

## SLOVENIA

### Entry of skilled/younger farmers

#### Location

Laško

#### Programming period

2014 – 2020

#### Priority

P2 – Competitiveness

#### Measure

M6 – Farm & business  
development

#### Funding (EUR)

Total budget 45 000  
EAFRD 33 750  
National/Regional 11 250

#### Project duration

2016 – 2020

#### Project promoter

Darja Šolar – young farmer

#### Contact

[darja.solar@gmail.com](mailto:darja.solar@gmail.com)

#### Website

[www.facebook.com/cebelarstvosolar/](https://www.facebook.com/cebelarstvosolar/)

A young farmer used RDP support to expand and diversify the range of products and services offered by her beekeeping holding.

### Summary

Šolar Farm was taken over by Darja Šolar who resigned from her previous job as accountant to become a young farmer. The farm has a more than 35 year tradition of beekeeping. The farm is one of only a few beekeeping holdings in Slovenia who maintain one of the oldest traditional national crafts – gingerbread making.

Support from the Slovenian Rural Development Programme was used to acquire beekeeping equipment including a beeswax cooker and a larger honey extractor. Darja also purchased new beehives and restored the room where the extracting and storing honey takes place. She also set up a new insulated apiary and purchased ICT equipment including a personal computer and a phone.



# šolar

MEDENA PRAVLJICA

### Results

When Darja Šolar took over the farm it had 62 beehives in three locations. Today, the farm has 130 beehives in seven locations.

In 2018, the farm produced five varieties of honey (chestnut tree, forest, floral, lime and acacia honey). Before the investment, the farm produced only three varieties of honey.

Gingerbread production increased from 150 kg to 450 kg.

The farm began to attend more fairs and local events from one per month to four per month.

The number of individuals visiting the farm increased from approximately five to 25 visits per month.

### Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ The Šolar farm is a good example on how a beekeeping farm can expand and diversify its activities to become economically viable and create new employment opportunities in a rural area.
- ❑ Increasing the number of visits to a rural area requires local producers to collaborate and connect to make a joint offer of services and products.

## Context

Darja Šolar has a Bachelor in Economics and worked for 12 years as an accountant. Darja was always passionate about bees and their diligence, persistence and mightiness. Eventually she decided to quit her job and take over the family farm and become a young farmer.

Over the last 35 years, the Šolar Farm has specialised in beekeeping. The bees are kept in a pristine natural environment which enables the farm to obtain a wide range of high-quality bee products. The farm is one of only a few beekeeping farms in the country that maintains one of the oldest traditional crafts in Slovenia which is gingerbread making. Gingerbread is a decorative confectionery product that can be used as corporate gift or a keepsake or a Christmas tree decoration. 'Ema's honey cake' is the name of the gingerbread produced in the farm and was named after Darja's first daughter. The product has been awarded two quality marks.

Darja attended an apitherapy course on the production, storage and management of bee products. Her final thesis focussed on bees' immune systems. Recently, she completed her training as honey taster at the Biotechnical Faculty in Ljubljana. In 2019, she aims to obtain a master beekeeper qualification.

## Objectives

Darja aimed to improve the economic performance and competitiveness of her beekeeping farm by improving the quality of the produced products and the range of offered services, while protecting the environment.

## Activities

Support from the Slovenian Rural Development Programme was used to acquire beekeeping equipment including a beeswax cooker and a larger honey extractor. Darja purchased new beehives and restored the room where the extracting and storing of honey takes place. She also set up an insulated apiary and purchased ICT equipment including a personal computer and a phone.



## Main results

When Darja Šolar took over the farm it had 62 beehives in three locations. Her target was to set up 75 beehives in four locations. Today, the farm has 130 beehives in seven locations.

In 2018, the farm produced five varieties of honey (chestnut tree, forest, floral, lime and acacia honey). Before the investment, the farm produced only three varieties of honey.

In 2018, the farm started to produce pollen and expand its range of bee products e.g. cream honey with various additives, handmade silk boxes containing various honey products, as well as honey liqueurs containing edible gold.

Gingerbread production increased from 150 kg to 450 kg.

The project holder's attendance at fairs and local events increased from around one per month to four per month.

The number of individuals visiting the farm increased from five visits per month to 25.

Revenue is expected to increase in the coming years due to on-farm activities that are complementary to beekeeping.

The newly opened shop on the farm serves customers in a more customer-friendly environment.

Darja Šolar became self-employed on the farm in 2017.

The investments on the farm created new opportunities for collaboration with local and other partners, as well as with individuals for contractual work.

The existing apiary in the farm's yard was turned into a three-chamber apiary. The chambers are rounded off with natural spruce wood with 20 beehive units. Pleasant honey fragrances and the buzzing of the bees from beehives fills the chambers. The chambers are used as spaces where visitors can rest, relax and take a break from everyday difficulties and stress. The green surroundings also have a positive and calming effect on people.

At the apiary, visitors may also rest in a massage chair watching the bees flying in and out of the beehive and inhale aerosol from the beehive.

All age groups can attend various workshops at the farm such as painting on beehive panels, pouring wax candles, producing soaps and making gingerbread in the traditional way.

Darja intends to upgrade the farm's website so that their products can be bought by customers online, even from outside Slovenia.

These activities add value to the farm's products and services, but also contribute to the economy of the wider area.

### Key lessons

Darja's goal is to collaborate and connect with local providers so that they can develop a joint offer of services and products. This will increase the number of visits to the municipality of Laško. Various development entities in the area (STIK Laško - Center for Sport, Tourism, Information and Culture Laško, Slovenian Beekeepers' Association, Celeia Institute, dr. Filip Terč Slovenian Apitherapy Society, etc.) and tourist and promotional projects (Land of Celje, Laško - the Confluence of Good, etc.) will have an important role.

The farm has already signed a letter of intent with STIK Laško, in which, several forms of collaboration are foreseen for the promotion of Darja's beekeeping farm and honey experiences.

The Šolar farm is a good example on how a beekeeping farm can expand and diversify its activities to become economically viable and create new employment opportunities in a rural area.



### Additional sources of information

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=80WmzFINTgw&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR0P9VJyCN2ZKhs3tRLobc7k2bwEPGPfvVnvkqXADFABbnVrXwlcM2V92NA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80WmzFINTgw&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR0P9VJyCN2ZKhs3tRLobc7k2bwEPGPfvVnvkqXADFABbnVrXwlcM2V92NA)

[www.apiturizem.si](http://www.apiturizem.si)