

PORTUGAL

Restructuring and
developing physical
potential and
promoting innovation

Location

Malaqueijo, Rio Maior

Programming period

2007 - 2013

Axis

Axis 1 – Competitiveness

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 950 272.71

EAFRD 282 706.13

National/Regional 49 889.31

Private 617 677.26

Project duration

2012 – 2013

Project promoter

Planície Verde, Sociedade
Agrícola, Lda.

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A farm producing lettuce, melons and watermelons used RDP support to modernise its processing facilities and better respond to the clients requirements.

Summary

Planície Verde, Sociedade Agrícola, Lda. uses 200 ha of greenhouses and open air cultivation to produce lettuce, melons and watermelons. The company needed to improve and increase its production processes to meet the demands of the large retailers through whom it increasingly sells.

Support from the RDP contributed to the construction of two new pavilions and

new weighing and packaging lines, as well as automatisation of the process of palletising the melons and watermelons and tracking the fruit through the process.



Results

Increased processing capacity up to 20 tons of fruit per hour.

The company can respond much faster to client orders.

Improved working conditions and movement of vehicles in the shipping area.

Traceability of all produce ensured throughout the processing chain

Lower operating costs were achieved, contributing to higher profitability and supporting job creation.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ The success of this investment was the result of the fact that it was carefully adapted to the needs of the company.
- ❑ At the beginning of a company's development, priority should be given to small-scale projects that will allow to better understand the market; then gradually to proceed according to a well structured growth strategy for the company.



Context

Planície Verde, Sociedade Agrícola, Lda. uses 200 ha of greenhouses and open air cultivation to produce lettuce, melons and watermelons. It began its activities as a small farm in 1989 producing several horticultural crops in 700m² of greenhouses.

In 2004, the company was awarded the 'Green Plain' designation and gradually expanded to its current size. It should be noted that the whole farm was classified as Integrated Production, having reached GLOBAL GAP classification for 6 years, the maximum internationally awarded certification for the Horticulture sector.

The company has been a supplier to various major Portuguese retailers including the AUCHAN group, Grupo Jerónimo Martins, Grupo Sonae, most recently Lidl and Mackro. In this context, it was necessary to increase the production capacity to meet the needs of these large clients, including their high quality standards.

Objectives

The objectives of the project were to:

- raise the quality of the company's products;
- establish an automated process of selecting the fruit, weighing, packaging and shipping, according to the most rigorous existing processes;
- increase the volume of production;
- improve the efficient management of water resources;
- Improve the working conditions.

Activities

- Construction of two pavilions covering approximately 2400 m²;
- Acquisition of new weighing and packaging lines;
- The new lines were installed in the warehouse where the reception, washing, calibration, weighing, labelling and packaging of the fruit is carried out;
- An automated palletising process was introduced together with a process for cleaning the melons and watermelons without using of water;
- In a dedicated quality control room, a computer programme now registers each phase of the handling, allowing to identify and know in detail which lot of fruit goes to the warehouse and from there to the shipping area.

- New track lanes, parks, walls and piers were constructed in the shipping area.



Main results

- Increased automatisation of the fruit processing enabling an increase in the processing capacity to 20 tons of fruit per hour (and providing for greater responsiveness to client demand), as well as improving working conditions from a reduction in 'heavy' work.
- Working conditions and capacity also enhanced by the increase in the available covered area for processing.
- Traceability of all products and quality control ensured throughout the processing chain.
- Improved movement of transport vehicles in the shipping area and reduced contamination of the products with associated dust
- Lower operating costs, contributing to higher profitability and job creation.

Key lessons

- The success of this investment was the result of the fact that it was carefully adapted to the needs of the company.
- At first priority should be given to the development of small-scale projects that allow for a thorough knowledge of the market. Then gradually to proceed according to a well-structured growth strategy for the company.