

# INCOME GENERATION FOR SUSTAINABLE USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES

## JOB OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH MOUNTAIN PRODUCTS

### Employment and marketing in remote areas

The low level of processing technologies for agricultural products is one of the main reasons why mountain products are frequently uncompetitive on the world market. This considerably reduces the potential income of people depending on agriculture and often leads to out-migration especially in remote areas. Rural households normally sell unprocessed raw materials (meat, milk, vegetables or fruit) that generate only a modest income. Processing such goods at household or community levels can increase profit. Distant markets involve long journeys over poor quality roads demanding measures to avoid damaging the products.

Moreover local markets are increasingly selling low quality products imported from abroad, especially China. This explains why local markets offer very few local, natural and ecologically sound products. People have little experience and no traditions of processing their own goods, therefore new know-how and skills are required to generate alternative income opportunities which respect the sustainable use of natural resources while also meeting modern quality standards.

The widespread mono-functional use of natural resources inherited from Soviet times is an additional threat both to household economies and the environment. The dependency on one single product like cotton also increases climatic and economic vulnerability such as droughts or market price fluctuations respectively. The lack of diversification further limits the creation of additional jobs. These mono-cultural production systems constitute a serious ecological threat by putting special pressure on single natural resources such as soil or water.

### Generating opportunities

The high quality processing of local primary products can help to increase income at household level and reduce the risk of overuse of resources. Moreover it can help to balance the frequently unequal workload during the year by shifting major processing work to the less busy periods.

### Goal and approach

The efforts aiming at developing and marketing mountain products in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan are based on a comprehensive approach consisting of six steps that help local people to generate new income.

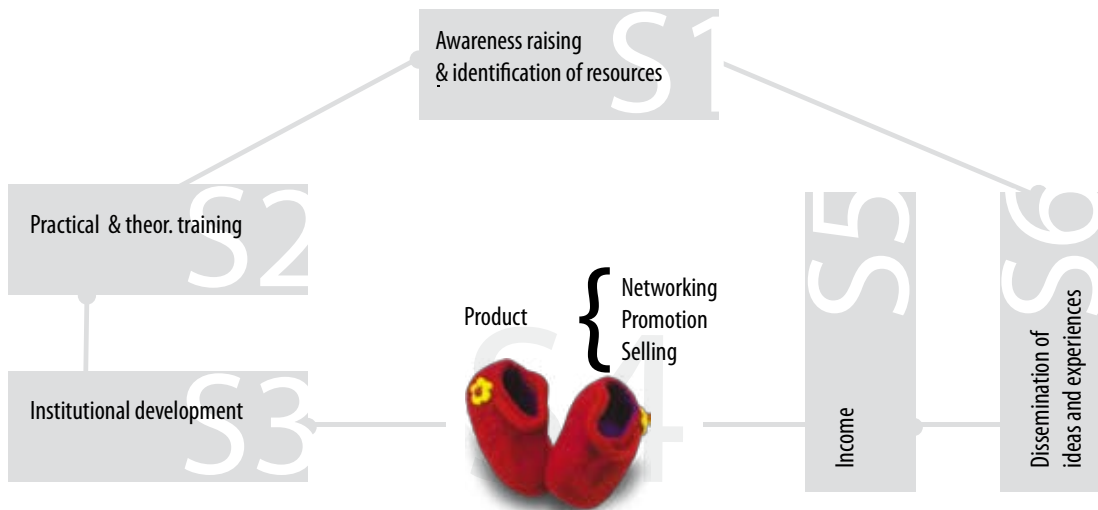
#### Step 1: Awareness raising and identification of additional resources

Villagers are informed of alternative income generating possibilities through information booklets and manuals, exhibitions and presentations, exchange visits, experience sharing with other communities and organizations, as well as through the mass media.

#### Step 2: Practical and theoretical training

The best potential alternative income generation opportunities are selected based upon the interests of the population and the availability of local resources. Practical training is offered and conducted in the villages in order to provide participants with new technologies and ideas on how to process raw materials and to develop new products or designs.





CAMP 6-Step approach for income generation

## Examples of local products

- Medicinal herbs, spices and natural colorants**  
 The collection, drying and selling of mountain herbs for different treatments, natural dyes and spices is a valuable source of alternative income and especially involves women.
- Processing of yak meat**  
 Processing, storing and preparing yak meat is a new economic activity which may lead to an increased demand for yak breeding and better use of high mountain pastures.
- Cheese making**  
 Milk processing and cheese making are good ways of preserving milk and increasing its value. It particularly involves women and is ideally suited to life on the summer pastures where milk can't be preserved for very long, and the markets are far away.
- Willow weaving**  
 Planting willow trees helps to protect riverbanks and simultaneously creates additional income through weaving baskets and furniture. This activity can be carried out in the winter, and is usually done by men.
- Felt making**  
 While nowadays wool is often thrown away or burned in many villages, or at best sold to middlemen at a low price, the value of high quality and professionally designed felt products is steadily increasing. This represents a good source of income especially for women.

## Step 3: Institutional development

In order to make the income generating efforts more sustainable, local production and training centres are being supported. They help to increase and improve production as well as further disseminate goods and experiences. So far, three centres have been established in Kyrgyzstan: a centre for felt training and production, a centre for wool processing (both in Kochkor) and a centre for willow weaving (in Tuz village). Through the GTZ-CCD 'Small Grants Program', support was provided to mountain villages in establishing mini workshops for cheese making, felting, bio-humus production from organic waste, and making solar stoves for fruit drying.



