SUCCESS STORY

CULTIVATING RASPBERRIES FOR HEALTH AND WEALTH

It is end of August and raspberries have featured as news actuality in the media, promoting the fruit as healthy and wealthy and praised as the best source to reduce unemployment. August and September are raspberry harvesting time. A raspberry fair is taking place at the center of Pristina, the capital city of Kosovo, where farmers are promoting fresh raspberries. Colorful and refreshingly sweet, juicy and satisfying to eat, raspberries also offer plenty health benefits, from helping control weight to possibly helping prevent cancer. Although it's hard to beat the flavor and texture of fresh raspberries, raspberries can be frozen, freeze-dried, and even dried and powdered without losing their nutritive value. One of the world's largest exporting countries, in the border with Kosovo, associates raspberries with gold calling them "red gold" due to high profitability.

130 km far from capital, in the village Blaq of the municipality of Dragash, five youth have planted an area of 0.25ha of raspberry, variety Polka. Egzon Imeri, the group leader, age 19, parallel to his studies in law has decided to enter agribusiness. The harvesting of Polka variety has started and Egzon and his four colleagues have already generated 200 Euro each for ten days. They expect to earn at least 500 Euro this season. "No, we didn't visit the fair. We are selling our entire yield here in Dragash, the market is secured with a very good price. Nowadays, raspberries are very popular among the community. When we first started to cultivate the raspberry our parents and the community were skeptical of our decision. They told us you are losing time, but due to our hard work, the first year yield provided return on investment," - says Egzon.

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The group attended a 16 days training on raspberry cultivation provided by the project in their village, and the group had the opportunity to visit raspberry orchards to practice the training. Motivated and enthusiastic they planted 1,000 seedlings in a property of one of the group members. The group of five is managing and maintaining the plant together and are planning to expand the orchard.

"We do pick raspberries together early in the morning, and then sell them to the collection center "Hit Flores". We are planning to expand and have 0.25ha for each of the members. We have difficulties to find available land for rent, but we are working on it. We are happy that our parents and the community are convinced that we have made a right decision, we have a job and we can contribute for family wealth. The profit we are making with raspberries can't be generated with any other traditional crop," he says.

Recently, there has been an increased interest of youth to cultivate raspberry. Maximum yield is achieved in third year and the profit varies from 10,000-15,000 Euro per ha. Raspberry plant has a life cycle of 15 years and constantly produces new seedlings enabling farmers to expand from existing orchards.

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