Evaluation report of the Knowledge Exchange in Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina: Best Practices in Farmer Organization and Fruit and Vegetable Production and Marketing Focusing on Berries

October 2018
INTRODUCTION

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) are implementing the project “Supporting sustainable agrifood value chain integration in Montenegro's fruit and vegetable sector” in collaboration with the Montenegrin Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. As part of this project, the FAO and EBRD organized a knowledge exchange to Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina on Best practices in farmer organization and fruit and vegetable production and marketing focusing on berries. Support in organization of this exchange was received from the Regional Development Agency for (Bjelasica, Komovi and Prokletije) and Secretariat for rural and sustainable development, Municipality of Bijelo Polje. The knowledge exchange was held between 17 and 21 September 2018.

This knowledge exchange has the aim to introduce Montenegrin value chain actors to:

- advanced production technologies, including new trellising systems for raspberries and new varieties;
- post-harvest handling technologies as well as value-adding through packaging and processing;
- meeting market requirements through aggregating, packaging, compliance with international standards and certification;
- the role and importance of organization through agricultural cooperatives and associations.

The itinerary included visits to leading nurseries, cooperatives and associations, producers of relevant equipment (greenhouses and irrigation), as well as processors.

Sixteen participants attended: 14 agricultural producers in addition to a representative of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Montenegro as well as the Secretariat for rural and sustainable development, Municipality of Bijelo Polje.

Participants were asked to evaluate the program using the questionnaire in Annex 1 (English and Montenegrin). The evaluation is presented below.
EVALUATION

1. How do you evaluate this knowledge exchange?

As seen in the table below, the overwhelming majority rates the program as excellent. All 16 participants rated selected topics for visits, and organization/logistics as excellent. Three out of 16 participants rated practical implementation as very good (2 participants) and good (1 participant) - the remaining 13 rated it as excellent.

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<th>Very bad</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selected topics for visits</td>
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<td>Organization/Logistics</td>
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<td>Practical implementation</td>
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2. How relevant were site visits to you? What was most useful?

Participants’ responses were grouped under the headings of production, cooperatives, and general.

Production

- Thanks to this trip, the producers have learned some new methods for F&V production and storage, which will be very helpful to them in future production. One farmer especially enjoyed the visit to Plant doo as he is very interested in the production of vegetable plant materials.
- Visit/training by Adnan Malicevic.
- All site visits were useful. Most useful were greenhouse production.
- Learning about new production technologies and processing of berries.
- One farmer: “for me as a producer of raspberries and blueberries, the most useful visits were those that were related to berries”.
- Fruit storage, production and processing.
- Direct visits to sites where there are plantations so that everyone saw how crops are produced.
- Visits to all locations that were interesting and fruit production.

Cooperatives (farmer organization)

- Everything was good. One farmer: “the most useful for me were visits to organizations that have organized processing of agricultural products”.
- All visits were very useful - especially Gracanica and Arilje related to the establishment of cooperatives.
- All site visits were adequate. Especially useful was exchange of knowledge and experience in the formation, organization and functioning of a cooperative.
- New knowledge and experience in the phase of organizing farmers.
- The visit to ZZ Gracanka in Gracanica, farmer organization and exchange of experience through presentations by Rada Svitlica and Rasim Husic.
- Visits were very important and useful. Organization is 90% of work - exchange of experience.
- Visit to cooperatives that are successfully producing and surviving on the market.
- Gracanica - topic of cooperatives. Being welcome.

General

- Visits were very useful for us and our households. Everything was good.
3. Which aspects of the program were not so relevant for you?

Ten participants made comments that can all be grouped under the heading of "all was useful". Our participants did indicate some specific topics that were not so useful to them.

**All was useful**

- All visit were useful / everything was good (x6).
- All was useful to me as I learned a lot that I need in future work.
- None / There were no irrelevant topics on this trip (x3).

**Some topics were not so useful**

- Production and storage of blueberries and mushrooms.
- Mushrooms.
- Production and development of blueberries, strawberries and currants.
- Everything was interesting but we are mainly interested in raspberries.

4. What will you do differently once you return to your farm or job because of this program? Will you adopt some new practices or ideas?

Participants’ responses were grouped under the headings of production cooperatives, and general.

**Production**

- Knowledge gained through this trip will be useful and applied in the future - both in terms of farmer organization through cooperatives and new ways of production.
- How to establish a facility for processing - namely for raspberries.
- Better organization of work on the farm.
- Will consider establishing a plantation with blueberries in containers as well as strawberry mjesečarka.
- Will try to expand production.
- With this experience, we will improve production.
- A farmer: “What I have seen, and the possibilities, will apply on my raspberry farm”.
- All that I have seen that is better / more modern, I will aim to apply on my farm.
- “I will apply most of the things learned as before I did not have as much knowledge that is important for my farm. I asked questions and now know what I need to do in the future”.
- Improving production by introducing new technologies. Expanding the palate of products (strawberries).

**Cooperatives (farmer organization)**

- Knowledge gained through this trip will be useful and applied in the future - both in terms of farmer organization through cooperatives but new ways of production.
- New ideas for organizing and starting an association or a cooperative.
- Associations and cooperatives. Education/training.
- Practical knowledge and experience of agricultural producers in BiH and Serbia for our producers. We will establish a cooperative - the best solution for organizing producers.
- We will establish a cooperative. That is our future.
- This trip has opened our eyes for better organization.
- Continue to expand knowledge on the importance of forming cooperatives as the only possible way to increase income on farmers and improving market linkages.
- Work to include agricultural producers in producer organizations - cooperatives.

