

Slovenia

Farm's performance, restructuring & modernisation

Slovenian apple producers introduce new and popular eco-friendly variety.

Summary

A new variety of apple with lower input costs from fewer agri-chemical requirements was introduced and successfully promoted by a producer group of Slovenian farmers. This 'Bonita' apple variety became popular with consumers and CAP funding helped this happen through supporting new production technology, storage, and marketing, throughout the value chain.



© BONITA, new resistant club apple variety in Slovenia - from production to marketing

Location

Ljubljana

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P2 - Competitiveness

Measure

M16 - Cooperation

Funding

Total budget 349 874.00 (EUR)
EAFRD 279 899.20 (EUR)
National/Regional 69 974.80 (EUR)

Project duration

2019 – 2022

Project promoter

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Project Results

Thanks to this project, new plantations of 'Bonita' apples were planted across 40 ha in three Slovenian regions.

More than 200 Slovenian fruit growers participated in knowledge transfer events and workshops, which were delivered by Slovenian fruit growing associations and experts.

The variety has achieved higher prices and brought higher incomes to its producers. It is also associated with lower input costs due to a 20% lower use of plant protection products. Demand for the variety currently exceeds supply.

Lessons & Recommendations

- The project was successful because of the efficient cooperation between a research/education institution, consultants, and growers. Knowledge was shared vertically, from the research institution via the advisory service to the growers, as well as horizontally between the advisers and the fruit growers.

Context

Over the last few years in Slovenia there has been a decline in intensive apple production due to poor yields and the poor economic situation of fruit growers. Previous attempts to reverse this situation by introducing club varieties of apple (patented apple varieties whose production and marketing is controlled by members of a cooperative) in Slovenia have been unsuccessful.

However, a new opportunity emerged with the new 'Bonita' variety. This variety comes from the well-known and highly demanded 'Pink Lady' and 'Topaz' varieties. The apples have attractive bright red colours, firm and crunchy fruit, and a harmonious sweet and sour flavour. At the same time, the 'Bonita' variety is resistant to apple scab, which brings significant benefits as it can be combined with environmentally friendly growing practices.

However, the parent varieties of 'Bonita' were not grown in in Slovenia and thus the cultivation technology was also unknown. A successful introduction of this variety into intensive apple production was viewed as an important innovation for the country that could have a positive impact on the sector.

Objectives

The aim of this cooperation project was to improve the economic situation and competitiveness of apple producers in Slovenia. This would be achieved by introducing the new 'Bonita' club apple variety into commercial production and marketing it through a dedicated 'BonitaSi' brand.

Activities

The following activities were implemented over a three-year period:

Production activities:

- Demonstrations of cultivation techniques took place seven times a year (winter pruning in plantations of different ages, tillage, site selection, land preparation, planting, formative pruning, basic fertilisation, fertilisation through soil and through leaves,

sustainable protection against diseases and pests, setting the picking window).

- Practical tests were implemented with growers, and training and advice was provided throughout, e.g. determining the maturity of the apples, protection from frost, protection against diseases and pests, organic and integrated cultivation.

- Open workshops were organised where interested parties who were not involved in the project could find out about it and ask questions.

Marketing activities:

- The 'BonitaSi' brand and visual identity was created and consumer tasting sessions were organised.

- A website and social media profiles were set up to promote the project, and its results were shared in print media and on television.

- A marketing workshop was offered to the producers and the brand was promoted through print and online media.

Storage activities:

- Experiments related to the maturity and storage of the fruit were designed and implemented.

Main Results

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More than 200 Slovenian fruit growers participated in knowledge transfer events and workshops, which were delivered by Slovenian fruit growing associations and experts.

The 'BonitaSi' variety has achieved higher prices and brought higher incomes to its producers. It is also associated with lower input costs due to a 20% lower use of plant protection products. Demand for the variety currently exceeds supply.

Key lessons

The project was successful because of the efficient cooperation between a research/education institution, consultants, and growers. Knowledge was shared vertically, from the research institution via the advisory service to the growers, as well as horizontally between the advisers and the fruit growers.