

## SLOVENIA

### Farm performance, restructuring & modernisation

**Location**  
Gračiče

**Programming period**  
2014 – 2020

**Priority**  
P2 – Competitiveness  
P4 – Ecosystems  
management

**Measure**  
M4 – Investments in physical  
assets  
M10 – Agri-environment-  
climate  
M11 – Organic farming  
M13 – Areas with constraints

**Funding (EUR)**  
M4  
Total budget 13 248.60  
EAFRD 4 712.70  
National/Regional 1 570.90  
Private 6 965.00

**M10, M11, M13**  
RDP support 4 650.22  
EAFRD 3 487.66  
National/Regional 1 162.56

**Project duration**  
2016 – 2018

**Project promoter**  
Kmetija Marima, Urška  
Klančar

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A subsistence farm used support from multiple RDP support in order to become a commercially viable farm by investing in organic production.

### Summary

The Marima farm was a typical small Istrian subsistence farm. Given its potential to specialise in organic fruit production and processing, the farm entered an organic production scheme and used investment support to expand its production capacities by setting up a new orchard and vineyard.



### Results

In total, around six ha of orchards (owned and leased land) are being cultivated in a sustainable way.

By drying a variety of fruits, the project owner added value to the farm's produce. Now, on average, around five tonnes of dried fruit are produced annually. The farm is so far the only producer of dried organic fig fruits in Slovenia and will soon be offering organic raisins.

### Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Much research had to be carried out in order to find suitable varieties of table grape. Time is also needed to test and define the production practices and drying processes in order to maximise the quality of the product
- ❑ Being an organic farmer surrounded by mainly conventional olive tree growers can be a challenge and requires a thorough understanding of the specifics and requirements of organic production.
- ❑ With regards to the RDP application and implementation process, attention to detail and careful planning was very important, however one cannot foresee everything. The application for setting up the new orchard was approved in December when the optimal time for planting of the fruit trees had already passed. The request for extension of the implementation was approved and the entire project was then delayed for one season.

## Context

The farm Marima is situated in a small village of Trebeše, at the municipality of Koper. Like most Istrian farms in the hinterland of the Adriatic coast, it began as a subsistence farm which produced small quantities of vegetables, fruits, meat, eggs and olives. The farmland is divided into several plots at different locations with different conditions for farming, for example some terrains are very steep.

Urška Klančar, the farm owner, recognised the potential for agricultural production in the area, and in particular, fruit growing. Through her studies at the Biotechnical Faculty of Ljubljana University she specialised in fig tree growing and obtained her master's degree exploring fig drying methods.

There are fig trees growing on almost every farm holding in Istria, however their market potential is still underexploited mainly due to the fact that fresh figs are perishable produce. When Urška took over the farm from her parents, she decided to specialise in organic fruit growing and processing. She developed a plan for the farm's revitalisation, which included also the integration of plots owned by her husband's family.

Although in practice the olives and fruit varieties have already been grown organically for many years, the official organic certification was obtained in 2015. To increase the farm's viability, it was necessary to expand the production area, the variety of fruits produced and to add value through processing. In order to do so, support from several RDP measures was combined.

## Objectives

The objectives of this projects were to:

- Revitalise the farm and increase its viability by expanding the production
- Add value to the farm's organic produce
- To extend the farm's productivity to all seasons

## Activities

The Marima farm entered three payment schemes. Since 2015 they received support for the organic production of fruits, vegetables and olives. By entering the scheme, the farm is obliged to comply with organic fruit growing practices and to take part in training related to organic production. The payment from the organic production scheme in 2018 covered a total of 4.14 ha.

The farm also entered the Agri-Environment-Climate

Measure (M10) (AECM) to support the environmental aspects of fruit growing by implementing farming practices that preserve and improve the soil. AECM payments apply to 6.52 ha (2018). The farm only uses organic manure, which is supplied from an organic stockbreeding farm.

Some plots are located on steep terrains, so the farm is eligible for payment under Measure 13 in order to preserve these cultivated areas. M13 support applies for a total surface of 2.66 ha.

All financial support from these schemes is used to partly compensate for the higher costs of production due to more manual work and lower yields compared to conventional fruit production.

Support from Measure 4 – Investments in physical assets, was acquired to plant a new orchard on 0.46 ha with a variety of fruit trees (figs, pears, prunes, apricots). Also, a new vineyard was set up on 0.22 ha with several types of table grapes, which were also suitable for drying. The orchards were planted at two different locations. It was important to choose varieties of trees, which are resilient to disease and climate changes so they could decrease or completely abandon any treatment. Therefore, it is critical to regularly and closely monitor the orchards. Family members and seasonal workers are involved in picking the fruits and olives.



Apart from olives, which are taken to an oil mill for cold pressing within 24 hours of being picked, all other produce is either sold fresh or dried on the farm. The farm has also invested in a fruit processing facility. An electric dehydrator unit was purchased, which operates using hot air. Fruits are dried on temperatures below 55C to preserve the enzymes, vitamins and antioxidants. Drying reduces the volume and weight of the fruit and increases the concentration of nutrients. Besides moisture being taken from the fruit, no other treatment takes place and no preservatives are added. Dried fruit is packed into glass jars and lasts for several months.

Sales channels are slowly being developed. Part of the produce is sold directly on the farm and part is sold through the local cooperative which operates several shops. Direct sale agreements have been made with some restaurants and customers.

## Main Results

With the combination of the RDP measures the Marima farm managed to restore the farm's production and create a stable basis for the production of organic fruit.

- In total, around six ha of orchards (owned and leased land) are being cultivated in a sustainable manner;
- The mixture of produce, ranging from figs, persimmon (kaki fruit), prunes, pears, apricots and table grapes, which are picked at different periods of the year, enables the farm to be financially viable throughout the year. And, by setting up orchards at two different locations, the risk of loss of yields due to hail, frost or pests was decreased;
- On average, around five tonnes of dried fruit are produced annually and value is added through the drying process. Technological processes for all the fruits have now been tested and refined;
- The farm is so far the only producer of dried organic fig fruits in Slovenia and will soon be offering organic raisins, which are also a relatively niche product in the current market. The quality of organic dried fruits has been recognised several times at the largest national food grading event 'Dobrote slovenskih kmetij (Goodies of the Slovenian farms);
- Through promotion, the farm helps to raise awareness of the importance of healthy food and of the preservation of the cultural landscape and biodiversity in the Slovenian Istria.

## Key lessons

The farmer was already an expert in organic fruit production and processing, however, considerable research had to be conducted to find suitable table grapes. Time is needed to test and define the production practices and drying processes to ensure the highest quality product possible.

Being an organic farmer surrounded by mainly conventional olive tree growers can be a challenge and requires a thorough understanding of the specifics and requirements of organic production.

Due to specific drying technology the organic dried fruit has different sensory qualities compared to conventionally produced products; e.g. dried figs are not as soft; the colour of dried apricots is darker. It was critical to inform consumers so that they were able to understand the difference and appreciate the quality of organically dried fruits.

With regards to the RDP application and implementation process, attention to detail and careful planning was very important, however one cannot foresee everything. The application for setting up the new orchard was approved in December when the optimal time for planting of the fruit trees had already passed. The request for extension of the implementation was approved and the entire project was then delayed for one season.

*"By choosing a variety of fruit species and plots we managed to increase production, extend our presence on the market and decrease effects of climate change on production."*

Urška Klančar, farm owner

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## Additional sources of information

n/a