



# Annual Report 2024



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# 2024 GRADUATION CEREMONY:

## A CELEBRATION OF NEW BEGINNINGS AND A HEARTFELT REUNION OF ATC AND EVN WINE ACADEMY ALUMNI

The Zabel Yessayan Agribusiness Center (ZYAC) has become a cherished venue for hosting the graduation ceremonies of the Agribusiness Teaching Center (ATC) and the EVN Wine Academy. This year's event was particularly significant, bringing together graduates from multiple cohorts to celebrate their achievements and strengthen their professional network. Held for the second time at ZYAC, the ceremony provided an opportunity for graduates to reconnect with classmates, reflect on shared experiences, and look forward to new opportunities in their respective fields. The gathering underscored the lasting impact of ATC and EVN Wine Academy in shaping skilled professionals who contribute to the advancement of agribusiness and winemaking in Armenia and beyond.

Hrachya Zakoyan, Acting Rector of the Armenian National Agrarian University

(ANAU), addressed the graduates with heartfelt congratulations, encouraging them to continue their pursuit of knowledge and refine their expertise for the betterment of the nation. He emphasized that the University remains a welcoming home for its alumni, whether they return as students, analysts, or lecturers.

Zaruhi Muradyan, Executive Director of the Vine and Wine Foundation of Armenia, also took the podium, offering her congratulations to the graduates. She expressed hope that the EVN Wine Academy alumni would bring fresh, innovative ideas to the wine industry, motivating them to embrace future challenges with passion and creativity.





Messages of congratulations were conveyed via video by Professor John Nichols, Chairman of the ICARE Board, and Professor John Hanf from Geisenheim University, both wishing the graduates continued success and achievements.

Their words of encouragement reinforced the strong global connections that support the growth and development of the academy's alumni.

A special video presentation showcasing congratulations from ATC graduates residing abroad added a personal touch to the ceremony, bringing joy to the graduates as they saw familiar faces and received well-wishes from afar. This heartfelt connection served as a reminder of the global community bound together by their shared experiences at ATC and EVN Wine Academy.

The ceremony culminated in the awarding of diplomas and the traditional tossing of graduation caps, symbolizing the end of one chapter and the beginning of another. The event was a resounding success, reaffirming the role of the Agribusiness Teaching Center and EVN Wine Academy in shaping

exceptional professionals. United by their commitment to the nation's development and the advancement of the winemaking industry, these graduates are poised to contribute their knowledge and expertise toward a brighter and more prosperous future.



# BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: HANDS-ON LEARNING & INDUSTRY IMMERSION

This year has been marked by significant progress in advancing experiential learning, industry collaboration, and innovation at the Agribusiness Training Center. Through hands-on training, expert-led discussions, and immersive industry visits, students gained practical insights into agribusiness, hospitality, and financial management. From engaging tours at leading wineries and cider factories to high-impact internships and research-driven capstone projects, our students actively bridged the gap between theory and practice.

Students of the Agribusiness Training Center engaged in a series of industry visits, gaining firsthand experience in agribusiness operations.

- ▶ At Villa Armos Cider Factory, third-year ATC students observed the cider production process and participated in a tasting session, expanding their understanding of beverage manufacturing.
- ▶ Visits to Armenia Wine Company and Voskevaz Winery provided students with insights into vineyard management and winemaking techniques while allowing them to explore the nuances of wine tasting.

- ▶ In 2024, ATC Students had the unique opportunity to visit the Coca-Cola Happiness Factory in Armenia. During the tour, they gained firsthand insights into modern beverage production, quality control processes, and sustainable business practices. The visit provided an engaging learning experience, allowing students to connect theoretical knowledge with real-world operations in one of the world's leading beverage companies.

These tours offered invaluable exposure to real-world agricultural production, bridging theoretical learning with practical applications.



# STUDENT VOICES:

## ERIK AND NAZELI SHARE THEIR JOURNEY AND PERSPECTIVES

**A**t the Agribusiness Teaching Center, education is more than just acquiring knowledge – it’s about fostering leadership, critical thinking, and a sense of belonging. Erik and Nazeli, two students of the Undergraduate Agribusiness Program (UAB), share their unique experiences and insights, shedding light on what makes ATC a truly exceptional learning environment. For Erik, joining ATC felt like a natural choice, influenced by years of family discussions about the program. “My parents had already started preparing me to attend ATC from a young age,” he shares. The modern, Western-structured curriculum in English and the promise of a high-quality education played



a key role in his decision. Erik’s passion lies in Microeconomics and Management, and he envisions a future where he combines these skills as a CEO. The UAB program provides him with the tools to achieve this goal, offering courses that not only build academic expertise but also enhance leadership, teamwork, and communication skills. These qualities prepare graduates for a diverse range of careers in agribusiness, economics, marketing, finance, and management.



For Nazeli, the most defining aspect of ATC is its strong sense of community. Studying in a rather small class, she describes the experience “as being part of a big family”. She emphasizes how students form deep bonds that extend beyond the classroom. From sharing meals together to supporting each other academically and personally, this unique environment creates a student experience that she believes is not found in other Armenian universities. Nazeli also appreciates ATC’s student-friendly and student-oriented atmosphere, where freedom and independence are highly valued. “The freedom that they give to the students – the freedom of choice, the freedom of speech – that is the type of environment that I want to be in when I study,” she explains. This open and dynamic educational model encourages students to explore, express themselves, and take ownership of their learning journey.

# INSIGHTS FROM INDUSTRY LEADERS: GUEST LECTURES & EXPERT SESSIONS

**T**hroughout the year, students benefited from expert-led discussions that provided practical guidance and deep industry insights:



- ▶ Martin Knezevich, Financial Director of the Campaign Center in Montenegro, delivered a specialized lecture on agricultural business budgeting, sharing tailored financial strategies for the sector.



