

32.4 degrees Brix
maraska sour cherry quality according to Berlin-based GfL



EU AGRICULTURAL POLICY APPLIED IN CROATIA

A huge comeback for maraska

A young fruit grower's ambition to spur local development

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The EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has been applied in the rocky Omiš hinterland. It covers an area of 40 hectares of orchards for which the company *Dalmaconsult* obtained a 50-year concession. There are plans for an additional 9.5 hectares of organic production of the traditional Dalmatian sour cherry variety maraska, officially recognised as the best sour cherry in the world. The idea behind the project is to spur local development. The requirements of CAP (in force in Croatia from 1st July 2013) have been met – organic production, local sour cherry varieties, top quality and a rural development support programme. The person behind the project is Denis



and processing and tourism support. He is not interested in providing raw materials for others, since his wish is for a large number of traditional recipes, created for centuries based on the cult of Dalmatian sour cherry, dried or frozen, to be transformed into liqueurs, wines, jams and juices primarily in the vicinity of the orchard.

Sour cherry success

The orchards will start providing a yield sufficient for commercial processing in two to three years. Rubić has opted for maraska due to its tradition and since people once made substantial profits from this activity in the past, as demand notably exceeds production. Furthermore, the project covers a wide range of environmental features, which require specific procedures and controls, includes beekeepers and local cattle breeders. Surprisingly, Rubić encountered no problems in his communications with ministries and other institutions and managed to meet all requirements rapidly. He has also been co-operating with various experts in an equally successful manner. “As an economist, I was never



able to tell the difference between an apple and a banana. Nevertheless, I was willing to learn”, stated Rubić. Machinery has been used in accordance with the special procedures to transform the inhospitable rocky ground into soil suitable for growing fruit trees. Sour cherry seedlings of the clone ‘Brač 6’ originated in Kaštela and there are plans to include other varieties in the future. He applied for IPARD funds with 5,000 new seedlings during the first extension of the orchard; the second phase was officially opened at the orchard by Masaru Tsuji, the Japanese Ambassador to Croatia, as ‘godfather’ to the project. The project is being implemented with the support from ‘godfathers’ throughout the world. Rubić pointed out the fact that ‘godfathers’ are not solely investors but also have a multiplier effect in marketing and providing moral support and advertising. Rubić has recently sent them an email with an excellent news – the analysis of the leading Berlin-based laboratory for the food processing industry, GfL, has confirmed the top quality of maraska, which had already been



considered the best sour cherry in the world, by assessing it at 32.4 degrees Brix, up from last year's 28.2. Sour cherry with Brix degrees exceeding 20 is considered top quality.

Exports through co-operation

Rubić does not fear competition. “We are not even able to meet local demand due to our size. If we manage to involve some 10 young local fruit growers in the project, it will be a huge success. I will provide all the information with utmost pleasure. Croatia needs at least 10 maraska factories to make the best sour cherry in the world globally famous. We can use the same channels through synergies. I was delighted to hear about a new plantation currently being developed near Zadar. We cannot be competitors, we need to strengthen co-operation”, he explains. As a result of his previous work as a consultant in the Biograd area, Rubić is also involved in forming a Local Action Group (LAG) to strengthen the absorption capacity of EU funding at a micro-regional level. He expects to be working with a committed team and anticipates excellent results. ■

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Rubić, Director of *Dalmaconsult*, and lead partner in the *Terra marascae* project. Rubić is an economist from Germany but local to the area, with ample experience in EU projects, a Board Member of German-Croatian Chamber of Industry and Commerce (on a voluntary basis) and currently involved in creating a landmark project to encompass the whole local area, bringing together sour cherry growing