and MOACFP regional staff indicate that farmers in AAC-supported regions have made significant progress in improving farming methods and increasing productivity, and that *relatively*<sup>5</sup> limited support to production would be needed (see below). A few associations have shown increased capacity to provide effective support to their members and are likely to remain as effective in the future. These include the essential oils producers and cultivators association, the citrus producers association, and the olive oil association. Several commodities with high prospects for growth with limited support include greenhouse crops, medicinal and aromatic plants, mandarin oranges, and melon.

### **4.2 Critical Elements in USAID Support that Should be Continued After January 2013 and Additional Elements to be Considered**

Together with findings in preceding sections, evidence in Section 4.1 suggests that the following elements should be considered after AAC ends in January 2013:

- Additional support will be needed to guide the transformation of agriculture in Albania into a modern sector
- The priority geographic regions are Lushnja, Saranda and Shkodra because they have shown the most progress in developing market-driven production.
- Focus should be placed on greenhouse vegetables, watermelon, citrus, and medicinal and aromatic plants -- high-value crops with the highest-growth potential.
- To increase productivity and improve quality of produce, promotion of new production technology should continue, particularly through IPM training, better use of agrochemical inputs and improved farm management.
- Greater emphasis should, however, be placed on postharvest technology and market development.

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<sup>5</sup> This is not to say that additional support to production will not be needed. Relatively limited support to production means that devoting more resources to postharvest technology and access to domestic and export markets are likely to pay higher dividends.

- In the immediate future, the domestic and regional markets should receive priority consideration. This recommendation reflects the fact that exports of AAC commodities to neighboring countries represent the bulk of Albanian exports.<sup>6</sup>
- Continued efforts to improve food-safety standards and higher product quality will eventually enable Albanian exporters to further improve their competitiveness and gain access to the largely untapped E.U. and U.S. markets.

#### **4.3 Prospects for Short-Term Sustainability in Moving Toward a Hybrid Donor-Sponsored/Market-Driven Approach with Decreasing Intensity in Donor Support**

Building on the success of the AAC program through a follow-up initiative is justified on several grounds:

- The program has been involved in high-value horticulture and other value chains of strategic importance to the development of the agricultural sector in Albania.
- The program has made significant contributions to the development of the targeted value chains, yet much remains to be done to enhance the competitiveness of the agricultural economy. This is all the more critical because the agricultural sector in Albania faces enormous challenges in meeting future E.U. standards.
- Discussions with SNV and GIZ<sup>7</sup> in Tirana indicate that despite the demonstrated need to continue AAC technical assistance, to their knowledge no similar support will be available to AAC value chains in the near future.
- There is very strong demand for AAC services from all stakeholders, ranging from MOAFCP at the central and regional levels to value chain actors at all levels.

To assess the appropriate mechanism through which AAC assistance can be extended, three options were put forward for consideration: 1) extending the current AAC contract; 2) a new contract to be awarded competitively; and 3) a local non-government organization to continue USAID support to the target value chains beyond January 12, 2013.

Discussions with USAID/Albania indicate that the two first options are not feasible for reasons related to procurement constraints, and that working with a local non-government organization (L-NGO) remains the only alternative.

During this evaluation, AAC fielded an organization development specialist to identify an existing L-NGO with proven capability to sustain AAC legacy. However, preliminary indications are that no such L-NGO is available.

AAC has proposed setting up a new L-NGO called Agricultural Technical Advisory Group. Drawing upon current key local AAC technical and management staff, such an organization would provide the most viable option. Benefiting from USAID funding for up to three years, it would offer continuity; demonstrated success; knowledge of what remains to be

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<sup>6</sup> Calculations using data provided by AAC show that exports of AAC commodities to the E.U. (excluding Greece, a neighboring country) amounted to 3 percent of total exports over the past three years. Exports to the U.S. amounted to 1.3 percent during the same period.

<sup>7</sup> In addition to its bilateral portfolio, GIZ, the German international development agency, has an E.U. mandate to advise the Albanian government on its preparation to E.U. accession and to manage E.U. promotional funds.

achieved; strong and relevant technical expertise; and successful working relationship with private- and public-sector stakeholders at the national, regional and local levels.

It must be noted, however, that sustainability after USAID funding ends would undoubtedly remain a major challenge facing the nascent L-NGO. Sustainability will depend on the extent to which the new organization will be able to mobilize its assets toward generating the ongoing resources necessary to maintain its mission and carry out its work beyond USAID/Albania's initial funding.

To maximize the new L-NGO's sustainability potential, it is recommended that initial USAID funding be accompanied by technical assistance in human and institutional capacity development (HICD). HICD is a USAID model of structured and integrated processes designed to remove significant barriers to the achievement of an institution's goals and objectives. To this end, technical assistance provided to the new organization would focus on the following areas:

- Institutional vision, mission, goals, and strategies
- Leadership issues
- Management structure
- Management practices
- Financial management systems
- Financial and technical reporting to USAID during the initial period
- Roles and responsibilities of work groups and individuals
- Human resources management issues
- Resource allocation
- Technical focus
- Financial sustainability
- Institutional performance measurement systems

Preliminary short-term technical assistance would determine the type and level of support needed after AAC ends. This evaluation estimates that a long-term HICD expert, together with specialized short-term technical assistance will be needed for at least one year. To be effective, both the preliminary short-term technical assistance and the longer-term technical expertise should be based on the HICD framework and methodology.

#### **4.4 How Can USAID Best Support its Agricultural DCA Portfolio?**

Interviews with several value chain actors<sup>8</sup> who have obtained or sought loans from local banks show that borrowers in Albania face four major challenges: 1) Banks are reluctant to lend to agriculture; 2) their interest rates are high; 3) only short-term secured loans are provided; and 4) borrowers have to start payments shortly after loans are made. This finding suggests that banks in Albania – as in many other developing countries -- are very conservative in their lending practices. Their loans are generally made to established customers and are subject to high collateral requirements. As a result, many creditworthy borrowers are unable to access financing.

Established in 1999, the USAID DCA program was designed to make funding available to agriculture and other underserved sectors in developing countries. The DCA works with

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<sup>8</sup> Particularly those involved in processing and produce collection for domestic sales and/or exports

investors, local financial institutions, and development organizations to design and deliver investment alternatives that unlock financing for those sectors. Its ultimate objective is to prove the commercial viability of underserved markets so that lending and investment can continue long after USAID's exit. To mobilize local financing, the DCA uses partial credit guarantees.

USAID/Albania's DCA program is scheduled to start in the second half of 2012. Qualifying borrowers under the program are non-sovereign individuals, and micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises operating in Albania, with special emphasis on those operating in the agricultural sector. Qualifying projects consist of investments designed to encourage growth of those qualifying borrowers. The DCA guarantee is 50 percent of each guaranteed party's net losses of principal with respect to qualifying loans. The two guaranteed parties are Banka Kombëtare Tregëtare (BKT) and ProCredit Bank Albania.

The USAID guarantee is intended to strengthen the guaranteed party's ability to finance loans to individuals and businesses in Albania, especially in agriculture, with a view to stimulating the country's economy. The maximum portfolio amount is the Albanian Leke equivalent of \$15 million. The final date for placing qualifying loans under coverage is March 31, 2017.

DCA experience in other countries (U.S. Government 2012) indicates that DCA portfolio utilization rates vary widely, and that USAID technical assistance to partner banks as well as to potential borrowers will contribute to higher utilization. Coupled with the partial loan guarantee, such technical assistance will not only enable partner banks to extend credit to the target sectors, but it will also contribute to credit mainstreaming in those sectors by encouraging other financial institutions to enter the market.