- ▶ Ani Hovakimyan, founder of Moka Pot Cafe, led an engaging seminar on Armenia's HORECA industry, covering its unique challenges, opportunities, and evolving market trends.
- ▶ Mariana Edilian, Director of Human Resources at Viva MTS Armenia, inspired students with a session on career development, emphasizing networking, positive thinking, and time management. She also provided practical tips on résumé writing and interview preparation.

These sessions enriched students' learning experiences, equipping them with industry-specific knowledge and essential professional skills.

# SHOWCASING INNOVATION: ATC STUDENTS PRESENT FINAL PROJECTS

The final project presentations at the Agribusiness Teaching Center highlighted the creativity, research, and entrepreneurial spirit of fourth-year students. Demonstrating a diverse range of innovative ideas and business solutions, students presented projects that combined agricultural traditions with modern business approaches.

Among the standout concepts were almond paste with grape syrup and apricot dried fruits, fragrant raisins, and powder production. Others explored sustainable business models, such as homemade natural sponges from loofah (Chinese okra). In addition to business ventures, research projects tackled critical industry challenges, including an IT-driven analysis of community lands along Armenia's river basins, economic efficiency assessments of greenhouse models, and plant species mapping using remote sensing tools.

These projects not only showcased students' academic growth and technical expertise but also demonstrated their potential to impact the agribusiness sector with practical, forward-thinking solutions. Many of the ideas are already in development, proving the viability and entrepreneurial mindset fostered at ATC.

## INTERNSHIP INSIGHTS

The English-based instruction at the ATC has enabled me to adapt quickly in my internship workplace, particularly while I'm interning at the International Relations. Additionally, the digital marketing skills I gained at university are coming in handy during my.

**Arevik Hovhannisyan,**  
ATC Senior Student



# CELEBRATING THE 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF EVN WINE ACADEMY AND THE LAUNCH OF OUR EXPERIMENTAL WINERY

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the EVN Wine Academy at the ICARE Foundation, we are thrilled to announce the establishment of our state-of-the-art practical winery at the Zabel Yessayan Agribusiness Campus. This milestone represents a significant leap forward in our mission to provide hands-on winemaking education, offering students the opportunity to fully immerse themselves in all facets of the





winemaking process. The new winery will also serve as a vital resource for aspiring winemakers across Armenia, equipping them with the practical skills and knowledge essential to their success.

The realization of this project was made possible through the generous support of ICARE's visionary leaders, Judith Saryan and Victor Zarougian, along with the H. Hovnanian Family Foundation. We are also proud to highlight the installation of rooftop solar energy panels, funded by the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ), which are part of our commitment to sustainability. These panels are a key feature of our newly established student winery, reinforcing our dedication to eco-friendly practices.

The Enology and Wine Business program, a joint certificate program between the ICARE Foundation and Geisenheim University continues to offer an esteemed 18-month English-taught curriculum. With twelve intensive modules covering various aspects of winemaking and the wine business, this program



provides students with a comprehensive blend of theoretical knowledge and practical experience in the industry.

Our alumni have already made significant contributions to the wine sector, creating renowned wines and brands that are gaining recognition both in Armenia and abroad. As we look ahead, the student winery and ongoing development of the program will undoubtedly shape the future of Armenia's winemaking industry.

# EVN WINE ACADEMY STUDENTS EXPLORE GEORGIA'S RICH WINEMAKING HERITAGE

Students of the EVN Wine Academy recently embarked on an educational trip to the renowned Kakheti region of Georgia, a country with a deep-rooted winemaking tradition. The visit aimed to provide students with firsthand insights into Georgia's distinctive wine culture and production techniques, which differ significantly from local winemaking practices.

Kakheti, celebrated for its centuries-old viticultural heritage, offered an immersive learning experience. Students visited several esteemed wineries, including Kindzmarauli, Giuaani, and Khareba, where they explored traditional and modern Georgian winemaking methods. These visits allowed them to gain valuable knowledge about fermentation techniques, grape varieties, and aging processes unique to the region.





A highlight of the trip was the wine tasting sessions, where students had the opportunity to apply their professional expertise by evaluating the taste, aroma, and quality of various Georgian wines. This hands-on experience reinforced their theoretical learning and broadened their understanding of different winemaking approaches.



We are confident that this intensive three-day journey provided students with new perspectives, invaluable knowledge, and a deeper appreciation of regional winemaking traditions.

# EVN WINE ACADEMY STUDENTS STEP ONTO THE GLOBAL STAGE AT PROWEIN 2024

From March 10th to 12th, students of the EVN Wine Academy had the exceptional opportunity to participate in the 30th ProWein International Wine and Alcoholic Beverage Exhibition in Düsseldorf, Germany. As one of the most prestigious events in the wine industry, ProWein 2024 brought together over 6,000 exhibitors and 6,500 industry specialists from more than 60 countries, offering a strong B2B-focused platform that connects professionals across the retail, gastronomy, food, import-export, and specialized institutions sectors. With more than 500 industry events and keynotes on emerging trends, as well as dedicated spaces for spirits, craft beers, and organic products, ProWein remains an essential venue for exploring innovations in the wine industry.

For EVN students, the exhibition served as a transformative learning experience, offering them firsthand exposure to the latest industry trends, cutting-edge winemaking innovations, and evolving market dynamics. They

engaged with seasoned industry professionals and potential employers, fostering connections that could shape their future careers.

Beyond the exhibition floor, what truly inspired the students were the innovative techniques and marketing strategies showcased at ProWein. From revolutionary advancements in winemaking to creative approaches in branding and distribution, the event reinforced the importance of continuous learning and adaptability in a competitive market.

