

Improve access to market in the Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project activities

After completion of the phase 4 of the sustainable agriculture project in the Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project (CIWP), it was decided to emphasis on the planning for the selling of the agricultural products. In this regard, the conceptual framework of the Marketing Channel got employed. By definition, marketing channel is a set of integrated organizations which are actively involved in building access to goods and services for the end clients. In other words, the path each product paves through the value chain to the end client, is named marketing channel. Thus, to improve sells of a product, its marketing channel should be distinguished and analyzed for providing the alternatives. In this sense, and in line with the goal defined by the CIWP, at the initial phase a project titled ‘Improving access to market’ was established, with the aim to distinguish and analyze the marketing channel of the selected products at the Lake Urmia basin area.

This project is implemented at three steps:

- 1-Initial study with the aim to find the products and understanding the capacities and opportunities in the region;
- 2-Defining the modified scenarios and testing their hypotheses using the feedbacks from the local actors;
- 3-Preparing the comprehensive action plan and concluding

At the first step, the products, villages and local partners of the CIWP were identified to reach at a few options at the region. Due to the limitations, only four products were identified, including tomato at the Urmia city, apple at the Mahabad city, raisin grape at Malekan, and pistachio at Oskoo. Moreover, at this step an educational workshop was held at Tabriz to not only explain the basics of the marketing channel for the local partners, but also exercise a few cases in the region in collaboration with the partners for a further comprehension of the concepts and tools.

In the next step, the analysis of the relevant channels was conducted through data gathering and discussions with the channel’s members. For each channel, after defining the channel’s structure and realizing their status and defections, alternatives produced for enhancing the channel. These were provided the form of a few scenarios. Then, considering the assumptions of each scenario, applicability and

effectiveness of alternatives were investigated. Assumptions used in designing the alternatives are as follow:

- Existence of high social capital among farmers for engaging in collective activities in the form of corporations or unions
- Financial readiness and risk-taking by farmers to implement the activities which they have not done before
- Existence of relevant legal capacities which can guarantee the interactions and commitments of contracts between the farmers and other members of the channel

For evaluation of the current situation regarding the assumptions, a direct dialogue was established with the members of the channel including farmers, processors, and traders. Finally, by summarizing the results of discussions, optimum alternatives were identified.

One of the operational approaches in this project is starting at the small scale. Thus, for implementing the results of this project at the next stages it was necessary to choose one amongst different products, to pass into the next phase. Therefore, at the third step of this project, only one of the options became selected, i.e., raisins at Malekan. For this product, the optimum solution of the channel was individual participation of farmers with traders and/or industrialists. Also, partnerships between orchard growers and industrialists or traders was suggested to be established in under an independent brand; this way all partners will become committed.

Also, at this step, the action plan for implementation of these prescriptions are provided. As said, for implementation of the alternatives it is required to get involved other actors in addition to the active members of the channel. An institution like CIWP can provide required conditions, as a facilitator. In this sense, the action plan for the next project are designed as follows

Channel members are orchard growers, industrialist or traders. Required actions in this part are:

- Realizing the target market and its requirements
- Adoption of appropriate pesticides and fertilizers
- Correct processing of the product, according to the clients' demands
- Establishment of an accurate financial and accounting system for collaborations of the members
- Independent brand and packing design

- Active participation in fairs
- Digital marketing
- Networking to the logistics chain actors for the target markets

Development institution in this project is CIWP. The required actions by CIWP are as follow:

- Invoking the members of channel for participation
- Monitoring on the coordination of operational plans between members of channel
- Construction and provision of infrastructures by the supplying institutions
- Provisioning the establishment of appropriate legal and contractual infrastructures for interaction among the members and guaranteeing the commitments
- Formation of educational and monitoring settings especially for the technical aspects of production

Supplying institutions in this project are governmental and state actors, as well as international institutions. Significant activities in this regard are:

- Establishment of appropriate legal and contractual infrastructures for interaction among the members and guaranteeing the commitments
- Provision of required information according to the members' demands especially of international markets

Implementation of educational and monitoring settings for the technical aspects of production and marketing