To maximize the success of the new DCA and enhance its sustainability, USAID/Albania should therefore complement its credit portfolio with a technical assistance program that would:

- Assist potential borrowers in demonstrating their credit worthiness to lenders.
- Help partner banks learn about new clients and markets through training in how to work with farmers, how to improve assessment of risk in agriculture, and how to apply innovative due-diligence procedures, including identification of alternative forms of collateral.

The AAC program implemented by the new L-NGO after January 12, 2013 should include a well-defined set of activities to support the DCA portfolio.

#### **4.5 Are There Successful Strategies for Increasing Income for Subsistence Farmers?**

Subsistence farming may be defined as one in which most of the produce is consumed within the household or bartered with others for products not grown or made on the farm. With commercialization, the purpose of the farming system changes from meeting food self-sufficiency to generation of cash income, which will be used for diverse purposes including education, health and leisure. The change affects choice of farm activities, agricultural technology, input levels and other resource use.

Agricultural land account for 24 percent of total land, with forests accounting for 36 percent, pastures and meadows for 15 percent, and other uses for 15 percent (MOAFCP 2007a). Albania is predominantly mountainous in the North and East, with agricultural land concentrated in the more densely populated coastal plains of the West (over 40 percent of arable land). The rest of the agricultural land lies in river valleys or upland (MOAFCP 2012).

The AAC program has assisted farmers in targeted areas in shifting resource use from subsistence production to commercial farming, by designing and implementing programs that have helped farmers make the necessary investments to improve production techniques, increase yield and enhance quality. This transition has resulted in increased productivity and higher income to beneficiaries (see Section 3.1).

From this perspective, it is clear that the AAC strategy to increase income for subsistence farmers in the targeted areas has been largely successful. It must be noted, however, that the AAC strategy cannot be replicated throughout the country.

Interventions will be successful only when they are tailored to the significant variations in conditions and constraints along geographic lines. As noted in Section 3.2, AAC's success in Shkodra, Lushnja and Saranda may be explained by the fact that the three regions have responded well to AAC interventions because of their favorable climate conditions, soil fertility, population density, better infrastructure and public services, and easier access to markets. However, similar interventions are unlikely to be as successful in the mountainous North and North East, a region that faces binding constraints in the form of underdeveloped infrastructure and inferior public services. More suitable interventions in those areas would place greater emphasis on pro-poor, non-agricultural policies to improve public services, upgrade infrastructure, and provide social assistance to promote growth and alleviate rural poverty.

## **ANNEXES**

## **ANNEX I: SOURCE OF INFORMATION**

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## **ANNEX II: PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS CONTACTED**

## People and Organizations Contacted: USAID, AAC, and International Organizations

USAID	
Marc Ellingstad	Director, Economic Growth Office
Kristaq Jorgji	Senior Agriculture Specialist
Andrew Maybrook	Program Officer
Alken Myftiu	Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist
AAC	
David Anderson	Chief of Party
Gengi Como	Regional Office Manager, Korça
Josip Gogai	Office Agronomist, Lushnja
Ina IssaLari	Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist
Kostandin Koço	Manager, Saranda outpost
Pirro Rrapushi	Regional Office Manager, Lushnja
Sabah Sena	Association Development Manager
Safet Shparthi	Office Agronomist, Korça
Vilma Xhakollari	Market Liaison & Training Specialist
International Organizations	
Roland Cela	Chief, GIZ
Elvana Zhezha	Chief of Party, SNV/Promali

## People and Organizations Contacted: Government, Agricultural Universities and Technology Transfer Centers

Organization	Name	Position
MoAFCP	Mr. Ndoc Fasllia	Deputy Minister
MoAFCP	Eneida Topulli	Head, Department of Statistics
MoAFCP	Ms. Lauresha Grezda	Marketing Department
MoAFCP	Mr. Gjokë Vuksani	General Director, National Payment Agency
MoAFCP	Tatjana Dishnica	Director, Extension and Research
MoAFCP	Minire Mandija	Technical specialist, Shkodra Regional Agriculture Directorate
MoAFCP	Adrian Maho	Director, Korça Regional Agriculture Directorate
MoAFCP	Bekim Beshaj	Agronomist, Fier Regional Agriculture Directorate
MoAFCP	Ajet Hyka	Agronomist, Berat Regional Agriculture Directorate
MoAFCP	Rakip Iljazi	Agronomist, Delvina Regional Agriculture Directorate
MoAFCP	Dhimitraq Qorri	Coordinator of extension service, Lushnje Regional Agriculture Directorate
Agricultural University of Tirana	Mr. Sulejman Sulce	Professor and Certified Environmental Evaluation Expert
Agricultural University of Tirana	Astrit Balliu	Professor and Initiator of the keshilluesi bujqesor.al –website
Agriculture University of Tirana	Shpend Shahini	Chief, Plant Protection Department
Agriculture University of Tirana	Drini Imami	Professor and researcher
F. Kruja Technology transfer Center	Mr. Adrian Doko	Director
Korça Technology transfer Center	Ylli Hysolli	Director
Durres TTC/Agricultural University of Tirana	Vangjel Jovani	Specialist
Mountain Areas Development Agency	Brunilda Stamo	Director
Xarre Commune	Dhimiter Kote	Chief
Lukove Commune	Spiro Munguli	Agronomist
Delvine	Rakip Iljazi	Director of Agriculture
KASH	Enver Ferizaj	President, Albanian Agribusiness Council

**People and Organizations Contacted: Farmer Organization  
Representatives and Other Value Chain Actors**

<b>Farmer Organization Representatives</b>		
Name	City/Town	Organization
Antigoni Ndoni	Këmishtaj/Lushnje	Woman association / greenhouse vegetables, open-field crops, and fruit trees
Petraç Capuni	Mertish/Lushnje	Gjelberimi Association, greenhouse vegetables
Valentina Postoli	Tirana	Albanian Olive Oil Association
Genci Mita	Tirana	Agro-processors Association
Xheladin Zekaj	Koplik	Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Association
<b>Other Value Chain Actors</b>		
Name	City/Town	Role
Vesaf Musai	Novosele	Olive Oil Exporter
Sajmir Biti	Divjake/Lushnje	Exporter, greenhouse and open-field crops
Mystehak Goga	Goriçan/Berat	Exporter, greenhouse crops
Haxhi Bershaj	Koplik	Exporter, medicinal and aromatic plants