The EVN Wine Academy remains committed to experiential learning, ensuring that students not only acquire knowledge but also gain practical experiences that will influence their professional paths. As they return from Düsseldorf, these students bring back a renewed passion, a deeper understanding of the industry, and an eagerness to contribute to Armenia's growing wine sector.



# WHAT OUR STUDENTS SHARE ABOUT EVN...

**Hazreh Shanazari,**  
a student of EVN Wine Academy



“ Studying at EVN Wine Academy has been an amazing experience, and I’m so glad I got the chance to be part of it. I wasn’t originally planning to enroll for the 2023-2025 program, but things worked out, and I feel lucky to be in this class. The instructors are some of the best professionals in the wine industry, and I’ve learned so much from them. But what makes this journey even better is my classmates – we’re more than just students sitting in the same room. We help each other, talk about our mistakes, and push each other to improve every day. I’ve not only gained knowledge but also made lifelong friends.

If you’re interested in the wine industry, I recommend EVN Wine Academy, but be ready to work hard. Nothing is handed to you – you have to ask questions, put in the effort, and take every opportunity to learn. Studying wine in Armenia gives you a strong foundation and, more importantly, helps you understand how things are done here – the good and the bad. You’ll see how winemaking works in other countries and compare it to Armenia, which is key if you want to help the industry grow. It’s not just about learning; it’s about figuring out how to make a real difference”.

# WINE MAP OF ARMENIA: A GUIDE TO THE COUNTRY'S RICH CULTURAL HERITAGE



The Wine Map of Armenia serves as a gateway for locals and tourists to explore the diverse and evolving landscape of Armenian winemaking. Designed as a comprehensive guide, the map highlights the country's wine regions, key wineries, and unique grape varieties, offering a valuable resource for wine enthusiasts, travelers, and industry professionals alike.

The creation of the map was inspired by the discovery of the Areni-1 Cave, where archaeologists uncovered the world's oldest known winemaking facility, dating back over 6,000 years. This groundbreaking find reaffirmed Armenia's deep-rooted winemaking traditions and provided a strong foundation for the revival and modernization of the country's wine industry. Today, Armenia is home to an increasing number of small and medium-sized wineries, each contributing to the nation's reputation as a rising wine destination.

Recognizing the importance of accessibility, the Wine Map of Armenia has been continuously updated and printed for the past four years. It is widely available at wineries, wine bars, travel agencies, and tourism centers, ensuring that both visitors and locals can easily navigate and discover Armenia's rich winemaking heritage.

To cater to international visitors, the map is available in English and Russian, broadening its reach and making Armenian wines more accessible to a global audience. Whether exploring the high-altitude vineyards of Vayots Dzor, the volcanic soils of Aragatsotn, or the sun-drenched plains of Ararat, the Wine Map of Armenia is an essential tool for anyone looking to experience the country's thriving wine culture. The map can be found on the ICARE website or simply scanning the QR code below.

# PRESENTATION OF THE “ENOTOURISM: A TOUR GUIDE’S HANDBOOK”

On May 30, the Armenian wine tourism sector marked a significant milestone with the presentation of the book “*Enotourism: A Tour Guide’s Handbook*” and the completion ceremony of the retraining program for tour operators specializing in wine tourism. This initiative was made possible through the collaboration of the German Corporation for International Cooperation and Wines of Armenia NGO, as part of the “Private Sector Development, Vocational Education and Training” program. Delegated by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the program is co-financed by the European Union and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, emphasizing a commitment to fostering professional excellence in Armenia’s tourism sector.



## Introducing “*Enotourism: A Tour Guide’s Handbook*”

The first part of the event featured Nora Sargsyan, one of the co-authors of the newly released book, who shared insights into its creation. “*Enotourism:*

*A Tour Guide’s Handbook*” explores the evolution of Armenian winemaking, bridging its historical roots with modern industry developments. Published with the initiative and support of the MHz VET program, the book aims to serve as a valuable resource for wine guides and tourism professionals.

## Empowering Wine Tourism Professionals

Following the book presentation, Sona Khojoyan, Head of Operations at the ICARE Foundation, introduced another major achievement – the launch of a dedicated information portal for wine guides. This initiative is part of the GuideMaster program, implemented jointly with ICARE. The GuideMaster program equips wine guides with in-depth knowledge and practical skills in viticulture, winemaking, and customer engagement, ensuring they deliver engaging and immersive wine tourism experiences.

During the event, graduates of the GuideMaster and Tour Operator training programs shared their personal success stories, demonstrating the tangible impact of these initiatives on their professional growth and career advancement.





### Graduation Ceremony: A New Wave of Wine Tourism Experts

The event concluded with a graduation ceremony honoring the tour operators who successfully completed their specialized retraining in wine tourism. This training, conducted in partnership with GIZ and Wines of Armenia NGO, is a

crucial step in strengthening Armenia's position as a premier wine tourism destination.

As Armenia's wine sector continues to flourish, initiatives like these play a pivotal role in shaping a knowledgeable, skilled, and passionate community of professionals dedicated to elevating the country's wine tourism experience.

# ICARE FOUNDATION CELEBRATES THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF GUIDEMASTER III WINE GUIDE TRAINING PROGRAM

**ICARE** Foundation proudly celebrated the culmination of its third wine guide training course with a memorable event, where passionate and dedicated participants not only passed their exams but also showcased their creativity through impressive final presentations, featuring tourism projects they personally developed. A defining moment in the program was the presentation of certificates to the new qualified wine guides, marking the completion of the GuideMASTER program, which has been shaping the future of wine tourism since its inception in 2020. This initiative has been supported by the “Private Sector Development and



Vocational Education and Training in the South Caucasus” program by the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) on behalf of the German government. The GuideMASTER program stands out for its comprehensive academic experience, focusing on the history of Armenian wine, viticulture, and winemaking, paired with practical lessons such as wine tastings in classrooms and at renowned wineries, and visits to Armenia’s cultural landmarks.

