Promotion of the Union of Agricultural Associations of Kosovo (UAAK)

On 27th of February 2014, the organization Initiative for Agricultural Development of Kosovo (IADK) in collaboration with the Union of Agricultural Associations of Kosovo (UAAK) has organized the promotion event of the Union of Agricultural Associations Kosovo (UAAK), where among other things it was discussed for: “Cooperation and coordination of UAAK activities with relevant institutions and other stakeholders”.

In this event attended a total number of 36 participants from various organizations and institutions such as IADK, UAAK members, Turkish Embassy, American Chamber of Commerce, the Turkish Chamber of Kosovo, UNDP, Solidar Suisse, GIZ, Kosovo Chamber of Commerce, Pestova Company, MAFRD, Women for Women International, etc.

The opening ceremony is made by the UAAK representative Mr. Milazim Berisha who thank the IADK for their contribution in creating the UAAK as the need for organizing farmers and a powerful voice in defense of their interests, especially in the current situation in agriculture due to unfavorable policies to make business, then the lack of communication and cooperation between institutions and farmer’s organizations, the negative balance of import-export, etc. During his speech he also urged that Kosovo consumers should have a positive nationalism for consumption of domestic products that simultaneously increases employment and the economy in Kosovo. Then the floor was for the Executive Director of IADK Mr. Zenel Bunjaku who presented chronologically the IADK’s work in organizing the farmers, where first IADK has helped to create farmers’ associations at the local level then creating the Union of Farmers Association in Mitrovica.

He said that IADK based on the requests expressed by the farmers community and the need for representation at the national level, has supported the creation of the Union of Agricultural Associations of Kosovo (UAAK) - 10 sectorial associations and 2 regional networks. “In parallel, we have supported the establishment of Fruit Association of Kosovo (ASPEK) and the Umbrella Women’s Associations dealing with domestic processing. We have also contributed to the inclusion of UAAK in BAAN, BON and are helping UAAK to have the membership in COPA COGEGA” – he said. Mr. Zenel Bunjaku noted that the organization will succeed if there is transparency, accountability and should be closer to its members and institutions in order to participate in decision-making processes.

Mrs. Shqipe Dema, Director of the Department of Rural Development Policy and Head of the Managing Authority in MAFRD, said that the representation of producers associations is very important. She said that farmers should be involved in various associations so that their voice to be strong. “In many committees, working groups, various analyses participate farmers representatives. MBPZHR has established the monitoring committee as an important body which comprises 50% of civil society and 50% of institutions” - she said.

After these presentations it was an open discussion where attendees expressed many problems faced by Kosovo farmers. Many remarks were in division of subsidies and grants by MAFRD, unfavorable fiscal policies and many other issues. In the end, Mr. Zenel Bunjaku said the UAAK as an association can contribute more, but should work on sustainability through advisory services, dialogue (preparation of laws) and communication. Conclusions and recommendations from this event were:

- Organization of farmers in associations is essential as a strong voice of farmers
- The importance of farmers participation in working groups, monitoring committee, etc.
- Representatives of farmers’ associations representing the interests of farmers and not their personal interests
- Many participants mentioned the importance of organizing such meetings

During this event there were distributed a number of leaflets and other visibility materials of UAAK.
Pollinating Bees (bumblebees) and their importance in agriculture

Pollinating Bees (bumblebees) have shown very good results in pollination of different crops

Pollination management is a challenge in agriculture particularly in horticulture sector because it protects and promotes present pollination and inclusion of additional pollination methods. One of the best known pollination is honey bee. For their role as good pollinating show the data that only in orchards of California are used about a million bees, whereas the trees and the yield increases to various vegetables by 20-30%

The effect of pollinating bees (bumblebees) compared to honey bees is indisputable. Both types of bees while visiting various flowers of fruits and vegetables feed with their nectar and take the pollen over other flowers and store it their ovary stigma. In this article we will focus more on the advantages that have pollinating bumblebees compared to honey bees and other pollinating methods.

The use of different pollinating methods throughout the history

Until 1989, many tomato growers exploit hormones that promote the formation of fruits. Another method has been vibration; flowers are shaken mechanically to ensure the release and distribution of pollen.

Large scale research conducted in 1988 and 1989 have brought to light that the pollinating bees (bumblebees) will bring more pollinating compared with honey bees colonies, the use of hormones and mechanical vibration. As a result of this, since 1993, about 90% of European growers have begun using mass of pollinating bees, and today in some countries with developed agriculture such as Holland it can be even 100%.

Today pollinating bees used in a large number of plants in the whole world.

