

Food Security and Agriculture

While IOCC's work has spanned operations in more than 60 countries and myriad program areas, its work today is focused on five core competencies: emergency preparedness and response, WASH, sustainable livelihoods, food security and agriculture, and health. IOCC continues to serve communities where we work in other program areas, as needs and local priorities indicate, but our core work and depth of expertise and experience reside in these five key sectors. IOCC works with and through local partners, including the local Orthodox Church's development agency and other local NGOs. Capacity building for these partners is an integral part of IOCC projects. IOCC seeks to support local communities to address the needs they prioritize for themselves and to leave behind local structures better able to manage the developmental challenges communities face.



Bosnia and Herzegovina

IOCC's microloan program in Bosnia and Herzegovina began in 2002 and remains active. With a repayment rate of over 99%, loans to artisans and small businesses in agriculture, trade, and manufacturing grow family incomes and promote job creation in rural, underdeveloped areas.

Over 20,500 loans cumulatively worth \$30.9 million have been made since the program's inception, and in 2022 alone, 928 loans valued at \$1.55 million were made. Also in 2022, the program created 140 new sustainable jobs. For example, with a loan to buy a used car, one borrower started his taxi business; another used the funds to buy additional equipment

for a hair salon, creating a need for one more employee; still another procured additional woodworking machines that likewise created a new position. The microloan program supports business activities in the fields of agriculture, production, services, and trade. In addition, the program provides loans for tuition; in 2022, IOCC helped 125 students pursue higher education, thus increasing their chances of finding promising employment. About half the loans support agricultural development. There are many farmers who, 17 years ago, started a business from scratch and are now successful producers of milk and dairy products, poultry and eggs, or greenhouse crops.



Uganda

Through a collaboration with the University of Maryland, IOCC supported training for students, agricultural teachers, and farmers in modern agriculture best practices. Covering topics like soil, irrigation and pest management, and food safety, the program also included practice sessions in a demonstration garden. IOCC assembled and sent to Uganda an internationally experienced and highly trained three-member team of agriculture extension faculty and a biologist from the University of Maryland.

The team implemented a production project and conducted extension workshops for farmers in four main project areas:

- Water management both for irrigation and post-harvest handling of agricultural crops
- Soil and plant fertility
- Integrated pest management (IPM)
- Good agricultural practices for reducing microbial contamination (e.g., food safety)

Georgia

In 2022-2023, IOCC and partner Cultivating New Frontiers in Agriculture (CNFA) helped farmers establish and equip a new business-oriented solar-drying fruit and vegetable processing cooperative enterprise in western Georgia, with funding from the IOCC Foundation and USAID. IOCC and CNFA built and equipped the facility, where co-op members can now bring their produce and have it dried so they can sell it at market. Dried produce fetches a better price and can provide income beyond the growing season.

using custom-designed frames. Rather than purchase premade frames, IOCC purchased a metal-forming machine which allows site-specific greenhouses to be manufactured at low cost. IOCC has trained local welders to use the machine and fabricate the greenhouses. The structures make year-round production possible, generating a steady source of income for local partners who run them.

IOCC has also helped local partners and Georgian farmers improve production and increase the value of their products by providing greenhouses, demonstration plots, and solar dryers in the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region. The area absorbed a significant number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Abkhazia, but the local population has also been declining as unemployment in rural areas forces residents to seek work in urban centers. The projects have helped families remain in their homes by increasing agricultural income. The greenhouses are built locally



Syria



Prior to the start of the conflict in Syria in 2011, agriculture accounted for the livelihoods of over half of the Syrian population. Today, crop production has been negatively impacted by several causes. Among them are labor shortages and high labor costs, crop and land destruction resulting from the conflict and extensive flooding (as seen in 2018), and fragmented markets with supply chains disrupted by poor-quality production and poor irrigation on existing farmlands.