## People and Organizations Contacted: Farmers

Name	Location	Occupation
<b>Korça</b>		
Lavderim Mira	Menkulas/ Miras/Devoll	Onion grower
Ferdinand Ali	Dvoran/ Mollaj/ Korça	Apple grower/Seedling producers
Oltian Shaholli	Voskop/Voskop/ Korça	Apple grower
Enver Shaholli	Bulgarec / Korça	Potato grower
Tefik Mecollari	Pirg/Korça	Potato grower
Ylli Bimi	Bulgarec / Korça	Potato grower
Rakip Musa	Cangonj/Proger/Devoll	Apple grower
<b>Saranda</b>		
Stavri Bame	Xarre/Sarandë	Citrus grower
Ziso Lokoshi	Konispol/Sarandë	Citrus grower
Lefter Ciçaj	Stjar/Delvina	Citrus grower
Proko Kote	Mursi/Sarandë	Citrus grower
Hysen Kakaci	Vrinë/Sarandë	Citrus and olive grower
Spiro Mungulli	Lukove/Sarandë	Olive grower
Rakip Iliazi	Delvina	Citrus grower
Lefter Liçaj	Delvina	Citrus grower
<b>Shkodra</b>		
Xheladin Zeka	Koplik	Medicinal and aromatic plants producer
Bajram Zekaj	Koplik	Medicinal and aromatic plants producer
Fadil Zekaj	Koplik	Medicinal and aromatic plants producer
Behar Zekaj	Koplik	Medicinal and aromatic plants producer
Erjon Zekaj	Koplik	Medicinal and aromatic plants producer
Artan Zekaj	Koplik	Medicinal and aromatic plants producer
Afrim Zekaj	Koplik	Medicinal and aromatic plants producer
Tahir Zekaj	Koplik	Medicinal and aromatic plants producer
<b>Lushnja</b>		
Stavri Gjini	Mertish/Lushnje	Greenhouse vegetable grower
Andrea Thomai	Goricaj /Lushnje	Greenhouse vegetable grower
Petraç Çapuni	Fierseman/Lushnje	Greenhouse vegetable grower
Gjergji Mileti	Fierseman/Lushnje	Greenhouse vegetable grower
Mikail Mileti	Fierseman/Lushnje	Greenhouse vegetable grower
Lili Koco	Gorre/Lushnje	Greenhouse vegetable grower
Antigoni Ndoni	Këmishtaj/Lushnje	Greenhouse vegetables, open-field crops and fruit trees
Josif Gorrea	Divjake/Lushnje	Water melon and open-field crop production
Sajmir Biti	Divjake/Lushnje	Water melon and open-field crop production
Muharrem Xhebexhiu	Hysgjokaj/Lushnje	Greenhouse vegetable grower

Name	Location	Occupation
Mystehak Goga	Goriçan/Berat	Greenhouse vegetable grower
Luan Bilcari	Morave/Berat	Greenhouse vegetable grower
Petrit Zeka,	Otlake/Berat	Greenhouse vegetable grower
Luli Azizi	Morave/Berat	Greenhouse vegetable grower
Alfred Azizi	Morave/Berat	Greenhouse vegetable grower
Lavdi Goga	Morave/Berat	Greenhouse vegetable grower
Kastriot Goga,	Hinge/Berat	Greenhouse vegetable grower
Ermir Hoxha	Gajde/Berat	Greenhouse vegetable grower
Zenun Zeka	Drenovice/Berat	Greenhouse vegetable grower
Skender Tabaku	Velmish/Fier	Greenhouse vegetable grower
Stavri Bame	Xarre/Sarandë	Citrus grower
Ziso Lokoshi	Konispol/Sarandë	Citrus grower
Lefter Ciçaj	Stjar/Delvine	Citrus grower
Proko Kote	Mursi/Sarandë	Citrus grower
Hysen Kakaci	Vrinë/Sarandë	Citrus and olive grower
Spiro Mungulli	Lukove/Sarandë	Olive grower
Burhan Malasi	Syzes Berat	Olive oil grower and processor
Bekim Beshaj	Cakran/Fier	Olive grower
Vesaf Musai	Novosele	Olive oil grower and exporter
<b>Tirana</b>		
Valentina Postoli	Tirana	Olive oil grower
Ruzhdi Koni	Maminas Durres	Vegetable storehouse and distribution centre
Genci Mita	Tirana	Processor

## **ANNEX III: INTERVIEW GUIDES**

## **Interview Guide: USAID**

### **Program Results, Impact and Major Successes**

1. AAC contributions to Albania's performance in the agricultural sector
2. Short-term impact of the market information system and its long-term sustainability potential
3. Effectiveness of AAC implementation strategies and approaches
4. Gender considerations
5. Environmental considerations
6. Assessment of AAC objectives and expected results relative to its overall budget and human resources
7. Assessment of AAC objectives and expected results relative to its overall budget and human resources
8. Assessment of AAC original assumptions for the implementation of program activities

### **Lessons Learned from AAC Implementation**

9. Assessment of AAC technical approaches and products in terms of their viability and relevance to beneficiaries
10. Beneficiaries' adoption of AAC new technologies and management practices, and their impact on their businesses
11. What geographic area(s) has (have) shown the most progress in developing market-driven production and why?
12. Identification of successful collaboration and synergy with other USAID and other donor-funded activities
13. Identification of successful collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture

### **Recommendations for Continued USAID Support**

14. Critical elements in USAID support that should be continued after January 2013 and additional elements to be considered
15. Prospects for short-term sustainability in moving toward a hybrid donor-sponsored/market-driven approach with decreasing intensity in donor support
16. How can USAID best support its agricultural Development Credit Authority portfolio, which will start in the second half of 2012?
17. Are there successful strategies for increasing income for subsistence farmers?

## **Interview Guide: Implementing Contractor**

### **Program Results, Impact and Major Successes**

1. AAC contributions to Albania's performance in the agricultural sector
2. AAC contributions to market-driven production
  - Market information
  - Agricultural/agribusiness associations
  - Access to new technologies and markets
3. AAC contributions to enhanced quality of produce
4. AAC contributions to reducing market risk and procurement costs
5. AAC contributions to enhanced post-harvest handling and other market practices
6. Short-term impact of the market information system and its long-term sustainability potential
7. Effectiveness of AAC implementation strategies and approaches
8. Gender considerations
9. Environmental considerations
10. Assessment of AAC objectives and expected results relative to its overall budget and human resources
11. Assessment of AAC objectives and expected results relative to its overall budget and human resources
12. Assessment of AAC original assumptions for the implementation of program activities

### **Lessons Learned from AAC Implementation**

13. Assessment of AAC technical approaches and products in terms of their viability and relevance to beneficiaries
14. Beneficiaries' adoption of AAC new technologies and management practices, and their impact on their businesses
15. What geographic area(s) has (have) shown the most progress in developing market-driven production and why?
16. Identification of successful collaboration and synergy with other USAID and other donor-funded activities
17. Identification of successful collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture

### **Recommendations for Continued USAID Support**

18. Critical elements in USAID support that should be continued after January 2013 and additional elements to be considered
19. Prospects for short-term sustainability in moving toward a hybrid donor-sponsored/market-driven approach with decreasing intensity in donor support
20. How can USAID best support its agricultural Development Credit Authority portfolio, which will start in the second half of 2012?
21. Are there successful strategies for increasing income for subsistence farmers?

## **Interview Guide: Government Officials**

### **Program Results, Impact and Major Successes**

1. AAC contributions to Albania's performance in the agricultural sector
2. AAC contributions to market-driven production
  - Market information
  - Agricultural/agribusiness associations
  - Access to new technologies and markets
3. AAC contributions to enhanced quality of produce
4. AAC contributions to reducing market risk and procurement costs
5. AAC contributions to enhanced post-harvest handling and other market practices
6. Short-term impact of the market information system and its long-term sustainability potential
7. Effectiveness of AAC implementation strategies and approaches
8. Gender considerations
9. Assessment of AAC objectives and expected results relative to its overall budget and human resources
10. Assessment of AAC objectives and expected results relative to its overall budget and human resources
11. Assessment of AAC original assumptions for the implementation of program activities

### **Lessons Learned from AAC Implementation**

12. Assessment of AAC technical approaches and products in terms of their viability and relevance to beneficiaries
13. What geographic area(s) has (have) shown the most progress in developing market-driven production and why?
14. Identification of successful collaboration and synergy with other USAID and other donor-funded activities
15. Identification of successful collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture

### **Recommendations for Continued USAID Support**

16. Critical elements in USAID support that should be continued after January 2013 and additional elements to be considered
17. Prospects for short-term sustainability in moving toward a hybrid donor-sponsored/market-driven approach with decreasing intensity in donor support
18. How can USAID best support its agricultural Development Credit Authority portfolio, which will start in the second half of 2012?
19. Are there successful strategies for increasing income for subsistence farmers?

