

## SLOVENIA

### Farm's performance, restructuring & modernisation

#### Location

Lower Savinja Valley

#### Programming period

2014 – 2020

#### Priority

P2 – Competitiveness

#### Measure

M04 – Investments in physical assets

#### Funding

Total budget 4 808 304 (EUR)

RDP contribution 4 800 221 (EUR)

Private / own 8 083 (EUR)

#### Project duration

2019 to 2021

#### Project promoter

Društvo namakalnih naprav Breg – Roje

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#### Website

n/a

RDP funds were used to improve the management of water resources in an area of intensive agriculture.

### Summary

The Lower Savinja Valley in northeast Slovenia, is well known for its intensive hops production. An extensive network of irrigation systems supports production during dry seasons. However, over the years the irrigation infrastructure had become outdated and with droughts becoming increasingly frequent.

The system was no longer able to meet demand. The two associations who manage the irrigation systems on behalf of the Lower Savinja Valley farmers joined forces to implement a modernisation project.



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### Project Results

298 farmers now benefit from improved access to water which will allow them to protect their crops in times of drought.

The modernised irrigation infrastructure has reduced energy consumption by up to 40 %.

Leakages in the system have been very significantly reduced and water is managed much more efficiently.

### Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ The support of the agricultural advisory service was critical in ensuring that the project was managed in accordance with the demanding administrative and legal requirements of the RDP.
- ❑ It must be clear how individual producers will pay for their own irrigation use and equipment. Beneficiaries should be prepared for the fact that the processing of payment requests takes considerable time.

## Context

Slovenia is among the top five hop producers worldwide and the Lower Savinja Valley is one of the main hop-growing areas in the country. The tradition of producing hops is a strong aspect of local identity. However, as the impacts of climate change become more evident, the risk of failure in the quality and quantity of production, has increased.

Thus, the need for irrigation has become more pressing in recent years, not only for hop growers, but also vegetable and cereal producers.

The irrigation infrastructure on the project area was built between 1986 and 1988. Their management was taken over by two farmer associations who maintained the systems just enough to be operational when needed. However, after 30 years of use, the systems were worn out and their technology could no longer meet the needs, in terms of capacity and energy consumption, of those whose livelihoods relied upon them.

## Objectives

The aim of this project was to increase the efficiency of the management of water resources in an area of intensive agriculture.

## Activities

This investment project was implemented in three phases

### a. Preparatory phase

The process started with the preparation of the project documentation for new irrigation systems in the areas of Breg, Šempeter - Vrboje, Gotovlje and Latkova Vas. This involved obtaining the required permits from the relevant authorities and submitting a separate application for each

irrigation system. For this, the two managing farmer associations were supported by the agricultural advisory services and the Institute for Hop-growing and Brewing of Žalec. The agricultural advisory service helped them to calculate the amount of pre-financing required to cover expenses in advance of the first payment of funds. The associations then applied for a bank loan to cover 40 % of the total investment. This loan was secured by remortgaging the farm properties of some of the individual members of the associations.

### b. Construction, modernisation of equipment and testing phase

The associations installed drip irrigation systems on the agreed areas. The project also financed the modernisation of three pumping stations; the purchase of a mobile pumping station and hydrants; and the modernisation of the primary pipelines. The irrigation system in Latkova Vas was improved by the construction of a feeding pipeline connecting it with the river Trnavca and a water retention pool to be used when the water levels of the river Trnavca are low. In total, 932 ha of agricultural land was covered by the new irrigation systems. The works were carried out by a local construction company in close cooperation with the beneficiaries and associated farmers, and their advisors.

### c. Final phase

The agricultural advisory services supported the associations in preparing their payment requests. Three payment requests were prepared and submitted for each of the four systems.

### Main Results

298 farmers now benefit from improved access to water which will allow them to sustain crops in times of drought.

The increased efficiency of the new pumping technologies has led to a reduction in energy consumption of up to 40%.

As there are no longer any leakages in the system, the consumption of water is now also more efficient.

A second phase of the project is now the subject of a new funding application, and this will connect even more farmers to the irrigation system. Beyond this, other farmers in the wider area have decided to set up joint management associations to oversee the preparation and implementation of similar irrigation projects.

### Key lessons

Several important lessons were learned and should be considered for the implementation similar irrigation projects:

- In projects that include many final beneficiaries, it is of the utmost importance to start with a common agreement on the objectives and a clear understanding of what is at stake. Transparent leadership and the support

of experts and the advisory services was vital.

- It must be clear how individual producers will pay for their own irrigation use and equipment. During the testing period the farmers agreed to cover a collective lump sum. After this period, individual costs are calculated based on water meter readings. A membership fee covers the ongoing maintenance of the system and related, joint expenses.
- The support of the agricultural advisory service was critical for meeting the demanding administrative requirements both regarding water and building permits and RDP funding.
- Beneficiaries should be prepared for the fact that the processing of payment requests takes considerable time.

*“This project is an example of an effective bottom-up initiative which in our view is the right approach. The implementation showed great commitment of all stakeholders which at the end resulted in effective completion in the field and administratively. The project became a role model for other producers in the area.”*

Irena Friškovec, Institute for agriculture and forestry Celje

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### Additional sources of information

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