



CASE STUDY

Organic Buckwheat Wins New Markets

A small company makes healthy food a big success

Challenge

Samir Mehonic and Vesna Latifovic were in an odd position. Their organic buckwheat products had just won the “Golden Rose” prize for best new product of the year at an international food fair in Sarajevo, but their resources were stretched so thin that they had to stop production at their company, Heljda Eko Sarajevo.



Photo: USAID/Kasey Vannett

Heljda Eko staff Bilsana Bajramovic and Denis Hrnicevic celebrate World Healthy Food Day with a display of their company's foods at the Mercator Supermarket in Sarajevo.

“I can honestly say that Heljda Ekos’ produces some of the best food in the country. My friends and I personally consume Heljda everyday,” Sukrija Huseinovic, Eurofarm General Manager.

Initiative

One of USAID’s programs strives to link producers of quality products with markets and buyers. When program staff saw Hejda Eko’s display at a fair, they encouraged Mehonic and Latifovic to apply for a grant. “Our first application was rejected and the project team actually cried with us. Then they helped us improve our business plan and our second application was successful,” said Latifovic. The second time they applied, they were successful. The grant

helped Mehonic and Latifovic set up a factory and equip it with pasta-making machines. In addition, their company, Heljda Eko Sarajevo, makes 20 other products including buckwheat flour, tinctures, and honey. Everything is gluten-free, meaning it is high in energy and low in fat — very healthy for everyone, and especially children and the elderly. Buckwheat is also known for helping to improve blood circulation.

Results

Heljda Eko began providing ingredients for Eurofarm products, a major brand in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This helped them build up their business, maintain production, and expand their product line. As the business grew, so did its prospects. Now, their hard work is really paying off — the company took a great leap forward when it won a contract to supply its products to Mercator supermarkets throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina.