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## EXPLORING NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN THE MEDICINAL AROMATIC PLANTS AND NON-WOOD FOREST PRODUCTS SECTOR

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**HBS** Household Budget Survey

**ICS** Internal Control System

**KAS** Kosovo Agency of Statistics

**LFS** Labour Force Survey

**MAFRD** Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development

**MAP** Medicinal and Aromatic Plants

**MCC LFTUS** Labour Force and Time Use Survey commissioned by the Millennium Challenge Corporation

**NIF** Farmer Identification Number

**NWFP** Non-Wood Forest Plants

**PPSE** Promoting Private Sector Employment

**SILC** Survey of Income and Living Conditions

# 01

# INTRUDOCTION

### Brief Outline of the Economic Situation in Rural Areas

Although Kosovo's economic growth has been steady, on average estimated at 4% (World Bank, 2017), poverty remains high. It is more pronounced in rural areas, considering that bigger households are more likely to be found in these areas. Based on the data of the Household Budget Survey (HBS), it is estimated that 18% of the Kosovo's population lives below the poverty line, with 5.1% of the population below the extreme poverty line.[1]

Economic growth of Kosovo did not translate into job creation. As a result, in 2019, only 30.1% of the working age population (15-64 years were employed). Inactivity rate in Kosovo remains exceptionally high, recorded at 58.5%. Amidst this low activity rate, unemployment rate stood at 25.7%, with slight changes over the years.

According to the latest Labour Force Survey of the Kosovo Agency of Statistics for 2020, two thirds of the population are of the working age. Employed women are at 14.4%. According to this report, the inactivity rate is very high, especially that of women estimated at 78.5%. According to KAS surveys throughout the years, women in Kosovo own less than 10% of the total number of registered businesses. These businesses are mainly micro and small and operate in sectors with less potential for growth, primarily in service and trade.

The agricultural sector continues to remain a high priority for the Government of Kosovo (Economic Reform Programme 2020-2022). Different estimates exist for employment[2] in agriculture: 25% reported in the 2018 Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development (MAFRD) Green Report, while a similar estimate (21.7%) is reported in the 2017 large scale survey, which changed to 19.2% in 2019 survey, both by the Kosovo Agency of Statistics. These data suggest that agriculture is an important and strategic economic sector for the country.

Within the sector of agriculture, according to the 2019 Green Report, **the sector of organic farming of medicinal and aromatic plants is consolidated in cultivation and collection.** In 2018, statistics show that in total 424.10 ha were cultivated with medicinal and aromatic plants compared to 170 ha in 2017. In 2018 there were 35 certified companies compared to 5 in 2017; 373,488 ha were certified for collection of medicinal plants and wild fruits; and there were 45 collection centres throughout Kosovo. This sector has a strong export potential, mainly in the form of a semi-finished product. The largest share of exports (95%) was in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, with new markets emerging from year to year. An expanding sector is also confirmed with the report of Association ORGANIKA on the situation of the sector in 2019, reporting that overall, the Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFPs) and Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAPs) sector has demonstrated positive progress.

Donor support to the sector has been of great importance, especially for investments, capacity development and facilitating networking for export promotion. The vast majority of collection centres and processing companies, stated to have been supported primarily by donors: the European Commission, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, USAID, GIZ. Respondents (women farmers interviewed for purposes of this report) claim that only a few have benefitted from the MAFRD and they have no information if anyone has benefitted from the municipal funds.

A General Picture of MAPs and NWFPs Sector
The key actors in the sector of MAPs and NWFPs are the collectors, cultivators, collection centres and processing companies. After harvesting from the wild or cultivation, the medicinal aromatic plants (MAPs) and non-wood forest products (NWFPs) are delivered fresh or dried to the collection centres. Once the collection centres collect the MAPs and NWFPs from the farmers and collectors, the dried and temporarily stored, very rare semi-processing takes place in these centres (Boor, 2019). The dried MAPs and NWFPs are transported to processing companies, who usually are also involved in exporting. The processing and exporting companies carry out further preparation, like sorting, cutting, separation of stem and leaves, etc., after which they are mainly exported to international markets and to a small extent sold to domestic market (Boor, 2019).

In this value chain, in absolute terms, women comprise of the largest share of workforce, particularly as collectors/cultivators.

1 According to 2018 Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC), 47.3% of households would not be able to cope an unexpected expense of €100, from their own resources (KAS, 2020).

2 The growth model of Kosovo has not been accompanied with new jobs overall, since in 2019, only 30.1% of the working age population in employment, only 40.5% were active in the labour market and 25.7% were unemployed

The sector employs women from rural areas who have limited access to labour market and given their lower level of education have limited opportunities to finding jobs. Previous studies (Swisscontact – PPSE, 2015) have shown that women engagement in the sector, has had both financial and non-financial benefits. Earning from their activity in the sector has contributed to women empowerment in the household and the community, by further incentivizing other women to join the sector. Given their engagement in the sector and benefits obtained, this study aims the in-depth study of the role/contribution of women in the MAP and NWFP sector, to collect information on barriers for their development in the sector, and to assess opportunities available in the sector.

### Methodology of the Report

Whilst previous studies have collected data through quantitative research instruments, this study relies solely on qualitative instruments, namely employing in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. This approach enables not only to collect information but also to closely observe the impact that the sector has on women's life and their wellbeing. For this research, 22 interviews were conducted with 12 enterprises and collection centres, 7 with women cultivators and 3 employees (Table A1 in Annex) and 10 representatives participated in focus groups discussions (Table A2). One focus group discussion was implemented with women who were either owners/co-owners or managers of enterprises or collection centres, and the other focus group was conducted with men as owners of enterprises or collection centres. Discussions with the latter group proved of high relevance, as they shared their experience with women collectors/cultivators, collection centres and women owned processing companies. Finally, a discussion meeting was organised with the Chief Executive Officer of the Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality.

### Road-mapping the Report

The report is organized as follows. **Chapter 2** provides an overview of economic situation, labour market conditions and discusses the role of unpaid family work and agriculture sector in the economy. This Chapter sets the scene, by providing an overview of barriers for women in the labour market and their engagement in the rural agriculture. Using secondary data, **Chapter 3** describes the MAPs and NWFPs sector. In **Chapter 3**, drawing on information collated during this research, a discussion of success factors, challenges and opportunities to the sector are presented. **Chapter 4** is focused in exploring the role of women in each of the value chains and it identifies challenges that deter their development. In this Chapter, recommendations in the form of opportunities are presented, as key messages to the government and donor community supporting the sector.


### Acknowledgment:

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# 02

# CONTEXT

## The Unemployment Distress

High inactivity rate remains one of the pressing challenges in the Kosovo labour market, on average estimated at 60% (Table 1). Employment rate over this period remained low, with very slight improvements. A large number (63.6%) of the unemployed reported that they are unemployed for longer than 12 months, with nearly 80% of those aged 35-39 years old being unemployed for more than a year. Kosovo has a young population with a large demographic dividend (Cojojaru, 2017) but due to lack of jobs, this asset remains largely unutilized, with unemployment rate as high as 49.4% in 2019, with slight improvements over the years. In addition to being detached from the labour market, youth in Kosovo are also detached from education and training systems with nearly one third not being in employment, education of training.

