
Code of good aims and corruption risk.

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On July 20 the government of Armenia adopted the Technical Code of removal of the fertile layer of soil and requirements on its preservation and use. The representatives of the Ministry of Environmental Protection assure that this completes the enactment of the Land Code of Armenia. The code really has good aims but it contains corruption risk.

The technical code will cover all kinds of land works in Armenia. If the fertile layer of soil is removed and, for instance, a mine is operated, either the soil must be preserved or given to others for use. The latter contains a corruption risk. Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection Simon Papyan and Juliet Ghlichyan, a senior official of the ministry, explained in detail that standards of maintenance and removal of the fertile layer of soil have been set down. But the problem is that if the head of the community or the marzpet (the head of the regional administration), in case the land does not belong to communities, can prove that they do not lack fertile soil, they can give fertile soil to everyone they want. And since in accordance with the Land Code of Armenia fertile soil is not for sale, the head of the community or the marzpet officially will not get anything in return for this favor, but if they need a layer of fertile soil, there will always be another head of community or another marzpet, who would answer their favor.

And since our officials are mainly guided by the principle "a post stops being attractive unless you abuse it", it is beyond doubt that the head of the community or the marzpet will give the land to those who would have "a kind eye on them". Simon Papyan agrees that there is such risk.

Statistics shows that fertile soil is highly demanded in Armenia: about 70 percent of the territory of Armenia is on the verge of erosion, the majority of land of the Ararat Valley is salinated and unusable. Since Soviet times 7500 hectares of land is bad.

In order not to leave the responsibility for cultivation of this land on the shoulders of the government, businesses have to present a clear plan of cultivation of land with clear timing, and during its economic activities it transfers money to the capital intended for this very aim. And if this business is unable to prove that it can provide necessary conditions for preservation of the removed layer of fertile soil, it has to give it to someone else. In other words, companies also need to get on well with heads of communities or marzpets, who have a layer of fertile soil.