## **Interview Guide: Other Donors**

### **Program Results, Impact and Major Successes**

1. AAC contributions to Albania's performance in the agricultural sector
2. Short-term impact of the market information system and its long-term sustainability potential
3. Effectiveness of AAC implementation strategies and approaches
4. Gender considerations
5. Assessment of AAC objectives and expected results relative to its overall budget and human resources
6. Assessment of AAC objectives and expected results relative to its overall budget and human resources
7. Assessment of AAC original assumptions for the implementation of program activities

### **Lessons Learned from AAC Implementation**

8. Assessment of AAC technical approaches and products in terms of their viability and relevance to beneficiaries
9. What geographic area(s) has (have) shown the most progress in developing market-driven production and why?
10. Identification of successful collaboration and synergy with other USAID and other donor-funded activities
11. Identification of successful collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture

### **Recommendations for Continued USAID Support**

12. Critical elements in USAID support that should be continued after January 2013 and additional elements to be considered
13. Prospects for short-term sustainability in moving toward a hybrid donor-sponsored/market-driven approach with decreasing intensity in donor support
14. How can USAID best support its agricultural Development Credit Authority portfolio, which will start in the second half of 2012?
15. Are there successful strategies for increasing income for subsistence farmers?

## **Interview Guide: Universities and Technology Transfer Centers**

### **Program Results, Impact and Major Successes**

1. AAC contributions to Albania's performance in the agricultural sector
2. AAC contributions to market-driven production
  - Market information
  - Agricultural/agribusiness associations
  - Access to new technologies and markets
3. AAC contributions to enhanced quality of produce
4. AAC contributions to reducing market risk and procurement costs
5. AAC contributions to enhanced post-harvest handling and other market practices
6. Short-term impact of the market information system and its long-term sustainability potential
7. Effectiveness of AAC implementation strategies and approaches
8. Assessment of AAC objectives and expected results relative to its overall budget and human resources
9. Assessment of AAC objectives and expected results relative to its overall budget and human resources

### **Lessons Learned from AAC Implementation**

10. Assessment of AAC technical approaches and products in terms of their viability and relevance to beneficiaries
11. Beneficiaries' adoption of AAC new technologies and management practices, and their impact on their businesses
12. What geographic area(s) has (have) shown the most progress in developing market-driven production and why?
13. Identification of successful collaboration and synergy with other USAID and other donor-funded activities
14. Identification of successful collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture

### **Recommendations for Continued USAID Support**

15. Critical elements in USAID support that should be continued after January 2013 and additional elements to be considered
16. Prospects for short-term sustainability in moving toward a hybrid donor-sponsored/market-driven approach with decreasing intensity in donor support
17. Are there successful strategies for increasing income for subsistence farmers?

## **Interview Guide: Traders, Farmer Organizations, Agribusiness Associations**

### **Program Results, Impact and Major Successes**

1. AAC contributions to market-driven production
  - Market information
  - Agricultural/agribusiness associations
  - Access to new technologies and markets
2. AAC contributions to enhanced quality of produce
3. AAC contributions to reducing market risk and procurement costs
4. AAC contributions to enhanced post-harvest handling and other market practices
5. Short-term impact of the market information system and its long-term sustainability potential
6. Effectiveness of AAC implementation strategies and approaches
7. Gender considerations
8. Environmental considerations
9. Assessment of AAC objectives and expected results relative to its overall budget and human resources
10. Assessment of AAC objectives and expected results relative to its overall budget and human resources
11. Assessment of AAC original assumptions for the implementation of program activities

### **Lessons Learned from AAC Implementation**

12. Assessment of AAC technical approaches and products in terms of their viability and relevance to beneficiaries
13. Beneficiaries' adoption of AAC new technologies and management practices, and their impact on their businesses
14. What geographic area(s) has (have) shown the most progress in developing market-driven production and why?

### **Recommendations for Continued USAID Support**

15. Critical elements in USAID support that should be continued after January 2013 and additional elements to be considered
16. Prospects for short-term sustainability in moving toward a hybrid donor-sponsored/market-driven approach with decreasing intensity in donor support
17. Are there successful strategies for increasing income for subsistence farmers?

## **ANNEX IV: EVALUATION SCOPE OF WORK**

## **STATEMENT OF WORK**

This Statement of Work (SOW) calls for an evaluation team to conduct an external performance evaluation of the AAC Program for three weeks.

## **BACKGROUND**

On July 13, 2007, USAID awarded a competitive five-year contract to Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI) to implement the Albanian Agricultural Competitiveness (MC) Program.

Albania is largely an agricultural economy generating one-fifth of the country's GDP and providing the income base of almost half the population in Albania. The sector has good potential for growth with such favorable assets as fertile soils, favorable climatic conditions, proximity to EU markets, and educated, low cost labor force. Yet it remains at subsistence farming with few competitive agribusinesses moving into commercial farming or exporting.

To address these overall conditions, the aim of the AAC Program has been to stimulate sustained growth of Albania's agricultural sector and increase rural household income by developing and strengthening the competitiveness of producers and other operators in the market chain of high-value agricultural products. The program was designed to provide technical assistance and training to producers and to other stakeholders in promising selected value chains, in order to improve productivity and competitiveness, with the following results: (1) increased annual growth of the national agricultural sector; (2) reduced poverty in the targeted areas; and (3) increased domestic and export sales of targeted commodities.

The AAC Program operates through its main office in Tirana and four regional offices, in Lushnja, Korça, Shkodra, and Saranda, which provide program services to more than 600 individual farmer-clients, farmer's associations, traders, consolidators, and wholesalers focused on the production and sale of five high-value agriculture commodities, for example, apples, citrus, melons, olives, and greenhouse vegetables. The program also provides services and coordinates with Albania's Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Consumer Protection, the Agriculture University of Tirana, among others. The MC program has the following components:

### **Component I: Strengthening Producer Capacity for Competitive Farming**

Through technical assistance and training, AAC Program aimed at developing and strengthening the capacity of Albanian producers to engage commercially and to compete in the domestic and international markets. Interventions aimed to strengthen producer capabilities for improving production practices that respond to market demand. The expected results are increased commercial production, improved yield per hectare, and reduced production cost per unit of output of targeted commodities.

### **Component II: Strengthen Capability for Market Development**

The AAC Program has focused on building the capacity of producers and consolidators of targeted commodities to expand their existing and penetrate new domestic and international markets. The program is working to promote market facilitating services that assist farmers, processors, wholesalers, and retailers to increase supplies of higher quality produce, reduce uncertainty and procurement costs, and enhance and expand post-harvest handling and other market practices. The expected results are farmers' penetration in new domestic and international markets identified and increasing number and value of transactions completed as a result of the program assistance.

#### Component III: Increase Access and Use of Timely and Reliable Market Information

The AAC Program supported the establishment of a functional, reliable agricultural market information system, available and accessible to participants in the market chains for targeted commodities. The AAC Program also trained producers and consolidators to better understand and analyze information for production planning and marketing purposes. The expected results are the establishment of a functional and reliable agricultural market information system and increased capability of producers and traders to better use the information for production and marketing planning.

