



SUCCESS STORY

Suncokret Wins UK Organic Award

Suncokret Walnut Butter has received recognition in the UK as a high quality organic food product.



Photo: Agribusiness Project staff

Suncokret (www.suncokret.rs) now sells its' Raw Walnut Butter, and other products, in supermarket chains in the UK and other European countries, and their full line of Serbian organic products is available on their web site.

The USAID Agribusiness Project helped Suncokret to get a foothold in the EU market, and they are continuing to expand their sales & distribution there. Assistance will continue on branding, package design, and web site development.

Ivan Percic, owner of the Health Food company “Suncokret”, from the village of Hajdukovo in northern Serbia, adopted a vegetarian diet back in 1976. Ivan has maintained this regime ever since, and his long-term dedication to a healthy lifestyle has set the course for his business. In 1989, realizing that cold pressed oils, which are a key ingredient of a healthy diet, could not be found on the home market he decided to establish a company to produce cold pressed oils in Serbia. Suncokret purchased a hundred year old press and began to produce pumpkin, sunflower, and sesame oils in the traditional way, which preserves all of the seed’s nutrients.

As awareness of the environment and the benefits of organic food grew stronger, the demand for organic products has increased, especially in Western Europe. Realizing the potential of this market, and knowing that his products were of the highest quality, Ivan focused on exports. Despite his determination, it was not an easy plan to carry out, since Serbia did not have a law on organic certification at the time, which significantly limited the potential for the export of “organic” foods.

However, Suncokret managed to get a certificate of origin and quality for its products, and Ivan started researching foreign markets in order to identify opportunities and find buyers. In 2007, with support from the USAID Agribusiness Project, he participated in a series of seminars on international fairs, and he refined his marketing skills. With Project assistance “Suncokret” exhibited their products at the “BioFach” fair in Germany, and they went on to exhibit at other international trade fairs, such as “Fancy Food” in New York, and “Slow Food” in Turin. These years of dedication and hard work finally paid off, and now “Suncokret” products are on supermarket shelves in the UK, Germany, France, Belgium, Hungary and Croatia.

Their greatest achievement though is the 2009 Organic Food award which Suncokret received from the UK Soil Association. Their Raw Walnut Butter was selected from among more than 600 entries in the competition, and it received the award in the “Store Cupboard Staples” category. The judges were quoted as saying; “*Good quality fresh nuts, simplicity in a bottle. Finger licking good.*” The Agribusiness Project is continuing to provide assistance to Suncokret, with assistance in branding, package design & development, and web site design.