

COFARM



CASE STUDY: Association "Group of producers of organic fruit"

Introduction

The average farm size in Slovenia is one of the lowest in the EU so cooperation is vital especially when it comes to permanent crops and horticulture. The "Group of producers of organic fruit" has connected farmers who produce organically, in order to give them better opportunities when it comes to securing bigger contracts and marketing of their products.

Basic information



Nationwide

Name Association "Group of producers of organic fruit"

Year of establishment 2011

Kind of cooperation Association, Producers group

Number of farmers/ landowners/ entrepreneurs/ enterprises involved

40 (25 with a contract, 2 beekeepers, 13 with smaller production (plums))

Internet links <http://skupina-spess.si/>



Farm Data

Area cca 40 ha of orchards

Description

The farms involved in this type of cooperation are very small. In total, the farmers own approximately 40 hectares of orchards and a small number of beehives. These are small businesses which do not engage in large production and are typically sole traders. Initially, the main agricultural activity was apple production but the group later expanded into other varieties of fruit and vegetable production. Examples include: berries, plums, carrots, potatoes, garlic and honey products.

Cooperation Process Data

Threats/ Challenges

The cooperation is based on connecting small producers who have previously tried to work alone but came to realization that co-operating together could benefit them greatly. Through RDP there are more options for different types of cooperation where different groups of farmers can establish a formal entity and maybe get some additional mentoring and funding. The main objective is to connect smaller fruit producers for easier marketing, delivery and production. The group has been working on optimization of delivery costs with common delivery. Together they have achieved a more concentrated supply, greater product visibility and the option to gain public funding because they have an officially registered co-operative. The farmers who are participating in the cooperative are very committed to it and this is why it works. If the people involved especially at the beginning of the initiative were not devoted to the cause the group of producers would not operate as well as it does. At the beginning of the initiative it was essential to gain the trust of all members in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the co-operative.

Natural disasters – After two consecutive years of severe frosts in Spring, apple producers have had very small yields. Consequently, the organization has tried to find new members who could advise existing ones on how to prevent this kind of issues in the future. The cooperative is facing many threats and challenges with insufficient funding being a prominent one – the group is trying to get the best price for its farmers but that means the operational costs are kept as low as possible and to keep the farmers interested in the cooperation but without external funding that is not always possible.

Keeping a balance between the optimal price for the farmer and not setting the price too high and subsequently losing customer share is another significant threat. The price of the production cannot be lowered due to various limitations (small parcels, landscape) so it is important to have loyal customers who will appreciate the origins of the product and this requires appropriate marketing campaigns.

Training and Skills

The following are key training requirements for this type of co-operation activity:

- Procedures to manage a group of producers (governance structures)
- Legal and financial obligations
- Effective communication skills – necessary for gaining new members and arranging new contracts for farm products.
- Sourcing expert opinion to assist with technical tasks.



Advice/Recommendation

“ You have to take it step by step, the cooperation might not be successful in the beginning. If you have a lot of patience and dedication, the cooperation will slowly start showing its benefits. ”

Queries/Questions

- Social media is a vital tool in setting trends and showing the buyers what a company has to offer. Are farmers knowledgeable in the latest developments in social media?
- What are the benefits of small scale producers working collaboratively together?



Key Words

Cooperation Key Words

Association
Marketing/sales
None/Small investment
Producers group

Farm Key Words

Apiculture
Horticulture
Orchards
Organic/integrated/certified farming
Small/family farm(s)

Partners



Limerick Institute of Technology:
(Ireland)
www.lit.ie/rdi



Hof und Leben GmbH
(Germany)
www.hofundleben.de



Asociace
soukromého
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Asociace Soukromeho Zemedelstvi
Ceske Republiky (Czech Republic)
www.asz.cz



On Projects Advising SL
(Spain)
www.onprojects.es



Union de Agricultores y Ganaderos-
Jovenes Agricultores de Jaén (Spain)
www.coagjaen.es



Biotehniški Center Naklo
(Slovenia)
www.bc-naklo.si



Confederazione Italiana Agricoltori Toscana
(Italy)
www.ciatoscana.eu



European Landowners' Organisation
(Belgium)
www.europeanlandowners.org

Social Media



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Project Website

www.cofarm-erasmus.eu



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