

Supporting organic rose oil production in Bulgaria

Expanding the capacity of an essential oils distillery



Panagyurishte region



Rosa damascena



Organic Lavender plantation



An essential oils distillery



Cohobating system

Source: <http://www.ina-bulrose.com>

Summary

Rose oil is a traditional and emblematic Bulgarian product that has been regaining market popularity in recent years. Ina Ltd., a small essential oils company from the Panagyurishte region in Bulgaria, has used EAFRD funds to add organic rose oil to its product range by investing into distillery equipment through building, delivery and installation of cohobation (distillation of essential oil) equipment and building a ramp. The company could thus address the market demands for both, conventionally and organically produced rose oils.

Type of project

Investment in Organic Production

Funding

Total Funding: €20 800

EAFRD contribution €10 407

Own funds: €10,393

Priority/focus area, measure

Axis 1, M123; Axis 2, M214

UP 4 Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry (FA 4a)

Type of beneficiary

Farmer / Micro SME

Theme

Smart and Competitive Rural Areas

Duration

2012- 2014

Location

Panagyurishte, Bulgaria

Website

<http://www.ina-bulrose.com>

Description

Official project title

Expanding the capacity of an essential oils distillery

Context and needs

Rose oil is a traditional and emblematic product of Bulgaria. With the expanding interest in natural and organic products, especially in the fields of cosmetics and pharmaceuticals, organic rose oil has been in ever increasing demand. Organic rose and lavender oil production contribute to the achievement of not only economic but also ecological and social goals for rose-growing regions.

The company Ina Ltd. has been a conventional essential oils producer owning 6.84 hectares of roses and 21.8 hectares of lavender plantations in the region of Panagyurishte since 2000. The company has its own essential oils distillery with an annual capacity of 40 kg of rose oil and 4000 kg of lavender oil. The company's products are valued and sought after for their high quality, guaranteed by the locally produced raw-materials and traceable production processes.

In 2005, the company started organic certification for part of its lavender plantations and in 2009 it began to turn to certified organic production for parts of its rose gardens supported by EAFRD funding. In 2011 the distillery was certified for organic production of lavender oil.

Before the submission of the project the distillery did not have the equipment and technical capacity to produce organic rose oil. The lavender flower production was also insufficient to make full use of the distillery's capacity and to satisfy market demand.

During the five year transition period from conventional to certified organic production the rose oil had to be sold as conventional oil, even though for part of that time it was certified as organic rose oil.

Thus there was a need for an additional set of equipment to keep the organic and conventional oil production process separate as well as to expand the company's lavender plantations.

Objectives

The long-term goals of the company are to increase the distillery's capacity; maintain and improve the quality of the products, the organic rose and lavender oil production; and to establish its own brand.

The project aims to enable the organic rose oil production process to be separated from the conventional process (by the use of a separate set of equipment), which is expected to increase the sales revenue by 30% in 10 years.

Activities

The project was carried out in the period from 2012 to 2013 and allowed the company to buy and install the equipment (a second cohobating system and two water pumps) necessary for separating the organic rose oil production from the conventional rose oil production, as well as for more effective use of the three existing distillation units.

A pump for thick solutions (rose marcs) has been bought and installed allowing the capacity for rose oil production to be expanded. The rose marcs are later used as fertilisers for the company's own plantations.

A specialised ramp has been built for separating the conventional and the organic rose and lavender flowers and sending them to the corresponding distillation unit.

In addition to the project the company itself organised training for their own personnel and for suppliers of the raw materials.

Results

The main products of the company have been organic and conventional lavender oil, conventional rose oil and rose water. As a result of the project it can also produce organic rose oil.

The project allows for more effective use of the three distillation units, as well as for the production of organic rose oil and organic rose water, which are very popular and sought after by the market. Last but not least the ramp built as part of the project allows for separate storage of conventional and organic rose and lavender flowers – a requirement for the organic certification of the distillery.

The organic rose oil production has established Ina Ltd. as one of the most reliable suppliers of high quality organic rose and lavender oil. The organic rose oil plantation certification process started in 2009 and the certification of the company's own organic rose production was completed in 2014. A total of 9 kg of organic rose oil were produced in 2014 and 6 kg in 2015. Export turnover has risen from €13 300 in 2012 to €168 000 in 2014. The project has contributed to almost doubling the company's personnel (seasonal employment) – from four jobs in 2012 and 2013 to seven in 2014.

Lessons

Taking small steps in expanding and improving organic oil production has been the main reason this project has been a success. This includes continuous capacity building, annual investment, preferably co-funded by European programmes, encouraging suppliers to convert to organic farming and looking for new opportunities in the organic product market.

The successful project completion has led to raised interest in organic farming among other farmers in the Panagyurishte region. As of 2015, ten farmers have commenced the 3-year certification process for the organic production of lavender; five for organic production of roses with three farmers having already completed the certification process.

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Additional sources of information, links:

<http://www.ina-bulrose.com>

Language for contact: Bulgarian, English

References

The pictures have been provided by Ina Ltd.