Advantages of pollinating bees (bumblebees):

Advantages of pollinating bees (bumblebees) are:

1. Each bumblebee transfer more pollen to the ovary stigma compared with other common pollinating honey bees. In many cultures this results in giving better fruits and a very high % fruit topping in the harvest period.
2. A pollinating bumblebee also visits more flowers per hour than other pollinating, including honey bees.
3. Bumblebees have a tolerance against unsuitable climatic conditions, low temperatures and conditions with low lighting. They fly in temperatures as low as 8 °C, in low-intensity rain, wind or weather conditions with dense cloud. Generally, honey bees do not perform their best functional activities in greenhouses and tunnels. They are generally less effective or inadequate during periods of low temperatures (below 15 °C) and cloudy weather.
4. Mechanical pollination is a waste of time and difficult to manage.
5. Hormones often resulting in low quality fruits, which are not attractive for sale and have less seeds in the fruit.
6. Bumblebees are also active in cultures in enclosed spaces: under the net against storm in plastic tunnels, condition in which others pollinating bees will fail.
7. Bumblebees easily move their colonies during flowering to different cultures at different times depending on which plant blooms first.
8. There is the possibility of collecting bumblebees and their closure could be carried out in broad daylight and you can move bee boxes elsewhere temporarily or permanently, for example during the spraying of crops, or if you want to take away the fruits in a larger number.
9. Bumblebees are never aggressive; it means greater security for you and your employees to work. In general, they are peaceful insects and will sting you only when they feel that their boxes are in danger.
10. Bumblebees can perform very well and work together with honey bees.
11. The use of bumblebees will mean saving of labor force compared with other pollinating techniques.

Return on investment - Bumblebees work and they function very well, this is observed in reflection and improvement of excellent pollinating results.

As a result, productivity increases, fruits are often larger and the number of failed fruit falls.

Given that fruits are formed and well developed, post-harvest losses are also reduced: an important economic aspect. Depending on the country, culture, variety and cultivation conditions, the results may be higher or lower than the averages presented.

Tomatoes give higher productivity in greenhouses 25-45%, greater weight of fruit 20-65%, more fruit seeds in the fruit than other forms of pollination, multi-vitamins, etc. Tomatoes in the open field give up to 30% productivity.

Sweet pepper fruit has extra weight up to 30% more, contains more seeds and has a better shape.

A colony of bumblebees is sufficient for pollination of a cultivated area of 3,000 to 5,000 m² over 6 to 8 weeks.

Strawberries in the open field give 20% greater weight fruits, and up to 3% less fruit failed. Where as to apples, there is 20% higher fruit weight.

Blueberries 17 to 32% extra performance thanks to better quality of fruit (larger fruit). Bumblebees are a very good replace of honey bees during the period when they are not active: in winter and spring, during the cold and gloomy weather.

Watermelons and melons provide up to 30% extra performance and more uniform fruits as a result of which the collection and manpower requirements are extremely reduced. / source: www.iadk.org.
Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

Protection from pests, the first step for healthier plants

Integrated Pest Management (IPM), also known as Integrated Pest Control (IPC) is a broad-based approach that integrates practices for economic control of pests. IPM aims to suppress pest populations below the economic injury level (EIL). The UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation defines IPM as "the careful consideration of all available pest control techniques and subsequent integration of appropriate measures that discourage the development of pest populations and keep pesticides and other interventions to levels that are economically justified and reduce or minimize risks to human health and the environment. IPM emphasizes the growth of a healthy crop with the least possible disruption to agro-ecosystems and encourages natural pest control mechanisms. OTHER Entomologists and ecologists have urged the adoption of IPM pest control since the 1970s. IPM allows for safer pest control. This includes managing insects, plant pathogens and weeds.

History

Shortly after World War II, when synthetic insecticides became widely available, entomologists in California developed the concept of "supervised insect control". Around the same time, entomologists in the US Cotton Belt were advocating a similar approach. Under this scheme, insect control was "supervised" by qualified entomologists and insecticide applications were based on conclusions reached from periodic monitoring of pest and natural-enemy populations. This was viewed as an alternative to calendar-based programs. Supervised control was based on knowledge of the ecology and analysis of projected trends in pest and natural-enemy populations. The term "integrated" was thus synonymous with "compatible." Chemical controls were to be applied only after regular monitoring indicated that a pest population had reached a level (the economic threshold) that required treatment to prevent the population from reaching a level (the economic injury level) at which economic losses would exceed the cost of the control measures.

IPM extended the concept of integrated control to all classes of pests and was expanded to include all tactics. Controls such as pesticides were to be applied as in integrated control, but these now had to be compatible with tactics for all classes of pests. Other tactics, such as host-plant resistance and cultural manipulations, became part of the IPM framework.

Applications

IPM is used in agriculture, horticulture, in human habitations, etc.,

1. Acceptable pest levels—The emphasis is on control, not eradication. IPM programmes first work to establish acceptable pest levels, called action thresholds, and apply controls if those thresholds are crossed

2. Preventive cultural practices—Selecting varieties best for local growing conditions and maintaining healthy crops is the first line of defense. Plant quarantine and 'cultural techniques' such as crop sanitation are next, e.g., removal of diseased plants, and cleaning pruning shears to prevent spread of infections.

3. Monitoring—Regular observation is critically important. Observation is broken into inspection and identification. Visual inspection of insect and other methods are used to monitor pest levels. Record-keeping is essential, as is a thorough knowledge target pest behavior and reproductive cycles.

4. Mechanical controls—Should a pest reach an unacceptable level, mechanical methods are the first options. They include simple hand-picking, barriers, traps, vacuuming and tillage to disrupt breeding.