**63.6%**

**of the unemployed reported that they are unemployed for longer than 12 months.**

**80%**

**of those aged 35-39 years old being unemployed for more than a year.**

**49.4%**

**enemployment rate in 2019.**

| | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Labour force participation rate** | 36.9 | 40.5 | 41.6 | 37.6 | 38.7 | 42.8 | 40.9 | 40.5 |
| **Inactivity rate** | 63.1 | 59.5 | 58.4 | 62.4 | 61.3 | 57.2 | 59.1 | 59.5 |
| **Employment-to-population ratio (employment rate)** | 25.5 | 28.4 | 26.9 | 25.2 | 28.0 | 29.8 | 28.8 | 30.1 |
| **Unemployment rate** | 30.9 | 30.0 | 35.3 | 32.9 | 27.5 | 30.5 | 29.6 | 25.7 |
| **Youth unemployment rate (15-24 years)** | 55.3 | 55.9 | 61.0 | 57.7 | 52.4 | 52.7 | 55.4 | 49.4 |
| **NEET share of youth population (15-24 years)** | 35.1 | 35.3 | 30.2 | 31.4 | 30.1 | 27.4 | 30.1 | 32.7 |
| **Vulnerable employment (self-employed without employees and unpaid family workers)** | 16.8 | 23.6 | 24.9 | 22.7 | 22.9 | 23.1 | 19.6 | 18.8 |
| **Informal employment (% without employment contract)** | 16.6 | 18.0 | 15.5 | 15.5 | 26.3 | 21.5 | 14.0 | 13.4 |
| **Temporary employment** | 73.0 | 68.2 | 71.6 | 72 | 70.5 | 70.6 | 74.5 | 54.7 |

**Table 1: Key labour market indicators** Source: KAS, Labour Force Survey 2012-2019

Besides difficulties to finding a job in Kosovo, there is a strong dissatisfaction of workers with working conditions in Kosovo. A recent study (EPPC, 2020) found that 60% of employed Kosovars were not satisfied with their job, and dissatisfaction with the wage as the most the commonly cited reason (59%). Low wages are considered among the key determinants of the high in-work-poverty-estimated at 15.2% in 2017 (Haxhikadrija et al., 2019).

For purposes of this report, although the Kosovo Agency of Statistics is the official institution mandated to report labour market statistics, reference will be made to the Labour Force and Time Use Survey commissioned by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC LFTUS). This is because the MCC LFTUS was designed to capture individuals at the margin, who are easy to classify as inactive if the respondents are not appropriately probed about their labour force status (Siddiqui et al. 2017). The MCC LFS was able to capture more agricultural workers, the employment estimates and activity rates were higher (43.1% and 42.8%, respectively while unemployment rate was the lower recorded at 16.7%. This study suggests that engagement in agriculture is an important activity for the economy, but which largely remains under-reported and studied.

According to the MCC LFTUS in 2017, employment rate was 41.1% in rural areas and 39.3% in urban areas, while unemployment rates were 21 and 15%, respectively. Whilst KAS LFS recorded informal employment at 21.5% in 2017 whilst the MCC LFTUS reported that 40.8% of workers did not have a written contract of employment. According to survey findings of MCC LFTUS, youth unemployment rate in 2017 was 29.2%, which is significantly lower than the 52.4% estimated by the 2016 KAS LFS. One striking difference is found, with regards to women activity rate, reported at 18.6% from KAS LFS, and 33% by MCC LFTUS survey. This is an important difference in absolute terms, indicating that one third of women were active, compared to less than one in five, reported by KAS. This difference again is coming from the fact that women are more likely to be unpaid family workers and thus more of them were captured in the MCC LFTUS.

There is a stark gender divide in the labour market in Kosovo, with women being at a disadvantageous position (Table 2). It is important to note that education attainment in Kosovo has improved considerably, particularly among women (Table A3). According to Kosovo LFS, the share of population aged 30-34 with tertiary education has increased from 9.3% in 2012 to 20.9% in 2018, from 6.5% in 2012 to 20.8% in 2018 for women, compared to 12.1% for men in 2012 to 20.9% in 2018 (Table A3. Despite these improvements, education level of working age women is lower than of men. Based on survey results from the MCC LFTUS, in 2017, about 60% of working age women had less than upper secondary education, compared to 33% of men. (Table 2).

| | 2012 | | 2013 | | 2014 | | 2015 | | 2016 | | 2017 | | 2018 | | 2019 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | W | M | W | M | W | M | W | M | W | M | W | M | W | M | W |
| **Labour force participation rate** | 55.4 | 17.8 | 60.2 | 21.1 | 61.8 | 21.4 | 56.7 | 18.1 | 58.3 | 18.6 | 65.3 | 20.0 | 63.3 | 18.4 | 59.7 | 21.1 |
| **Inactivity rate** | 44.6 | 82.2 | 39.8 | 78.9 | 38.2 | 78.6 | 43.3 | 81.9 | 41.7 | 81.4 | 34.7 | 80.0 | 36.7 | 81.6 | 40.3 | 78.9 |
| **Employment-to-population ratio (employment rate)** | 39.t9 | 10.7 | 44. | 12.9 | 41.3 | 12.5 | 38.7 | 11.5 | 43.0 | 12.7 | 46.6 | 12.7 | 45.3 | 12.3 | 46.2 | 13.9 |
| **Unemployment rate** | 28.1 | 40.0 | 26.9 | 38.8 | 33.1 | 41. | 31.8 | 36.6 | 26.2 | 31.8 | 28.7 | 36.6 | 28.5 | 33.4 | 22.6 | 34.4 |
| **Youth unemployment rate (15-24 years)** | 52.0 | 63.8 | 50.4 | 68.4 | 56.2 | 71.7 | 54.2 | 67.2 | 47.2 | 65.4 | 48.4 | 63.5 | 51.5 | 64.7 | 44.1 | 60.3 |
| **Employee** | 71.4 | 86.4 | 66.5 | 78.3 | 65.0 | 78.9 | 68.6 | 79.4 | 67.7 | 77.9 | 66.3 | 78.3 | 70.5 | 80.6 | 70.1 | 83.1 |
| **Self-employed with employees** | 10.1 | 2.1 | 8.3 | 2.6 | 8.2 | 2.1 | 7.5 | 1.9 | 8.3 | 3.2 | 9.4 | 3.3 | 9.3 | 2.2 | 9.6 | 2.9 |
| **Self-employed without employees** | 12.6 | 6.2 | 17.2 | 10.0 | 17.9 | 11.5 | 15.7 | 11.9 | 15.9 | 11.8 | 16.6 | 10.8 | 14.5 | 11.5 | 14.9 | 8.9 |
| **Unpaid family worker** | 5.8 | 5.4 | 7.9 | 9.1 | 8.9 | 7.4 | 8.2 | 6.8 | 8.1 | 7.1 | 7.7 | 7.6 | 5.7 | 5.6 | 5.4 | 4.9 |

**Table 2: Key labour market indicators, by gender** Source: KAS, LFS 2012-2019

Employment gender gaps are observed across all levels of education (Table 3). In 2019, the employment rate of men with tertiary education was 23 percentage points higher than of women (73.1% and 49.9%, respectively). This suggests that gender gaps with prevail in the future, amidst increased education attainment of women in recent years.

| | 2018 | | 2019 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| No formal education | 7.3 | 2 | 5.2 | 3.2 |
| Primary | 22.1 | 3.2 | 27.6 | 4.1 |
| Secondary education, vocational | 49.1 | 15.2 | 50.1 | 14.8 |
| Secondary education, gymnasium | 50.6 | 10 | 42.4 | 13.6 |
| Tertiary | 74.9 | 54.3 | 73.1 | 49.9 |

