

# Heritage Crops and Agroecology for Social and Environmental Impact

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For **BIO**tiful Life!  
Organic product. Rural diversity.



# Introduction



- ❑ Biological Farming Association “Elkana” Georgian NGO established in 1994 by 9 farmers, currently works with about 2,500 farmers all over Georgia. Core mandate of the organization: agroecology & organic farming, conservation of agricultural biodiversity, valorization of traditional food and wine production
- ❑ Elkana extension service provides technical support to farmers to maximize returns on local level using extensive, agroecological approaches.
- ❑ Georgia / Caucasus belong to the Western Asian Centre of Origin of cultivated plants. Since 1996 Elkana runs its **Agricultural Biodiversity Program** – reintroducing heritage grain crops, lost due to Soviet planned economy, back to farmers’ fields.

# ELKANA initiative – returning heritage crops to farmers

- ❑ Cooperation between scientists, extension workers and farmers for **heritage seed multiplication (with farmers – giving 1 portion – returning back 1.5) and traditional knowledge recording**
- ❑ Selection of **threatened heritage crop landraces** with market potential and high adaptation to local soil and **climatic conditions**, suitable for rain fed agriculture
- ❑ Promotion of **heritage crops** among farmers & consumers, providing technical support in primary production
- ❑ Product development and building up **collaborative value chains**





**Farmer & Processors**



Direct sales

On-farm

Delivery Service

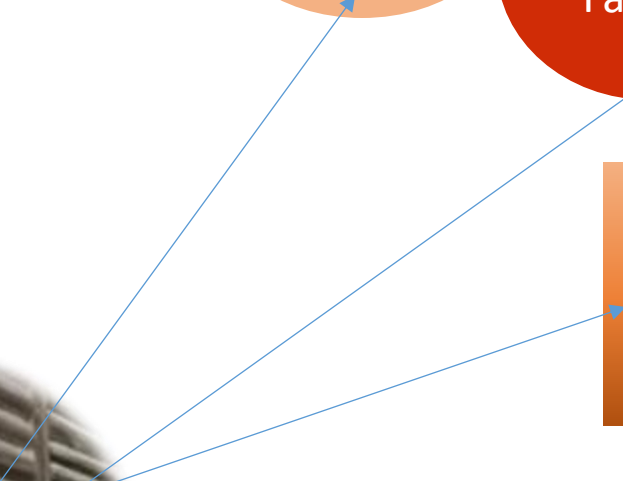
Festivals, Farmer

Customers via Social Media

Main Marketing Channels



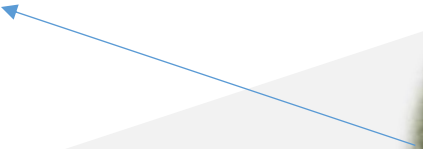
**Large Farmers - primary & flour production**



Consolidation Centre (Elkana)



**Small Farmers - grain production**



On-line shop, Bakers, Restaurants, Specialty Shops

## Lessons learnt



The effects of climate change highly challenge the productivity of the agricultural sector in Georgia. In this respect the smallholders are the most affected. Agroecological & organic production system in combination with use of heritage grain crops, wheat among them, can be a solution for stable harvests and food security for smallholder farmers from dry areas affected by the climate change, as these crops are known for:

- Stable harvests in low input systems - food security for smallholders
- High nutritive and gastronomic qualities, for more healthy & tasty food
- High adaptability to local soils and changing weather conditions Resistance to pests & disease
- Diversity that encompass enormous genetic potential to adapt to climate change and other environmental factors

# Policy Recommendations



**Agricultural policies and programs should support farmer-based seed production systems, traditional knowledge and conservation of agroecosystems based on UN Declaration on Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) adopted in September 2018 by the General Assembly, which recognizes basic human rights to:**

- **save, use, exchange & sell their own seeds**
- **maintain, control & develop their own seeds**
- **have access to locally adapted seeds**
- **participate in decision-making and protect traditional knowledge and**
- **food and food sovereignty!**





**Thank you for listening!**