5. Biological controls—Natural biological processes and materials can provide control, with acceptable environmental impact, and often at lower cost. The main approach is to promote beneficial insects that eat or parasitize target pests. Biological insecticides, derived from naturally occurring microorganisms

6. Responsible use—Synthetic pesticides are used as required and only at specific times in a pest's life cycle. Many newer pesticides are derived from plants or naturally occurring substances (e.g.—nicotine, pyrethrum and insect juvenile hormone analogues), but the toxophore or active component may be altered to provide increased biological activity or stability.

Applications of pesticides must reach their intended targets. Matching the application technique to the crop, the pest, and the pesticide is critical. The use of low-volume spray equipment reduces overall pesticide use and labor cost.

Processes

Risk assessment usually includes four issues: 1) characterization of biological control agents, 2) health risks 3) environmental risks and 4) efficacy. Mistaken identification of a pest may result in ineffective actions. E.g., plant damage due to over-watering could be mistaken for fungal infection, since many fungal and viral infections arise under moist conditions. Monitoring of agricultural pests includes tracking soil/planting media fertility and water quality.

Overall plant health and resistance to pests is greatly influenced by pH, alkalinity, of dissolved mineral and Oxygen Reduction Potential. Many diseases are waterborne, spread directly by irrigation water and indirectly by splashing. Once the pest is known, knowledge of its lifecycle provides the optimal intervention points. Intervention is warranted if the expected cost of damage by the pest is more than the cost of control. Health hazards may require intervention that is not warranted by economic considerations.

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**Information from: The Agriculture Sector of Kosovo**

Continues support for the forestry sector

As the whole moderate world, Kosovo is trying to deal with priority the forest and environmental issues, since the importance of these sectors for the country is estimated to be large enough in many aspects. So said Minister of Agriculture, Blerand Stavileci in the first session of debating forum for the Forest Sector, which was held on the 28th of February at hotel "Sharri" in Prizren, where attended European Commission officials, representatives of donor organizations, and also local institutions and officials. Minister Stavileci, said that despite many measures taken by institutions, despite many positive developments and even though only in the last year there were imposed 5593 in court summonses to illegal woodcutting, all these developments, according to him, still remain under the shadow of this negative phenomenon, namely illegal woodcutting. “This meeting here, but also many other joint meetings, as primarily having addressed the challenges and problems facing this sector. So, the main objective of also the first debate of the Forum for Forest Sector in Kosovo is to discuss in detailed issues and challenges of forest sector development in Kosovo, which are beyond the institutions, strategies and current mandate”, said Stavileci. He shown that in the forestry sector, which offers a great employment opportunity, did not miss the presence and support of foreign donors in Kosovo and thanks to this support, according to him, Kosovo Forest Agency as an institution responsible for forest and forestlands management has implemented a series of projects according to priorities set by the Forestry Strategy 2010-2020. On the other hand, according to the latest data from the National Forest Inventory turns out that Kosovo has 481 thousand hectares of forests, which cover 44.7% of the territory and if we show the ownership, it is estimated that 62% of the forests belong to the public sector, while 38% belongs to private, while the volume of total wood mass is considered to be 46,331 million m³ and annual growth at the country level is 1.55 million m³ per hectare while the annual growth is 3.3 m³ ha. According to these data, Kosovo for a period of 10 years has increased forest area to 20,200 hectares, or about 5%. /Source: MAFRD

**Shtimja/Štimlje becomes agribusiness center**

About two thousand farmers will no longer have a problem to place their agricultural products in local and regional market. Thanks to the opening of the Agribusiness Center in Shtimja/Štimlje, farmers from municipalities of Shtimja/Štimlje, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Drenas/Glogovac, Lipjan/Lipljan and Suharekë/Suva Reka will collect, preserve and branding their crops together in this center, which is planned to expand even further in the future. In the inauguration ceremony of this center, Minister of Agriculture, Blerand Stavileci, estimated that opening of this center will create positive effects on agricultural producers, who according to him producers will be able to place fresh products into the local market and stored them in the best possible way throughout the year. He showed that the Ministry of Agriculture in recent years has increased investment in the horticulture sector, thus contributing the quality of agricultural products. On the other hand, Naim Ismaili, Mayor of Shtimja/Štimlje, said that it will create opportunities to farmers of the municipality, but also of other municipalities to increase their production capacities. On the other hand the representative of the European Union in Kosovo, Christof Stock, said that investments in this sector are necessary, given the impact of this sector has in economic development. "Agribusiness is a sector that contributes 14 % to GDP and employs about 30 percent of the population. The opening of such centers has a very important role in this sector", said Stock. This project, the value of which amounts to about 500 thousand euros is financed to the extent of 73 % from the EU Office in Kosovo, while the rest is financed by the municipality Shtimja/Štimlje which in collaboration with the association "Women in Business" and the municipalities of Ferizaj/Uroševac, Drenas/Glogovac, Suharekë/Suva Reka and Lipjan/Lipljan have fully implemented this project./source: MAFRD

**Weather forecast for the month of March in Kosovo**

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Source: MAFRD

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