



## SUCCESS STORY

# Local Eggs Now Compete with Imports

**New approaches to feed and processing help Kosovo's egg producers take back the domestic market**



Photo: USAID/Patricia Orlowitz

Tusha owner Bekim Krasniqi examines eggs at his farm.

***Bekim and his brothers keep good track of the numbers and know that lower costs help them — and other egg producers — sell more eggs.***

There are no white coats for the lab testers at Tusha farm in Kosovo; they wear feathers. The eggs from Tusha's several hundred hens will go to market, but the hens' real job is to test feed. Owner Bekim Krasniqi and his brothers are seeking a mix of grains and supplements that yields the most eggs at the lowest cost. It's a critical equation for Kosovo's poultry industry, where feed accounts for 80 percent of the cost of doing business. Most feed ingredients are imported and taxed, so productivity must be high to keep local eggs competitive with imports.

Using software provided by USAID, Tusha can now calculate the optimum mix of grains and nutrients for feed. In 2003, the company sold 5,000 tons of high-quality feed worth \$1.67 million to local farmers, helping them raise production and lower costs. While Kosovo used to import up to 50 percent of its eggs, use of local resources, better cooperation between producers and processors, and industry-friendly policies have turned the situation around. Today, 85 percent of eggs bought in Kosovo are domestically produced.

Tusha also raises chicks until they are ready to be sold as layers. To help Tusha import "parent" chickens that would breed highly productive flocks, USAID connected Tusha with Hy-Line International, a U.S. producer of chickens with extremely high yields. Tusha and another local company are now negotiating for rights to produce Hy-Line chickens for Kosovo and Albania. USAID also helps egg producers contract with slaughterhouses and meat processors to buy and process hens after their productive life has ended.

Back in the henhouse, the birds squawk and flap when the camera flashes, then settle back to the business of testing feed and making eggs. Bekim and his brothers keep good track of the numbers, and know that lower costs help them — and other egg producers — sell more eggs.

"We call the farmer the producer, but the real producer is nature," says poultry expert Ilir Zenelaj. "In agribusiness, processing is the key."