**Table 3: Employment rate by education level, by gender** Source: KAS, LFS 2018 and 2019

IN 2019, THE EMPLOYMENT RATE OF MEN WITH TERTIARY EDUCATION WAS 23 PERCENTAGE POINTS HIGHER THAN OF WOMEN (73.1% AND 49.9%, RESPECTIVELY)

While employment rates are low across all age groups, the lowest rates are observed for women older than 44 years (Table 4).

| | 2012 | | 2013 | | 2014 | | 2015 | | 2016 | | 2017 | | 2018 | | 2019 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| 15-24 | 14.4 | 4.6 | 15.1 | 4.6 | 13.4 | 4.2 | 12.9 | 3.7 | 15.2 | 4.4 | 16.7 | 5.2 | 14.6 | 4.9 | 18.6 | 7.1 |
| 25-34 | 45.8 | 14.3 | 52.1 | 16.4 | 48.8 | 15.5 | 42.6 | 14.4 | 48.3 | 17.0 | 53.3 | 14.9 | 50.3 | 16.0 | 52.4 | 18.5 |
| 35-44 | 56.4 | 14.0 | 61.8 | 16.2 | 60.0 | 15.7 | 56.6 | 15.1 | 61.8 | 16.9 | 66.2 | 16.8 | 64.3 | 16.7 | 62.4 | 18.5 |
| 45-54 | 59.0 | 14.2 | 62.7 | 18.7 | 58.7 | 18.0 | 56.8 | 17.5 | 61.7 | 17.7 | 65.4 | 16.9 | 65.9 | 14.5 | 63.3 | 15.7 |
| 55-64 | 44.5 | 7.9 | 50.4 | 12.2 | 47.2 | 13.4 | 45.2 | 9.6 | 49.4 | 10.0 | 52.0 | 12.4 | 51.6 | 11.8 | 53.7 | 11.6 |
| Total 15-64 | 39.9 | 10.7 | 44.0 | 12.9 | 41.3 | 12.5 | 38.7 | 11.5 | 43.0 | 12.7 | 46.6 | 12.7 | 45.3 | 12.3 | 46.2 | 13.9 |

**Table 4: Employment rate by age group, by gender** Source: KAS, LFS 2012-2019

| | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| All | 9.3 | 12.0 | 14.8 | 17.2 | 19.1 | 21.8 | 20.9 |
| Men | 12.1 | 14.2 | 16.6 | 19.5 | 18.9 | 22.4 | 20.9 |
| Women | 6.5 | 9.9 | 13.0 | 14.7 | 19.4 | 21.2 | 20.8 |

**Table 5: Tertiary education attainment (% aged 30-34) Source: KAS,** Labour Force Survey, taken from ETF

# AGRICULTURE WHERE THE WOMEN ARE

According to the MCC LFTUS contribution of agriculture sector to women employment is higher-with 33.3% of employed women in agriculture, as opposed to 17.6% of employed men. Survey findings suggest that 34.7% of employment is vulnerable i.e., self-employed with no employees or being an unpaid family worker, which is higher than the share reported in the KAS LFS (22.9%). Vulnerable employment is more prevalent among women: 46% compared to 30.7% of men. Unsurprisingly, the highest level of vulnerable employment was in agriculture, forestry, and fishery workers (92.6%) and activities of households as employers (89.8%). Disaggregated by location, vulnerable employment for women in rural areas accounted for 58.8% compared to men in rural areas 33.3%. In urban areas the shares are 12.5% of women and 20% for men. The MCC LFTUS study found that about 23.0% of employed individuals are unpaid family workers (compared to 7.9% depicted with KAS LFS). Unpaid family work is more present among low educated individuals accounting for 81.7% of employed individuals with no education; 81.3% of those with primary education, 55.5% of those with lower secondary education, and with very low share among those with tertiary education (Table A4).

## TOSUMMARISE,

## DATA PRESENTED IN THIS CHAPTER AND THE CORRESPONDING ANNEXES REVEAL THAT WOMEN'S ACCESS TO THE LABOUR MARKET IS LIMITED, PREVAILING ACROSS ALL EDUCATION LEVELS.

Finding a waged employment in rural areas is more difficult, whilst engagement in the form of unpaid family work is an important contributor to employment, especially for women. Data also suggest that jobs in Kosovo are of low quality, in terms of pay and other working conditions. Given that women in rural areas are characterised by lower levels of education and with limited access to labour market, the analysis suggests that agriculture sector is an important sector for women, that supports them to accommodate work and housework responsibilities and earn income.

# 03

# MEDICINAL AROMATIC PLANTS & NON-WOOD FOREST PRODUCTS SECTOR IN KOSOVO

## 3.1 How Things Currently Stand in the MAPs and NWFPs Sector

To describe the Medicinal Aromatic Plants (MAPs) and Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFPs) sector, information is extracted from two reports prepared by the sector Association ORGANIKA: one referring to 2017 and the other to 2018. The NWFPs and MAP represent a most important cluster of agriculture due to its high export potential, good climate conditions and long tradition in the sector. In 2018, the export of the NWFPs and MAPs was €6.3Milion, with great potential to grow because of market linkages already established with key EU markets, primarily Germany, Italy, and Austria. As per the recent value chain assessment conducted by GIZ (Boor, Value Chain and Market for MAPs in Kosovo, 2019, Prishtina) EU represents the largest single commercial market for herbal medicine in the world, importing yearly 150,000 tons of (raw material) medicinal plants in amount of €425 million (Association ORGANIKA, 2020). Germany is an EU market leader, importing 65,000t per year in amount of €201 million. According to a recent GIZ study on Value Chain and Markets for MAPs (Boor, 2019), there are around 7,500 NWFPs collectors, around 700 cultivating farmers and 50 collection centres, and 10 companies engaged in exporting activities.

In 2018, there were 862 total hectares of cultivated MAPs, producing 537 tons of goods, with 26 different cultivated crops; 39 different NWFPs are collected (Association ORGANIKA, 2020). The sector has expanded the total number of employees and its capacities. In 2018, there was an increase of 545m2 on installed dryers' capacities (increase of 35%) with the total surface of installed dryers is 1,993m2, out of which 640m2 are green-house dryers (natural dryers). The daily capacity of all dryers in the sector is 72 tons/day, but due to seasonality the yearly usage of dryer capacity is only 19.3 %. Out of total surface of shock tunnels (-40°C) of 448m2 with capacity to process 80 tons of goods per day only 28% was utilised. Increased use of shock tunnels by 103% is also observed in 2018.

In 2018, 2,088 tons of NWFPs were collected from several farmers and collection centres, resulting in a total of 2,896 contracts, with 55% supplied from farmers without a contract. The quantity of overall collected NWFPs decreased by 11% or 269 tons in 2018, with a decline of 220 tons of mushrooms and a decrease of 156 tons of juniper. The total amount of cultivated MAPs in 2018 was 537 tons, which was cultivated in an area of 862 Ha. The surface of cultivated MAPs was four times greater than that in 2017, an increase of 604 ha or a 234%-increase of cultivated areas, while the quantity of cultivated MAPs increased by 329 tons or with a 158%-increase compared to 2017. Another important feature of the MAPs sector is that 91% of cultivated MAPs is organic (Association ORGANIKA, 2020). In 2018, there were 37 NWFPs and 23 cultivated crops.

Overall, these data suggest that the sector is expanding in terms of cultivated quantities, employment, and its capacities. However, the low level of capacity utilization is a concerning issue, which requires addressing given the available market space for the NWFPs and MAPs in national and international market.


