

SLOVENIA

Entry of skilled/younger farmers

Location

Loče

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P2 – Competitiveness

Measure

M06 – Farm & business development

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 61 500
EAFRD 25 200
National/Regional 6 300
Private 30 000

Project duration

2017 – 2020

Project promoter

Katja Temnik

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Website

majnika.si

A young farmer created a new business model that combines organic farming and environmental protection with job creation and socially inclusive educational services.

Summary

Katja Temnik became a young farmer and bought an abandoned five-hectare (ha) farm to invest in the biodynamic production of herbs and take advantage of an opportunity for personal development. Katja wanted to create a new business model that combines organic farming to protect the environment, create employment and at the same time provide education services while being socially inclusive.



Financial support from multiple Rural Development Programme (RDP) measures was used to create diverse organic plantations: hazelnuts (1.4 ha), herbs (2.1 ha), high-trunk orchard (0.7 ha) and to purchase machinery for stripping, cutting, and packing herbs and a hammer mill.

Results

Two permanent job positions were created on the farm and there are many opportunities for part-time work.

Sales increased by at least 30 %.

There are no costs for the purchase of fertilisers or other chemical inputs.

Biodiversity on the farm and in its surroundings has increased. There is now greater recognition of the significance of organic and biodynamic farming in what is otherwise a very traditional intensive farming environment.

Other RDP support received

	M04 - Investments in physical assets	M11 - Organic farming	M13 - Areas with constraints
Total	21 102.23	11 623.61	2 022.78
EAFRD	6 826.67	4 967.71	1 517.09
National/Reg.	2 275.56	1 655.90	505.70
Private	12 000.00	5 000.00	

Context

The story of the Majnika herb garden and farm began when the beneficiary's mother Majda Temnik hired one hectare of land. The story continues with her daughter Katja who bought an abandoned farm of five hectares and saw an opportunity for the biodynamic production of herbs, as well as for personal development.

Katja, a former professional athlete, spent six years abroad and is highly educated but not in agriculture. Based on her experience abroad and while travelling around the world, she realised that Slovenia still had a high potential for establishing a quality lifestyle and working environment with good access to nature and healthy food.

At the same time, she realised that these qualities were in rapid decline. Biodiversity and food quality were decreasing, while intensive farming was accelerating. She came to realise that for her, the foundation for a better way of life and work was through anthroposophy and biodynamic farming. She decided to turn her mother's hobby (biodynamic farming for herb production) into a new business model. She also decided that instead of investing in machinery, she would include more people in the work process e.g. neighbours, friends, the elderly, young people, children and adults with disabilities and the unemployed. On the basis of her lengthy experience in the sporting world, she believed that only the recognition of human potential and respectful relationships between people could lead to successful actions in the local community, the environment and beyond.

Objectives

The objectives of this project were to create a new business model that combines organic farming for the protection of the environment, the creation of employment and at the same time the provision of educational services, while always being socially inclusive.

Activities

Since 2017, when Katja became a young farmer, almost all of the farm's disused land was planted with permanent organic crops thanks to the advisory support and funding received under RDP measure M04.

The financial support from multiple RDP measures was used to create diverse organic plantations: hazelnuts (1.4 ha), herbs (2.1 ha), high-trunk orchard (0.7 ha) and to purchase machinery for stripping, cutting, and packing herbs and a hammer mill.



In 2020, the farm entered the Demeter biodynamic farming certification process and hired additional herb gardens at the nearby Žiče Charterhouse, which is an extraordinary cultural heritage site and a monument of national importance.

The farm expanded the range of Majnika products, which was instigated by Majda Temnik. It established itself on the Slovenian market through cooperatives and producer organisations with the Majnika herb kitchen salt and various tea mixtures, amongst others.

Advisory support was received on the preparation of tenders and on permanent crops. Expert institutions which also contributed include the IHPS Žalec, Inštitut za promocijo varovanja okolja, and the societies of Ajda Štajerska Arnika (a Czech non-governmental organisation uniting people seeking a better environment) and the Society of Slovenian Producers and Processors of Medicinal Plants.

For the marketing side of the business, cooperation was established with organic and other cooperatives and producer organisations including Eko zadruga, KGZ Slovenske Konjice, Kmetič, KZ Šaleška dolina, KZ Šmarje pri Jelšah and SPESS.

The farm offers guided tours of the herbal garden, natural science days for children, and lectures and workshops on herbs, biodynamics, healthy food and other topics.

Various vulnerable groups within the community are also addressed. The farm is cooperating with the V Parku Elementary School for children with special educational needs and disabilities and Slovenske Konjice Occupational Activity Centre and is in a project for the inclusion of long-term unemployed people.

Katja was also entered into the database of host family farms in an international project of the IFYE (International Farm Youth Exchange) organisation, through which exchanges of rural youth are organised. Exchanges take place each summer between partners from Austria, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Switzerland and the USA. The participants stay on a farm for one to three weeks, out of a total of seven weeks, in Slovenia. During this time, they learn about Slovenian farmers' daily lives.

Main Results

Two permanent job positions were created on the farm, and there are many opportunities for part-time work.

Sales increased by at least 30 %.

There are no costs for the purchase of fertilisers or other chemical inputs.

Biodiversity on the farm and in the surrounding area has increased. There is now greater recognition of the significance of organic and biodynamic farming in what is otherwise a very traditional environment of intensive farming.

Distinguished awards attest to the fact that the Majnika Farm is on the right track with its work and attitude to people, animals and plants, for example:

- In 2020, Katja won an award for the best entrepreneur in agriculture Agrobiznis 2020 given by the Finance Newspaper in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food and other partners.

- In 2018, the Tourist Association of Slovenia (TZS) ranked Majnika herb kitchen salt as one of the top 20 culinary and gastronomic souvenirs in the Alpine region.
- In 2018, a special committee led by Dr Janez Bogataj awarded the Majnika organic herb tea, Majnika premium herb kitchen salt with Chinese yam, and the Majnika herb kitchen salt with the Taste Rogla 2018 quality label.
- In 2019, Katja received the Innovative Young Farmer 2019 award of the Slovenian Rural Youth Association (ZSPM) from the President of the Republic of Slovenia, Borut Pahor at the presidential palace.
- In addition, in 2020, Katja Temnik was the ambassador of the Rogla-Pohorje tourist destination and she received the Bronze Coat of Arms from the Municipality of Slovenske Konjice for her dedication to promoting organic farming and the local environment.

Additional sources of information

www.facebook.com/ZeliscniVrtMajnika/