Anna, a participant of the third round, shared her enthusiasm for the program: “My friends who participated in previous rounds spoke highly of the GuideMASTER program, and I eagerly awaited my turn. The knowledge I gained will help me speak competently about Armenian winemaking and design

diverse and informed wine tours. Many of us have already started collaborating with tour operators, and I am confident that there will be more wine tourism opportunities in the future.” Recognized as a modular program of additional education by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports of the RA, GuideMASTER equips graduates with not only the knowledge but also a recognized certification, setting them apart in the field.

ICARE Foundation congratulates the graduates, whose skills and expertise will undoubtedly contribute to the growth of wine tourism in Armenia. We also extend gratitude to our partners – GIZ Armenia, Tourism Committee of RA, and the Vine and Wine Foundation of Armenia – for their support in making GuideMASTER a success.

As the program concludes, we eagerly anticipate the positive impact our graduates will have on the expanding Armenian wine tourism industry. Here’s to a future of knowledge, passion, and unforgettable wine experiences!



**Anahit Karapetyan,**  
a participant of  
the GUIDEMASTER Program

**G**uideMaster Program completely transformed my career path. This program shifted my life vector by 180 degrees, immersing me in the world of winemaking and viticulture – one of the most significant pillars



of our culture. For us, tour guides, winemaking is not just a profession but a way of life. Wherever we go, we carry this identity with us. After completing the GuideMaster program, wine became an integral part of my lifestyle, influencing my daily life, my family, and even my friends, who became equally fascinated by the care and appreciation for wine and grapes. Armenia's wine industry is rapidly growing, with more people choosing wine over other alcoholic beverages. The field demands constant learning and adaptation, as the topics are endless. Today, wine tourism attracts visitors who have traveled to renowned winemaking regions worldwide. These tourists are well-informed and often compare Armenia's wine industry with international standards, making it crucial for guides to be knowledgeable and capable of delivering high-quality, insightful experiences.

During the program we gained essential knowledge that will serve as a strong foundation for further exploration. The GuideMaster program equipped us with the tools to continue learning about international winemaking and viticulture – country by country – ensuring that we can represent Armenia's wine culture with the professionalism and depth it deserves.

**Meri Mirzakhanyan,**  
a participant of  
the GUIDEMASTER Program

In the previous phase of the GuideMASTER Program, we learned to distinguish Armenian grape varieties, taste them, and truly appreciate our wines. When I heard about the new program, I saw it as an opportunity to deepen my knowledge of wine and viticulture.



Thanks to ICARE, wine became an integral part of my life. The program was comprehensive and insightful, equipping me with the ability to appreciate international grape varieties, wine styles, and quality. I take great pride in having been part of this educational journey.

**Varsenik Poghosyan,**  
a participant of  
the GUIDEMASTER Program

After completing the GuideMASTER3 program, where we explored the origins, development, and modern landscape of Armenian wine production, the Level Up program felt like a natural continuation. Its main goal – deepening our understanding of global winemaking – was exactly what I was looking for. I'm grateful for this opportunity, as it allowed us to study both the Old and New World wines, analyzing the past and present of major wine-producing countries, as well as emerging players in the industry. The engaging discussions, carefully curated materials, and expertly selected wines for tasting, along with the high standards set by the ICARE Foundation, not only helped me complete the course successfully but also inspired me to continue expanding my knowledge in the field.



# FIRST-EVER DEMONSTRATION OF ORGANIC FERTILIZATION USING DRONES IN ARMENIA

For the first time in Armenia, the demonstration of the innovative method of organic fertilization of arable land using a drone was carried out. On June 14, in the picturesque Aghavndzor village of the Vayots Dzor region, with the support of the ECOserve environmental program implemented by the GIZ, a demonstration of the innovative method of organic fertilization of grasslands with a drone was organized. The purpose of the

method is to improve degraded grasslands using artificial fertilization.

The operation was carried out by the ICARE within the framework of the “Improvement of agricultural land and natural resources, contributing to food security in Syunik and Vayots Dzor regions” project.

The field visit was followed by a roundtable discussion, during which the stakeholders were presented with the achievements and main results of the event.





**Razmik Margaryan,**  
one of the beneficiaries of the program, shared  
his impressions:

“

With the help of the program, we got the opportunity to cultivate our fields and with the quality seeds provided, we already have a good economy. We can produce fodder, seeds, and generate income for our families. In addition to theoretical knowledge and participation in courses, we have actively worked with specialists and received their advice in our fields.”

In total, during this project ICARE improved 542 hectares of uncultivated farmland and 100 hectares of arable land in the communities of Syunik Marz Sisian and Vayots Dzor Marz Yeghegis. 352 beneficiaries directly benefited from the support.

# ICARE FOUNDATION CELEBRATES THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF “GREENHOUSE CROP PRODUCTION AND MANAGEMENT” COURSE

The ICARE Foundation is proud to announce the successful completion of its annual “Greenhouse Crop Production and Management” course, with a group of skilled agronomists graduating this year. The course aims to equip participants with modern knowledge and practical skills necessary for managing indoor crop cultivation, alongside insights into market trends and management practices.

The program prepares specialists in modern greenhouse structures, advanced technologies used in greenhouse environments, production materials, climate management systems, plant physiology, and plant protection. Hermine, a graduate of this year’s course, shared her reflections:

“This course has strengthened my knowledge and boosted my confidence in my work. I had the chance to exchange experiences and information with peers, and I also made new and valuable friendships. I’m grateful to the teachers for sharing their practical knowledge with us.”

