

THE WORLD FOOD PRIZE

GLOBAL CHALLENGE

Stina Ermeni – Become recognized as a Borlaug Scholar?

Topic: **Implementation of quality and food safety standards on vegetable production in Kosovo.**

Introduction: I am Stina Ermeni, student of the tenth grade in the secondary economic school "Kadri Kusari" in Gjakova. My family is composed of the father, the mother, the little brother Vlerori and the two grandparents.

In this activity I was supported by the teachers of my school and my teacher, Ms. Merita Bokshi who helped me in the preparation of the materials and if we succeed in our application will be part of our activity in your school.

1. STEP ONE:

Country: **KOSOVO**

○ *What is the country's population? What percentage are urban and rural?*

As of 1 January 2019, the population of Kosovo was estimated to be 1,809,280 people¹. The agricultural sector contributes up to 20 percent of GDP, and 60% of Kosovo population lives in rural areas.

○ *What type of government and leadership exists?*

Government type: Parliamentary Republic.

Kosovo Leadership: President of republic of Kosovo, Prime minister

○ *How much of the land is currently cultivated? What are the major crops and exports?*

The total area of Kosovo is 1.1 million ha;

Agricultural land - 52.45 % (577,000 ha);

Forests and forest land - 47.55 % (467,800 ha);

The major vegetables crops are: pepper, tomato, cucumber, salad and onions;

The major fruit crops are: apple, plums, soft fruits (strawberry, raspberry, blueberry, etc), grapes, etc.;

Cereals: wheat, corn, sunflower, etc.

Agricultural products comprise around 16% of the total exports;²

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○ *What is the average farm size in your chosen country? For context, what can you compare it to?*

The agriculture sector is characterized of small farms, around 180,000 active farms; average of farm 2.5 ha.

○ *What is the climate and geography?*

Kosovo has a mild continental climate with cold, snowy winters and warm summers.

¹ <https://countrymeters.info/en/Kosovo>.

² Kosovo agriculture development strategy 2014-2020.

Landlocked Kosovo shares borders with Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Albania. It is ringed by mountains: The Sharr Mountains are located in the south and south-east, bordering Macedonia. The Kopaonik Mountains rise in the north. The south-west borders with Montenegro and Albania are also mountainous, and are home to the nation's highest mountain, Gjeravica 2,656m high. The central region is mainly hilly, but two large plains spread over Kosovo's west and east.

2. STEP TWO: RESEARCH A TYPICAL FAMILY:

- **What is a typical family size? Describe the dwelling in which they live.**

Nationally, the average household size is 5.7 people per household.⁴ They are living usually in small buildings (maximum four rooms).

- **What does a typical family diet consist of?**

Most **traditional** Albanian food consists of vegetables, spices, meats yogurt and herbs. Cow, lamb, rabbit and chicken meat is used heavily in various dishes. Vegetables are used in almost every dish. Milk and its byproducts, as well as eggs, are daily food.

- **Where do families get food and how do they cook it?**

In urban area the supply is made in hypermarkets. In rural areas, farmers themselves produce 70 % of vegetables. Food preparation is mainly done at home in the traditional format.

- **What types of jobs do they have and what is the average wage?**

In rural areas, people are mainly engaged in agriculture, whereas in urban areas they are more engaged in the sectors such are: trade, catering, food and textile industries that are more pronounced. The average salary in Kosovo is around 170 Euro/month.⁵

- **Do families have access to education and health care? Is it affordable?**

In Kosovo, primary education is compulsory and the next education is everyone's right to decide for themselves. Health insurance is at an early stage and they are mainly based on private insurance. There is still no health insurance that is regulated by the state. In this moment it is not affordable for mostly of citizens in Kosovo.

- **Do families have access to clean water, toilets, electricity, telephones, roads and local markets?**

Yes, now is much better situation compare to years '90 and families have access to clean water, toilets, electricity, telephones, roads and local markets. Internet coverage is very high and it is ranged highest in the region.

- **What major barriers do typical families face including earning a living and access to nutrition food?**

Material conditions and very low salaries make it impossible for families to be supplied with the abundant and calorie foods that are offered in Kosovo market. As a result of their incomes, they are forced to feed on lower food calories.

3. STEP THREE:

⁴ <https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=1381436c32524e76b32152e191772fe8>.

⁵ Kosovo Ministry of labor and Social Welfare

CHOOSE A TOPIC: Plants

Utilizing plants to increase and improve food, nutrition, medicine, fibers, fuels and other products.

○ Why did I choose this topic?

Firstly, I think that primary agricultural production is Kosovo's most important economic development sector. To be competitive with the domestic and foreign markets, this sector needs to develop by producing quantity and quality that meets the quality standards applied in all developed countries. I consider that the training of all involved actors in this sector in the implementation of the quality standards starting from the techniques and technology of plant cultivation and their marketing, is very important in the development of this sector especially and the country in general.

