

SNAPSHOT

USAID OPENS NEW EXPORT OPPORTUNITIES FOR MACEDONIAN FRUITS AND VEGETABLES PRODUCERS



Importers from Montenegro in Strumica



Importers from B&H in Polog's apple orchards



Conference and B2Bs of Macedonian fresh fruits and vegetables exporters with Slovakian importers

Photo: AgBiz Program's Staff

The export of fresh produce has significant impact on the overall Macedonian agricultural sales. Although in the recent years some companies managed to enter and expand their sales on different international markets, the main export destination for Macedonian fresh produce remains to be Ex-Yu markets. During the last decade Macedonia's export to those markets was significantly reduced mostly due to the increased competition from other domestic and import suppliers, changed consumer preferences and rapid diversification in quality and new varieties of fresh produce.

Recent improvements in the production of new varieties demanded on the market, standardization and increased investment in post-harvesting facilities improved competitiveness of Macedonian fresh produce and set the ground for targeting new non-traditional markets. In response to this efforts, the USAID AgBiz Program in cooperation with the consulting firm Epicentar implemented a comprehensive activity to identify and establish market linkages with non-traditional markets for Macedonian fresh fruits and vegetables (FF&V). After the baseline screenings three target markets were selected primarily considering optimal matching of the chosen markets' demands and key competitive advantages of specific Macedonian fresh produce. Therefore, the three most favorable market-product matches were Montenegro for peppers, Bosnia and Hercegovina (B&H) for apples and Slovakia for table grapes.

During the period from September till November leading importers from Montenegro, B&H and Slovakia visited Macedonia and three separate conferences and B2B meetings were organized where the experts from Macedonia and the respective country presented the findings on specific market-product and supply-demand characteristics, potential market entry points for Macedonian products, buyers and consumers requirements and possible trading barriers for the particular market. Each of the three conferences were followed by a one day field visit of Macedonian producers and exporters.

Foreign buyers had an opportunity to better understand Macedonian FF&V industry potential and to witness production capacity, post-harvest technologies and quality standards of Macedonian exporters. Direct business contacts enabled effective negotiations on assortment, price levels, packaging, timing and transport that resulted in export of 2,000 tons of apples and pre-contracting of 500 tons of table grapes and 2,000 tons of vegetables. In addition, the representatives from Hortim – the largest supermarkets chain in Slovakia negotiated import of ten various products from Macedonia for the 2013 such as table grapes, pears, apples, watermelons, cabbage, potatoes, onions, rice, tomatoes and wine.

"After we almost completely lost the Bosnian market, Macedonian apple will again strengthen its presence on Bosnian tables. The partners from Bosnia learned about our preparedness to deliver high-quality apples on time and with reasonable prices. Macedonian apples must regain the reputation of being the best in the region", says Ivan Kitinov, sales manager from Agroplod – the company that exported 1,500 tons of apples to Bosnia and Hercegovina as a result of this activity.