IOCC has worked in the Kassab region, an area that was seriously impacted by the conflict, to help farmers restart production on family farms. The project supported 480 farming families (over 2,500 individuals) to improve the productivity of the farmland and quality of the crops, through the provision of tools and technical assistance and training to protect crops from damaging diseases and pests. Irrigation systems were also repaired and improved to ensure an adequate supply of water, and farmers learned how to better manage and conserve water resources used for irrigation. Drip technology, the most efficient system used to grow crops and ensure they have proper water and nutrients, was introduced to farmers; this method increases crop yield and ensures that water and fertilizer are evenly distributed throughout the field to the roots of crops by dripping through pipes. In addition to supporting the farmers with enhanced crop productivity, the project improved the professional technical skills of 100 women in food-processing through trainings covering entrepreneurial skills and market-

ing basics. To ensure sustainability, the local community was significantly involved in all phases of the project, including the local municipality and community members, and an advisory committee made up of community members was formed, through which farmers meet and seek agricultural advice. One of the advisory committee's main purposes is to ensure that farmers have access to technical assistance in order to prevent crop diseases, and work toward the sustainability of their farmlands.

To improve food security and mitigate malnutrition health risks, IOCC has provided food parcels to help over 256,000 vulnerable individuals supplement their daily food needs.



Jordan

To increase farming families' harvests so that they can feed themselves and generate more income, IOCC has trained farmers in animal husbandry and water conservation. IOCC has supported farmers to establish water catchments for reliable irrigation and greenhouses for increased productivity, in addition to supplying farmers with cows, chickens, or goats so they can build up their herds – and their livelihoods. IOCC has also provided small grants to farmers to support increased income-generation activities. Additionally, IOCC has worked directly with farmers and led awareness raising at the community level on improved management of Jordan's scarce water resources.



Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza

Since 2011, through IOCC, more than 2,500 households (~16,000 people) in Gaza and the West Bank have received agricultural supplies and training for home gardens or greenhouses, or livestock or beekeeping training to provide food and marketable farm products. Hundreds of women have participated in IOCC's agricultural activities and capacity building, including training in farming and marketing, and have received specialized equipment like solar-powered herb dryers, equipping them to improve quality of life for themselves and their children.

In addition to the agricultural supplies, IOCC provided agricultural assets through greenhouse rehabilitation and home gardens. Hundreds of greenhouses and home gardens have been established through IOCC programs and equipped with irrigation systems.

In addition, over 1,200 families have received laying hens and rabbits, plus supplies, increasing household food security.



Greece



In response to the 2021 wildfires on Evia, IOCC provided new technical equipment to over a dozen ruined businesses on Evia and approximately 1,000 tons of animal feed to fire-affected farmers there to support continued production. Examples of technical equipment include a lathe for a motorcycle workshop to resume fabricating accessories, digital interactive screens for a language-school's classrooms, and air-conditioning systems for a guesthouse.

After the disastrous 2007 fires in the Peloponnese, IOCC helped rebuild the agriculture capacity of farmers who suffered severe losses, including providing forage seed to livestock farms of various sizes.

In 2009, IOCC partnered with the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and the Pan-Cretan Association in America to establish a well-organized modern soil laboratory in the fire-affected region of Ileia in the Peloponnese. Prior to this, no soil laboratories existed in the area, and farmers had to send their soil samples to Athens for analysis. Following the official opening ceremony, the soil laboratory began providing services to an estimated 100,000

local farmers. The entire population of 800,000 on the Western Peloponnese also benefitted indirectly from the services provided by the center.

Since 2015, IOCC worked with agricultural associations to improve the agricultural output of individual members as well as the overall management of the associations. IOCC has helped associations identify investments that allow farmers to add value to raw products, create marketing strategies for these value-added products, and, for the first time, access export markets. Many rural associations have traditionally sold their products only locally because requirements and processes for shipping to other parts of the EU were complicated, expensive, and difficult to understand.

IOCC has connected farmers with business mentors who help them navigate the export process and obtain licenses. Licensing helps producers increase revenue by selling in new markets where their products do not compete with those of other local producers. Mentors also advise on core business operations, such as creating a business plan, marketing, and scaling up production and sales.