Throughout the course, participants gain comprehensive knowledge in areas such as greenhouse construction, hydroponic and terrestrial greenhouse management, crop cultivation technologies, pest and disease control, and greenhouse business management. As part of the program, participants also visit operational greenhouses, including Mastara Tomato Hydroponic Greenhouse, Voskehat Strawberry Hydroponic Greenhouse, Gagarin Pink Greenhouse, and the greenhouse of valuable crops in Zvartnots.Gor Baghramyan, another participant, expressed his appreciation for the course:





“

I joined the program to deepen my professional knowledge, exchange experiences, and connect with others in the greenhouse industry. I've learned how to address production challenges efficiently, and I am happy that such programs allow us to specialize further in this field.”

Now in its 6th year, the course has seen more than 100 participants, many of whom have gone on to establish their own greenhouses or work successfully as agronomists in large and medium-sized greenhouses across Armenia. This initiative continues to contribute to the growth of the greenhouse sector, equipping professionals with the expertise needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving agricultural landscape.

# FRUTENIA PROJECT CONCLUDES WITH KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN ADVANCING ARMENIA'S FRUIT PRODUCTION SECTOR

frutenia

On April 12, 2025, the closing ceremony of the FRUTENIA project took place, marking the successful conclusion of a four-year initiative aimed at enhancing Armenia's fruit production sector. Funded by the Austrian Development Cooperation and implemented by the ICARE Foundation in partnership with the Armenian National Agrarian University (ANAU), the project has laid strong foundations for sustainable fruit sector development in Armenia.

The closing ceremony was attended by key stakeholders, including representatives from the beneficiary community, project experts, and implementing organizations. Klaus Kapper, Head of the Yerevan Office of the Austrian Development Agency, Hrachya Zakoyan, Acting Rector of ANAU, and Davide Neri, International Expert of the project, delivered speeches highlighting the importance and results of the project. Artur Grigoryan, Director of the ICARE

Foundation, presented the project's achievements, followed by reports from project beneficiaries and local experts.

The FRUTENIA project, which started in 2019, aimed to improve Armenia's fruit production sector by modernizing agricultural education, providing professional development, and promoting sustainable practices. The project focused on several key components. It modernized agronomy education at ANAU by introducing new teaching methods and updating curricula in agronomy and fruit production. The project also provided training for instructors at both ANAU and TVET institutions to ensure that the teaching staff had the necessary skills and knowledge to educate the next generation of horticulturists. The modernization of



agronomy and fruit production curricula at ANAU has provided students with up-to-date knowledge and skills, making them more competitive in the agricultural job market. Additionally, the development of new textbooks and professional manuals, aligned with modern industry requirements, has contributed to the improvement of the quality of horticultural education in Armenia.

In addition, the project established a short-term professional certificate program in "Establishment and Management of Intensive Orchards," targeting farmers, students, and faculty to equip them with the skills needed to manage

modern fruit orchards effectively. The establishment of a demonstration orchard at the Voskehat farm of ANAU provided hands-on learning opportunities for students and farmers, showcasing modern fruit production techniques.

Furthermore, the project contributed to the development of Armenia's first-ever e-learning platform dedicated to fruit production, [www.aygi.am](http://www.aygi.am). This platform serves as a resource for farmers, students, experts, and the general public, providing accessible information on best practices in fruit production. In line with its outreach efforts, the project also organized two rounds of Youth Camps to raise awareness about career opportunities in the fruit production sector, encouraging youth to engage in the industry.

Through training and certification programs, over 500 individuals, including farmers, teachers, and students, gained valuable knowledge and expertise. The hands-on experience gained at the Voskehat farm orchard and other regional visits to operating greenhouses and orchards enabled participants to apply their theoretical knowledge in practical settings. The project's emphasis on sustainable and climate-smart agriculture practices has made a significant contribution to the long-term sustainability of Armenia's fruit production sector.



The introduction of modern greenhouse technologies and integrated pest management systems has not only improved productivity but also minimized the environmental impact of farming practices.

By helping farmers meet the modern market's demands, the project has increased the competitiveness of Armenia's fruit sector. The professional certification programs also empowered farmers to improve their business operations, enabling them to expand their market reach.

## Future Prospects

The successful completion of the FRUTENIA project has set the stage for future developments in Armenia's horticulture sector. The upcoming FRUTENIA-2 phase will build upon the success of the original project, introducing additional training programs, including a specialized short-term professional certificate course in viticulture, with an emphasis on comprehensive knowledge transfer beyond typical shorter programs.

The project also plans to establish a climate-smart demonstration and experimental vineyard at ICARE's Zabel Yessayan Agribusiness Center (ZYAC) in Proshyan, Kotayk region. This vineyard will serve both educational and research purposes, focusing on sustainable vineyard management practices and the cultivation of indigenous grape varieties. The continued focus on youth engagement, through the creation of agro-clubs and summer camps, will ensure that future generations are actively involved in agricultural innovation.

Moreover, the project will prioritize women's empowerment by organizing training sessions and events to highlight the crucial role of women in agriculture, thus encouraging their greater participation in the sector. The [aygi.am](http://aygi.am) platform will continue to be developed, improving its content, visibility, and accessibility to provide stakeholders in the fruit production sector with the resources they need to succeed.

