

SUCCESS STORY

USAID cares about food safety

AgBiz Program is stimulating the sustainable and significantly increased growth of Macedonian agribusinesses participating in value chains that have good potential in export markets, especially for value-added products, and where there is an opportunity for a broad-based positive impact.



Local expert (left in the photo) is guiding company representatives in an exercise on how to establish a HACCP team

Photo: AgBiz Program's Staff

To date, the AgBiz has organized three human resources capacity enhancement activities. Two were related to HACCP standards for customers in four of the five AgBiz value chains (bottled wine, table grapes, fresh vegetables and wild gathered products).

A total of 13 companies from the four value chains were represented by 24 participants who attended the training sessions and obtained certificates for "HACCP Systems Implementation, Verification and Maintenance" issued by team of local experts.

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In September USAID's AgBiz Program organized a three-day workshop on "HACCP System Implementation, Verification and Maintenance" in Kavadarci. The objective of this capacity enhancement activity was to introduce the HACCP (Hazard Analysis of Critical Control Points) to Macedonian agribusiness from the three value chains, and present the advantages of proper application of this system, which ultimately effects the production of safe food products.

According to Macedonian food safety regulations, all food operators in the Republic must introduce, implement and maintain food safety assurance systems based on HACCP principles as of January 1st 09. This requirement is applicable to all food operators regardless of whether they produce for the domestic market only, or they export to EU markets. AgBiz recognized this critical need on the part of its customers, and organized this HACCP training

Workshop participants represented a range of firms such as agribusiness working in the table grape, wild gathered products and fresh vegetables value chains. In addition to these firms, a certification company and an organic products producer organization were also beneficiaries of the training. The companies that participated were: "Flors"; "Agrotikvesh"; "Ledra Agro", "Vigan", "Angormarketing"; "Dushan Cirik" and Balkan Biosert, the certification entity and the Federation of Farmers for organic production. Sixteen representatives from the eight companies were able to obtain in-depth information about what a HACCP system means, what the value of it is and how to implement and maintain a HACCP system within the company. The goal of this training was to help company managers and HACCP team members to easily acknowledge where and what type of problems can arise concerning food safety, and how to prevent them from happening.

"We gained information on where to go and how to use the HACCP standard, and how to improve our production control! Meeting this food safety standard, will assure more added-value of our products, and will result in our being more competitive in regional and global markets!" said one of the participants at the training.

"The main feature of the HACCP system is prevention, and not inspection. HACCP represents a system of self-imposed control of food safety in our facilities. In other words, the people responsible for the food production hold the prime responsibility for the food safety!" said Ph.D. Vladimir Kakurinov, one of the trainers.

USAID's AgBiz Program provides a range of support to agribusiness firms to enhance their export competitiveness by supporting training, marketing activities, technical assistance, physical facilities expansion and advanced equipment acquisition.