



SUCCESS STORY

Small Bakery, Big Success: Local Entrepreneur's Story of Struggle and Growth

Kosovo business enters the market and builds a following



Photo by: USAID EMPOWER Private Sector

Dragica and Bojan are proud of their products and what they have achieved through their business. They hope to expand into a new production facility in the next few years and employ more people to keep up with their orders.

“When we initially started the business, I never thought we would become this big. I never thought we would get to this stage of growth.”

— Dragica Antonijevic, owner of Milos and Marta

July 2018 – After Dragica Antonijevic lost her factory job in 2009, she started to think about how she could support her family financially. Two children to support, Bojan her husband jobless, she had to find a way to generate income to survive.

Fully equipped with family recipes passed down from her grandmother and mother, Dragica started a baking business. Using the tools she had at home—just three pans, a small oven, and a refrigerator—Dragica began producing cakes and other baked goods. However, she struggled to find people and stores to buy her creations. Determined to get the word out, Dragica began going door to door, pleading with shop owners to sample what she baked. “No one knew the quality of my products, so I decided to find my own market,” she remembers.

Little by little, Dragica convinced different stores around North Kosovo, where she lives, to carry her products. As the popularity of her products increased, her business—named Milos and Marta after the couple’s children—started to receive more orders. Dragica and Bojan were delighted that demand for their products had increased, but now they faced a new problem: producing enough for their customers with their existing equipment.

In 2015, Dragica and Bojan found about USAID and applied for a grant that supplement a bank loan they secured, and bought new cooking equipment including a commercial-grade oven and mixer. They also constructed a larger processing facility to increase production, improve the quality of products, and diversify their product range.

After these upgrades—and with more orders rolling in—Milos and Marta (as the bakery was named) hired nine additional employees, ramped up production, and won a large contract to provide baked goods to the main university student center in North Kosovo. The company also began shipping its products to different areas of

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Kosovo and to neighboring Serbia. Since receiving USAID support, the sales have quadrupled.

In Dragica's words, receiving assistance from USAID marked a turning point for their business: "Without USAID support, we would not have had the budget or the capacity to achieve the success our business is experiencing."

These days, Dragica is happy that customers are coming to her and that she no longer needs to ask people to try her sweet treats. Dragica and Bojan are now focused on keeping up with orders. "By 2020, we hope to build a two-story production facility. This growth will enable us to employ more people and expand our business to reach more markets," says Bojan. "Success, from where we started and what we have achieved up till now makes us very proud," added Dragica.

To date, the USAID EMPOWER Private Sector, a five-year project that aims to create jobs in Kosovo by helping businesses identify and pursue opportunities for growth has assisted 364 Kosovo businesses like Milos and Marta to expand their production and sales. By fostering and encouraging growth opportunities, USAID has stimulated \$83.8 million in sales among its beneficiary companies and helped create 2,973 new jobs since 2015.