Also see Annex 1 for the Program's "Causal Model" and Annex 2 for a list of the Program's Performance Indicators.

### **PURPOSE AND EVALUATION TASKS**

1. To assess the performance and the achievements of the AAC Program to date.
2. To cultivate best practices and lessons-learned from the AAC Program.
3. To assess and recommend any other opportunities in the agriculture sector that should be considered for future funding/support.
4. To provide USAID/Albania with practical and implementable recommendations for core USAID support to the agricultural sector utilizing host-country institution(s).

#### **At minimum, the evaluation report must address the following:**

##### ***Area 1: Program Results, Impact, and Main Successes***

- How has the AAC Program contributed to Albania's performance in the agricultural sector?
- To what extent have AAC activities resulted in market-driven production -- based on market information, consolidated farmers networks, and access to new technologies and markets?
- As a result of the Program...How have assisted farmers, consolidators and traders assessed the Program's impact on the quality of their produce?
- To what extent has there been a change in the level of risk and overall reduction of procurement costs in the market?

- How have beneficiaries enhanced and expanded post-harvest handling and other market practices?
- What is the short and long-term assessment of the sustainability and impact of the Market Information System (MIS)?
- Assess the effectiveness of the project's implementation strategies and approaches.
- Were the expected project results and objectives realistic with regard to the program's overall budgetary and human resources?
- Were the original assumptions for undertaking these activities accurate? How could they be improved?

***Area 2: Lessons learned from the AAC Program***

- According to beneficiaries (farmers, consolidators, exporters, etc.), what technical approaches or products of the AAC Program were the most helpful/viable? And the least helpful/viable?
- To what extent have beneficiaries adopted new technologies and management practices, and how have they added-value to their businesses? How could this be made more effective? What geographic area has shown the most progress in developing market-driven production, and why?
- Identify successful collaboration and synergy models with other USAID-or with other donor funded activities.
- Identify successful collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture.
- Identify activities, associations, crops most likely to develop with limited support.

***Area 3: Recommendations for Continued USAID Support in the Sector***

- What are the critical core elements in USAID's agricultural support that should be continued after January 2013? What are other elements to be considered?
- What are the prospects for sustainability in short term (two -three years) in moving towards a hybrid donor-sponsored/market driven with a sliding downward scale of donor support?
- How can USAID best support its agricultural Development Credit Authority portfolio which will start in the second half of 2012?
- Is there/are there successful strategies for increasing income for subsistence farmers?

## **ANNEX IV: FINAL WORKPLAN**



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## **WORK PLAN**

# **Performance Evaluation of the Albanian Agricultural Competitiveness (AAC) Project**

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Submitted by:

**ME&A**

**Mendez England & Associates**

## **BACKGROUND**

Agriculture is a major component of Albania's economy. It generates approximately 20 percent of its gross domestic product. With appropriate policies, support, and regulatory and legal framework, agriculture has significant potential to become a powerful engine for the country's economic growth and its competitiveness in international markets. However, the agricultural sector in Albania faces a number of challenges such as a large number of very small and fragmented farmers; poor rural infrastructure; outdated technique; low labor productivity; and limited technological innovation.

For these reasons, there are only a few competitive agribusinesses moving into commercial farming or exports. According to a World Bank report, agribusiness exports in Albania had stagnated at 8 percent of total exports in 2007, compared with 16 percent in Macedonia, and 20 percent in Serbia, while agricultural food imports constituted 18 percent of total imports, compared with 14 percent in Macedonia, and 7 percent in Serbia.

Recognizing the importance of agribusiness in Albania, USAID has funded several initiatives and programs, including the Albanian Agricultural Competitiveness (AAC) project. AAC focuses on providing technical assistance to producers and other stakeholders to promote sustained growth of Albania's agriculture, and stimulate its competitiveness in domestic and international markets.

AAC operates through its main office in Tirana, two regional offices in Korça and Lushnja, and two satellite offices in Shkodra and Saranda. The four offices provide program services to more than 600 individual farmer-clients, farmer associations, traders, consolidators, and wholesalers focused on the production and sale of high-value agricultural commodities such as apples, citrus, melons, olives, greenhouse vegetables, field-grown vegetables and herbs and Spices. The program also provides services to and coordinates with government institutions such as Albania's Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Consumer Protection and the Agriculture University of Tirana and Korça University.

## **EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY**

### **Objectives**

The major objectives of the evaluation are to:

- Assess AAC performance and achievements to date
- Identify best practices and lessons-learned from AAC implementation.
- Assess and recommend any other opportunities in the agriculture sector that should be considered for future funding support.
- Provide USAID/Albania with practical and implementable recommendations for core D support to the agricultural sector using host-country institutions.

### **Methodology**

The table below lists the proposed evaluation questions, sources of data to conduct the evaluation, and proposed methods for data collection. Data will be collected from available AAC documents such as: AAC SOW and deliverables; AAC annual workplans, progress reports, consultant reports, and performance management plan (PMP); AAC self-assessment report; and USAID/Albania's country development cooperation strategy

(CDCS). Other data collection sources include program managers (USAID and implementing contractor personnel); government officials; local institutions with relevance to agriculture and agribusiness development in Albania, including universities and collaborating organizations; other donor programs with relevance to AAC activities; and AAC direct beneficiaries, including individual farmer-clients, individual traders dealing with AAC commodities, and farmer and agribusiness associations.

Rapid appraisal methods will be used to collect the information. Rapid appraisal techniques offer systematic low-cost ways to gather data in support of managers' information needs, particularly regarding program performance. Due to time and resource constraints, two rapid appraisal techniques will mostly be used for this evaluation: direct observations and thorough interviews with stakeholders. If feasible, focus group interviews will be conducted with selected members from agribusiness and farmer associations. Quantitative analysis will be limited to data provided by AAC staff and other stakeholders.

Key informant interviews are qualitative, in-depth interviews of individuals selected for their first-hand knowledge of the program. Key informants include program managers, host-government officials, donor organizations, and beneficiaries. The objective of the interviews is to probe for information about program activities to identify successes and shortcomings, and help formulate recommendations to improve program performance.

Various interview guides are provided as an annex to this workplan. The proposed interview guides serve as a checklist to ensure that a given category of respondents provide information on the same topics, and are based on the evaluation questions most relevant to those respondents (see below).

The interview guides do not include obvious items such as explaining the purpose of the interview, the intended use of the information and assurances of confidentiality. Nor do they contain questions relative to the organization the interviewee represents, as this information varies across individuals and organizations

The proposed guides do not use rigid questionnaires, as these inhibit free discussions. Each guide is designed in the form of an outline that covers the topics to be discussed, allowing flexibility to ask supplementary questions for clarification or pursue unanticipated but relevant issues. The proposed guides cover all major stakeholders so that divergent interests and perceptions can be captured.

The evaluation team will jointly interview representatives of key organizations involved in AAC activities, including USAID/Albania, key implementing contractor staff and government officials in Tirana. While in the field, two separate teams will be formed to collect information from AAC direct beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

For internal communications and recordkeeping, team members will prepare meeting notes that summarize their individual meetings. To the extent possible, team members will meet daily throughout the evaluation to share findings and discuss major conclusions and recommendations. The evaluation team will spend the last few days in Tirana to finalize key findings, conclusions and recommendations for presentation to USAID, and to discuss how the draft and final reports will be completed.