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### 3.2 Success factors and challenges of the sector

In this section, a summary of key success factors and challenges is outlined. Key success factors of the sector are considered the following:

- **Organic production, which qualifies Kosovo as one of the top performers (this was stated by few interviewees)**
- **Sustained quality in the value chain**
- **Support from donor organisations in investments, capacity building, and networking**
- **Participation in fairs and study visits, which enabled participants to identify best practices, opportunities, and setting up networks**
- **Unmet demand for the MAPs and NWFPs in Kosovo and abroad**
- **Good prices in local and international markets**
- **Interested contractors for exporting**
- **The sector is well organized and actors in the value chain are supportive to each other. This was explained with the fact that there exists a scope for everyone and improvements in one stage/process contribute to following stages/processes. Farmers have been supported by export companies with equipment and access to grants**
- **An increased interest for the sector, primarily among rural women for cultivation and rural men for collection**
- **The sector has a strong Association ORGANIKA, which has also been vocal advocating to the government for the MAPs and NWFPs, provided updated information about the sector and has facilitate participation of members in international fairs and study visits; and**
- **Certification services provided by local entities is missing in Kosovo, as is reported also in the 2019 Green Report for year 2018**

In Kosovo, in the absence of a local control body, the certification of organic products is done by two international certification bodies: Albinspekt from Albania and Q-Check P.C from Greece. The MAFRD Green Report 2018 acknowledges that the cost of certification is quite high, which also affects the cost of production. Therefore, without any financial support, it is very difficult for the farmers who deal with organic production to bear all the costs of production on their own.

However, the sector remains deterred from barriers that were identified previously, among the main ones being:

- **Barriers to accessing finance, particularly due to lack of collateral as a consequence of lack of land ownership**
- **Lack of government grants, due to harsh eligibility criteria for collection centres and no access for cultivators/natural persons**
- **High interest rates from the banks and other financial institutions. As reported by participants of the focus group discussions, high interest rate has been a serious barrier for their business and a stress source for them personally**
- **Lack of financial instruments to address the lack of cash flow related to the seasonality of the sector**
- **Inability to purchase new equipment, it is likely that productivity in all value chain is less than optimal**
- **Energy outages, which increase operation costs but also damage products**
- **Expensive certification process, which if not subsidised, is unaffordable for most farmers. Certification is a barrier to benefiting from the MAFRD subsidies. As explained in the 2019 Green Report, for 1 ha with medicinal and aromatic plants, the basic subsidy is €0.00/ha, but if certified for organic production, the farmer receives €500/ha. Beneficiaries are farmers who have planted/cultivated at least 0.10 ha of agricultural crops and for which they have the certificate of certification for organic production**
- **Expensive laboratory tests, which must be conducted abroad. The Laboratory in Peja does not perform all types of laboratory tests, which forces processing companies to use the service from abroad, which is financially and timewise expensive**
- **One-fits-all design of donor support interventions have not addressed the pressing needs of the collection centres and farmers. A demand-based approach is being suggested by farmers and collection centres**
- **Unsupportive tax policies-VAT at 18%, for which reason collection points underreport their sales in order to remain under the VAT limit. Therefore, the collection centres damage their bank statements, which in turn limit their access to loans. In addition, one of the interviewed collection centre representatives indicated that the existing accounting requirements do not take into account the possible damages of goods, which are quite likely especially for NWFPs**
- **Formalisation of the cultivators/collectors. Based on data gathered from processing companies, a significant share of cultivators/collectors are**

**not formalized, i.e., they do not possess the Farmer Identification Number (NIF), through which they would have to pay 1% on their income. In some of the cases, the processing company covered this cost**

If above enlisted challenges are addressed properly and the success factors are maximized, the sector has the following opportunities:

- **Expand further in terms of quantity produced and exported through expansion of existing actors and inclusion of new entrants**

**Diversification of products, with increased value added**

- **Increased productivity through utilization of new machinery and increased know how, through training, study visits, participation in fairs, etc.**
- **Youth could be incentivized to study in this area**
- **Expand type of actors, for example through greater use of specialized distributors who are currently used by very few collection centres**
- **Expand the number of enterprises that directly export-as currently there are 10 such enterprises. For this, there is a need to provide a package of tailored support and use experience of existing exporting enterprises**

Expansion of the sector would employ individuals from disadvantaged rural areas, whose options are either to remain dependent on social assistance or send children abroad for working. Properly designed support measures would also address the seasonality of the sector, which is demotivating engagement of particularly youth in the sector. The importance to support women in this sector was also acknowledged by the Chief Executive Officer of the Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality. The need to best inform women in rural areas for available opportunities and financial support was deemed necessary. The CEO also highlighted that there is a need that local NGOs work closely with the local community. It was also suggested that there is a scope to train women to prepare applications for subsidies and grants, with focus on more simple applications which can easily be prepared by women themselves.

# 04

## WOMEN IN THE MAPS AND NWFPS SECTOR

### Women Are Transforming the MAPs and NWFPs Sector

According to the recent report of ORGANIKA (2020), in 2018, in total, the MAPs and NWFPs sector employed 1,109 individuals, marking an increase from 53% compared to year 2017 (Figure 1). Increases are observed among full time and seasonal workers, namely 61% and 51% respectively. It is important to note that in total (full-time and seasonal work), there was a significant increase in the number of minorities 79 jobs last year to 271 jobs in 2018. Primary data collected within this research suggest that on average, one collection centre collects from 50-70 cultivators/collectors-most of which are women.

**THE 2020 ORGANIKA REPORT, REFERING TO DATA FOR 2017 AND 2018 SHOWS THAT WOMEN REPRESENT AN IMPORTANT SHARE OF THE WORKFORCE IN THE MAPS AND NWFPS SECTOR. IN 2018 THE NWFPS AND MAPS, WOMEN COMPOSED 62% OF TOTAL EMPLOYMENT-AN INCREASE OF 6 PERCENTAGE POINT COMPARD TO YEAR 2017. BY TYPE OF EMPOYMENT, IN 2018, WOMEN REPRESENTED HALF OF FULL TIME EMPLOYMENT AND TWO-THIRDS OF SEASONAL EMPLOYMENT.**

