



NOVEMBER 2020

This past month started off in a whirl. Leaving on Nov. 18 meant that I had a week or two to make last visits to our farm partners around the country, clean and pack and finish errands and try not to forget to turn off the lights on the way out. I had planned to work my way around Moldova in a circle over four days, ending back at my home in the south. The first day I headed to Dancu, which is north of me 2.5 hrs, also along the Prut River, the border with Romania. I had planned to flip the compost pile I had made and also construct another, but I would need a tractor and driver (not being an experienced tractor operator ;) Though I had called the day before and was told that there would be someone with the tractor and front-end loader available, I arrived to find the aforementioned tractor being used as a lift for construction materials and the driver at the wheel. He apologized and said that he was needed on-site and could not help me.

This forced me to reconsider my plans, so I decided to cancel a visit to another farm on the fourth day so I could come back and work with the tractor. I wanted to have the compost mature by spring and if we postponed the compost pile construction until after I returned, I wasn't sure it would be ready to put in the greenhouse by April. After making a few notes about the straw and grass I'd need for the new pile and cleaning bits of trash and baling twine out of the old straw stack, I left for Chişinău.

A friend from my village had asked me to take a package of canned goods and produce to her cousin who lived in an apartment in the city. I visited a little while with her, and left to go to another friend's home, where I usually stay when in the area. Except that my car wouldn't start.

The next morning, after being rescued by my friends and taught to start my car by pushing it down a hill (think motorcycle jump-starting), I had another plan change. What to do while my car's starter was being repaired the whole day? Instead of several meetings and heading further north that day, I called up Stas, our Moldovan project director. He cleared out his afternoon schedule and I briefed him on each of the projects. One of the most

difficult was a farmer who has dreamed of having a 50-cow dairy herd; he's a go-getter and we've been trying to help him develop his current 5-cow enterprise. Unfortunately, he's encountered unobliging neighbors complaining of the smell of the cows, landlords who take back land they've rented to him, and a mayor's office that won't sell him any land so that he can start a registered business. Now he'd found a farm for sale and was hoping we'd loan him funds to purchase it.

Stas and I discussed our earlier conversations with the farmer, how we'd agreed to fund the purchase for a small plot of land for him and take small steps toward a larger enterprise, instead of him suddenly handling 25 ac. and 20 cows and the management of an official business all in one step. I left feeling satisfied by our discussion but a bit apprehensive about telling all this to the excited farmer.

At left: A small farmer and pastor who is building his first dairy barn, slowly making progress as he can afford the next step in construction.



The next morning I headed north in my repaired vehicle (praise God!). I visited a businessman who oversees the farming of some land for a nursing home. The land rent is very cheap and most years they make a substantial profit. This year, however, was a total loss because of the country-wide drought. He had sent me pictures throughout the growing season, and though the corn looked nice mid-summer, 'til fall it had produced only 4"-long ears. Yet though it had been a hard year for the farm, his door and window manufacturing business was growing steadily. He has worked hard and has grown to employ 30 people, including his wife and adult son, and diversified into general construction as well.

Finishing up there, I traveled east and spent the night at another project, a small poultry/vegetable farm. This family desires to reach their village for Christ and also train missionaries and young farmers. It's a big vision but with God's direction and wisdom, they can make a difference in the area and even the country as a whole. I spent the morning looking over the garden, alfalfa, and turkey and chickens. Over tea, I discussed future plans with Agnesa, the middle-aged woman who stays in the village while her son travels back and forth from Chişinau each week. That afternoon I returned to Chişinau and rested a bit, as it was Sunday and I needed to breath a little.

Monday morning, I returned to Dancu and built a new compost pile and checked the small radish plants and oats sprouted from what I'd seeded several weeks before. Then on the way home to Vadul lui Isac, my village in the south, I stopped to talk to the dairy farmer about what Stas and I had discussed. He was quite disappointed and frustrated, but we parted on generally good terms. I wanted to talk to him in person before leaving for the States.

This is just a little taste of some of the issues we deal with—changing schedules, crop problems, people problems and making decisions about how and who to help. But the flip-side is the joy of seeing the businessman grow, the commitment of Agnesa to studying the Bible with her neighbors, and the satisfaction of working through conflict, solving problems together. Growing, together. Each of these situations requires wisdom and the building of good relationships. It is easier to have a "program" than to work with each person individually, but we're convinced that authentic, give-and-take relationships form the foundation for effective ministry. As God works in us and the farmers with whom we interact, His glory is displayed in a way that just giving money or goods to people doesn't accomplish. We are transformed through iron sharpening iron and through His Spirit at work among us.

Please pray that our love would abound in knowledge and depth of insight, so that we may be able to discern what is best. Pray that we can work together with farmers and organizations so that each party can bring something to the table and bear the yoke of work together. Please pray that we can humbly admit mistakes and walk as children of God.

Since arriving in the States, Les and I have talked about each project and the next steps we need to make in Moldova. We don't have it all figured out yet—much of our work is pioneering and many "how-do-we-do-that" questions still don't have answers. We agree that we are educators and networkers and cannot become a micro-finance organization, though We need to understand business law and impediments to starting farm businesses like those faced by our dairy farmer with 5 cows. We are trying to look to God, to wait patiently for Him and to be faithful in what lies within our reach already. Thank you for praying and supporting us as a part of the Body.

All God's best,

Angela



Autumn sights in rural Moldova.

The compost pile is gets turned regularly at Dancu to heat and compost more rapidly.



Daikon radishes seeded as a cover crop in the Dancu greenhouse.