Evaluation Questions, Data Sources and Data Collection Methods	
Evaluation Questions	Data Sources and Data Collection Methods
<b>1. Program Results, Impact and Major Successes</b>	
1.1. AAC contributions to Albania's performance in the agricultural sector	Program documents; interviews with program managers (USAID, implementing contractor staff), other donors, government officials at national and local levels, universities & technology transfer centers
1.2. AAC contributions to market-driven production	
<b>1.1.1 1.2.1. Market information</b>	Program documents; interviews with implementing contractor staff, government officials at national and local levels, universities & technology transfer centers, farmer associations/groups, agribusiness associations, individual traders
<b>1.1.2 1.2.2. Agricultural/agribusiness associations</b>	Program documents; interviews with implementing contractor staff, government officials at national and local levels, universities & technology transfer centers, farmer associations/groups, agribusiness associations, individual traders
<b>1.1.3 1.2.3. Access to new technologies and markets</b>	Program documents; interviews with implementing contractor staff, government officials at national and local levels, universities & technology transfer centers, farmer associations/groups, agribusiness associations, individual traders
1.3. AAC contributions to enhanced quality of produce	Program documents; interviews with implementing contractor staff, government officials at national and local levels, universities & technology transfer centers, farmer associations/groups, agribusiness associations, individual traders
1.4. AAC contributions to reducing market risk and procurement costs	Program documents; interviews with implementing contractor staff, government officials at national and local levels, universities & technology transfer centers, farmer associations/groups, agribusiness associations, individual traders
1.5. AAC contributions to enhanced post-harvest handling and other market practices	Program documents; interviews with implementing contractor staff, government officials at national and local levels, universities & technology transfer centers, farmer associations/groups, agribusiness associations, individual traders
1.6. Short-term impact of the market information system and its long-term sustainability potential	Program documents; interviews with program managers (USAID, implementing contractor staff), other donors, government officials at national and local levels, universities & technology transfer centers, farmer associations/groups, agribusiness associations, individual traders
1.7. Effectiveness of AAC implementation strategies and approaches	Program documents; interviews with program managers (USAID, implementing contractor staff), other donors, government officials at national and local levels, universities & technology transfer centers, farmer associations/groups, agribusiness associations, individual traders
1.8. Gender considerations	Program documents; interviews with program managers (USAID, implementing contractor staff), other donors, government

	officials at national and local levels, farmer associations/groups, agribusiness associations, individual traders
1.9. Environmental considerations	Program documents; interviews with program managers (USAID, implementing contractor staff), farmer associations/groups, agribusiness associations, individual traders
1.10. Assessment of AAC objectives and expected results relative to its overall budget and human resources	Program documents; interviews with program managers (USAID, implementing contractor staff), other donors, government officials at national and local levels, universities & technology transfer centers
1.11. Assessment of AAC original assumptions for the implementation of program activities	Program documents; interviews with program managers (USAID, implementing contractor staff), other donors, government officials at national and local levels
<b>2. Lessons Learned from AAC Implementation</b>	
2.1. Assessment of AAC technical approaches and products in terms of their viability and relevance to beneficiaries	Program documents; interviews with program managers (USAID, implementing contractor staff), other donors, government officials at national and local levels, universities & technology transfer centers, farmer associations/groups, agribusiness associations, individual traders
2.2. Beneficiaries' adoption of AAC new technologies and management practices, and their impact on their businesses	Program documents; interviews with program managers (USAID, implementing contractor staff), farmer associations/groups, agribusiness associations, individual traders
2.3. What geographic area(s) has (have) shown the most progress in developing market-driven production and why?	Program documents; interviews with program managers (USAID, implementing contractor staff), other donors, government officials at national and local levels, universities & technology transfer centers, farmer associations/groups, agribusiness associations, individual traders
2.4. Identification of successful collaboration and synergy with other USAID and other donor-funded activities	Program documents; interviews with program managers (USAID, implementing contractor staff), other donors, government officials at national and local levels, universities & technology transfer centers
2.5. Identification of successful collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture	Program documents; interviews with program managers (USAID, implementing contractor staff), other donors, government officials at national and local levels, universities & technology transfer centers
<b>3. Recommendations for Continued USAID Support</b>	
3.1. Critical elements in USAID support that should be continued after January 2013 and additional elements to be considered	Program documents; interviews with program managers (USAID, implementing contractor staff), other donors, government officials at national and local levels, universities & technology transfer centers, farmer associations/groups, agribusiness associations, individual traders
3.2. Prospects for short-term sustainability in moving toward a hybrid donor-sponsored/market-driven	Program documents; interviews with program managers (USAID, implementing contractor staff), other donors, government officials at national and local levels, universities & technology transfer centers, farmer associations/groups, agribusiness

approach with decreasing intensity in donor support	associations, individual traders
3.3. How can USAID best support its agricultural Development Credit Authority portfolio, which will start in the second half of 2012?	DCA documents; interviews with program managers (USAID, implementing contractor staff), other donors, government officials at national and local levels
3.4. Are there successful strategies for increasing income for subsistence farmers?	Program documents; interviews with program managers (USAID, implementing contractor staff), other donors, government officials at national and local levels, universities & technology transfer centers, farmer associations/groups, agribusiness associations, individual traders
3.5. Critical elements in USAID support that should be continued after January 2013 and additional elements to be considered	Program documents; interviews with program managers (USAID, implementing contractor staff), other donors, government officials at national and local levels, universities & technology transfer centers, farmer associations/groups, agribusiness associations, individual traders

Preliminary List of Site Visits and Meetings (*)	
Location	Organization
<b>Tirana</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• USAID</li> <li>• Implementing contractor staff</li> <li>• Government officials at the national level</li> <li>• Other donors</li> <li>• Universities and technology transfer centers</li> <li>• Farmer associations/groups</li> <li>• Agribusiness associations</li> <li>• Individual traders</li> </ul>
<b>Lushnje</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementing contractor staff</li> <li>• Government officials at the regional level</li> <li>• Universities and technology transfer centers</li> <li>• Farmer associations/groups</li> <li>• Agribusiness associations</li> <li>• Individual traders</li> </ul>
<b>Fier</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementing contractor staff</li> <li>• Government officials at the regional level</li> <li>• Universities and technology transfer centers</li> <li>• Farmer associations/groups</li> <li>• Agribusiness associations</li> <li>• Individual traders</li> </ul>
<b>Berat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementing contractor staff</li> <li>• Government officials at the regional level</li> <li>• Universities and technology transfer centers</li> <li>• Farmer associations/groups</li> <li>• Agribusiness associations</li> <li>• Individual traders</li> </ul>
<b>Vlora</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementing contractor staff</li> <li>• Government officials at the regional level</li> <li>• Universities and technology transfer centers</li> <li>• Farmer associations/groups</li> <li>• Agribusiness associations</li> <li>Individual traders</li> </ul>
<b>Korca</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementing contractor staff</li> <li>• Government officials at the regional level</li> <li>• Universities and technology transfer centers</li> <li>• Farmer associations/groups</li> <li>• Agribusiness associations</li> <li>• Individual traders</li> </ul>

(\*) For more detail, see schedule in annex

## SCHEDULE OF DELIVERABLES

Deliverable	Date
Workplan	June 13, 2012
USAID Presentation	July 2, 2012
Draft evaluation report	July 20, 2012
Final Report	One week after receiving USAID comments

**ANNEX I: PRELIMINARY REPORT OUTLINE**

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- 1.1 Background and Project Description**
- 1.2 Evaluation Objectives and Methodology**
- 1.1.4 1.2.1 Objectives**
- 1.1.5 1.2.2 Methodology**
- 1.3 Organization of the Report

