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SUCCESS STORY

International Certification Pays Off

GlobalGAP certification has allowed ABD Prom to export more than \$1.4M of frozen fruit in 2009.



[Photo: Katarina Markovic]

Prior to the final assessment of ABD Prom, Mr. Aleksandar Jakovljevic, owner and manager, spoke to the local press regarding assistance his firm received from the Agribusiness Project.

"Initially, the process looked complicated. However, once we realized what the requirements were, we established that this was a requirement we could easily meet. I would advise others to use the USAID Agribusiness Project grant program and obtain certification. This certification provides a guarantee that products can be exported to international markets."

Mr. Aleksandar Jakovljevic

Buyers in western markets such as the EU and the USA are placing a greater emphasis on international quality standards, such as GlobalGAP and ISO, and they are now requiring their overseas suppliers to have these standards as a pre-condition for the purchase of products. Companies in Serbia that export to these markets are under great pressure from their foreign customers to obtain these standards for their products, or they will no longer be able to export to these markets.

Recognizing this as a key constraint to growing, or even maintaining, Serbia's agricultural exports, the USAID Agribusiness Project launched a grant program to support private agribusiness firms that wished to adopt these standards for their production and processing activities. The grant program supports 50% of the cost of preparation and 70% of the cost of certification, up to a limit of \$5,000 per company. In 2009 the Project awarded 28 grants for the adoption of international standards.

ABD Prom, a private fruit processing and exporting company from the Sabac area of western Serbia was the first company to receive GlobalGAP certification as a result of Project assistance. For ABD Prom, this was a critical achievement for their business, because their French customer had informed them that they would no longer purchase sour cherries from them without the GlobalGAP certification. The award of this certification played a key role in their exports of sour cherries in 2009, as immediately following certification ABD Prom began their exports of certified frozen fruit to their customer, and as of the end of September 2009 these exports were worth \$1.4M.

Besides applying the GlobalGAP standards to their own orchards, ABD Prom will be working with their small farmer suppliers and assisting them to adopt the procedures and techniques that are part of the GlobalGAP package. Their goal is to have not only their own orchards, but the orchards of all their individual farmer suppliers, GlobalGAP certified. In this way ABD Prom is a role model for the farmers in the region, and it is spreading an awareness of the need for higher quality standards for the production and processing of the fruit crop.