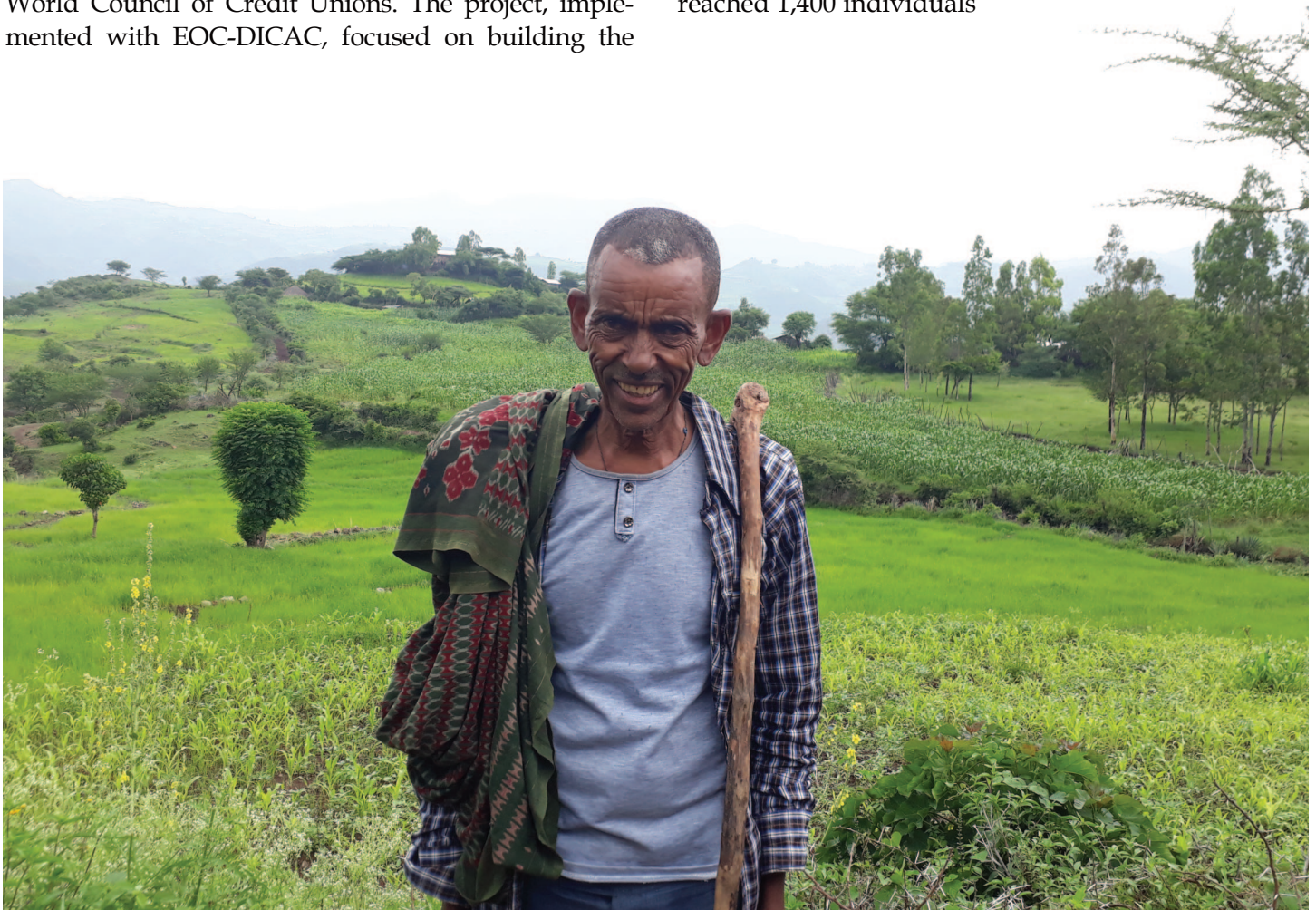
Ethiopia

Starting in 2021, IOCC began providing agricultural support across Amhara in response to destructive desert locust infestations. The project is supporting over 600 households through unconditional cash assistance, and nearly 500 households have received crop and vegetable seeds. The six locust-affected communities received fruit tree seedlings, banana suckers, and forage tree and grass seeds. The response has also enclosed three overgrazed and eroded parcels of land (five hectares each) to protect them from animal grazing and to regenerate soil fertility.

