

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT FOR BETTER LIFE IN SOUTHERN SERBIA



Besim Mustafa shows new mashines, donation from USAID and CHF through CRDA Program



Besim Mustafa in his field with wheat planted with a help of the new machines

PRESEVO, SERBIA – During last 12 years agriculture was a way to survive for approximately 80% of inhabitants in Municipalities in the Pcinjski District. Old mechanization, lack of investments for production development as well as small plots of land influenced the collapse of agriculture and its' failing as a main income source for many families. In order to support economic development as well as development of agricultural production in Southern Serbia USAID and CHF International in cooperation with UNDP and GOAL Ireland financed the founding of cooperatives in 6 villages of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja Municipalities.

Besim Mustafa is a director of Cooperative "Agrozunica" in Zujince. The Cooperative gathers 22 producers from this village. In order to make land lots bigger, each member entered the Cooperative with 1 ha of land. Along with 7 ha that members rented they have 29 ha of productive land in the fertile Presevo Valley now. From CHF, Besim and his colleagues received sowing machines for grain, fertilizer spreaders, paprika and tobacco planting machines and mill and sprinklers for corn.

Cooperative "Agrozunica" is mostly engaged in pumpkin production and processing, but they also produce paprika, tomato, corn and wheat. "Everything that we produce we sell in Presevo, Bujanovac and Kosovo. Recently our Cooperative "Agrozunica" with 13 products was the biggest exhibitor at an agricultural fair in Bujanovac. Thanks to founding the cooperative and the help of CHF and USAID we succeed to decrease expenses of production and become competitive" says Besim Mustafa.

The Majority of people from the Cooperative did not have agricultural machines. Many of them worked with their own hands or rented machines. Since the CRDA Program awarded a grant for planting machines, the Cooperative rents it to other farmers in the area. In three months Cooperative earned 600€ through renting the machine.

The Cooperative will continue not only on production of seeds and granular products but also start packaging them. Currently they are purchasing new machines for new affairs. "When we purchase new machines for packing we will employ 4 more people. Agriculture in our area is a safe business: land is good, there is water at 4-5 meters depth and the market for these products is big. In Kosovo they want paprika especially from Zujince. Sometimes other paprika producers claim to be from Zujince just in order to sell their products at a better price", says Besim.

Besim is married and he has two sons (7 and 4 years old). Until now he was not officially employed and he didn't have health insurance for himself and his family. Development of the Cooperative in Zujince solved many of Besim's problems as well as problems of his neighbors. As he says himself "State companies are ruined and workers do not have jobs and money. That is why this project is a big deal for us and our families. Now 22 people pay into social and pension fund and health insurance. This will enable bigger pensions to them all one day. That is why I think that it is good for USAID and CHF to support development of agriculture and economy here. As more people gets jobs the better for everyone".