

SUCCESS STORY

Macedonian “bambolino” watermelons on UK tables

USAID’s AgBiz Program helps its customers develop marketing skills and/or materials that improve the competitiveness of a firm or group of firms, including support for B2B meetings, marketing focused international study tours and trade fairs, enhanced marketing approaches, and programs for creating better brand and/or company recognition.



“Bambolino” watermelons



Photo: AgBiz Staff

Loading “bambolino” at the packaging center

Since March 2007, AgBiz has been providing a range of services to Macedonian agribusinesses to enhance their competitiveness in regional and global markets. Over the last year AgBiz has worked with more than 133 agribusiness firms in five value chains, has made at least 17 improved technologies practices available to customers and has provided short term training to 216 customers.

AgBiz recently signed nine grants for export business expansion projects and anticipates signing up to eleven more in the very near future. The projects supported by these grants are projected to result in increased agriculture-based exports of nearly \$39 million.

U.S. Agency for International Development
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Agrolozar is an agribusiness, located in the small village of Hamsali in the Boslilovo, Strumica region of southeast Macedonia, which exports agricultural produce from the region. Agrolozar was established as a private company in 1993, and in 2003 85% ownership of the company was bought by Agrohemija Ltd., Skopje.

Following the take-over, Agrohemija sought to be an important commercial producer of vegetables in open fields, heated greenhouses and plastic, as well as a significant supplier of early tomatoes and table grapes. It has grown rapidly and has become a leading company in the registration and distribution of commercial seeds in Macedonia.

Today the company provides assistance to its customers for the effective utilization of first class hybrid varieties of vegetable crops developed in USA and Holland. It produces some of the products it markets on 840 hectares of land of which 600 hectares are vineyards and the remainder is orchards of peaches, pears, melons, and, “bambolino” watermelons.

Agrohemija is the only producer of “bambolino” watermelons in the Balkans, and has “bambolino” customers in Germany, Holland and Austria. Because the company lacked contacts with buyers from the UK, yet had an interest in exporting to that market, Agrohemija management asked USAID’s AgBiz Program for assistance to access to UK markets.

AgBiz’s overall objective is to increase economic growth in Macedonia through expanded, sustainable production and sales of value-added agricultural products, achieved by enhancing the ability of producers and processors to compete regionally and globally. With the active support of AgBiz staff, a successful linkage was established between Agrohemija and a WalMart partner in the United Kingdom for selling “bambolinos”.

AgBiz staff continuously supported the company through all stages of negotiations, and provided technical support for meeting the export requirements of European markets, specifically the UK. A number of meetings between representatives of ASDA, the WalMart partner in the UK, and Agrohemija were organized and facilitated by an AgBiz staff member.

Thanks to USAID’s AgBiz Program 50,000 pieces (150 tones) of “bambolino” watermelons are currently being exporting to UK, with a value of \$145,000.

“This deal means a lot for our company. We are selling our produce, but at the same time we are promoting our country and Macedonian products. Having “bambolino” watermelons on UK tables means having more hectares dedicated to export production, more export sales and finally more employment!” said Mr. Delco Baltovski, owner of Agrohemija.

The success of Agrohemija’s UK bambolino sales is anticipated to create new opportunities for Agrohemija to sell other fresh products to UK markets, and to open the door for other Macedonian exporters of fresh produce.