

Description of the project

“Consolidation of the Local Organic Certification Bodies”

Project Background

Worldwide, 35 % of the certified organic area is located in transition and development economies, while 94 % of the organic consumption is in the Northern America, Western Europe and Japan. Export opportunities and premium prices stimulate organic production in emerging economies such as Albania where organic land is to a majority managed by small and medium farms. Local certification bodies such as Albinspekt facilitate access to certification – mainly for export – by managing trustworthy locally adapted certification systems in local languages.

Project objective

The overall objective of the Swiss financed organic project is to reduce poverty of small and medium-sized farmers by promoting trade with certified organic produce and facilitating access to the European and Swiss markets.

The first project objective is that the certification bodies involved (Albinspekt for Albania) offer efficient demand oriented certification services based on a strengthened business strategy that ensures long-term economic sustainability. This will be achieved by providing trainings on different quality management schemes, by supporting business partnerships and strengthening the business management skills of the partners, ,

The second project objective is the support for a policy framework conducive to the development of the organic sector in Albania and other target countries especially with regards to alignment to the European legislation – needed within the accession process with the EU.

A conducive legal framework which removes biases against organic and gives official recognition to organic agriculture helps to strengthen sector development, and to protect consumers from fraud. The program provides policy advice and expertise for strengthening a legal frame-work that is conducive to the development of the organic sector and meets Europe-an/international standard. It also makes available web-based information on organic regulations and certification schemes.

Switzerland's previous engagement in organic agriculture

Switzerland's contribution to the development of organic agriculture in Albania over the last decade has yielded visible and tangible results, notably in three fields:

The Economy: Support to the private sector facilitated the competitive-ness of organic and environmentally-friendly products in the market. As a concrete example, it generated seasonal employment of up to 3,700 poor farmers in the villages of Zus

(Shkodra), Dushk (Lushnja), Vakuf (Peshkopi). Out of these, 3,300 women saw their monthly income increase - tenfold.

The Institution: The Albanian organic inspection and certification body i.e. Albinspekt, accredited by the Albanian authorities and the EU, was established in the framework of our initiative. Support to the establishment of the Institute of Organic Agriculture and consolidation of Albanian Association of Marketing followed a similar objective.

The Environment: Additional benefits arise not only because organic production stands for healthier food, but also because it contributes to environmental protection, in the area of wild collection of medicinal herbs/plants when compliant with high quality standards: as a result, since 2008 the organically certified surface for wild collection has doubled to over 250'000 hectares, almost 9% of Albania's total surface.

The project at a glance

Title	Consolidation of the Local Certification Bodies
Donor	Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)
Implementing Agency	FiBL (Research Institute for Organic Agriculture, Switzerland)
Target countries	Albania, Macedonia, India, Ukraine
Project Partners	Albinspekt, Albania; Balkan Biocert Macedonia; Indocert, India; Organic Standard, Ukraine
Project Period	01.10.2014 - 31.12.2017 (3.25 years)
Total Budget	2'240'000 CHF
Envisaged Swiss contribution	1'580'000 CHF
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