**Figure 1: Employment in the MAPs and NWFPs sector** Source: ORGANIKA, 2020.

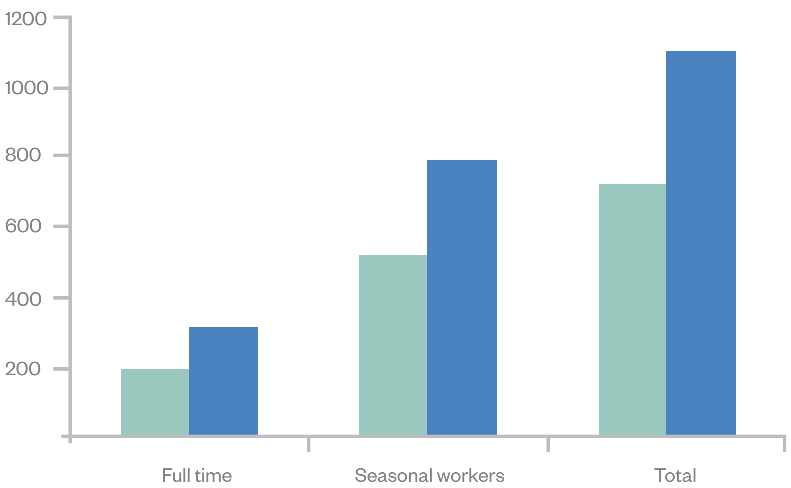
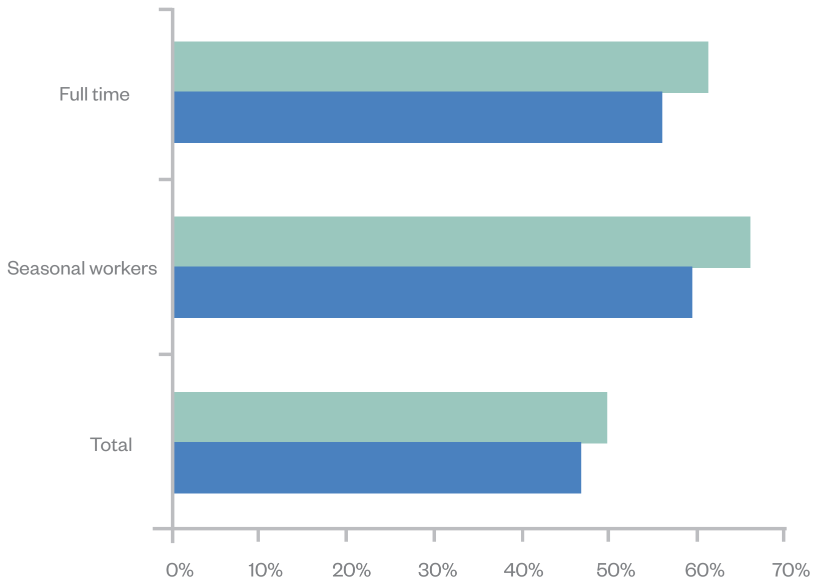



**Figure 2: Women as a share of employed individuals in MAPs and NWFPs sector**



In this Chapter the focus of the analysis is to examine the role of women in the sector, their challenges, opportunities, and support needed to reap benefits from available opportunities. This analysis is based on information gathered during interviews and focus group discussions. The analysis is provided separately for cultivators/collectors, collection centres and processing companies.

### 4.1 Collection of NWFPs and cultivation of MAPs

Data collected through interviews and focus group discussion revealed that collection and cultivation of MAPs is largely conducted by women while collection of NWFPs is mainly done by men. Collection of mushrooms by men is related with the risk and heavy work required. Prior to joining the sector, some were unemployed, while others were working in agriculture sector. The latter group switched to the MAPs and NWFPs as both are more profitable.
Collection and cultivation are considered as suitable jobs by women engaged in these tasks and by the collection centres and processing companies. This task is usually organized by women in their 40s or 50s, with lower level of education and no prior working experience other than in agriculture. Income earned from this activity provides an important income for households, as majority of those visited within this research were either benefiting from social assistance or war veteran pension. The latter, according to existing legal provisions, prevents recipients to earn any income. One advantage of engagement in the sector is that the sales are secure, it is a job perceived suitable for women as they are more precise, gentle, and having more patience.

During this research, all cultivators/collectors stated that they receive their payment at the point when they deliver plants to collection centres. Given this way of payment and the fact that generated income from cultivation/collection of MAPs and NWFPs represents an important financial source for the family, all family members to work together and ensure minimum standards of quality. One woman stated that '*we keep our eyes in growing process of the flowers, since we need the money for covering living costs.*' Since women are owners of the product, this has contributed to their empowerment in the household and community.

The sector is quite organized, with cultivators/collectors supplying one collection centre only. Their products are sold entirely.

### Challenges faced by cultivators/collectors

Possessing small plots of land was considered as an advantage as they could be worked out by a woman and her family members. Larger plots of land demand access to or use of machinery, in order to respond to heavy work during the peak seasons as dictated by the specifics of certain cultures that require larger areas for cultivation. However, it must be emphasised that requirements for bigger land parcels and equipment vary by type of cultivated MAPs: for some types such as mallow, calendula, or cyan are usually cultivated in small land parcels and most of the work is performed by hand, whilst for chamomile, mints, or nettle larger land parcels are more appropriate and agriculture machinery are important.

#### Lack of irrigation capacities

In some localities, lack of irrigation capacities was mentioned as a barrier to increasing capacities and increasing productivity. Often, cultivators had to carry water from distant locations, either through a truck or by hand. On average, the costs for one well were €1,500, but it varied on its depth. One of the collection point representative proposed that it would be efficient if a well would be opened in a location which would increase irrigation capacities to a group of farmers.

#### Lack of equipment

Although investments were made in all collection centres, there is a further need to become equipped with new machinery and equipment, that would support capacity expansion but also increase the quality of goods and labour productivity. Information collected from interviews with cultivators/collectors, collection points and processing companies revealed that although donors have supported some of the cultivators/collectors, there is a further need to support them with necessary equipment and tools, the most commonly mentioned were dryers. Women cultivators/collectors mentioned the need for moto cultivators. Some of the interviewed cultivators/collectors have been supported through collection points/processing enterprises with dryers and equipment but have not been beneficiaries of MAFRD or municipal subsidy or grants. Most of them were not informed about any financing opportunities either from government or donors. In some instances, support with equipment was provided by collection centres and processing enterprises. Although lack of equipment was mentioned by all interviewed women, requirements were mainly for dryers and small trucks, with no innovative equipment being mentioned. An exception was a collection point from Shtërpce, who mentioned that there is a need to have nets for protection against hail This would reduce potential loss of farmers.

#### Seasonality

On average, depending on the plants/fruits, cultivators/collectors work about 3-5 months during the year. This implies that they are not occupied for the rest of the year and this also demotivates particularly youth to engage in the sector. It is therefore of utmost importance to support women in identifying ways to expand their activities throughout a longer period.

#### Seeds / seedlings supply, quality, and cost impact on women farmers

Based on discussions, seeds are considered expensive while collection centres and processing companies indicated the quality of seeds as a challenge. So far, these have been provided by collection points/processors. Whilst this was of a great support for cultivators, according to the processors this is a suitable option for them as they are assured about the quality of the plants. However, if this practice does not continue, there is a need to consider ways to support cultivators.

#### Organic farming

Interviews and focus group discussions have shown that due to high price for certification, farmers are not certifying their land. The expensive costs for certification are also indicated in the 2019 Green Report of the MAFRD. However, it was stated that this aspect needs to be addressed and it was reported that there are ongoing discussions about group certification model. However, on the collection point owner, considers this as unsuitable option as it will put all the risk on collection points.

#### Women's mobility

Cultivators/collectors carry out their products to collection points. When the collection points are in a distant location and since women do not possess transportation means, transportation is done by their husbands or sons, who also collect income from collection points. In rare instances, collection points collect products directly from cultivators/collectors. In turn, given that men conduct transportation, they also become contact points for collection points and processing enterprises. Therefore, developing a transportation model and access to public transport would ensure that women as cultivators/collectors receive payments and in turn manage the financial income they earn themselves.

#### Quality assurance: education and training

All interviewed cultivators/collectors have lower education and none of them had education in the agriculture field. Training of collectors/cultivators was mainly provided by collection points and/or processing enterprises and skills were also gained through learning by doing. None of the cultivators were aware of any websites or sources

for updating their knowledge about the sector. Training provided by PPSE-Swisscontact through Viber was mentioned as an important approach to develop capacities of existing but also future cultivators/ collectors. Provision of coaching support for 6 months by PPSE was mentioned as a best practice, which developed capacities of collection centre staff and cultivators/collectors. It is important to re-organise trainings in post-harvest handling including drying procedure.
During field visits observations it became evident that cultivators need specialized advice and learn best instructions on maintaining the proper facility and environmental health conditions on ground; either in the area where they cultivate the MAPs, in the dryer area, or the required level of equipment maintenance and cleanliness.