# AGRI CAMP PROGRAM: ADVANCING AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES AND KNOWLEDGE ACROSS ARMENIA

In 2024, the AGRI CAMP Program experienced a year of remarkable achievements and progress, making significant strides in enhancing agricultural practices and knowledge in Armenia. The program, funded by USAID and implemented by the ICARE Foundation, focused on providing innovative training and learning opportunities for farmers, SMEs, and agricultural cooperatives across the country. The year was marked by the launch of new initiatives aimed at fostering sustainability,



improving farm operations, and empowering farmers with the latest agricultural technologies. Through hands-on courses, expert-led workshops, and collaborative efforts with local and international partners, AGRI CAMP has strengthened the agricultural community, enabling participants to adopt modern, efficient, and climate-smart practices that are transforming Armenia's agricultural landscape.

This year The AGRI CAMP Program announced the launch of a new objective aimed at developing and piloting an Agricultural Data and Mapping System. This component focuses on creating an innovative digital twin technology for agriculture, named *AgroTwin*, which will leverage the capabilities of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Remote Sensing (RS). This technology aims to provide a comprehensive platform for in-season crop management and optimization of farm operations. Through the *AgroTwin* platform, a series of data dashboards will be developed to assist policymakers, farmers, investors, and agricultural researchers in modeling, simulating, and analyzing agricultural data for efficient decision-making, improved food security, and more sustainable farming practices.

As part of this new initiative, the AGRI CAMP team will collaborate with Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center, as well as specialists from the Precision Agriculture Center and Agro-drone Lab of the Armenian National Agrarian University. These partnerships will contribute to the development and implementation of the system, which promises to revolutionize agricultural practices in Armenia.

In 2024, the AGRI CAMP Program organized over 25 training courses aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of cooperative members, SMEs, and farmers. These courses were attended by nearly 495 participants, including women farmers and agro-entrepreneurs. The following provides an overview of some of the key courses held during the year.



## 1. “Features of Intensive Garden Cultivation” Training

A training on the Features of Intensive Garden Cultivation was conducted for SMEs and farmers in Hovtashat village, located in the Ararat region. The three-day course focused on modern agricultural techniques and practices for cultivating intensive gardens. This training was instrumental in increasing the productivity and sustainability of local farming operations.

## 2. **AgroSotk Training in Gegharkunik Region**

In a unique and impactful event held in the village of Sotk, Gegharkunik region, the AGRI CAMP team conducted a three-day training session for AgroSotk AC members. The training took place in the local secondary school, where the team was warmly greeted by school students eager to assist. Despite initial concerns about local economic challenges, the training team successfully engaged participants through interactive and relevant content. Topics covered included farm business management, livestock breeding with innovative technologies, and combating trafficking in persons. These practical sessions contributed significantly to the participants' knowledge and skills.

## 3. **Deghdzavan Village Course on Intensive Garden Cultivation and Modern Agricultural Technologies**

Another notable training event took place in Deghdzavan village, Tavush region, where SMEs participated in a two-day course covering intensive garden cultivation, modern raspberry and strawberry cultivation technologies, and the **One Health** concept. The participants were particularly inspired by the innovative agricultural practices discussed during the training, including the expansion of olive orchards in the region. The course was well-received, and the participants showed great enthusiasm for adopting new technologies in their own agricultural ventures.

## 4. **“Financial Literacy” Training**

A special training on **Financial Literacy** was developed for the AGRI CAMP Program, incorporating elements of business pitching. Program Expert Hasmik Makaryan led the course, which featured practical exercises such as business

plan development, budget planning, and pitching. The interactive format of the training received positive feedback, and it is expected to be integrated into future courses to continue enhancing participants' financial management skills.

## 5. **Livestock Breeding and One Health Training in Lori Region**

On March 9-10, the AGRI CAMP team conducted a two-day course in Hartagiugh village, Lori marz, focused on livestock breeding and innovative technologies. Expert speakers, including Arman Ohanyan and Davit Navasrdyan, presented valuable insights into modern breeding techniques. The **One Health** concept, presented by Elvira Mirzoyan, addressed the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health, particularly focusing on the use of antibiotics in veterinary medicine and plant propagation. The course was highly interactive, and participants appreciated the opportunity to both learn and share their own experiences in a collaborative environment.

# UNCORKING CONNECTIONS: B2B WORKSHOP

On April 26, the USAID-funded AGRI CAMP Program, implemented by the ICARE Foundation, organized the “Uncorking Connections: B2B Workshop,” aimed at expanding business relations between program beneficiaries and representatives of the HoReCa sector. Lusine Tadevosyan, Chief of Party of the AGRI CAMP Program, highlighted the significance of the event in fostering new partnerships and strengthening industry connections. The workshop featured insightful presentations by leading experts, covering topics such as wine market trends, sustainable viticulture, innovative winemaking solutions, and the role of bioinformatics in viticulture. Speakers included representatives from the Vine

and Wine Foundation of Armenia, AgriConcept CJSC, WineWorks CJSC, In Vino Wine Bar, Decant Wine Shop & Tasting Room, and other key industry players. Following the presentations, AGRI CAMP Program grantees and partners showcased their products and services, engaging directly with HoReCa representatives to explore potential collaborations. Arthur Grigoryan,



Director of the ICARE Foundation, emphasized the value of B2B workshops in promoting business growth and creating opportunities for networking. The event successfully provided a platform for knowledge exchange, industry networking, and business development, further contributing to the advancement of Armenia’s viticulture and wine sector.

# AGRI CAMP SUPPORTED PARTICIPATION OF THE PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES IN THE “ZATIK” WINE FESTIVAL

Beneficiaries of the AGRI CAMP Program participated in the “ZATIK” Wine Festival on March 29-30 at Seasons Park, Yerevan, showcasing a diverse range of products, including wines, cheeses, frozen vegetables and herbs, preserves, and juices.

