Case Study: Scaling Sustainable Livelihoods through Household Agroforestry How KAFLU's Targeted In-Kind Model Is Transforming Vulnerable Rural Households in Kyrgyzstan

Executive Summary

In rural Kyrgyzstan, economic volatility, seasonal labor dependency, and climate shocks hit vulnerable households the hardest. To bridge the gap between social assistance and long-term economic independence, **the Kyrgyz Association of Forest and Land Users (KAFLU)** engineered a replicable, community-anchored targeted support model.

By combining rigorous local governance partnerships with targeted in-kind starter kits—such as high-yield berry crops, fruit orchards, and processing tools—KAFLU enables low-income families to convert underutilized household plots into self-sustaining, commercial agroforestry micro-enterprises.

The Operational Model: Governance, Selection, and Starter Kits

KAFLU's approach moves away from passive social assistance, establishing a structured pathway toward household production and micro-entrepreneurship.

Key Pillars of the KAFLU Mechanism:

- **Institutional Collaboration:** KAFLU works directly with local municipal bodies (*Aiyl Okmotu*) and local social workers to ensure real-time identification of households living below the subsistence minimum.
- **Strict Social Quotas:** Priority is built directly into the program design, reserving 50% of non-cash grants for female-headed households, 30% for young families (under 35), and 20% for extremely vulnerable households.
- **In-Kind Asset Transfer:** Beneficiaries receive tailored starter packages (seedlings, mini-greenhouses, small livestock, or drying/processing equipment) rather than cash, ensuring investments directly build productive household infrastructure.
- **Co-Investment & Capacity Building:** Beneficiaries contribute land preparation, labor, and basic tools. KAFLU provides practical training on food safety, hygiene, organic farming, and climate-resilient plot management.

Field Implementation: Real Impacts Across Pilot Regions (some examples)

Under the DMSOP project, KAFLU deployed targeted agroforestry and berry starter kits across the Issyk-Kul and Jalal-Abad regions. The transition from seasonal informal labor to high-value perennial crop production is already generating measurable economic security for participating families.

1. Jety-Oguz District, Issyk-Kul Region (Saruu Village)

In Saruu, smallholder plots were supplied with perennial berry stock and fruit trees to construct multi-tiered agroforestry systems.

- **Makhabat Arykbaeva:** Managing a household with a husband holding Group III disability and a child with cerebral palsy, Makhabat relied on monthly child benefits. KAFLU provided an agroforestry kit covering 0.15 hectares (400 currant bushes, raspberry, strawberry, and mixed fruit trees valued at ~81,200 KGS / $928). Land preparation was completed by the family. Starting in Year 2, projected annual revenues from raspberries alone are estimated at 360,000 KGS, fundamentally altering the family's financial security.
- **Alima Urmanbetova:** Dependent on unpredictable seasonal labor and child support, Alima developed a 0.25-hectare plot utilizing a 70,100 KGS ($801) kit containing 350 currant bushes, raspberries, and fruit trees. The investment establishes a permanent home-based farm with projected yields capable of generating over 360,000 KGS annually while securing fresh, nutrient-rich produce for her children.

2. Suzak District, Jalal-Abad Region (Kara-Alma Village)

In Kara-Alma, where average household incomes frequently lingered below 6,000 KGS per month, high-yield berry crops were deployed to convert small yard spaces into commercial producers.

- **Aiperi Aitkulova**: Living on ~8,000 KGS per month from seasonal non-timber forest collection, Aiperi transformed a compact 0.05-hectare plot using a 61,830 KGS ($707) package consisting of 600 raspberry plants, 200 loganberry plants, currants, and fruit trees. The concentrated high-density planting provides self-employment and a projected yearly revenue stream of 360,000 KGS starting in Year 2.
- **Madina Kulnazarova**: Transitioning from a 6,000 KGS/month baseline, Madina received a targeted strawberry and fruit package worth 29,230 KGS ($330) on 0.05 hectares. Utilizing 800 high-yield strawberry plants, her household is projected to generate up to 360,000 KGS per year beginning in the second season.
- **Albina Ergeshova**: Supporting elderly parents on an average monthly income of 5,000 KGS, Albina established a 0.04-hectare plot with a 49,830 KGS ($570) starter kit featuring 400 raspberry bushes, loganberries, and fruit trees. The plot is expected to return 240,000 KGS annually from raspberries alone.

Between 2025 and August 2026 alone, **KAFLU successfully extended direct targeted assistance to over 200 vulnerable households across all seven regions of Kyrgyzstan.** Building on this momentum, the Association plans to expand its reach to support **over 300 additional families by December 2027.**

Socio-Economic & Environmental ROI (Return on Investment)

The preliminary results across these pilot cases demonstrate the clear strengths of KAFLU's household support model:

Dimension	***Primary Outcome***
Economic Shift	Household food expenses **drop by 30–50%**; annual family incomes rise significantly above regional poverty lines within 18–24 months.
Social Empowerment	Provides structured, home-based **self-employment for women and young caretakers** without requiring them to migrate for seasonal labor.
Environmental Resilience	Replaces intensive agrochemicals with **organic perennial cultivation, improving soil health, microclimates, and household climate adaptation.**

Scaling Potential & Investment Outlook

KAFLU's long-term vision involves expanding this validated methodology across all pilot rural municipalities in Kyrgyzstan, reaching over 1,000 low-income households.

To link home production to urban and international markets, KAFLU is deploying local aggregation and micro-processing hubs connected to its Business Development and Export Promotion Centers in Bishkek and Manas cities.

- Target Deployment: 1,000 low-income households across rural Kyrgyzstan
- Estimated Investment: ~131 million KGS (approx. $1.5M USD)

- Funding Allocation: High-quality certified stock, mini-greenhouses, processing equipment (dryers, juicers, autoclaves), field agronomy, and multi-year impact monitoring.
- Institutional Alignment: Designed for scaling in partnership with international development organizations, including GAFSP, IFAD, WFP, FAO, and the World Bank.