Opportunities and Support Needed

### Women's Contribution to Sustainable Livelihoods

### A suitable and likeable sector for women in rural areas with expansion potential

During interviews with women engaged in the sector, it became evident that women like to work in this sector and their wellbeing has advanced over time. Now there is a community of women working in the sector, which also benefits their capacity-building, but they also serve as a supportive community for one another. '*There is space for everyone, so we do not see each other as competitors but rather as partners'* was a statement of one the women cultivator. Although the MAPs sector is considered as very profitable by all interviewed individuals within this study, men are less interested in working with MAPs, which they consider as a 'woman's job'. This was also emphasized during the focus group discussion with men, who reported one example when a man rather preferred to work in the heavy work in the construction sector and earn e.g., €400 per month, instead of working in the MAPs sector with the land he owned, which would give him about up to €5,000 split into 12 months, an average wage of €400. '*Women are satisfied with small income, while men opt to earn a lot'* was a statement of one of the participants. As a result, male participants of the focus group discussion emphasized that it is easier to attract women in the sector.
All interviewed collectors/cultivators would like to increase their cultivation capacities and stated that they have confirmations from collection points that they products will be purchased. Each of them would increase their capacity from 5 to 60 acre.

## 'THERE IS SPACE FOR EVERYONE, SO WE DO NOT SEE EACH OTHER AS COMPETITORS BUT RATHER AS PARTNERS'

### A scope to diversify plants/fruits of cultivators

As elaborated above, women are willing to expand their activities, to enable them to extend the period of their activities. This can be done through professional analyses 'audit' of existing cultivators/ collectors, so they diversify their products/plants/fruits to enable their activity over a longer period of time. Engagement in one/ some processes conducted by the collection point is another feasible approach, but which would require additional investments for cultivators/collectors. As reported by one of the collection centre representatives, there is a tendency of cultivators to follow their peers, so in Shtërpce 90% cultivate berries while they could diversify to blueberry and red currant, which would enable to diversify their risk.

### A scope to diversify products of the collection centres

Expansion of period of engagement by cultivators can be achieved also through product diversification of collection points/processors. For example, one of the women-owned enterprises is producing facial creams and oils with herbs, which are in high demand and could engage women cultivators during off-peak seasons. This will increase capacity of collection points/processors, in turn increasing their export potential. To reap benefits from available opportunities there is a need to design tailored support which would include equipment, education, and training including management trainings. The Chief Executive Officer of the Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality (AGE) indicated that donors and government can support the sector through matching funds and the AGE would be willing to cooperate for implementing this approach.

### Ensure access to quality seeds/seedlings

To ensure the quality of seedlings, the most feasible option is to establish nurseries for production of seedlings for MAPs. Ensuring high quality of MAPs is of central importance, knowing that most of MAPs are for export and need to be certified as organic. The organic standard has high criteria and requires that land, seeds/seedlings are organic as well, which criteria cannot be fulfilled by every single farmer.


"Natyrë mirënjohës përjetë
Çajra Organike
Çaji përmban antioksidues
Çaji është pa kalori
Çaji rrit metabolizmin tuaj
Çaji rrit imunitetin
Çaji iu mbron kundër kancerit
Çaji ulë rrezikun e atakut të zemrës
Çaji ripërtrinë çelizat e
Çaji të jep një
Çaji ju mban të hidratuar
Çaji mbron kockat
Qendra për kultivim, grumbullim
dhe përpunim të bimëve
Punojmë ndershëm dhe
99 Lule

### 4.2 Collection centres, bulking and cultivating the plants and fruits

Similar to the cultivators/collectors, collection points are usually run by family members. All interviewed owners of collection points are also engaged in cultivation process. Collection points supply to the big processing companies, which then directly export. Most of collection centres are owned by men. For women cultivators, the women running collection points have been key in their decision to join the sector. Each of the interviewed collection centres were supplied from 20-70 cultivators/collectors, providing income to 20-70 families mainly from rural areas.

### Challenges faced by collection points

Based on information collected within this research, main challenges for collection points are elaborated below.

#### Limited access to finance and expensive loans

Access to finance is the most commonly mentioned challenge for increasing capacities of collection centres. Access to MAFRD grants is perceived as difficult, given their tough eligibility criteria. Donor support has been crucial for the sector development, but the co-financing requirement is deemed dire. Representatives of collection centres indicated that they will no longer apply for loans, as doing so has proven hard to cope for them.

#### Managing suppliers

For women-owned collection points, management of collection process is considered as challenging. This is related to lack of transportation means on the side of women cultivators/collectors and women as owners of collection points. As a consequence, most of the 'business' is done between men, who negotiate prices with male famers for the work performed by their wives/daughters.

#### Lack of land ownership

Lack of land ownership was mentioned as a pressing challenge for the sector, since most of the land is still under the name of fathers/grandfathers. As a result, farmers are unable to apply for loans, which although expensive, have been important in the sector development. One of the women-owned processors stated that lack of land ownership was among main barriers for her business development.

#### Lack of equipment/machinery

Most of collection point representatives emphasized that lack of machinery and equipment is preventing their business expansion and diversification of their products. Most commonly noted machinery include dryers, and fast-freeze fridges. Although in the recent years, donor organizations have provided substantial support even in terms of dryers, these types of equipment have mostly gone to big sector actors. Therefore, women farmers or small women businesses are still in need of this type of equipment support. For them, as many respondents have highlighted, even one dryer would give a strong boost to their activity, changing their lives. While the support by donors was highly appreciated, a commonly noted remark was that donors have been restrictive in type of equipment to support. In addition, complaints were also raised about the quality of purchased equipment/machinery by donors and the suggestion was to allow applicants to express their needs and to purchase machinery/equipment to match their needs. This requirement for a tailored and not one-size-fits all approach was mentioned by several interviewed representatives. Boor (2019) reported that growers of MAPs in Kosovo are lacking appropriate machines for economic and proper cultivation. During field work it was observed that some cultivators did not have access to special machines for soil preparation, weeding and harvesting. This was mentioned as a constrained by some of the processing companies.

#### Limited capacities

Limited capacities were mentioned as a barrier to becoming direct exporters. Given their existing physical space and equipment, despite the available demand, collection centres cannot expand their capacity, which is one of the main barriers to become direct exporters. Instead, they remain in the same position as before and sell to big processing companies, which then direct export their products.

#### Quality management system

Information gathered during this research and observations of collection centres suggest that there is lack of experience in managing the centres. For example, it is rare that a collection centre has a person allocated to foresee the quality of received plants and fruits. Quality checking is an important task and therefore it is necessary to provide support in setting up a quality management system.

#### Cash flow challenges

Collection centres are faced with liquidity challenges. While they pay farmers at the point of receiving plants and fruits, some of them stated that payments from processing companies are sometimes delayed. However, there were no concrete ideas of how this could be overcome.

