



SUCCESS STORY

Clever Branding Brings Recognition

Crimean grape producer achieves brand recognition

Produce brand names are often inspired by the region where the product is made. Crimean table grapes are no exception. They enjoy brand recognition with Ukrainians in the same way that Florida oranges or Idaho potatoes do with North Americans.



Nikolay Choropita inspects the table grapes at his company's vineyard in Crimea, Ukraine.

Photo: USAID/Mykola Havrylyuk

When three founders of a successful grain company in Crimea decided to diversify and add vineyard management to their portfolio, they discovered that simply cultivating table grapes is not enough: the produce must also be marketed. They also found that their usual practice of using affordable banana boxes to package grapes gave no brand identity to the produce, preventing them from capitalizing on the reputation of the Crimean grapes they grew.

Specialists from USAID's Agricultural Marketing Project persuaded them to use new packaging and marketing

practices. The specialists then helped them come up with a logo: they played on the shape of the Crimean peninsula, which resembles a cluster of grapes, to develop a logo for the newly registered company, Agro-Yukos Ltd. Manager Nikolay Choropita understood the importance of branding. He worked with a local box manufacturer to design custom-made boxes with the company's new logo. Today, buyers receive Agro-Yukos grapes in these boxes. In addition, the new packaging has reduced produce loss to about 5 percent, compared to 50 percent in banana boxes.

What began as a fun side business has become a profitable venture for Agro-Yukos. Table grapes yields a great deal more revenue than grain: one hectare of grapes brings \$50,000 in revenue, compared to \$30-40 for grain. Also, table grape production creates additional employment opportunities. Today, seven full-time and up to 30 seasonal employees work with Agro-Yukos Ltd. each year, and the Agro-Yukos brand is increasingly recognized throughout the country.

“The success of our grape brand helped us win a grant for manufacturing grape boxes. And we will definitely continue developing our brand next season,” said Nikolay Choropita, part owner of Agro-Yukos Ltd.