

Improvement of ApiMI's bee cosmetics production – purchase of a self-designed production facility

Agri-food system jobs created by female entrepreneurs and LEADER in rural Latvia.

EAFRD-funded projects

Location: Cēsu municipality, Latvia

Programming period: 2014-2020

Priority: P6 – Social inclusion and local development

Focus Area: Local development

Measures: M19 – LEADER CLLD

Funding: Total budget 34 500 (EUR)

EAFRD 15 249 (EUR)

National/Regional 7 176 (EUR)

Private/own 12 075 (EUR)

Timeframe: 06/2022 – 01/2023

Project promoter: ApiMI Ltd.

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Summary

Two new jobs were created by LEADER in rural Latvia by sisters Madara and Ieva, who founded ApiMI Ltd., which produces natural bee-based cosmetics. Inspired by their beekeeper father and apitherapist mother, they sought to harness the potential of bee products like honey and propolis. Recognising the importance of bees, the rural entrepreneurs aimed to improve their competitive edge by implementing modernised technological practices.

The sisters designed and developed a custom production facility to meet growing demand and expand into new markets. This is unique in its capability to produce complex oil-in-water emulsions. Its digitalised automated production process increased capacity so ApiMI is now positioned to expand its product line and market reach, including international exports.

Project results

- The new digitalised facility enables ApiMI to produce a variety of cosmetics, including serums, creams and lotions (O/W emulsions), as well as water-based products like tonics, face and body washes, and gels.

- Two new jobs were created by the project's success in modernising and automating a traditional agri-food production process, reducing costs, while significantly increasing production capacity.
- Thanks to the project, ApiMI is poised to increase its export volumes incrementally by building demand and brand recognition.

Key lessons and recommendations

- Running a business and developing unique products require an open mind and the courage to step out of one's comfort zone. As women in business, both sisters have shown entrepreneurial strength, whether presenting on stage, navigating unknown markets or engaging with professionals in apitherapy. Their success highlights the importance of innovation and adaptability in creating a niche market.
- ApiMI's unique processing equipment and innovative products earned them the title of LEADER Project of the Year 2023 by the Local Action Group (LAG) 'Cēsu District Rural Partnership' at the national 'LEADER Dižprojekts' awards, organised by the Latvian Rural Forum and LAGs in Latvia.





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Context

ApiMI Ltd. is a family business based in rural Latvia that produces natural bee cosmetics. The company was founded in 2019 by two sisters, Madara and Ieva, inspired by their parents – a third-generation beekeeper father and a mother who is a family doctor and apitherapist. Madara holds degrees in chemical technologies and engineering in food science. She oversees production and product development, including the adaptation and automation of equipment. Ieva, who holds an engineering degree in construction and has additional training in accounting and export skills, manages sales, marketing, partnerships and documentation.

The sisters believe that bees embody peace, order and the miracle of creation. Growing up with a deep love for bee products, they sought to explore innovative uses for honey, propolis, beeswax and royal jelly. Their goal was to develop products that harness these natural super-substances, which have been used traditionally for centuries in Latvia to help preserve youth, restore health and enhance well-being.

Through perseverance and experimentation, ApiMI developed various products for beauty, health and daily life. Their offerings include hand, face, feet and body creams, lip balms, multifunctional beeswax and propolis heating applications, among other products. What sets ApiMI apart is its commitment to nature, family values and a blend of adventurous and knowledgeable business practices. All bee products used in their cosmetics are sourced from the family farm and extracts are from trusted Latvian suppliers.

After completing a regional business incubator programme and creating company premises, the sisters reinvested most of the earnings into their family firm.

As the product range expanded, the entrepreneurs recognised the need to increase production capacity and support continuous growth. They also needed a production facility that could adapt to reflect market demand.

Objectives

The project aimed to advance the company's development, expand market presence nationally and internationally, and facilitate the creation of new products in sufficient quantities. The key objectives included standardising production processes, increasing production capacity to meet market demand and preparing for expanded export opportunities.

Activities

Design and development of a custom production facility – No existing production facilities in Europe met ApiMI's specific needs, so Madara, an engineer and co-founder, designed a custom facility in collaboration with her husband. The facility's production was outsourced to a Latvian company, ensuring it could be adapted to meet changing needs. For instance, the mixer in the equipment can be removed or modified as required.

Specialised equipment installation – The facility is unique due to its ability to handle the production of oil-in-water (O/W) emulsion creams, lotions, and serums. This requires a reactor with two separate heated tanks: a large tank with a working volume of 30 litres for water-based products and a smaller 15-litre tank for the oil phase. After heating, these are combined and homogenised, with the ability to cool the mixture. Such complexity demanded careful attention during the acquisition process.

Premises renovation – The local municipality provided space for rent, which was then renovated and adapted from the company's funds to meet production requirements. The facility was also designed to be accessible to visitors, enhancing public engagement and potential educational possibilities.

Main results

- The new digitalised facility enables ApiMI to produce a variety of cosmetics, including serums, creams, and lotions (O/W emulsions), as well as water-based products like tonics, face and body washes, and gels.
- Two new jobs were created by the project's success in modernising and automating a traditional agri-food production process, reducing costs while significantly increasing production capacity.



- > This expansion has allowed ApiMI the flexibility to identify and focus on expanding within the most suitable sustainable markets without production capacity limiting its plans. Exports have been secured for markets in Belgium, Hungary, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland and the UAE. Thanks to the project, ApiMI is poised to increase its export volumes incrementally by building demand and brand recognition.

Key lessons and recommendations

- > Running a business and developing unique products require an open mind and the courage to step out of one's comfort zone. As women in business, both sisters have shown entrepreneurial strength, whether presenting on stage, navigating unknown markets or engaging with professionals in apitherapy. Their success highlights the importance of innovation and adaptability in creating a niche market.
- > ApiMI's unique processing equipment and innovative products earned them the title of LEADER Project of the Year 2023 by the LAG 'Cēsu District Rural Partnership' at the national LEADER Dižprojekts awards, organised by the Latvian Rural Forum and LAGs in Latvia.

Quote

"It is important for us to reduce the operating time in every process in order to have time for communication with cooperation partners, with potential and existing customers, to have time for the creation of the company's strategy, as well as to have time where we can relax and, most importantly, to be with family, not only for the growth of the company - everything must be in balance".

ApiMI Ltd.

"Products created by bees like honey, propolis, beeswax and royal jelly are real natural super-substances that have been used for several centuries to preserve youth, restore health and strengthen".

ApiMI Ltd.

Additional information:

Website:
<https://apimi.lv/>

YouTube:
www.youtube.com/@apimi9702

Instagram:
www.instagram.com/apimi.lv/

Facebook:
www.facebook.com/apimi.lv

