

SUCCESS STORY

Better Quality Table Grapes for Increased Exports

AgBiz is assisting agribusiness to understand market demand, and look for ways to make their products more competitive in export markets!



Jordancho Gjorchev Inside the New Cooling Facility in GD Tikvesh

Photo: AgBiz Program Staff

GD Tikvesh is one of the twenty leading Macedonian agribusiness exporters that received grants for export-focused business expansion projects.

On 4 May at a Project Congratulations Ceremony AgBiz, USAID, the MAFWE Minister and the US Ambassador honored grantees for the successful completion of their 18 month Projects.

These twenty projects were selected from 82 support applications received and evaluated from the Wine, Table Grapes, Fresh Vegetables, Processed Vegetables and Wild Gathered Products Value Chains.

Jordancho Gjorchev, the sales manager of Goce Delchev "Tikvesh", the leading table grape producer, marketer and exporter in Kavadarci, a town in Tikvesh region of Macedonia, recalls the former process of grape handling and marketing to buyers in ex-Yugoslav markets.

"The old inefficient and marginally effective irrigation system had to be replaced with a new one. The previous system didn't provide a sufficient supply of water, and therefore the company suffered significant yield losses. But this was only part of the problem" said Gjorchev. As a result of less than optimal use of protective substances, the grapes produced were of lower quality due to burned skins and the lack of proper post-harvest treatment therefore gained low market prices.

This was before USAID's AgBiz Program awarded a Business Expansion Grant to GD Tikvesh for a project that enabled the company to upgrade their existing packing center by installing a new pre-cooling facility and installing a new irrigation system on 40 ha. In addition to this, the company with its own funds installed drip irrigation on another 260 ha. After completion of the Project, which ended March 2010, the new packing center equipment allowed full humidity control and a sulfur supplying system, handling control of all processes and a higher level of energy efficiency.

The company completely renewed and modernized the traditional packaging process and developed a packaging center that added value and made their table grape final product more attractive and marketable. The project has enabled GD Tikvesh to have high quality products and customize their product offer in terms of packaging, weight, color, taste, sugar content according to customers' preferences.

Installation of a new drip irrigational system on 300 ha. of table grape vineyards offered a sophisticated way of irrigation with significant water saving and decreased the cost of water use from new wells and enabled the timely watering of the vineyards.

"By modernization of the grape cultivating process, the company has dramatically increased quality and yields and has achieved much greater production. With this investment GD Tikvesh reinforced their company identity, strengthened its position in traditional ex-Yugoslav markets and started expanding into other foreign markets" said Gjorchev.

Since 2007 GD Tikvesh has been a regular participant in a range of AgBiz activities for capacity enhancements such as B2B meetings, trade fairs, study tours and training. The company has utilized the information and experience gained during these events and successfully utilized it to develop new and substantial export business transactions resulting in nearly 700,000 Eur of increased export sales, increased purchases of raw material of nearly 300,000 Eur and increased employment of 86 new jobs.

Through the AgBiz Program, USAID is helping Macedonian agribusiness exporters become more competitive by adding value to existing products, developing and expanding to new export markets, increasing the capacities of the businesses as well as implementing improved food standards.