### Opportunities for collection centres

#### Product diversification

Some of collection centres, in addition to collection of products were also engaged in processing, being it fruit juices, facial creams, oils, jam, etc. The combination of collection and production is important for business expansion, risk diversification and extension of working months during a year. For example, one of the collection centres that currently collects forest fruits from collectors and cultivators and freezes those, with PPSE support, is planning to start drying forest fruits. This will enable reduction of costs for freezing goods and reduce loses due to high fragility of forest fruits. The owner indicated that it will be more cost effective to dry some of the fruits as drying is less expensive compared to keeping freezers on. To make adequate decisions it is important to collect economic data and carry out product cost calculation for individual species-while most of cultivators knew about average turnover for one acre, none of them were able to respond to cost related questions.

#### Conversion into a mini-processing company

Similarly, to the cultivators, collection centres are subject to seasonal work. During focus group discussions and interviews it was stated that in cooperation with processing companies, collection centres can act as mini processors. Their engagement would be defined in coordination with processing companies, based on their needs, either to replace one of their activities or support processing companies in processing additional products-mainly intermediary ones. This would require close cooperation and design of a joint plan that would benefit both processing companies and collection points.

#### Using extended services/distributors

As stated above, women-owned businesses did not use specialized personnel, but rather tried to cover all tasks in the centre, in some instances supported by their family members-none of which were qualified for the performed tasks. During the field work, a good example on delegation of tasks has been observed from a woman owned business outside of the MAP/NWFP sectors-one cultivator of asparagus and producer of conserved asparagus uses a distributor, which takes care of sales. This service in the chain should be considered by other women, especially for sales within Kosovo. This service will release some of their logistic burden and allow more time for other tasks in the centre. Higher selling in the real trade sector was mentioned as one benefit of selling in Kosovo.

#### Utilisation of ICT tools

Nearly all interviewed individuals, stated that they use Internet-based platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Viber, and WhatsApp. They consider that there is a need to use these platforms for trainings and for online shopping. Some of collection points and processors have already started selling online and find this as an important sales channel. Therefore, trainings for using ICT tools have been mentioned as important for their business.

### 4. 3 Processing/exporting companies

As noted above, some processing takes place also in collection centres. According to the newly developed database of the Association ORGANIKA (in 2020), there are 33 processors, out of which only 3 are owned by women. However, from the field work we identified few others with women co-owners. With regards to exporting companies, the database shows only 9 exporters, with only one owned by a woman. However, during the field work, in one company the woman was a co-owner, with plans to become the only owner of the company. In this section, some barriers refer to processing companies only, regardless of their export activity. While most of male owned processing companies have long tradition, the women-owned ones were young in their operation. Although they were owned by women, men from the family were important supporters.

It is important to emphasise that the profile of women and men-owned processing companies interviewed for this study have a very different profile. At a first sight, women-owned processing companies look like a collection centre, have less than 5 employees-all family members and lack administrative/logistics staff, who are crucial for the enterprise operations. For this reason, specific barriers to women enterprises will be presented.

### Challenges faced by processing companies

#### Administrative burden in land permissions

Bureaucratic procedures have been mentioned as a concerning issue. One of the companies was located in an agriculture land, making it impossible for building a warehouse, whilst construction in a rented place is not a feasible option. The other company was waiting for land permission for about a year, which prevented their capacity expansion.

#### Cultivators lacking financial support

Given the performance in one of the value chains influences all others, lack of investments by cultivators and lack of quality management skills influences outcomes and profitability of processing companies. Lacking financial sources, processing companies are forced to support cultivators often even with seeds. Provision of seeds enables processing companies to have quality under control. As reported above, informal activity of farmers is another concerning issue, as processors need to cover the 1% tax but also have to maintain cash to meet daily demands from farmers.

#### Unqualified staff in companies

Most of companies have reported that their workers have low-qualifications, and it is rare that they have completed education in area related to the sector. As a result, employers have to train every single worker, which is costly when taking into account that some of the companies need to employ workers every season.

#### Seasonal activity which leads to underutilization of capacities is mentioned as a pressing barrier

As reported in Chapter 3, processing companies are not using their working capital. Compared to collection centres, processing companies operate over a longer period of time between 6-8 months, while one big company has managed to remain active for 11 months, with one off month only.  This shorter duration of operations has negatively impacted companies and employees.

*Barriers specific to women owned processing companies*

#### Limited capacities-undersupply

The demand for NWFPs and MAPs in the national and international markets is not met. One of the reasons was related to lack of capacities to respond to seasonal demand. This barrier was particularly pronounced for women-owned processing companies. This was as a consequence of limited access to finances due to lack of land ownership.

#### Lack of experience in exporting activities

Women-owned processors were not linked to international markets, but they relied on the big processing companies that directly exported their goods. While interviewed women would like to become direct exporters, they have not explored requirements and challenges that they can face. During discussions with men in the focus group, it was stated that it is hard for women to engage and run an exporting company, though there were no strong arguments about this, besides the fact that women have more difficulties to set up networks.

#### Lack of management skills

During discussions, it was observed that women-owned processors are run by one-person, lacking support for market research, logistics and other specific tasks.  One of the women that in Association ORGANIKA website is listed under processors, was working on her own, trying to manage collections from many farmers of different products, following market changes and coordinating the supply to processing companies.  Whilst lack of specialized staff can be explained with the size of processor and seasonal nature of their work, it is hard for one person to handle and possessing necessary skills for all the tasks. Hence, there is a need to provide management related trainings.

#### Lack of entrepreneurial drive

Interviewed women who were engaged in processing were mainly working with their family members. Although women are very hard working and creative in their ideas, based on discussions and observations, it seems like there is lack of entrepreneurial drive and creativity for business development. Women were less reluctant to take risks and easily satisfied with their business success, most likely due to lower ambitions and risk-averse attitudes. It is important to enforce this aspect with motivational or leadership training programs designed specifically for them, so they can pursue higher for their business and be ready to take concrete steps.

#### Lack of specialized staff

As indicated above, women-owned processing companies were mainly run/supported and managed by family members, most of which were not qualified for tasks related to administration of the business, marketing, logistics, etc. This is partly due to their size, but it may as well be also an attitude of women in the business-wanting to do everything by themselves. Although in the short run this may be a feasible option for the profitability, it may not be a good solution for the long-term. Therefore, a proper 'auditing' of women owned processors would be beneficial, accompanied with clear and concrete recommendations.

#### Lack of tailored support

Donor community has been supportive to women in the MAPs and NWFPs sector but there is lack of support from the government side. Although associations have been apprised of their engagement in the sector, specific needs of women were not taken all into consideration. Access to trade fairs and study visits was also limited, mainly favouring men.

### Opportunities for processing companies

Referring to data for year 2018 and 2017, the 2019 report of Association ORGANIKA states the sector is growing. This research confirms this conclusively as well. In spite of the COVID-19 crisis, most of processing companies expect to complete the year with sales above of those in 2019. Optimistic forecasts for the coming three years were mentioned by all interviewed processors.

#### Engagement of family members

Most of processing companies engage their family members, which was considered as a great asset for business development. Given the seasonal feature of the business requires intensive efforts from workers, which is best provided by the family members.

## ‘DURING PEAK SEASON, WE WORK 7 DAYS A WEEK-24 HOUR A DAY AND WE CANNOT CALL UPON WORKERS, BUT WE RELY ON OUR FAMILY MEMBERS’

was a statement of one of the processing companies.

### Diversification of products

Whilst this was mentioned as a weakness for collection centres, some of the centres that are also processors are processing different products, such as oils, facial creams, moisturizers, vinegar. However, taking into account the high demand, the quantities are quite limited. This is mainly due to lack of machinery and equipment. To support women in diversifying their products, support could be provided by supporting their attendance in international fairs, B2B meetings, support with international experts whereby women will be informed about best practices and available opportunities, provision of trainings/information’s through videos/Viber, and organisations of creative thinking workshops.

