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Kosovo Strawberry Promotional Initiative Becomes Annual Event



Photo: USAID New Opportunities for Agriculture

The strawberry promotion was a hit with school children from all over Pristina, who visited the event.



Photo: USAID New Opportunities for Agriculture

Fresh, attractive strawberries lure consumers to buy the locally grown fruit, at Strawberry Promotion Days in downtown Pristina.

A promotional event that draws a spotlight on Kosovo’s bountiful strawberry harvest has become an annual happening. This year’s opening of the second annual Strawberry Promotion Days drew 3,000 people to downtown Pristina.

The four-day event corresponds with the peak of the fresh strawberry harvest. The 20 participating farmers reported selling 2,300 kilograms of fresh strawberries the first day. One of those farmers, Halim Baftiu, predicted he alone would sell 700 kilograms by the event’s end. More than 11 tons of strawberries were sold, which is more than 22,000 euros.

Across Kosovo, USAID works with roughly 100 growers to actively promote the adoption of new strawberry varieties and technologies, as well as innovative ways of handling, packing and marketing the soft fruit. The efforts are helping those producers sell everything they can grow, all while supporting USAID’s wider goals of fostering growth, creating jobs and generating exports.

USAID New Opportunities for Agriculture program also assists growers to meet international standards, including Global G.A.P. The voluntary good agricultural practices certification covers food safety, sustainability, worker welfare and the responsible use of water and other resources. In recent days, Baftiu became the first strawberry farmer in Kosovo to gain Global G.A.P. certification.

“It’s so great because now I can tell everyone freely that my strawberries are certified,” Baftiu said.

USAID organized the June 5-8 2013 Strawberry Promotional Days to link Kosovo’s strawberry farmers with consumers. The promotional event should not only expand the market for fresh strawberries and jams, but also inspire more domestic farmers to begin cultivating the berries as well, according to officials.

At the farm and nursery level, USAID has introduced new strawberry varieties, along with new methods of cultivating the fruit, to Kosovo. These interventions have increased the size of the strawberry crop, edging out imports. They likewise have lengthened the growing season. Thanks to USAID, domestically grown strawberries now are available in Kosovo’s markets in all but winter months.

USAID, through New Opportunities for Agriculture (NOA) a four-year program that started in January 2011 and ends in January 2015 focuses on creation of market linkages, increasing and diversifying

agricultural products, improving food quality and safety, increasing affordable and accessible credit, in addition the activity supports the sector through small grants to farmers, agricultural enterprises and association.