Secondly, I'm motivated by my dad who is graduated in food technology and works in a vegetable collecting center (Agrocelina). He is certified in the implementation of quality standards and food safety. Dad's talks with me about these topics has increased the curiosity for this topic and have pushed me to go to visit him at his work and personally to explore the farmers' how they doing this.

4. STEP FOUR: ANALYZE THE IMPACT

○ What is the present status and severity of this topic?

From what we have learned in school and heard from my father, the main challenges in this regard are as follows:

- Protecting agricultural land from destruction and degradation;
- Climate changes, plant protection and food security;
- Using pesticides, herbicides and weedicides that are allowed to use active substances that are permitted by the European Union regulations;
- Implementation of Global GAP (Good Agriculture Practices) standards;
- Implementation of food safety standards (ISO 22000/HACCP);
- Improving agriculture input supplier chain management;
- Increasing citizen's awareness for food quality.

○ Are trends improving worsening or staying the same?

Young people who are educated in the agricultural sector and ongoing trainings are very helpful in educating farmers in the implementation of quality standards and in achieving the right yields that make good incomes for them. During my visit to the collection center I noticed that the implementation of the contract criteria with the company buyers (mostly from EU market) have been determined the advancement of cultivation techniques and technologies and the fulfillment of quality standards by the farmers as well as by the collection center. In this aspect, advancement is obvious and food security is evident.

○ What contributes to this trend?

Food safety criteria set by EU buyers for collection centers and farmers with particular emphasis on permitted use of pesticides have contributed to the advancement of this trend of upgrading and achieving standards.

○ How does this topic affect rural and urban populations?

Ensuring sustainable contracts for the sale of agricultural products to the EU market, as is the case with the collection center where I have visited, makes a sustainable business for the farmers and this has a positive effect in the rural and urban population.

○ **How does this topic affect women and men differently? The elderly? Children?**

In my country due to the small agricultural parcels, engaged are mostly family workers, and during the harvest season, seasonal workers are engaged. This implies that family women and elderly people are engaged and, from time to time, children are also engaged in light work.

○ **How does this topic affect marginalized populations? (minorities, refugees, indigenous, etc.).**

The great unemployment in Kosovo and the harsh living conditions of its inhabitants, and especially of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian minorities (RAE community), result in their growing demand to work in this sector and this has a positive effect on their economic well-being

○ **How does this topic affect the environment?**

My experience in the sector that has emerged as a result of the center visits and conversations with the dad has shown that this field does not affect the environment and is not related to any environmental pollution. The use of plant protection products against pests (pesticides, chemical fertilizers, etc.), in order to respect the formulas and the way of treatment, does not harm the environment.

5. STEP FIVE: SOLUTIONS&RECOMANDATIONS:

SOLUTION	STRENGTH (PROS)	WEAKNESS (CONS)
Implementation good agriculture practices	Trained farmers	Small number of trained farmers
Replacing traditional plant cultivation on advanced technics of plant cultivation	Young farmers	Influence of older farmers (heads of households) in slowing the application of changes in farms.
Exchange experiences with other farmers from other countries	Farmers' readiness to take part in study visits	Budget for organizing study visits.

○ **Would these solutions meet all the needs of the population in your country?**

The implementation of these solutions will enable very large agricultural outputs for Kosovo farmers, including the right quality. I think that this will enable stable and long-term farmers contracts with the collection center and selling all of their production capacities.

○ **What solutions you recommend to solve this challenge? Describe the plan of action.**

Solution	Activity	No. of activities	Participants
Implementation good agriculture practices	Organization of trainings for farmers	10	100 farmers
Exchange experiences with other farmers from other countries	Study visits	4 visits.	4 visits

- **Who would manage and lead this project? Examples: the United Nations, World bank, non-profits, civic organizations, etc.**

I think that this project would manage collection centre (Agrocelina) in cooperation with donors presented in Kosovo (World bank, etc.).

- **How could this project funded?**

Project could be founded by business sector (Agrocelina), local institutions (local agriculture departments) and international donors in Kosovo.

- **What role do community members, the government, and other organizations play in implementing your plan?**

The role of the community and institutions is to implement the sector development strategy in the region where the project is implemented. This region is known as a vegetable region and in this case farmers will be trained to produce vegetables.

- **What policies would need to be in place for the project to be successful?**

I think that implementation of quality and food safety standards by farmers will determine project to be successful.

- **What cultural norms or behaviors need to be considered while developing your plan?**

I think that the seriousness of farmers in the implementation of these standards should be the main factor in the development of this plan.

- **How can this project be sustainable?**

Strengthening linkages with collection center as a buyer for farmers and producing quality agriculture products including implementation of the quality and food safety standards by farmers will do the project sustainable.

CONCLUSION:

My research and the idea presented in the project I consider that it is very useful not only for me and my career advancement, but also for the agricultural sector and my country in general.

My participation in the activities of your school and the lessons and experiences that I will receive of the experience from other participants will be inspiration for my future education.

STEP SIX: WRITING&FORMAT YOUR PAPER.

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