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Technology Expands Competitive Agribusiness

Albanian essential oils company finds cost-effective technology that increases competitiveness and employment



Photo: Brittany Lynk

Xhevit Hysenaj, owner of Xherdo Medicinal Plants and Essential Oils near Durres, Albania, beams proudly next to the essential oils distiller he was able to design and construct with the help of a USAID-funded grant

“Thanks to USAID, we were able to design, construct, and put into operation a cost-effective distiller for essential oils,” said Xhevit Hysenaj, owner of Xherdo: Medicinal Plants and Essential Oils

Telling Our Story
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://stories.usaid.gov>

From humble business beginnings buying and selling blueberries, Xhevit Hysenaj, owner of Xherdo: Medicinal Plants and Essential Oils, is now dealing in berries, herbs, and oils. He has not only successfully tapped into the Albanian and export markets; but he has also been pivotal in adapting technology, as well as promoting his product: essential oils.

Hysenaj is more than a business man; he is an innovator. While developing his product, he realized that larger essential oil distillers were needed to increase production, improve quality, and make the process more efficient and cost-effective.

Research into foreign oil distillers returned only exorbitantly high price quotes. Affordable distillers were of unacceptably low quality. Sustainability, efficiency, and economic sense made it clear to Hysenaj that the best thing to do was adapt the technology himself in a way that would fit his company’s needs as well as further empowering Albania’s agroprocessing industry.

With the help of a small grant from USAID, Hysenaj was able to bring in three engineers to advise on the design, construction, and operation of a larger-capacity, cost-effective distiller for essential oils. He saved money by making the equipment in Albania, while also developing oil distiller technology. This newly adapted technology has increased production and sales, leading to more local employment, coupled with increased income for growers and collectors of raw materials.

“From one small grant from USAID, there remain huge effects for my company,” said Hysenaj in his native Albanian. “This USAID grant allowed Xherdo Company to design and build an essential oils distiller with European standards that cost three times less than any distiller of similar quality we could have purchased.”

With the first prototype of the distiller designed and operating, further improvements are being made. Once fine tuning to perfect the technology is completed, Hysenaj hopes to consolidate and document the knowledge in a manual, to be made available to other essential oil distillers in Albania.