

GREEN BUSINESS

**Rural development based on the
preservation and sustainable use
of natural and cultural heritage**



Royal treasure of aromatic Dalmatian flowers

The famous scientist Albert Einstein once said: „If the bee disappears from the surface of the earth, man would have no more than four years to live“. The bees pollinate over 80% of plants, including one third of fruits and vegetables we eat (e.g. apple, potato, broccoli, strawberry...), thus making the survival of plant species possible.



Photo: Roman Ozimec

Ecological bee-keeping represents the non-intrusive symbiosis of man, plants and animals, while providing, in addition to that, high-quality autochthonous products.

Family farm Ivica Dragan Elez is one of the two ecological beekeeping establishments in Dalmatia. The Farm currently has 72 ecological bee communities, which produce high-quality honey from aromatic Dalmatian plants, such as Common Sage (*Salvia officinalis*), Lavender (*Lavandula sp.*) and Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*). Ecological honey from aromatic Dalmatian plants is very much valued both in Croatia, and in the EU market. Almost one half of the total Croatian honey production is exported, and it also serves as an excellent, original and autochthonous Croatian souvenir. The project of ecological beekeeping, together with the production of high-quality ecological honey, also includes multiple benefits for the local communities: the young inhabitants of rural areas get the new perspective and the opportunity to live and work in their native areas, through sustainable use of natural wealth and the expansion of the tourist offer, which results in economic development, as well as the decrease of depopulation in rural areas.

Organic vineyard with autochthonous varieties of Grk and Plavac mali grape on south side of Korčula island



Photo: Jelena Kurtović

Grk grape is the autochthonous Croatian vine variety, succeeding and achieving superb results in the sandy and dry soil of Lumbarda, in the inland areas of the Island of Korčula. However, despite significant natural potential for the production of exquisite wine, the southern slopes of the Island of Korčula remained neglected and uncultivated for years.

Franjo Milina Bire began cultivating the autochthonous white variety Grk on the southern slopes of the Island of Korčula, and his vineyard is also the first ecological vineyard on the island. In addition to the variety Grk, he also planted one of the most valued Croatian varieties, Plavac mali, which was selected not only because of the good wine produced from it, but also in order to aid the cultivation of Grk. He is cultivating and maintaining the vineyard in a traditional manner, by extracting, grinding and arranging the stones.

With this green project, the Family Farm Bire aims to complete its existing tourist offer, already extraordinarily attractive and frequently visited. In addition to wine and liqueur tasting rooms, the Family Farm also includes stalls for goats and donkeys, the olive grove, orchards of orange, lemon and tangerine, vegetable garden and the existing vineyards. The satisfaction of guests at the estate, but also the overall success of this business enterprise, constitute the best example of a sustainable combination of agriculture and rural tourism. At the same time, the success of the Family Farm is an invitation to other future green entrepreneurs in this area to renew the tradition of vine cultivation on the southern side of the Island of Korčula, following this successful example and experience, and to enrich, as Franjo Milina Bire did, the tourist offer and recognizability of the area as a desirable tourist destination.

Organic animal husbandry of autochthonous Buša cattle breed as base for premium price products



Photo: Jelena Kurtović

Autochthonous varieties and breeds constitute an important part of biological diversity, which is a fact also enshrined in the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Buša cattle is an autochthonous breed of bovine cattle of the Balkan peninsula, which, together with the Podolian breed, was the dominant breed in Croatia once upon a time, with over one million pieces of cattle. Today, this breed is critically endangered, with the estimates pointing to only approximately 220 such pieces of cattle remaining in Croatia – despite the advantages of the Buša breed, such as the resistance to disease, adjustment to scant and rough terrains, the capability of surviving in open air throughout the year, and small level of required care. The Buša is one of the smallest cattle breeds in the world, approximately 110 cm in height and approximately 200 kilos in weight.

Family Farm Nikica Žampera, active in the field of cattle breeding for 15 years, and in the ecological production of goat cheese and olive oil for the last six years, recognized the value of the autochthonous Buša breed, and its revitalization will surely increase the offer of high-quality ecological cheese at the estate.

Apart from providing its high-quality milk, the Buša cow also has a significant role in the restoration of the traditional landscape, dominated by natural habitats of meadows and pastures that are quickly vanishing due to the lack of use.

Revitalization of the breed Buša, together with favorable circumstances for the development of ecological cattle breeding and for the provision of tourist offer based on premium products, provide excellent opportunities for economic development of poorly inhabited island areas.