**General**

- We will adopt some new programs.
5. What are your ideas for future training or activities?

Participants’ responses were grouped under the headings of production/processing, cooperatives, and general.

**Production and processing**

- More trips like these in the future - including visits to smaller farmers and processors.
- Include smaller cooperatives or several farms, which are just developing their business. Have more time for training by Adnan Malicevic.
- Workshops to improve production. Special emphasis for practical training on demonstration sites and farms.
- Suggest that the experts also visit us - our plantations.
- More visits like these to gain knowledge about new production methods, new crops and varieties that are currently in trend.
- Suggest that Adnan Hodzic conduct training on the production and plant protection of vegetable seedlings.
- Visits to small producers in Slovenia and Austria.
- As many presentations as possible on production.
- Visits to smaller plantations and producers of final products.
- Have a study tour in apples and stone fruits to Fruska Gora etc.
- A lot more of such programs and direct visits on the spot where we can best learn and see.
- A farmer: “I would like to have more trips like this in the future as now I have a lot more information and I am satisfied with all the visited destinations”.
- Workshops for processing of berry fruits into juice and jams.

**Cooperatives**

- Assistance to resolve issue during the establishment of a cooperative.
- Suggest that Rada Svitlica and Rasim Husic attend our cooperative founding assembly.
- Suggest that Mr Bozo Jokovic conduct training on the organization of producers and processors.
- Assistance to form a cooperative.

**General**

- More trips like this with our local expert Benjamin Toric, who is more than good. With him, everything was easy to follow.
- Knowledge exchange is very important and the organizers have clearly identified what is needed.
- A farmer: “I suggest that you help in all aspects but finance is critical”.
- Education/training on the establishment of cooperatives by engaging experts Rada Svitlica and Rasim Husic; engagement of Bozo Jokovic; who would jointly present the importance of cooperatives and their experiences to farmers in Bijelo Polje and beyond.

6. Additional suggestions/comments?

- All praise for the organization in general, and for the Benjamin Toric support (x3)
- All praise for the organization, selection of sites, welcome and kindness on sites visited.
- All praise for the organization.
- We are pleased with everything.
- The organisers but specifically Benjamin Toric organized the study tour professionally and of high quality. We have seen, heard and learned a lot. I am also thankful to the FAO and EBRD, which support such projects as only through education and capacity building in agricultural production we can reach adequate results. Prof. Adnan Malicevic unselfishly shared his knowledge in the raspberry production technologies and other berries and currants, but due to time constraints, it would be great if he could visit us in Bijelo Polje so
that he can transfer his knowledge to other raspberry producers who could not attend this knowledge exchange. We in Montenegro are honoured that Benjamin Toric lives in Podgorica.

- I just want to say that Benjamin Toric is the right person for this type of training. Thanks to him and his contacts, we return home with newly gained knowledge. “In the future, we hope there will be a project or visits of village households as I hope that I will through some projects renovate a 100 year old house, which forms part of history of the place I am located in. Thank you Benjamin for selflessly sharing information and for giving attention to all of us.”
- Thank you for this experience.
- Support at the beginning is important.
- Continue to raise awareness among agricultural producers on the importance of forming cooperatives as well as present the current trends in market demand of agricultural products on the EU market (i.e. which crop varieties are currently in growing demand on the global market).
- I thank the organizers and Benjamin Toric who have enabled this wonderful trip, which will help production and us in future.
- It was phenomenal, useful. We gained a lot more knowledge, which we will use as a base to improve our work. All praise to whoever thought of and organized this.
Annex 1.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge exchange/study visit</th>
<th>Best Practices in Farmer Organization and Fruit and Vegetable Production and Marketing Focusing on Berries</th>
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<td>Location:</td>
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Please answer all of the following questions. The information will help us evaluate the quality of the program and improve it in the future. Thank you for your cooperation!

7. How do you evaluate this knowledge exchange? *(place X in the relevant cell).*

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8. How relevant were site visits to you? What was most useful?

9. Which aspects of the program were not so relevant for you?

10. What will you do differently once you return to your farm or job as a result of this program? Will you adopt some new practices or ideas?

11. What are your ideas for future training or activities?

12. Additional suggestions/comments?
OCJENA PROGRAMA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Razmjena znanja/studijska posjeta:</th>
<th>Najbolje prakse u organizaciji poljoprivrednih proizvođača u proizvodnji i plasmanu voća i povrća, sa naglaskom na jagodičasto voće</th>
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Molimo vas da odgovorite na svako od slijedećih pitanja. Informacije će nam pomoći da procijenimo kvalitet programa te da ih poboljšamo u budućnosti. Zahvaljujemo na saradnji!


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14. Koliko su relevantne posjete bile za vas? Šta vam je bilo najkorisnije?

15. Koji aspekti programa nisu bili toliko korisni za vas?

16. Šta ćete učiniti drugačije po povratku na vaše gazdinstvo ili posao kao rezultat ovog programa? Da li ćete usvojiti neke nove prakse ili ideje?

17. Koji si vaši prijedlozi za buduće obuke ili aktivnosti?

18. Dodatne sugestije/komentari?