

"There are 12 employees in our cooperative," explained Romik Andreasyan, one of its founders.

"Among them are an agrarian specialist, a pharmacist, and someone with experience in the canning industry - all specialists of one type or another. Sea buckthorn is only the beginning, for the Armenian forests contain almost 30 varieties of valuable plants which we plan eventually to use. In the meantime we are taking the first steps: we have taken out a bank loan of 92,000 roubles. Making payments on the loan is easy in the autumn. I say 'easy' because we deposited 12,000 roubles in our bank account during the first 4 months alone. Our earnings are directly linked to sales. The more we sell, the better the balance in our book."

"A present we are making natural buckthorn juice in 630 gram jars priced at R2.50 each. We are starting production of drinks, puree, jams, and sweets - all made from buckthorn. We have begun to develop the technology for producing buckthorn butter. The healing properties of this plant have been recognized for a long time and are widely known, so the cooperative's profits will grow rapidly when production is in full swing. This is only one side of the coin, however. It is noteworthy that butter is made from the pits of the berries and, by using them, our production process fully utilizes the whole berry."

"Naturally the cooperative has some problems: a shortage of jars and bottles and high transportation costs. Our relationship with various administrative agencies still has to be worked out and we are experiencing many organizational difficulties. Purchase prices undoubtedly need to be reexamined. They are not properly structured and do