

SUCCESS STORY

Macedonians learn modern techniques to add value and competitiveness to their table grape exports



Photo: AgBiz Program Staff

At Vineyards with Double Crossarm or „Y” Trellis System in Kern County, California

“We had numerous positive experiences in California that we must transfer and practice in our businesses. This knowledge will lead us to better organization of our work.”

Said Jordancho Gjorchev from “GD Tikvesh”

The study tour for Macedonian Table Grapes Exporters to California was the second international learning experience for table grape AgBiz customers. In 2008 USAID’s AgBiz Program supported a group of managers involved in table grape production, consolidation and exporting to conduct a study tour to South Africa.

The combination of lessons learned in South Africa and California has resulted in accelerated and new investments in table grape production, post harvest handling and packaging and marketing technologies and practices by the Macedonian companies that participated in these study tours.

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In March 2009, ten participants from six Macedonian table grape producers and marketers visited their colleagues in South and Central California, USA. California is one of the largest table grapes exporters in the world. During the ten days of this highly technical study tour, AgBiz customers investigated and now understand the modern, integrated production and post-harvest systems that can be applied to their enterprises and existing table grapes varieties. This learning experience included subjects to increase participants’ knowledge of responsible agrichemical use, and the stringent post-harvest residue requirements of sophisticated markets.

The Tour combined class room training with on-site visits that allowed participants to learn about and observe advanced pack-house operations and lay outs for fresh grape handling, as well as the objectives and means of establishing table grape marketing and trade organizations.

AgBiz, in partnership with the University of California - Davis, College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences, provided learning experiences and extensive handout materials to participants that will significantly enhance their knowledge and understanding of the production and post harvest handling technologies applicable to their operations which, if properly applied, will increase their competitiveness.

“We received detailed information about the whole process in the form of literature, practical experience and in-the-field demonstrations by UC-D Advisors. We had an opportunity to follow the entire cycle from root stock for planting through to packaged products marketing.” said Ph.D Krum Boshkov from Macedonian Faculty of Food and Science.

Macedonia’s largest table grape exporters had the unique opportunity to visit one of the largest wholesale produce markets in Los Angeles, as well table grape operations in Palm Springs and Bakersfield, well-known for their high standard of table grape production. AgBiz customers observed the application of modern table grape production methods with an accent on green pruning techniques. The group recognized these measures as being especially important for transfer to Macedonia to increase grape quality, and thus improve competitiveness and achieve better prices on export markets.

As a follow-up to the study tour, AgBiz conducted a one day roundtable where the lessons learned in California were presented, discussed and shared with twenty-two participants from nine Macedonian table grape producers and traders, the Association of Fruit Producers and academics, including 13 individuals that did not participate in the Study Tour. Roundtable participants identified opportunities to use the lessons learned from the Study Tour to enhance their table grape operations. AgBiz is planning a demonstration program to confirm and illustrate the application of these modern practices.