### CHAPTER 2: PROGRAM RESULTS, IMPACT AND MAJOR SUCCESSES

- 2.1. AAC contributions to Albania's performance in the agricultural sector
- 2.2. AAC contributions to market-driven production
- 1.1.6 2.2.1. Market information**
- 1.1.7 2.2.2. Agricultural/agribusiness associations**
- 1.1.8 2.2.3. Access to new technologies and markets**
- 2.3. AAC contributions to enhanced quality of produce
- 2.4. AAC contributions to reducing market risk and procurement costs
- 2.5. AAC contributions to enhanced post-harvest handling and other market practices
- 2.6. Short-term impact of the market information system and its long-term sustainability potential
- 2.7. Effectiveness of AAC implementation strategies and approaches
- 2.8. Gender considerations
- 2.9. Environmental considerations
- 2.10. Assessment of AAC objectives and expected results relative to its overall budget and human resources
- 2.11. Assessment of AAC original assumptions for the implementation of program activities
- 2.12. Summary and conclusions

### CHAPTER 3: LESSONS LEARNED FROM AAC IMPLEMENTATION

- 3.1. Assessment of AAC technical approaches and products in terms of their viability and relevance to beneficiaries
- 3.2. Beneficiaries' adoption of AAC new technologies and management practices, and their impact on their businesses
- 3.3. What geographic area(s) has (have) shown the most progress in developing market-driven production and why?

- 3.4. Identification of successful collaboration and synergy with other USAID and other donor-funded activities
- 3.5. Identification of successful collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture
- 3.6. Identification of activities, associations, crops most likely to develop with limited support
- 3.7. Summary and conclusions

#### **CHAPTER 4: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONTINUED USAID SUPPORT**

- 4.1. Critical elements in USAID support that should be continued after January 2013 and additional elements to be considered
- 4.2. Prospects for short-term sustainability in moving toward a hybrid donor-sponsored/market-driven approach with decreasing intensity in donor support
- 4.3. How can USAID best support its agricultural Development Credit Authority portfolio, which will start in the second half of 2012?
- 4.4. Are there successful strategies for increasing income for subsistence farmers?
- 4.5. Summary and conclusions

## **ANNEX II: INTERVIEW GUIDES**

## Interview Guide: USAID

### Program Results, Impact and Major Successes

18. How has the AAC program contributed to Albania's performance in the agricultural sector?
19. Can you assess the (a) short-term impact of the market information system and (b) its long-term sustainability potential?
20. Can you assess the effectiveness of AAC implementation strategies and approaches? Please give specific examples.
21. Did AAC activities have an impact on gender? If so, in what way? What else could have been done to achieve greater results?
22. Did AAC activities have an impact on the environment? If so, in what way? What else could have been done to achieve greater results?
23. Were AAC objectives and expected results realistic relative to its overall budget and human resources?
24. Were the original assumptions for implementing AAC activities accurate? How could they be made more accurate?

### Lessons Learned from AAC Implementation

25. What geographic area(s) has (have) shown the most progress in developing market-driven production and why? What geographic area(s) has (have) shown the least progress and why?
26. How do you rate AAC collaboration and synergy with other USAID- and donor-funded activities? Can you identify successful cases of such collaboration and synergy? What else could have been done to further improve collaboration and synergy with other USAID- and donor-funded activities?
27. How do you rate AAC collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture? Can you identify successful cases of such collaboration? What else could have been done to further improve collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture?

## Recommendations for Continued USAID Support

28. What are the critical elements in USAID support that should be continued after January 2013? Should additional elements be considered? For each element recommended, identify the degree to which it can realistically be implemented in terms of stakeholders' capability and experience as well as incentives and risk.
29. What are the prospects for short-term sustainability in moving toward a hybrid donor-sponsored/market-driven approach with decreasing intensity in donor support?
30. How can USAID best support its agricultural Development Credit Authority portfolio, which will start in the second half of 2012?
31. Are there successful strategies for increasing income for subsistence farmers?

## Interview Guide: Implementing Contractor

### Program Results, Impact and Major Successes

22. How has the AAC program contributed to Albania's performance in the agricultural sector?
23. To what extent have AAC activities resulted in market-driven production in the following three areas?
  - Market information
  - Agricultural/agribusiness associations
  - Access to new technologies and markets
24. Can you assess AAC's impact on the quality of farmers', consolidators' and traders' produce? Please give specific examples.
25. Can you assess AAC's contributions to reducing market risk and procurement costs? Please give specific examples.
26. Can you assess AAC's contributions to enhanced post-harvest handling and other market practices? Please give specific examples.
27. Can you assess (a) the short-term impact of the market information system and (b) its long-term sustainability potential?
28. Can you assess the effectiveness of AAC implementation strategies and approaches? Please give specific examples.
29. Did AAC activities have an impact on gender? If so, in what way? What else could have been done to achieve greater results?
30. Did AAC activities have an impact on the environment? If so, in what way? What else could have been done to achieve greater results?
31. Were AAC objectives and expected results realistic relative to its overall budget and human resources?
32. Were the original assumptions for implementing AAC activities accurate? How could they be made more realistic?

### **Lessons Learned from AAC Implementation**

33. Can you assess AAC technical approaches and products in terms of their viability and relevance to beneficiaries? Give specific examples.
34. Can you assess beneficiaries' adoption of AAC new technologies and management practices, and their impact on their businesses? Give specific examples.
35. How do you rate AAC collaboration and synergy with other USAID- and donor-funded activities? Can you identify successful cases of such collaboration and synergy? What else could have been done to further improve collaboration and synergy with other USAID- and donor-funded activities?
36. How do you rate AAC collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture? Can you identify successful cases of such collaboration? What else could have been done to further improve collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture?
37. Can you identify AAC elements that are most likely to develop with limited support in the following areas?
  - Associations
  - Crops
  - Activities
  - Other

### **Recommendations for Continued USAID Support**

38. What are the critical elements in USAID support that should be continued after January 2013? Should additional elements be considered? For each element recommended, identify the degree to which it can realistically be implemented in terms of stakeholders' capability and experience as well as incentives and risk.
39. What are the prospects for short-term sustainability in moving toward a hybrid donor-sponsored/market-driven approach with decreasing intensity in donor support?
40. How can USAID best support its agricultural Development Credit Authority portfolio, which will start in the second half of 2012?

41. Are there successful strategies for increasing income for subsistence farmers?

## Interview Guide: Government Officials

### Program Results, Impact and Major Successes

1. Has the AAC program contributed to Albania's performance in the agricultural sector? If so, in what way?
2. To what extent have AAC activities resulted in market-driven production in the following three areas?
  - Market information
  - Agricultural/agribusiness associations
  - Access to new technologies and markets
3. Can you assess AAC's impact on the quality of farmers', consolidators' and traders' produce? Please give specific examples.
4. Can you assess AAC's contributions to reducing market risk and procurement costs? Please give specific examples.
5. Can you assess AAC's contributions to enhanced post-harvest handling and other market practices? Please give specific examples.
6. Can you assess (a) the short-term impact of the market information system and (b) its long-term sustainability potential?
7. Can you assess the effectiveness of AAC implementation strategies and approaches? Please give specific examples.