Pilot commercial farming of Warty Venus (*Venus verrucosa*)

Due to its major productivity and importance in terms of the farming of shellfish, the Malostonski Bay was declared nature reserve at sea in 1983. Today, it is the most significant location for shellfish farming in Croatia because of its pristine sea water that is the precondition for shellfish growth. Tomo Gamulin, one of the most important researchers of the Adriatic Sea, once famously remarked: *"The Republic of Croatia has hundreds of bays, but there is only one Bistrina [Clarity]."*



Photo: Jelena Kurtović

It is precisely in this inlet of Bistrina, which is part of the Malostonski Bay, that the **Technological and Business Innovation Center for Mariculture MARIBIC** used as a location for its shellfish hatchery, while starting the pilot project of commercial cultivation of Warty Venus shellfish (*Venus verrucosa*). The demand for Warty Venus, in particular in the Italian and French market, is much greater than the supply; each year, approximately 4 tons of Warty Venus are extracted in Croatia and sold. Due to the underdeveloped commercial farming, the shellfish is frequently extracted from its natural habitat, leading to uncontrolled exploitation due to high demand and high market price. It is for that reason that the MARIBIC Center is developing commercial cultivation technology for the production of market-ready Warty Venus shellfish. The experiences gathered so far have shown that the successfulness rate of growth and survival is as high as 98%. This project will enable the technology transfer for commercial cultivation of Warty Venus to various partners, cultivators and entrepreneurs, which is likely to result in the increase of the total shellfish production in Croatia, thus contributing to the overall profitability of the Croatian mariculture. The cooperation with the association **"Stonski školjkari"** [The Shellfish Producers of Ston], which is the partner in the project, has already been established, and this association includes 55 shellfish farmers.

Rehabilitation and rejuvenation of the organic olive growing orchard

Dalmatia has a long tradition of olive growing and olive oil production. However, in the passage of time, a number of old olive groves remained neglected, abandoned and uncultivated due to a range of circumstances, forest fires and migration to urban centers.

That makes the project of the **Family Farm Vukas** all the more valuable: the Family Farm aims to rehabilitate one neglected olive grove, damaged by fire, into a modern ecological olive grove with preserved traditional landscape and autochthonous varieties. On the surface of 2,7 hectares, there are 100 rejuvenated olive trees, joined by 400 new seedlings that have been planted. Along with the rehabilitation of the olive grove, the Family Farm Vukas is also rejuvenating plant and animal life, which has a decisive role in ecological olive cultivation. Autochthonous aromatic plants of rosemary and lavender have been planted along the borders of the olive grove, and various legumes have also been planted around the trees, creating the nitrogen in a natural process, as the substance necessary for the growth of olives. Adjacent to the olive grove, plants of almond, fig, jujube and other autochthonous fruits have also been planted, in order to increase biodiversity, and to preserve the biological balance of the olive grove. The Family Farm Vukas is successfully combining its agricultural activities with tourism. Located in the settlement of Ponikve on the Pelješac peninsula, known for its landscape beauty and peaceful environment without noise or stress, which is perfect for vacation, they have developed a rich tourist offer. The tourists have the chance to enjoy superb wine and domestic delicacies, and they can also carry a part of that unforgettable atmosphere with them, by buying wine and extra vergine olive oil packed in attractive, likable bottles.



Photo: Jelena Kurtović

Construction of traditional fishing boat Falkuša, development and marketing of eco-tourist offer based on Falkuša



Photo: Croatian National Tourist Board

Falkuša is an ancient fishing vessel, and also one of the main symbols of one millennium of fishing tradition in the town of Komiža on the Island of Vis. In order to sail the open seas, the inhabitants of Komiža needed a vessel that would enable them to do that. Thus the master shipbuilders constructed a vessel that made it possible to cross bigger distances. Powered by sails and oars, Falkuša was made of pinewood, the type of wood that can best stand the temper of the sea. It was about 9 meters long, 2,90 meters wide, and the height of the mast was approximately equal to the vessel length. Five oars were needed to power it, and in windy weather, the big Latin sail and head sail were raised. She was named after the falks, i.e. the parts of the flank of the vessel that were removed during the fishing. That would lower the flank, thus making it easier to throw fishing nets.

In order to display the cultural heritage of Komiža to tourists, together with its tradition and practice of sustainable coexistence between man and his sea environment, the tourist agency **Vis Adventure**, which is providing nature friendly adventure tourism services, has started the revitalization project of Falkuša, the symbol of Komiža's cultural heritage. Such a type of tourist offer will fit the tourist development of Komiža perfectly, given the fact that it has established itself as a top destination for eco-tourism. The Falkuša, together with the tourist activities connected with it, would also gain central place in the planned eco-museum of Komiža. Unforgettable sailing on Falkuša would allow the tourists to become acquainted with the richness of the sea landscape of Komiža, and to experience traditional fishing that is managing sea resources in a sustainable manner, thus caring for the preservation of marine biodiversity.

GREEN BUSINESS: rural development based on the preservation and sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage

In the world dominated by mass production and tourism there is growing market for products based on the uniqueness of the local natural and cultural diversity.

Dalmatian coast, with its great biological, landscape and cultural heritage, and perspective tourism sector, is the prime example of the area that can use green business concept for both its development and conservation.

The sectors with major opportunities include: organic agriculture, growing of autochthonous breeds and varieties for the purpose of producing premium price products; organic fish and shellfish farming; nature-based agro, rural and adventure tourism.

The Green Business Support Programme has been established in Dalmatia towards the end of 2008 through the cooperation of the Global Environment Facility, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), four Dalmatian counties and their development agencies. The GBSP is focused on: 1) Direct loans through the guarantee loan fund for green business, in cooperation with Société Générale - Split bank; 2) Financial and technical assistance for the implementation of green business projects; and 3) Technical assistance in the preparation of project proposals for the application for other national and international support programmes.