### Enhanced support from associations

Association ORGANIKA is an important source of information for the sector, for trainings, certification, fairs, and study visits. Information is provided in both Albanian and Serbian languages. However, when asked about the role of the Association in supporting women in the MAPs and NWFPs, respondents stated that there was no role in this area. Moreover, it was stated that participation of women in fairs started only in last 3 years and in very limited numbers. Cooperation with Association Mjedra and Kosova Women for Women organisation should be enhanced. Given that women face different challenges, ORGANIKA could tailor specific activities such as trainings, fairs, lobbying, and other activities for women owned businesses.

### Aiming big for the future: Conversion to a direct exporter

For non-exporting processing companies, the main barrier for direct exports is the limited processing and storing capacities. Usually, contractors require supply of large amounts of products. Identification of partners abroad is also seen as a challenge, especially for women-owned processors. Whilst direct exports would produce in total higher profits, some of processors stated that exporting directly entails a greater risk, compared to their existing business with secured sales. From interviews it was found that for companies engaged and planning to engage in export activity, it is of crucial importance to study the regional and EU markets. For example, one of the processors’ representatives explained that the region of Shtëprce has a type of a berry which is highly demanded in France and Belgium, for which reason a company from Serbia has set up a contract with collection point in Shtërpce, with the aim to export to two before mentioned countries. Serbia is rich in berries, but it has a type which is much cheaper in Poland, hence it is not profitable for Serbia to export it to EU. In the long run, assuming that existing women owned businesses will grow further, it may be advisable to support one of the women-owned processing companies towards transformation into an exporting company. This would require an in-depth and detailed analysis and provision of a range of support. To facilitate this conversion, it is important to provide tailored support from donors and government.

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**Anex**

| Name and surname | Activity Collection/ cultivation Collection centre Processing company | Position within the company | Name of the company | Location | Number of employees | Type of products/ plants | For collection centres, is it engaged in the processing process as well | Sold Name of the company Direct export | Collecting from XX number of cultivators |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Havushe Bunjaku** +2 cultivators | Collection/ cultivation | Owner | 99 Lule | Kishnica | 1 | MAP, tea, oils, vinegar, facial creams, soaps | Yes | To several companies but also in Kosovo | 17 active cultivators |
| **Arbesa Veliu** +2 women cultivators | Collection, cultivation, and processing | Agronomist | Agroflorentina | Polac, Skenderaj | 10 | Mushrooms Wild Mushrooms, Wild Forest Fruits and Aromatic Plants | | Direct export and sells to Agroproduct | 50-60 active cultivators and collectors |
| **Shqiponja Krasniqi and her father Shefqet Krasniqi** + 1 cultivator | Collection, cultivation, and processing | Manager | Agroshqiponja | Terpeze, Malisheve | 6 | Mushrooms, MAP and NFWP | | Sells to Agroproduct | 107 but active all the time are 30 |
| **Azemine Domuzeti** | Collection and Cultivation | Owner | Azemine Domuzeti | Dragash | 10 | MAP, wild fruits | No | To several companies in Kosovo and Albania | 52 |
| **Zarije Malsiu** + 2 cultivators | Collection and Cultivation | Owner | BioFruti | Kaçanik | 0 | MAP and other wild fruits | No | Sells to AgroProduct | 20 active cultivators |
| **Erblina Avdijaj** + 1 employee | Processing | Co-owner | Bliff | Istog | 1 | Organic teas | n/a | Sells in chain markets and restaurants | 0 |
| **Blinishta Beqiraj** | Collection and Cultivation | Manager | Erblin Beqiraj | Istog | 1 | MAP and wild fruits | No | Sells to AgroProduct | 16 |
| **Bejtush/and Sadie Gashi** + 2 employees | Processing company Cultivating | Owner/sales managment | Eurofruti | Mramor | 21 | Kërpudha, fruta të imëta | n/a | Direct exporter | 22 collection point which engage about 4,000-5,000 persons |
| **Majlinda Krasniqi** | Collection, Cultivation, and processing | Manager | Fungo FF | Kamenica | 10 | NWFP (mushrooms, forest fruits) | | | 150 collectors |
| **Stojan Milojevic** | Collection, Cultivation, and processing | Owner | Pepermint | Leposavic | 12 | MAP, wild fruits, etheric oils, pressed oils. | Yes | Mainly exports to European Countries and USA | 35 active cultivators |
| **Vlastimir Stojecetovic** | Collection and processing | Support manager | Sharr Berry | Shterpce | 2 | Mushrooms and forest fruits | | Hit Flores | 50-70 collectors and cultivators |
| **Qefsere Vuqiterna** | Cultivation and Processing | Co-Owner and Manager | Vicianum | Prishtina | 1 | MAP | n/a | Direct sale of finale products through chain markets and exporter. | 0 |

**Table A 1: List of interviews**

| | Company | Name | Position | Activity of the enterprise/collection centre |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Lorena Biofarm | Qazim Morina | Owner | Collection, Cultivation |
| 2. | Flora Eko | Afrim Zejnullahu | Owner | Collection, Cultivation, Export |
| 3. | Agro 2000 | Besart Krasniqi | Owner | Collection |
| 4. | Organic Herb | Lulzim Shala | CEO | Collection, Cultivation, Export |
| 5. | Natyra | Ahmet Govori | Owner | Collection, Cultivation, Packaging |
| 6. | Biofruti | Zarije Malsiu | Owner | Cultivation and collection |
| 7. | 99 LULE | Havushe Bunjaku | Owner | Cultivation and collection |
| 8. | Azemine Domuzeti | Azemine Domuzeti | Owner | Cultivation and collection |
| 9. | A.D.E Group | Sara Hashani | Agronomist | Cultivation |
| 10 | Vicianum | Qefsere Kulinxha | Co-owner/Manager | Cultivation and production on final products |

**Table A 2: List of focus group participants**

| Education level | Working age men | Working age women |
|---|---|---|
| No education | 1.2 | 5.3 |
| Primary education | 3.3 | 9.4 |
| Lower secondary education | 28.5 | 44.8 |
| Upper secondary-General | 16.2 | 14.2 |
| Upper secondary-Vocational | 38.1 | 16.6 |
| Post-secondary vocational | 3.1 | 1.4 |
| Tertiary-BA level | 7.9 | 7.2 |
| Tertiary-MA level | 1.5 | 1.0 |
| Tertiary-Phs | 0.1 | 0.0 |

**Table A 3: Highest level of education of the working age population, by gender** Source: MCC LFTUS 2017.

| Education level | Share of own unpaid family work |
|---|---|
| No education | 81.7% |
| Primary education | 81.3% |
| Lower secondary education | 55.5% |
| Upper secondary education | 34.3% |
| Upper secondary vocational | 26.4% |
| Post-secondary vocational | 18.4% |
| Tertiary | 9.8% |
| Postgraduate | 4.8% |
| PhD | 1.6% |

**Table A 4: Undeclared unpaid family work: distribution across occupations, 2015-2019** Source: MCC LFTUS, 2017

THERE IS MORE TO GROWTH THAN JUST GROWING

EXPLORING NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN THE MEDICINAL AROMATIC PLANTS AND NON-WOOD FOREST PRODUCTS SECTOR

MARCH 2021