*In 2005, the 'CAMP Consulting' Public Foundation supported the creation of the 'Production and Training Centre on Felting', which unites all Kazakh felt makers in the 'Eco-Bazaar Network'. The following aspects are crucial for financial sustainability of such networks:*

- *Constant exchange of experiences*
- *Provision of practical training*
- *Quality control of products*
- *Joint marketing efforts*
- *Common price policy*
- *Increase of network members*
- *Increase of product variety*
- *Creation of a development fund*

## Step 4: Networking, promotion and selling

For the marketing of mountain products two shops were created: 'Eco-Bazaar' in Kazakhstan and 'Too Murogu' in Kyrgyzstan. In addition, a shop window for the exposure of goods created by local craftsmen was installed at the Regional Ecological Centre of Central Asia (CAREC) in Almaty.

In order to improve the image of mountain products, a label for high quality was developed and the regional trademark 'Central Asian Mountain Product' registered within the CAMP Program. In 2006 the 'CAMP' trademark was officially registered with Kazpatent with 'CAMP Consulting' Public Foundation as the legal owner.

The main criteria for getting the 'CAMP' label are:



- The item has to be produced in a mountain region of Central Asia.
- It has to be produced manually and at household level or in small village workshops.
- It has to be produced without harming the environment.
- It has to make best use of local raw materials.
- It has to be practical and useful in daily life.

In 2006 six felt makers, four from Kazakhstan, two from Kyrgyzstan, were awarded the 'CAMP' label for their goods.

Many mountain products are associated with cleanliness and healthiness. Consumers are interested in purchasing high quality products. They are ready to pay up to 20% more for labelled products in which they can have more confidence. Experience shows that the labelled products are mainly purchased by urban residents aged between thirty and fifty-five with a higher education and income. This customer

profile helps in orienting public relation efforts and the further development of appropriate products attractive to this main target group. The promotion takes place through presentations, exhibitions and fairs involving the mass media and local craftsmen.

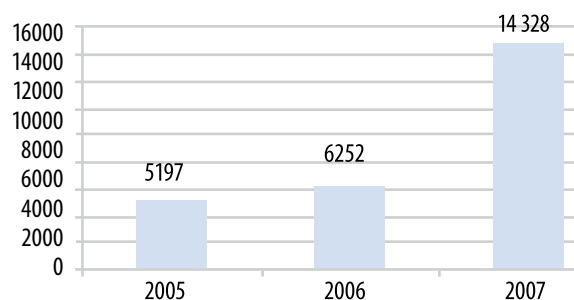
*To improve promotion and sales, felt makers from Kazakhstan regularly participate in regional and international craft fairs. Thanks to the initiative and support of embassies of the Kazakh Republic in the United Kingdom, Austria and Russia, felt goods representing Kazakh traditions are exposed to a wider public. Major examples are: 'Spring Bazaar' in London 2006, 2007, 2008; 'UN Bazaar' in Vienna 2006, 2007; 'Winter Bazaar' in Moscow 2006; the Annual Central Asian Craft Fair (2005-2007)*



*Major exports and international trade relationships of 'CAMP Bazaar'*

## Step 5: Generating income

The successful production and selling of hand made products by villagers from mountain areas is an important additional source of income, especially to women. Work is often done at home or in small groups without hampering household tasks or looking after children. Recently a catalogue of felt goods that can be purchased from the 'CAMP Bazaar Network' has been made available ([www.campbazaar.org.com](http://www.campbazaar.org.com)) to further promote this income opportunity at an international level.



CAMP Bazaar sales statistics 2005-2007 in USD

## Step 6: Dissemination of experience

In order to up-scale the achievements, regular exchange events with other interested organizations are held. For example: international organizations (UNDP, UNDESA), embassies (Kazakh embassies in Austria, the United Kingdom, and Russia), local state structures, and local communities and NGOs.

*The project 'Felting as a way of reducing unemployment and poverty' implemented by 'CAMP-Consulting' was nominated as best practice in sustainable development in Central Asia in 2007. The competition was organized by the regional network CARNet/ UNDP and the project recommended for further dissemination.*

### **Pitfalls and how to avoid them: The Example of felt making**

Low quality and poor design: traditional felt products such as tekemet, syrmak or covers for yurts made for personal use often don't meet quality standards for external customers. Here the introduction of new production technologies improves and widens the range of clothes, decorative accessories, toys, interior items, and souvenirs. However, the production of such goods is time consuming, requires talent and persistence.

Lack of marketing knowledge and business skills: Local producers need support and advice in marketing and pricing in order to ensure they make money, not lose it. Lack of wool processing facilities: Presently in Kazakhstan there are only two wool cleaning centres supplying good quality wool for export. Local felt masters therefore have difficulties in buying high quality raw wool. Processing, such as cleaning and dyeing, is time consuming. More often the quality achieved is not satisfactory. High quality raw materials must therefore be bought through middlemen but at high prices increasing the cost of the final products while reducing the profit.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

*The use of modern production technologies and the focus on quality and design has attracted the attention of traditional-craftwork connoisseurs and allowed the local masters to penetrate the local and international markets. Annual growth in sales volume indicates an increasing interest in unique, high-quality, and ecologically sound local products. Besides additional income for women, it also provides an incentive for gender equality promoting the rights and opportunities of women.*

### **Publications available**

- 'Mountain herbs - medicines, dyes and spices' (book in Russian)
- Cookery book for guest houses (in Russian)
- 'Advice for honey buyers' (in Russian)
- Various CAMP reports from regional workshops on felting, cheese making, yak meat processing, and willow weaving.

A colour felt book is currently under development in Kazakhstan. For further information please refer to [campkazakhstan.org.com](http://campkazakhstan.org.com) or [campbazaar.org.com](http://campbazaar.org.com).



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