

ROMANIA

Farm's performance, restructuring & modernisation

Location
Toboliu

Programming period
2014 – 2020

Priority
P2 – Competitiveness

Measure
M04 – Investments in
physical assets

Funding (EUR)
Total budget 729 096
EAFRD 464 872.05
National/Regional 24 466.95
Private 239 757

Project duration
2017 – 2020

Project promoter
SC VALENTINO LAND SRL

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A young entrepreneur used RDP support to build a state-of-the-art greenhouse for growing cherry tomatoes, using an innovative hydroponic system.

Summary

In recent years, cherry tomatoes have become widely appreciated in the Romanian tomato market. This has created new business opportunities for Romanian farmers. RDP support enabled a young entrepreneur to successfully engage in the vegetable farming business, by building a state-of-the-art greenhouse for growing cherry tomatoes.



He invested in innovative technologies to address a niche market and created sustainable jobs for the local labour force. The main activities of this project were to build and equip a 2 688 m² greenhouse for growing cherry tomatoes, using a hydroponic system.

Results

It is estimated that an annual tomato production of approximately 100 000 kg will be provided by Valentino Land to the local market;

Created three full-time and two part time jobs for people living in Toboliu;

Introduced local Romanian products to the market, thus reduced imports of cherry tomatoes to a small extent; and

Contributed to the development of the Toboliu economy by implementing an investment using European funds.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Young people should reconsider the idea of searching for work abroad, on the grounds that it is not possible to find work in Romania. The projects financed by the RDP are very good examples of young entrepreneurs who put their ideas into practice, returned to their country and realised investments in rural Romania.
- ❑ It is important that potential stakeholders and applicants know from the beginning what they must do, think ahead, and not only apply for support because they meet the conditions, but because they have plans for a long-term investment.

Context

In recent years, cherry tomatoes have become widely appreciated in the Romanian tomato market. Many Romanians say that they discovered their taste while on holidays abroad, mainly in Spain, Italy or Greece and they would like to be able to buy them all year round at an affordable price. This created a new business opportunity for Romanian farmers.

Robert Munteanu was just 22 years old when he founded SC VALENTINO LAND SRL in 2015 to grow vegetables. When Robert made the decision to turn to agriculture, he dropped out of law school and by 2018, he was a third-year student at the Faculty of Environmental Protection of Oradea, where he studied agriculture. Robert set up his farm on the land he inherited from his grandparents in the small Commune Toboliu. The commune is located 20 km away from Oradea, an important multi-ethnic, multicultural city in Transylvania. Oradea is characterised by its Art Nouveau architecture, rich cultural traditions, a university and nowadays also as a modern economic and financial centre.

The idea of setting up a greenhouse using European funds came naturally. Robert collected sufficient information about the RDP, he carried out a business market analysis, and realised that the location of his farm was advantageous as it is close to a major urban centre. The only problem he had to overcome was to decide what he should cultivate.

Looking for the most suitable crop for his land, he turned to the production of cherry tomatoes. It is a niche product in the Romanian market; can be grown in modern hydroponic system greenhouses, and there is a high yield. The plants can reach a height of 15 meters. A major advantage of hydroponic production is that it does not use soil, thus minimising the risk of diseases and pests, while the whole production process can be controlled. Also, the cultivation in ground soil cannot be maintained long term; in contrast, hydroponic production can be sustained for a very long period of time.

Objectives

The main objective of the Valentino Land project was to establish a sustainable and competitive farm business that will contribute to the development of the agricultural sector in the area.

Specific / operational objectives of the project were:

- the introduction of new tomato (cherry tomato) cultivation technology in a greenhouse;
- the creation of jobs for the local workforce; and
- the production of agricultural products of higher value.

Activities

The funding application was submitted in October 2016 and the contract was signed by the authorities in June 2017. The investments supported included:

- the construction of a greenhouse of 2 688 m² and related infrastructure;
- the organisation of sales and marketing;
- partially financed the documentation of the project application, namely the feasibility study;

The greenhouse is covered with a double layer of triple layered foil and an air cushion to provide the best possible insulation. The production in the greenhouse is based on a hydroponic system with coconut fibre substrate and is assisted by a fully automated fertilisation station. Plants are grown in cubes filled with coconut fibre and mounted on gutters from which they are fed with water and nutrients. This technology is of Dutch origin and the fully controlled microclimate ensures the quality of the products.

Once the greenhouse construction was finalised, the necessary equipment was purchased, and the greenhouse perimeter was fenced. The tomato greenhouse is equipped with the most modern systems available on the market. Among the equipment purchased were:

- Climate control systems for heating, humidification, destratification, CO₂ distribution, and an air conditioning control system;
- Irrigation, fertilisation and drainage system;
- Trolley and hydraulic trolley;
- Land cover material;
- Tomato clips;
- Hanging clips;
- Culture substrate;
- Culture gutters; and
- Scales and label printer.

Main Results

By implementing the project, the following economic and social impacts were achieved:

- VALENTINO LAND estimates an annual tomato production of approximately 100 000 kg will be available to the local market;
- Created three full-time and two part time jobs for people living in Toboliu;
- Introduced local Romanian products to the market, thus avoiding to a small extent imports of cherry tomatoes; and
- Contributed to the development of the Toboliu economy by implementing an investment using European funds.

Key lessons

Young people should reconsider the idea of searching for work abroad, on the grounds that it is not possible to find work in Romania. The projects financed by the RDP are very good examples of young entrepreneurs who put their ideas into practice, returned to their country and realised investments in rural Romania.

It is important that potential stakeholders and applicants know from the beginning what they must do, think ahead and not only apply for support because they meet the conditions, but because they have plans for a long-term investment.

Experts say hydroponics is the business of the future and will be the one mostly used in Europe in the next 20 years. However, in this type of production the quality of the products depends on the professionalism of those who run the business, as well as on the systems and fertilisers used.

Additional sources of information

www.rri.ro/ro_ro/sera_hidroponica_realizata_cu_fonduri_europene-2584671

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www.economica.net/rosii-cherry-in-fibra-cocos_155798.html

www.hidroponica.ro

www.gazetadeagricultura.ro