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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**TURKMENISTAN**

## FIRST PERSON

# Teacher Modernizes Farming

**A U.S. study tour inspires an economics teacher to modernize agricultural practices.**



*“I had a unique chance to visit farmers’ cooperatives and associations to learn about their establishment and operations.”*

- Ilyas Amanov, a USAID program alumnus

Ilyas Amanov, an economics teacher with years of experience, is combining his expertise with skills learned during a U.S. study program on agricultural practices to improve agriculture in his own country, Turkmenistan. He and his colleagues provide information about local and international markets, consultations on agricultural business development through trainings and seminars, and assist farmers in establishing associations.

A USAID Community Connections program study tour to Wausau, Wisconsin inspired Ilyas to organize the information service. In 2007, he and eight other specialists in agribusiness visited the United States to learn about operations and functions of lending associations and the role of credit in economic development in the field of agriculture.

“I had a unique chance to visit farmers’ cooperatives and associations to learn about their establishment and operations. What they do is fascinating,” said Amanov.

Since his return from the U.S., Amanov has collaborated with Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) and traveled around Turkmenistan to assess the needs of local farmers. In 2008, he received a grant from the U.S. Embassy to establish the Economic Information Service for Turkmen farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs. He opened representative offices of the Information Service in Ahal, Mary, and Dashoguz regions to cover remote areas of the country. Since then, the Information Service has provided consultations and assistance to over 50 agricultural entrepreneurs from various regions.

Currently, Amanov is working on opening representative offices in the Lebap and Balkan regions of Turkmenistan to cover all major regions of the country. Amanov and his partners are developing a clientele, and are collaborating with international agencies and local organizations. He believes the experience he gained in the U.S. has helped him to increase the number of clients and will continue to do so in the future. To spread information about services and opportunities available through the Information Service, Ilyas collaborated with the U.S. organization IREX to create a website. In the future, Ilyas plans to register his organization and improve the services he provides for farmers.