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ALBANIA

SUCCESS STORY

A Towel Maker Corners the Market

Loans and technical support help expand small businesses



Photo: USAID/Kristina Stefanova

A worker at Florjan-V tends a massive loom producing towels.

In eight years, Viktor Marku's company, Florjan-V, has doubled in size and now accounts for a quarter of the domestic towel market.

Florjan-V is the only towel maker in Albania. Its products are used throughout the country and have a growing presence in Kosovo and Montenegro. Owned by entrepreneur Viktor Marku's, Florjan-V has doubled in size over the last eight years and now accounts for a quarter of the domestic towel market.

"This is a business that has a market because the consumption is good," said Viktor. "You eat at least three times a day, so you'll use a towel at least six times a day."

USAID backs that sentiment, having provided Viktor with the loans and technical assistance that have helped him expand his business. After paying off an initial loan to repair equipment that helped him double production, Viktor took out another loan that allowed him to buy a generator and a minivan to deliver towels to his retailers and wholesalers.

Since 2002, USAID has been committed to helping empower Albania's small businesses, providing credit and technical assistance to more than 4,000 companies in 33 of Albania's 36 districts. Focused on manufacturing and agribusiness firms, the loans have been used to expand product lines, add employees and purchase and repair equipment.

In its early years, the main goal of the USAID's small business assistance was to offer credit and general business development support. Today it provides a small number of businesses with more specific aid, such as helping them develop new products and showing them how to better market their merchandise.

Viktor, for instance, is learning how to set up a computerized accounting and production control system, which will enhance his towels' quality and potentially make them more appealing to consumers abroad. Following advice from USAID, he has also added Florjan-V labels to his towels and has introduced new patterns and designs.

Telling Our Story

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Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://stories.usaid.gov>