



Producing watermelons
to the **highest**
quality standards



The Serbian
Watermelon
Project



The challenge of GLOBALGAP implementation

Where it all started

Fruit and vegetables are some of Serbia's most important export products with the majority of produce directed to the CEFTA region and the EU. At the same time, Serbian producers are constantly facing numerous demands regarding the quality and safety of their food products. Some quality standards, such as HACCP, have been largely introduced, but GLOBALGAP has become very important as well. In this context, Bayer CropScience's Serbian team was more than willing to support farmers and encourage and help them to achieve higher standards of production.

Initially, GLOBALGAP standards were merely seen as additional work and expense, and were considered to be very difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, at the beginning of 2007 Bayer CropScience's Serbian team had a meeting with Natasa Mladenovic, whose company was preparing to export watermelons to some retailers in the EU. One of the key requests from her clients was that watermelons be produced in strict accordance with GLOBALGAP standards. The main issues of cooperation with the company's import partners had already been agreed, but the situation regarding GLOBALGAP implementation had not yet been clarified. Natasa Mladenovic's company needed to find the best way to advise their contract farmers regarding the use of crop protection products.

Bayer CropScience's Serbian team presented the food chain partnership concept and offered to support Natasa Mladenovic's company in its efforts. The company readily accepted the offer of collaboration.

Who got involved in the project

Initially, the entire production of watermelons was distributed and exported via several local companies. Because all of them had different needs in terms of quality, quantity and delivery time, it was quite difficult for watermelon growers to plan and organise production in accordance with numerous different and unpredictable requirements. It was clearly necessary to find a more efficient way of responding to market demands and challenges. That is why the biggest watermelon growers together with Natasa Mladenovic decided to establish a new company (Agroimpex Fruit d.o.o.), which would be involved in the production and distribution of watermelons. Bayer CropScience Serbia supported this idea and immediately started to prepare joint activities.

Agroimpex Fruit d.o.o.: Located in North Serbia in the middle of the most intensive watermelon growing area, the company's basic idea is to establish a new brand name AGRONA, which would be recognised by consumers as a synonym for quality and healthy watermelons. The owners are the biggest watermelon growers and experienced experts with excellent knowledge of the fruit and vegetable market. Their strategy is to produce watermelons in accordance with the GLOBALGAP standards and supply markets that demand the highest quality.

Bayer CropScience: Bayer CropScience is recognised not only as a leading innovative company, but also as a partner that is capable of offering complete crop solutions for high-quality production by developing tailor-made crop protection programmes. Bayer CropScience has very intensive training programmes for farmers on the safe use of agrochemicals and optimal use of crop protection products.





What we aim to achieve

The main goal of all partners in this project is to produce high-quality watermelons and introduce GLOBALGAP standards in order to increase the marketability and competitiveness of Serbian watermelons in domestic supermarkets and to open up additional export opportunities.

Implementing a crop solution that meets the market's quality requirements

Bayer CropScience was aware that protecting watermelons by means of integrated crop solutions combining high-value seed and innovative crop protection products with top service would be one of the key success factors in achieving high-quality production. Bayer CropScience prepared and agreed a plan of activities with its food chain partners, which became the common platform for the use of crop protection products:

- Training courses for farmers on crop protection and rowing technology organised in cooperation with specialists from Nunhems, Bayer CropScience vegetable seed company



Nunhems® is a subsidiary of Bayer CropScience and the global specialist in vegetable seeds and sharing products, concepts and expertise adding value to the professional horticultural production industry and supply chain.

- Crop solutions based on Bayer CropScience complete portfolio of innovative crop protection products and seeds
- Monitoring and field visits during the season and updating of the crop protection programme according to the local conditions in order to optimise the number and times of application

The first pre-harvesting MRL tests were done locally in an accredited laboratory. All possible residues were below the level of detection.

During the 2009 summer season, Agroimpex Fruit was awarded GLOBALGAP certification so that they were then ready to offer highest-quality watermelons both for domestic and foreign markets. Although more than 50% of their total production was exported to EU countries, increased yields meant they had enough watermelons left to become one of the biggest suppliers of domestic retailers as well.

What we achieved

The most obvious gain was clear added value for Agroimpex Fruit:

- Safe yields
- High-quality crops
- Extended market opportunities in domestic and export markets
- Controlled quality of harvested goods
- Traceability

However, by providing quality and quantity, this food chain partnership has also succeeded in creating added value for other food chain stakeholders who were not involved directly in the project, namely importers, retailers and consumers.

Last but far from least, the mutual trust of all partners in the project – a key element for future success – has become much stronger.

Zoran Radojic
Supply Manager
of Agroimpex Fruit

Natasa Mladenovic
Head of Logistic and Sales
of Agroimpex Fruit

Goran Blanusa
Head of Production
of Agroimpex Fruit





Consumers are becoming increasingly conscious of the need for healthy nutrition. Food chain partnerships help to supply consumers with high-quality fresh produce, which forms the basis of a healthy diet. But such partnerships can only succeed if they involve every player in the food chain – from the farmer and processor to the exporter or importer and retailer. Bayer CropScience has the global experience and cutting-edge expertise to create a successful partnership at every level.



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