



## SUCCESS STORY

### AgBiz Supports Fresh Produce Exporters to Build Their Own Legacy

***“MAEA is the first and the only trade association that embraces Macedonian FF&V exporting companies. We have an open membership policy towards all exporters of fresh products.***

***Involving as many VC players as possible in the Association is the first step towards joining our strengths on national level to make our fresh produce exports more competitive, both on regional and world markets!”; said Slavica Angelova, President of MAEA***

Photo: AgBiz Program Staff



Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Post harvest Handling in a Member of a Bulgarian Trade Association that Utilized IPARD Funds

The Fresh Fruits and Vegetables (FF&V) Value Chain (VC) makes a very significant annual contribution to Macedonian export sales, both in volume and value. USAID’s AgBiz Program recognized the export potential of this value chain, but also identified a number of weaknesses, including a lack of cooperation and a functional organization to serve the needs of VC participants.

To help resolve these weaknesses, AgBiz conducted an assessment to identify the common interests of FF&V VC companies, and their commitment to establishing a national fresh produce trade association. A strong common interest was identified to address the problems and challenges faced by the VC and a joint vision for VC development actions emerged. Therefore, after additional work to bring VC participants together, a Founding General Assembly was organized at which 17 representatives from 13 companies participated and registered to become members of a new FF&V VC organization – the Macedonia Agro Exporters Association (MAEA). Active involvement of these 13 major players who employ at least 1,000 people sends strong signal to other FF&V companies to also join the new association.

Ten days later MAEA was officially registered and Mrs. Slavica Angelova, Manager of Dushan Ciric, was elected President. AgBiz applauded this result, and to help the newly established association build its capacity, agreed to support the Association to develop a Five Year Strategy and Action Plan.

To become a fully functional and well organized trade association, developing the strategy was by itself not enough. MAEA members needed to understand more about the role of the association, the process for strengthening and sustaining as well as optimizing benefits to members. Therefore, AgBiz, in partnership with MAEA, organized a five-day study tour for MAEA members to more advanced FF&V associations in Bulgaria. During the study tour MAEA members met with representatives of four trade/producer associations and visited their operations that utilize the latest value-added FF&V preparation systems. They also visited several IPARD funded facilities for postharvest handling and processing. The group also had an opportunity to meet and hold discussions with the Bulgarian Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Ms. Svetlana Boyanova, and staff in the Bulgarian Ministry responsible for development and support of producer organizations.

MAEA members learned about organizing sustainable FF&V-related associations, their management practices, advocating with Government, and the range of services offered to members of Bulgarian associations.

Thanks to AgBiz support, now MAEA is more capable of working in the best interest of its members, and contributing to strengthening the overall competitiveness of the Macedonian FF&V Value Chain.