



## SNAPSHOT

### ***Kosovo's Modernized Table Grape Industry Reaps Rewards***

**New varieties, technologies, practices put crop on path to growth.**



*Employees of the StoneCastle vineyard in Rahovec/Orahovac prune table grapes trained to grow on new "Y"-shaped trellises. USAID's international experts introduced the technique to local growers.*



*A local expert engaged by USAID examines grapes for presence of insect pests.*

**"Before USAID's intervention, many of the country's vineyards were producing wine grapes that often went unsold, even on local markets," says Habib Dina head of the Zëri i Bujkut.**

Efforts to modernize Kosovo's table grape industry have paid off, with local growers signing a major export deal to supply markets in Western Europe.

Zëri i Bujkut, a Rahovec-based association of grape growers, recently made the deal to export 7,000 tons of fresh table grapes, beginning with the fall 2014 harvest. The deal, signed in November 2013 with German-Kosovo food wholesaler KERMENDI GmbH, potentially covers the entire local harvest of quality table grapes.

USAID, through its New Opportunities for Agriculture project, helped broker the deal, which confirms the tremendous gains in the quality, quantity, and overall marketability of Kosovo's table grapes. The deal is a major victory not only for the producer's association, but for the local municipality and USAID, who have worked with the region's farmers to introduce necessary technical and cultural changes to the grape industry. These changes reflect internationally recognized best practices, and include the introduction of new seedless and seeded grape varieties with proven market appeal, as well as improved trellising techniques and state-of-the-art canopy management. USAID brought in a team of international and local experts to conduct the training.

The contract marks a significant move forward in developing the export sector of Kosovo's fresh fruit and vegetable industry. "Before USAID's intervention, many of the country's vineyards were producing wine grapes that often went unsold, even on local markets," says Habib Dina head of Zëri i Bujkut.

USAID stepped in to help re-graft the region's wine vines, enabling them able to produce table grapes. In addition to opening new export markets, the conversion has allowed growers to replace the imports that had traditionally satisfied local demand for table grapes. With the assistance of Kosovo's Ministry of Agriculture, KERMENDI is currently constructing a large-scale packing facility in Peja/Pec, a little more than an hour's drive from Rahovec. The facility will include modern forced-air cooling equipment for table grapes and other fresh fruits, increasing Kosovo's capacity to export quality produce.

The four-year New Opportunities for Agriculture project has been working with Kosovo's farming industry since January 2011 to create market new linkages, increase and diversifying agricultural products, improve food quality and safety, and increase affordable and accessible credit. The program also supports the sector through small grants to farmers, agricultural enterprises, and associations.