Held on the eve of Resurrection Day, the festival provided a unique platform for visitors to purchase high-quality Armenian wines at factory prices and engage in meaningful conversations with producers. Among the exhibitors under the AGRI CAMP pavilion, SAVAR Wines – made from endemic grapes of Rind village in Vayots Dzor – made their debut in the Armenian market. Nelly Khachatryan, representing SAVAR Wines, emphasized that the event was an excellent opportunity to introduce their products to wine enthusiasts.

Other wineries featured at the AGRI CAMP/USAID booth included Voskeni Wines (Araks village, Armavir marz), Van Ardi (Sasunik village, Aragatsotn marz), and GN Winery (Aralez village, Ararat marz). In addition to wines, visitors

explored a variety of high-quality products, such as frozen and dried berries and vegetables from Sareri Barik (Gegharkunik marz), artisanal cheeses from d’Rose (Khachaghbyur village, Gegharkunik marz), and preserves and juices from Punj (Vernashen village, Vayots Dzor marz).



We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our partner, Wines of Armenia NGO, for making this participation possible and wish our beneficiaries continued success in their ventures!



# AGRI CAMP SUPPORTED PARTICIPATION OF THE PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES IN THE YEREVAN WINE DAYS

The AGRI CAMP Program beneficiaries took part in the highly anticipated “Yerevan Wine Days 2024” festival and the newly launched “Wine and More: Business Market 2024” event, held on June 7-9 alongside the festival. The booths of AGRI CAMP’s participants, supported by USAID and ICARE Foundation, were bustling with visitors eager to taste Armenian wines and cheeses, hear producers’ stories, and explore potential business collaborations.

Bringing together the rich flavors of Armenian wine, the festival once again captivated visitors, including renowned international chefs. The USAID-Armenia team joined the lively celebration, with USAID Armenia Mission Director John Allello emphasizing the organization’s continued support for Armenia’s private and public sectors, particularly in strengthening wine production and sales.

For many AGRI CAMP beneficiaries, this was their first participation in the festival. Acclaimed American chefs Mary Sue Milliken and Lenora Marouani were particularly impressed by Savar wines and Borisovka cheeses, with Chef Milliken enthusiastically stating:



“

It's incredible. I didn't know that there is a whole universe of Armenian wines, and those wines are wonderful.”

Participation in “Yerevan Wine Days 2024” and “Wine and More: Business Market 2024” was a significant milestone for AGRI CAMP beneficiaries, providing an excellent platform to showcase their products, build business connections, and receive professional feedback.

On June 9, chefs Mary Sue Milliken and Lenora Marouani, along with USAID representatives, visited Fruit Food, a beneficiary of the AGRI CAMP Program, to explore their production processes and taste an assortment of Armenian dried fruits. The enthusiastic feedback from visitors was accompanied by valuable professional insights, further inspiring producers to refine and enhance their products.

Through these events, AGRI CAMP beneficiaries gained visibility, valuable networking opportunities, and expert guidance – a step forward in strengthening Armenia's agrifood and wine industries.



# FROM VILLAGE ROOTS TO GLOBAL RECOGNITION

Great success can be achieved even in a small village when vision and dedication turn aspirations into tangible goals. This philosophy defines SAVAR Wines, a company rooted in the historic winemaking traditions of Armenia.



Founded by Vardan Sahakyan, SAVAR Wines embodies a lifelong dream. Growing up in Rind, one of Armenia's oldest and most fertile villages, he envisioned making his hometown renowned worldwide for its high-quality wines. With its picturesque hills and centuries-old vineyards, Rind – along with Aghavnadzor, where the winery's vineyards are located at an altitude of 1,350 meters – cultivates endemic Armenian grape varieties such as Areni, Khatun Kharij, Voskehat, Tozot, and Kakhet. The unique terroir and breathtaking landscapes not only inspire viticulture but also invite contemplation and innovation.

The journey to establishing SAVAR Wines was a collaborative effort. “A few years ago, when winemaking was still just an idea, my uncle Vardan and I brainstormed how to bring it to life. We both agreed that the winery should be built in Rind, contributing to the village's development and demonstrating that success is possible even in small communities,” said Nelly Abrahamyan, Executive Director of SAVAR Wines. This vision materialized with the official

launch of the winery on November 3, 2019, at the Martiros Saryan House-Museum – a venue chosen to reflect the spirit of creativity and ambition, much like Saryan himself, who was known for his appreciation of wine as a noble art. At the event, guests had the opportunity to experience SAVAR's range of wines, including red and white still wines (2021 vintage) and rosé still wine (2022 vintage). This milestone was made possible with significant support from the USAID-funded AGRI CAMP program, which provided essential equipment and facilitated opportunities to expand exports and access new markets.

SAVAR Wines has already made remarkable strides. In addition to establishing a strong presence in the Armenian market, the winery is actively working to expand internationally. The AGRI CAMP program played a pivotal role in this effort by organizing a wine tasting event attended by international wine journalists, sommeliers, and industry experts. This event served as a key platform for introducing SAVAR Wines to a global audience.

Further reinforcing its reputation, SAVAR Wines participated in the IWSC 2024 Caucasian Wine Competition, where it was among the 22 medal-winning wines from Armenia. The company's red and white wines were recognized for their exceptional quality, underscoring the potential of Armenian winemaking on the international stage. The success of SAVAR Wines is not just a business achievement but a testament to perseverance and vision. Vardan Sahakyan's unwavering commitment to his dream inspired his niece, Nelly, who initially supported the winery as a marketing specialist before taking on the role of CEO. Now, alongside her leadership responsibilities, she is deepening her expertise at the EVN Wine Academy of the ICARE Foundation.

