

Stronger controls in Montenegro to protect plant health

Healthy plants mean that food can be produced efficiently and safely. But ensuring that plants are healthy requires strict monitoring – and that is why the EU is supporting Montenegro in building up its capacity for adequate control.

COUNTERING SERIOUS THREATS

The agriculture sector is a major employer and contributor to Montenegro's economy. But if destructive pests and plant diseases are not found when they should be, or are not controlled properly, they can pose a serious threat to crop production and the environment, and even become a health hazard. Montenegro has put in place a policy to combat harmful organisms. Its laboratories carry out testing – including on imports, check on seed quality, and advise on nutrition. To ensure that these mechanisms are fully effective, the EU has supplied training to the national phytosanitary (related to the health of plants) administration.

The primary aim was to boost Montenegro's own capacities. But because disease can spread rapidly in international trade, the project also served to protect EU countries that import goods from Montenegro, and every other country in the EU internal market.

PROVIDING THE RIGHT CONDITIONS

The EU has been helping Montenegro acquire additional skills and new instruments for quality control and certification of plants. That way, the country's farmers can be confident they are using the best varieties of seeds and seedlings, and the most effective plant protection products. The result is that they have the best chance of obtaining top quality of crops and high standards in food safety.

Setting up an integrated food safety system in the country assigns clear competences and avoids overlap between different departments, with a consequent increase in food safety. The focus has been on ensuring better computerised information systems, improving staff knowledge, sharpening the targeting of inspections, and eliminating gaps in the infrastructure needed for effective controls. At the same time, this upgrade of administrative and technical capacities is putting Montenegro on course for the compliance with EU phytosanitary legislation that it is aiming at covering not only plant health, plant protection products, seed and propagating material, but also plant variety rights and inspections. And it helps to increase the awareness of rights and obligations among producers and consumers.



Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)

Montenegro

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

Rada Marković, Deputy Director of the Administration for Inspection, emphasises the benefits the project brings to consumers too. She says: "Proper implementation of legislation will protect consumer rights. Informing consumers and raising awareness of the importance of consumer protection, which have been implemented in cooperation with the NGO sector, will enable consumers in Montenegro to make economically rational decisions".

Phytosanitary inspector Radojko Scepanovic, who works at the border inspection point in the port of Bar, says the project gave him new skills for his everyday work, especially in checking high-risk shipments such as citrus imports from non-European countries, and ensuring that the necessary certification is in place, in line with the new traceability requirements.

PROJECT DETAILS –

Strengthening the Phytosanitary Directorate

Partners:

Montenegrin Phytosanitary Directorate
Agricultural Office, Hungary
UK Food and Environment Research Agency
UK Chemicals Registration Directorate

Total cost in €:

770,000

EU Contribution in €:

700,000 (90%)

Start date:

April 2012

End date:

October 2013

Results:

Improved skills and procedures for staff in the phytosanitary administration, inspectorate, and laboratory; new IT systems; legislation on plant health, pesticides and plant-variety rights brought closer into line with the EU

Techniques:

Assistance in drafting legislation and developing of operational procedures; training; provision of equipment; exchanges with and visits to plant health facilities in the UK and Hungary

