

Apple-trees begin to blossom in Issyk-Kul

Let's imagine south coast of the lake with its rocky ravines, throughout spangled with gently – rose-colored, snow-white and brightly purple colors. Spring is close at hand and resurgent after winter orchards are its first “visiting card”. We wish so much to have bumper harvest of apples, apricots, pears, plums which will bring in return to local farmers.

It's not a secret, that the life of people from the south coast of Issyk-Kul is harder in compare with their compatriots from the north coast of the lake: territory here is less developed, many unreclaimed land, the summer tourist season is shorter, but microclimate is unique indeed. Water, hot rays of sun, frost absence in cold time of the year create favorable environment for horticulture.

Unfortunately, within 15 years of sovereignty we lost past advantages, left to the mercy of fate the profitable business for rural people. The State got out as there are many problems besides orchards – something handed over the private hands, and something granted on lease. But there were enthusiasts, who assiduously, step by step have been restoring past horticultural fame of the republic and haven't let vanish completely of renowned sorts such as: «borovinka», «kamenka», «vengerka domashnyaya», ensanguined apart.

The former agronomist of Pokrov fruit farm, and now he is a head of farm association «REMA» Raisa Tologonova remembers: during the time of former Soviet Union 15 agricultural farms were occupied with sort testing, and they had their own plot of land, they cultivated saplings and were watching for their quality. At present, even in the profile institutions the horticultural science took a back seat and study hours reduced to minimum. Meanwhile, the sowed cereals in Aksui and Djetioguz regions – as wheat and corn – hardly yields a harvest of 8-9 centners from a hectare, whereas from orchards it can gather a fair yield. There are established markets- northern regions of the Russian Federation. The wholesalers of Tomsk, Novosibirsk and Omsk ask to increase supplies, dream to eat accustomed to them ecologically clean, flavoured, succulent issykkul fruits, they are tired from tasteless Chinese fruits.

R. Tologonova consolidated around herself farmers -fruit-growers, whose allotments located nearby Baskoon village. Farmers rely on their own strength and patience, because saplings with right care can give back only within 2-3 years, and some within 5 years.

Assistance for enthusiasts came from distant America. Project manager of «Farmer to Farmer», Winrock International Institute for Agricultural Development, Ulan Raimbekov helped in registering application, looked for specialist, chose American state similar in climatic conditions with Djetioguz region.

The first who visited local places was John Fitzgerald. He shared experience how to better cultivate orchards and take care of saplings. In developed countries the orchards lay out thousand hectares, business put on industrial base, farmers work jointly with service cooperatives, processing specialists and with shops. Meanwhile, volunteers from all over the world come to Kyrgyzstan at our request and share with their handicraft, advanced technology. It is amazing that these people leave their houses, work and set out on distant land with one purpose – to support those who in need of skilled assistance and encourage them in new beginnings. Volunteers don't draw salary, only «».

OUR INFORMATION: “Farmer to Farmer” Program has been working since 1993 more than 250 volunteers – specialists having huge theoretical and practical agricultural experience have been sharing knowledge with agribusiness workers of Kyrgyzstan. The program was successful in KR having positive outputs on many projects, and thus the Program was prolonged for four years till December 2007.

The basic program directions from 2003 to 2007: 1) horticulture; 2) development of associations (strengthening of farmer and production associations and their networks); 3) agricultural processing; 4) water resources management (improvement of efficiency of water resources use in agriculture).

When we came to Barskoon, in «RE MAG» association was working a new volunteer – Ross Penhalegon from Oregon state. Here he was tenderly named as «hard worker», sawing something in the orchard, pruning trees and grafting them. He brought tools with himself – pruning shears, hack-saw – which are not similar with what was using local people from long time ago. It is good to prune small twigs with secateurs with oblong handle, there is no need for step-ladder. In the homeland the volunteer works as a horticulture expert in the local university, he has his own farm- family business. Ross's great grandfather was a fruit-grower. The wife is engaged in growing of medicinal herbs. They have five children, he came to Kyrgyzstan with a daughter Camilla. She is abroad for the first time. She likes the nature and says, that the mountains are near and it is amazing. She went with her father to the local Kyzylsuu market. Apples that the local people sell do not lose the taste quality.

Mr. Penhalegon speaks very optimistic on future trends of horticulture in this area: about within 6 years there will begin to blossom new plantations. It is necessary to diversify saplings, bring new sorts of apples and pears. Together with Raisa Tolgonova they have visited the new governor of Issyk-kul oblast, Kadyrbek Isaev. They have found the absolute support and kindness. Next time, when Ross comes, he will bring cutting of saplings and says that he can provide with about 4 000 of new sorts. –We need even forty for the beginning, -Raisa Tolgonova thinks,- the problem is how to take across the border. It would be good, if employees of Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Processing Industry will join in solving this problem.

Local farmers reach for new with inspiration, take in knowledge greedily, volunteer notice this quality as well. Ross astonished at their diligent, modesty, hospitality, but the main point is that the people seek for change their life, raise its level.

It is obvious, farmers have narrow means. There is no money to fight with orchard pests- codling moth, farinaceous dew. Ross advises: take blue vitriol, it is good for preventive measures, especially before blossoming.

Situation on horticulture in our republic reminds the volunteer his homeland during 60s. Farmers of Barskoon do not get rid of small fruits, they prune and ~~ap~~ of trees in their own way. Ross demonstrates how it is rightly to thin out the lines of apples, pears and apricots. By the way, according to him, the issykkul apricots will take deserved place in the international market. Apricots begin to ripen at first surroundings Balykchi, then in Barskoon. Local farmer J.Akunov bought several thousand saplings from «RE MAG» association, 90% have taken roots and he made a request for four thousand saplings. Then, we will hear the noise of the orchards in Issyk-Kul.

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