

Feeding the rural economy: European money modernises meat processing

In Kosovo, an EU rural grant scheme is allowing a meat processing company to bring its operations into line with the highest international standards, so that it can sell its products more widely abroad – and can compete better at home against imports.

STATE-OF-THE-ART PROCESSING

Sole-Koral makes a range of processed meat products at its plant on the outskirts of Pristina. EU money has enabled it to install the most modern production machinery, state-of-the-art cleaning equipment, and modern product design and packaging.

But just as important is the new approach that the grant made possible a focus on quality assurance and management systems. Rigorous manufacturing and hygiene practices have been introduced, with the result that Sole-Koral's meat production has obtained certification under widely-recognised international norms.

EFFECTIVE CONTROLS

The plant now operates in line with the HACCP system – the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points method of ensuring food safety through planning and prevention. Every part of the production process has been assessed to identify any risks to the safety of finished products, and customised measures have been introduced to reduce the risks to a safe level. This offers more effective control than merely conducting random checks at the end of a production line.

But to achieve HACCP certification, the company had to meet demanding criteria even on details such as the layout of the facilities, or precise information on temperature or calibration along the processing line.

At the same time, equally stringent norms in management of food production – under the International Standards Organisation – have been introduced and certified.

VITAL TRAINING

"Implementing HACCP was helped by training that German experts had already given to the company and to staff of our Food and Veterinary Agency, and by then bringing in an Italian company for six weeks", according to the owner of the company.

Farmers that supply the company are also being brought into the project, with training on best practices in keeping livestock for fattening purpose, and with some finance for balanced animal feed.

The project started in October 2012, and is scheduled to run for two years. The EU grant of €398,000 is matched by a further €189,000 from Sole-Koral and participating farmers.



*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)

Kosovo*

IPA – AN INVESTMENT IN EUROPE. AN INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AGRICULTURE

Sole-Koral is just one of 13 grant beneficiaries under this scheme, which has a total budget of €6.5 million, of which the EU contributes €4.5 million. Agriculture is a major element in Kosovo's economy, and an effective rural development policy is at the heart of the European Partnership with Kosovo, with the aim of overcoming low productivity and lack of skills.

Carefully targeted investments are modernising primary production, upgrading agro-food establishments and product quality, and diversifying rural activities. The wider results include stronger competitiveness of the agricultural sector and comprehensive socio-economic

development. The link to local farmers is raising revenues and productivity in the rural economy, and creating jobs.

CUSTOMER CONFIDENCE

For Sole-Koral, the results include increased market share, and greater consumer confidence in local products.

"Our new packaging not only makes our products look good. It gives new reassurance to our customers that our production processes are guaranteed to be of the highest quality", said Naser Rusinovci, managing director of Sole-Koral.

PROJECT DETAILS –

Agriculture and Rural Development Support

Total cost in €:
587,000

EU Contribution in €:
398,000 (67.80%)

Start date:
October 2012

End date:
September 2014

Results:
Improved competitiveness of the agricultural sector, raised revenues and productivity in the rural economy, job-creation, greater consumer confidence in local products