In 2013, IOCC completed a 2.5-year \$1.9 million pilot project funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) through a partnership with the World Council of Credit Unions. The project, implemented with EOC-DICAC, focused on building the

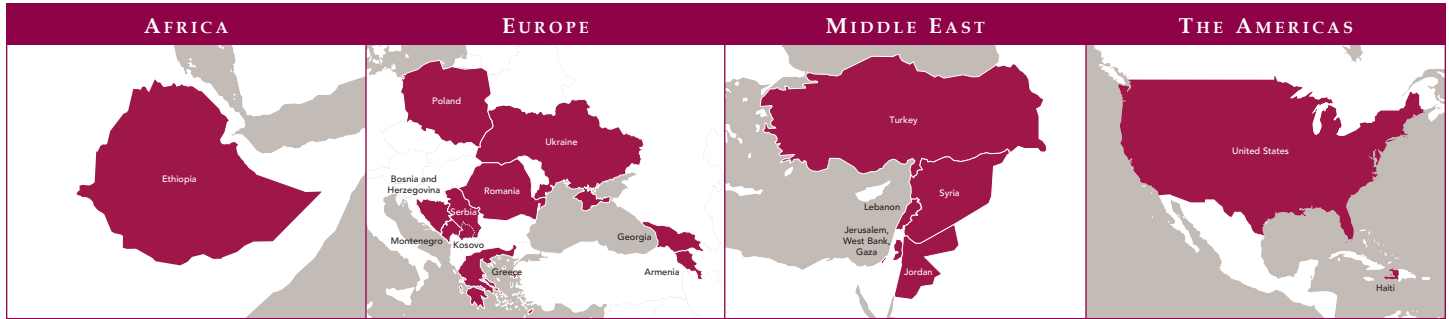
resilience of smallholder farmers. The project provided needs-based agricultural training and technical support and improved agricultural inputs to 35,000 smallholder farmers in Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray. Various rural and agricultural infrastructures were rehabilitated, improved, or constructed—among them, improved seed and vegetable stores, barns, and cooperative offices, irrigation wells, canals, and other structures.

In addition, spring-water caps were constructed and enhanced by soil, water, and environmental conservation activities. In another agriculture and food security project in Amhara and Oromia, IOCC improved childhood nutrition by establishing school gardens and training students on their management. The program reached 1,400 individuals



THROUGHOUT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, IOCC continued its projects around the world while taking steps to protect staff, partners, and beneficiaries. All projects are continuously evaluated for multiple risk factors, and appropriate modifications made. IOCC ensures that all staff and beneficiaries receive information about COVID-19, including testing locations, and integrates this information into ongoing projects, as indicated by local health authorities.

Active Worldwide Programs



- Ethiopia
- Armenia
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Georgia
- Greece
- Montenegro
- Poland
- Romania
- Serbia including Kosovo
- Ukraine
- Jerusalem, West Bank, Gaza
- Jordan
- Lebanon
- Syria
- Turkey
- Haiti
- United States



● Emergency Preparedness & Response	150,044
● Water, Sanitation, & Hygiene (WASH).....	40,362
● Sustainable Livelihoods.....	2,869
● Food Security & Agriculture.....	129,203
● Health	607,594
● Other (Education, Nonfood Items, Shelter, Protection)	2,917

IN 2023, IOCC SERVED 932,989 PEOPLE WORLDWIDE

IOCC was established in 1992 and is the official humanitarian organization of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States. IOCC provides emergency relief and development assistance to those in need worldwide, without discrimination, and strengthens the capacity of the Orthodox Church and local NGO and community partners. Its global operations are managed from its headquarters in Baltimore, Maryland, in the United States, with field offices in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, East Africa, and the US. Since its founding, IOCC has distributed more than \$800 million worth of aid in over 60 countries around the world, and has extensive experience implementing programs in partnership with United States government agencies (USAID, BHA, PRM) and the United Nations (UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR, OCHA), as well as with European and international donors.



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