

CASE STUDY:

CULTIVATION OF NON-TIMBER FOREST PRODUCTS (NTFP) HELPS INCREASE INCOMES AND EMPLOYMENT

Background

Kamenica is a multiethnic municipality in the north east of Kosovo. With an estimated 5,000 young unemployed men and women, Skills for Rural Employment (S4RE) identified Kamenica as an important area for increasing income and employment opportunities.

Kamenica has favorable conditions for agriculture, and a group of young farmers were interested to invest in order to increase their income and create job opportunities.

Intervention by S4RE

Farmers first heard about the possibility of growing black marshmallow as a medicinal plant from S4RE. After several meetings with the farmers S4RE in cooperation with Agro Produkt LLC, a Kosovo processor of NTFP, joined forces to support 21 farmers. This support included a 3 month training program about cultivation of the crop, as well as 3,000 seedlings for each farmer to develop their own plantings.



The group leader, Mr. Nexhmedin Kryeziu was further supported by S4RE to submit a proposal on behalf of the group to the

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municipality of Kamenica to help with the purchase of a drying facility. A grant to the value of €3,675 was awarded to the group, which allowed them to dry the product prior to sale, thereby achieving a higher price.

As part of the training, farmers have been facilitated to reach a contract for selling their products and to increase their business skills, leading to a great willingness to continue with this farming activity.

Results of the collaboration

As a result of this collaboration, there are 21 farmers producing black marshmallow. Despite poor weather conditions during the growing season which reduced the potential yield, the farmers are satisfied with the quantity collected and each of them engaged 2 young people in the harvesting process.

Mr. Kryeziu harvested and sold 75 kilograms of dried flowers of black marshmallow at the value of €10 per kilogram.

S4RE linked farmers with 2 local collection points in the Kamenica region, which collected the final product from them and sold to Agro Produkt. As a result of this successful collaboration, the black marshmallow grown in Kamenica is now being sold in a range of natural products in Germany and Switzerland!

The original group of farmers have formed 2 new groups of local growers who will attend trainings in 2015 and are ready to invest in the cultivation of NTFP. Farmers are very happy for this opportunity offered by S4RE and Agro Produkt. This is the first time that a project has invested with them in NTFP production and provided them with the opportunity to generate sustainable income and employment for their families and community.