### Lessons Learned from AAC Implementation

8. Can you assess AAC technical approaches and products in terms of their viability and relevance to beneficiaries? Please give specific examples.
9. Can you assess beneficiaries' adoption of AAC new technologies and management practices, and their impact on their businesses? Please give specific examples.
10. How do you rate AAC collaboration and synergy with other USAID- and donor-funded activities? Can you identify successful cases of such collaboration and synergy? What else could have been done to further improve collaboration and synergy with other USAID- and donor-funded activities?

11. How do you rate AAC collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture? Can you identify successful cases of such collaboration? What else could have been done to further improve collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture?

### **Recommendations for Continued USAID Support**

12. What are the critical elements in USAID support that should be continued after January 2013? Should additional elements be considered? For each element recommended, identify the degree to which it can realistically be implemented in terms of stakeholders' capability and experience as well as incentives and risk.
13. What are the prospects for short-term sustainability in moving toward a hybrid donor-sponsored/market-driven approach with decreasing intensity in donor support?
14. How can USAID best support its agricultural Development Credit Authority portfolio, which will start in the second half of 2012?
15. Are there successful strategies for increasing income for subsistence farmers?

## Interview Guide: Other Donors

### Program Results, Impact and Major Successes

16. Has the AAC program contributed to Albania's performance in the agricultural sector? If so, what are those contributions?
17. Can you assess (a) the short-term impact of the market information system and (b) its long-term sustainability potential?
18. Can you assess the effectiveness of AAC implementation strategies and approaches? Please give specific examples.

### Lessons Learned from AAC Implementation

19. Can you assess AAC technical approaches and products in terms of their viability and relevance to beneficiaries? Give specific examples.
20. How do you rate AAC collaboration and synergy with other USAID- and donor-funded activities? Can you identify successful cases of such collaboration and synergy? What else could have been done to further improve collaboration and synergy with other USAID- and donor-funded activities?
21. How do you rate AAC collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture? Can you identify successful cases of such collaboration? What else could have been done to further improve collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture?

### Recommendations for Continued USAID Support

22. What are the critical elements in USAID support that should be continued after January 2013? Should additional elements be considered? For each element recommended, identify the degree to which it can realistically be implemented in terms of stakeholders' capability and experience as well as incentives and risk.
23. What are the prospects for short-term sustainability in moving toward a hybrid donor-sponsored/market-driven approach with decreasing intensity in donor support?
24. How can USAID best support its agricultural Development Credit Authority portfolio, which will start in the second half of 2012?
25. Are there successful strategies for increasing income for subsistence farmers?

## Interview Guide: Universities and Technology Transfer Centers

### Program Results, Impact and Major Successes

1. Has the AAC program contributed to Albania's performance in the agricultural sector? If so, what are those contributions?
2. To what extent have AAC activities resulted in market-driven production in the following three areas?
  - Market information
  - Agricultural/agribusiness associations
  - Access to new technologies and markets
3. Can you assess AAC's impact on the quality of farmers', consolidators' and traders' produce? Please give specific examples.
4. Can you assess AAC's contributions to reducing market risk and procurement costs? Please give specific examples.
5. Can you assess AAC's contributions to enhanced post-harvest handling and other market practices? Please give specific examples.
6. Can you assess (a) the short-term impact of the market information system and (b) its long-term sustainability potential?
7. Can you assess the effectiveness of AAC implementation strategies and approaches? Please give specific examples.

### Lessons Learned from AAC Implementation

8. Can you assess AAC technical approaches and products in terms of their viability and relevance to beneficiaries? Give specific examples.
9. Can you assess beneficiaries' adoption of AAC new technologies and management practices, and their impact on their businesses? Give specific examples.
10. What geographic area(s) has (have) shown the most progress in developing market-driven production and why?
11. How do you rate AAC collaboration and synergy with other USAID- and donor-funded activities? Can you identify successful cases of such collaboration and

- synergy? What else could have been done to further improve collaboration and synergy with other USAID- and donor-funded activities?
12. How do you rate AAC collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture? Can you identify successful cases of such collaboration? What else could have been done to further improve collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture?

### **Recommendations for Continued USAID Support**

13. What are the critical elements in USAID support that should be continued after January 2013? Should additional elements be considered? For each element recommended, identify the degree to which it can realistically be implemented in terms of stakeholders' capability and experience as well as incentives and risk.
14. What are the prospects for short-term sustainability in moving toward a hybrid donor-sponsored/market-driven approach with decreasing intensity in donor support?
15. Are there successful strategies for increasing income for subsistence farmers?

## Interview Guide: Traders, Farmer Organizations, Agribusiness Associations

### Program Results, Impact and Major Successes

1. Has the AAC program contributed to Albania's performance in the agricultural sector? If so, what are those contributions?
2. To what extent have AAC activities resulted in market-driven production in the following three areas?
  - Market information
  - Agricultural/agribusiness associations
  - Access to new technologies and markets
3. Can you assess AAC's impact on the quality of your produce? Please give specific examples.
4. Can you assess AAC's contributions to reducing your market risk and procurement costs? Please give specific examples.
5. Can you assess AAC's contributions to enhanced post-harvest handling and other market practices? Please give specific examples
6. Can you assess (a) the short-term impact of the market information system and (b) its long-term sustainability potential?
7. Can you assess the effectiveness of AAC implementation strategies and approaches? Please give specific examples.
8. Have AAC activities had an impact on gender? If so, in what way? What else could have been done to achieve greater results?
9. Have AAC activities included environmental support? If so, what kind of environmental support was provided? What else could have been done to deal with environmental issues?

### **Lessons Learned from AAC Implementation**

10. Can you assess AAC technical approaches and products in terms of their viability and relevance to you? Give specific examples.
11. Have you adopted any of AAC new technologies and management practices? Did they have an impact on your business? Give specific examples.

### **Recommendations for Continued USAID Support**

12. Will you need additional AAC support in the next two to four years? If so, what kind of support will you need and why?
13. Is there any AAC support that you will no longer need? If so, what kind of support is it and why do you think it will no longer be needed?

**ANNEX III: PROPOSED WORKPLAN SCHEDULE**

**June 2012**

MONDAY	TUESDA	WEDNESDAY	THURSDA	FRIDAY	SATURDA	SUNDAY
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7 Conference call with USAID	8 Document review	9 Document review	10 Document review
11 Document review	12 Workplan submitted	13	14 USAID comments on workplan received	15	16 Team leader travel to Albania	17 Team leader arrives in Albania  Team leader meets with other evaluation team members
18 Meeting with USAID  Meeting with AAC	19 Meetings in Tirana  Workplan approved	20 Meetings Lushnje	20 Meetings Lushnje	22 Meetings in Fier	22 Meetings in Fier	24 Travel to Berat
Tirana	Tirana	Lushnje	Lushnje	Fier	Fier	
25 Meetings in Berat	26 Meetings in VLora	27 Meetings in Korca	28 Meetings in Saranda	29 Travel to Tirana	30 Preparation for USAID outbrief	July 1
Berat	Vlora	Korca	Saranda		Tirana	Tirana

**July 2012**

<b>MONDAY</b>	<b>TUESDAY</b>	<b>WEDNESD</b>	<b>THURSDA</b>	<b>FRIDAY</b>	<b>SATURDA</b>	<b>SUNDAY</b>
2 USAID outbrief  Tirana	3 Team leader departs Tirana	4 Team leader arrival in U.S.	5 Draft report preparation	6 Draft report preparation	7	8
9 Draft report preparation	10 Draft report preparation	11 Draft report preparation	12 Draft report preparation	13 Draft report preparation	14	15
16 Draft report submitted	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30 Final report due (one week after USAID comments are received)	31					



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