Social Transition and Agricultural Potential in the Caucasus and Central Asian Region

On March 10th, Mohammed Babadoost spoke at REEEC’s Noontime Scholars Lecture. Dr. Mohammad Babadoost is Professor of Plant Pathology and extension specialist in the College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences (ACES) at the University of Illinois. He has recently been honored with the Sheth Distinguished Faculty Award for International Achievement, an award presented to faculty with profound international accomplishments in teaching, research, and public service. Dr. Babadoost was honored for his work in improving the science of plant pathology and global food security throughout the world, especially in Mexico, Caucasus region, Central Asian region, China, and the Middle East. He is also an Honorary Professor at Azerbaijan State Agricultural University and recipient of the College Faculty Award of Excellence in the ACES extension.

His talk covered the Soviet past of the Caucasus and Central Asian region, delving into their current agricultural security. The Caucasus and Central Asian region covers 3.3 million square miles with only a population of 85 million. Dr. Babadoost highlighted each specific country, noting that they all faced different difficulties in producing effective agriculture. However, the diverse geography allows for a wide array of agricultural products such as cereals, legumes, vegetables, fruit, and nut crops. From the presentation, Dr. Babadoost noted that Kazakhstan seems the most promising country in the region, with a large amount of agricultural land and available resources. Likewise, Georgia has been producing high-quality wine and grape products from their capable vineyards.

Dr. Babadoost's personal experiences in the region highlighted that education, research, NGOs, and extension would not be enough to improve food production and quality. His recent work has found that these facets have distanced themselves from each other, instead of creating a more effective network of collaboration. He concluded that each entity must work together to improve production.