

## From Cow to the Store Quality Counts



Photo: USAID/Albania Karla Christensen

The program has trained over 12,000 Albanian farmers and dairy processors since 1993 on new product development, milk collection, business management, hygiene and sanitation, among other subjects.

**“We each sold our milk separately to local businessmen who were paying very low prices ... Now we realized that by working together and following good management practices, we could produce better quality milk and sell it for much more.”**

**- Arsino Zako, Dairy farmer and President of the Women's Metaj Dairy Cooperative**

Arsino Zako, the proud owner of ten cows and heifers, is the president of a women's dairy cooperative in a small village in central Albania. She recalls that “we were all milk maids during the communist regime when we worked seven days a week from 3am in the morning to sundown. When communism fell, we were given one cow and one heifer.” With little dairy production or business knowledge and limited livestock, the women were hardly able to manage a meager existence selling their milk.

As part of the USAID funded Land O' Lakes program, the women formed a coop, attended trainings on dairy production, and received a cooling tank for testing and storage of milk. Within four years, the coop grew from fifteen women to forty-five strong. The cooperative is now collecting over 1000 liters of milk a day selling it to dairy processors at double the price than two years before. The USAID program has trained over 12,000 Albanian farmers and dairy processors since 1993 on new product development, milk collection, business management, hygiene and sanitation, among other subjects.