As SAVAR Wines continues to grow, it remains committed to its mission of promoting Armenian viticulture and enhancing the economic development of Rind. With a foundation built on passion, hard work, and strategic partnerships, the company is poised for further expansion, reinforcing Armenia's reputation as a producer of world-class wines.

# MORNIN LLC'S JOURNEY TO GROWTH IS SUCCESS OF THE AGRI CAMP PROGRAM

The AGRI CAMP Program continues to foster innovation and entrepreneurship in Armenia's agribusiness sector by supporting small and medium-sized enterprises in improving production efficiency and market competitiveness. One such success story is *Mornin* LLC, Armenia's first company to produce muesli using locally sourced ingredients.

Founded by economist and entrepreneur Magda Karapetyan, *Mornin* LLC has leveraged the financial and technical support provided by the USAID-funded AGRI CAMP Program of ICARE Foundation to enhance its production processes. The acquisition of a state-of-the-art production line and packaging machine enabled the company to automate key manufacturing tasks, improving packaging reliability, increasing production volumes, and extending product shelf life. As a result, *Mornin* LLC now produces more than ten varieties of muesli bars and has expanded its operations to include contract packaging services for other brands.

Magda Karapetyan attributes the company's progress to a commitment to innovation and perseverance, stating:

“ John D. Rockefeller believed that enthusiasm is a decisive factor for achieving success. Such an approach to work and life helps in seeing opportunities, overcoming challenges, and reaching goals.”



The AGRI CAMP Program remains dedicated to supporting women-led enterprises in the agrifood sector, enabling them to scale production, enhance product quality, and access broader markets. The case of *Mornin* LLC demonstrates the impact of targeted interventions in strengthening Armenia's food industry and promoting sustainable economic growth.



JOHN P. NICHOLS

Chairman of the ICARE  
Board

**Donors lead the way:** For more than twenty years ICARE and the ATC have been engaged in education, training and research activities designed to encourage the development and sustainability of the Armenian economy's food and agricultural sector. Last year we reached a new milestone with the dedication of the Zabel Yessayan Agribusiness Center (ZYAC). This year's Annual Report covers this event and the amazing story behind its development, as well as what it means for our future. Much of the future of Armenia lies in the hands of young people, several of whom are featured in this report. We owe a great debt of gratitude to the vision and efforts of our lead donors, not just for the creation of ZYAC, but for many of our other projects and activities. I hope you will consider joining us in our new quests and will become a contributor. Thanks for your interest and enjoy reading through the 2022 Annual report.



ARTHUR GRIGORIAN

Director  
ICARE Foundation

For many years ICARE has been nurturing creative minds and uncovering entrepreneurial talent among Armenian youth. Our academic programs empower young men and women in leadership and innovation and create responsible citizens for Armenia. In our mission to continue developing as a lifelong learning hub and a platform for incubating and accelerating agribusiness start-ups, ICARE established the Zabel Yessayan Agribusiness Center (ZYAC). Zabel Yessayan was a groundbreaking writer, teacher, and an activist who bridged Eastern and Western Armenia.

Years ago, creation of ZYAC was just a dream. We started to work on this together with our partners, supporters, and friends; and in 2022 this dream became a reality. Today ZYAC is a home for agribusiness startups which experiment on introducing new and innovative agricultural products and services in Armenia. ICARE invites all interested teams to join the ZYAC agribusiness incubation platform to develop their “passion products.” We also

invite supporters to help us establish a seed fund which will assist these startups and propel them to commercialization of their products and services in Armenia and globally.

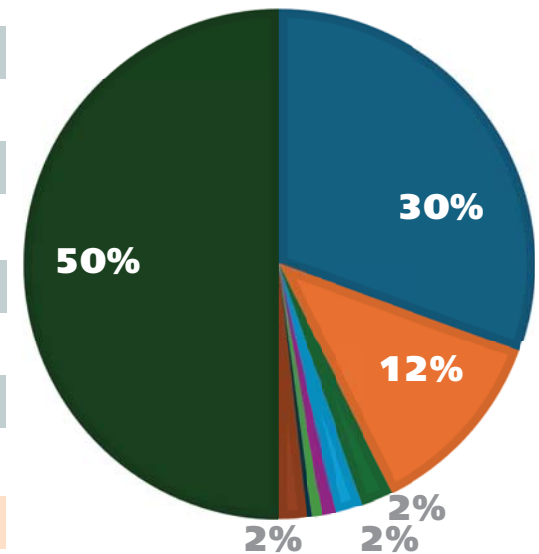
Though our development projects, during this year alone we trained hundreds of farmers all around Armenia in innovative agricultural practices and supported them with grants to enhance their businesses activities. ICARE has a vast experience in both academic and development projects covering topics related to climate change adaptation, green economic development, fruit and nut production and processing, strengthening primary agricultural production, food processing and export, value chain analysis and development, engagement of youth and enhancement of women entrepreneurship, plus the entire spectrum of research activities.

Join us in our efforts to make Armenian economy stronger and more resilient!

# Financial highlights

## Sources of Income in 2024

	<b>USD</b>
■ United States Agency for International Development (USAID)	\$ <b>1,904,150</b>
■ Austrian Development Cooperation	\$ <b>759,824</b>
■ European Union	\$ <b>125,757</b>
■ German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ)	\$ <b>110,414</b>
■ H. Hovnanian Family Foundation	\$ <b>52,976</b>
■ United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	\$ <b>37,367</b>
■ Donations from Individuals and Organization	\$ <b>21,500</b>
■ Fee-based Services and Other Contracts	\$ <b>108,527</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 3,120,515</b>





**INTERNATIONAL CENTER  
FOR AGRIBUSINESS RESEARCH  
AND EDUCATION (ICARE)  
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