

SEMA Case Study Profile

The jar

2016



SEMA is a transnational research project supported by the European Commission and funding bodies in five countries under the umbrella of ERASMUS+

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1 Farm Profile

„La borcan” (in English “The jar”) is a family farm established in 2013 that cultivates ecologically 2000 square meters, out of which 150 square meters in foil tunnels. The vegetables production consists in tomatoes, eggplant, zucchini, onion, carrot, cucumber and almost the entire production is transformed into jars.

In 2015 the farm doubled its culture surface in foil tunnels and has cultivated new plants. Also, the farmer has successfully implemented the project related to the biweekly basket of fresh vegetables delivered to clients. The number of clients doubled, both individuals and companies.

In 2016 the farmer cultivated 1 hectare of land as culture surface. It’s a family business.

2 Multifunctional Farming

In 2010 the owner was diagnosed with a rare syndrome, due among others to eating processed food products and excessive chemicals. Thus he began to produce his own food and he started with vegetables. He built his own foil tunnels, without having too many concepts in the field.

In 2012, after a record production of tomatoes, producing sauces and juices, he came up with the idea of selling them, both as fresh and as preserved.

2.1 Situation before Multifunctional Activity

In 2010 the farmer was producing ecological products for his own family, without obtaining profit from this activity. In 2013 the idea of selling the surplus of vegetables and cans came. In the next years the farm kept growing, through diversification and increase of the cultivated surface.

2.2 Developing the Business Idea

The idea of multifunctional agriculture came to the farmer when he realized that his products are appreciated by friends and when he saw that they want quality organic products.

Thus, besides the jar canned products, he has also experienced with great success the twice-weekly basket of fresh vegetables, doubling his customers, both individuals and legal entities.

The factors who contributed to the overall success of his enterprise were:

diversification of herbs and vegetables, planting increased and protected areas, and the use of the Internet as a way of promoting his products has brought him new customers.

2.3 Multifunctional Agriculture

At present, the family owns 1 hectare of land and the vegetables production consists in tomatoes, eggplant, zucchini, onion, carrot, cucumber and almost all are transformed into jars. The continuous diversification of the production of plants and vegetables, but also the introduction of the basket with fresh vegetables, besides the jar cans, has considerably increased the number of clients.

Thus, the multifunctional agriculture offers farmers the opportunity to increase their income and create added value by extending their activities.

2.4 Financing the New Business

The financing of the business idea came from the own resources of the two brothers, the own garden field, as well as taking over in bailment the land of his wife.

2.5 Outcomes of the Business Development

Every year the farmers have introduced new plants, but also new recipes for producing the canned products.

In 2014, the owners diversified the production by adding basil, celery, cilantro, lettuce and thus they attracted the first companies as clients, namely restaurants. They produced many jars that they sold in October of that year.

In 2015 the owners doubled the culture surface in protected spaces with many novelties: Chinese zucchini, yellow melons, green beans and grain beans, aromatic herbs, etc. They have also successfully introduced the bi-weekly basket of fresh vegetables and they doubled the number of clients.

In 2016 they cultivated 1 hectare as culture surface and other new plants. They prepare 3 types of traditional vegetables stew (in Romanian called “zacusca”) and 2 types of sauces based on baked vegetables.

3 Skills for Multifunctional Agriculture

The two brothers have good skills in cultivating organic plants, using only traditional varieties that they treat organically against pests. All the canned products follow the organic recipes and do not contain preservatives. At the same time, they are good merchandisers and they know how to promote the products both traditionally, as well as by means of the new technologies.

3.1 Promoter and Staff Competences

The farmer has continuously improved his training and knowledge in the agricultural field, not being professional specialized in this field. Within the family there are constantly 3 persons directly involved.

3.2 Access to and Management of Skills and Know-How

As a basic job, the farmer is a chef and has management studies which are very useful in leading his business, as well as marketing studies that help him successfully use also the social media networks for delivering the bi-weekly basket of fresh vegetables.

4 Experiences & Recommendations

As regards the organic agriculture, the farmer explains that:

- Seeds in organic system cost 5-6 times more than conventional hybrids.
- Productivity is much lower because chemicals are not used.
- Treatments and fertilizers have to be applied very often in the production of organic vegetables, even every three days, whereas in the conventional system, depending on the culture, they are applied 3-5 times per season.

*“The satisfying result from the traditional organic agriculture is given by the **product itself** and not by its quantity. Why? As food producers, we sleep without worries and fears after we deliver real health to our clients!” - Lucian Dragomir, farmer*

4.1 Implementing the Business Idea

Although the cost of organic production is much higher, as otherwise also the losses, the farmer believes that the effort is worth it as long as all the produced goods are of quality and healthy. In order for the losses due to weather to be as small as possible, he has also expanded the production in greenhouses.

The fact that the farm has a wide range of fruits, vegetables and herbs allows them to be both diversified and provide fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as canned jars. The risks of production are related to the specific of organic farming.

4.2 Finding Supporters for the Business Concept

His family helps him lead the business and he continuously improves his knowledge in the organic agriculture field.

4.3 Promoter's Advice

The conclusions of the farmer are:

- „conventional = small investment / huge results,
- traditional – organic = big investment / satisfying results.”

4.4 Queries and Consideration

Entrepreneurship in organic farming requires a lot of investment in the workforce but also specific knowledge and financial support.

Continuous training and strategic thinking are vital in organic agriculture.

The results are not always satisfactory, but it is very important to respect the ecological principles

and the end customer in order to be able to provide him with clean and healthy products.



Source: platferma.ro/