

ALBANIA

Albanian Sustainability History

The Albanian government has no existing policies for sustainability, but they have future aspirations for sustainability when the nation's conditions are better.



This is because people have other problems to think about at present such as poverty, which is so severe that sustainability has very little or no meaning to residents.

There are huge numbers of people, over 30% of the population, living in absolute poverty (less than \$2 per day income) and this is projected to increase to over 50% in the next ten years according to the World Bank and the United Nations,

Many people have emigrated in search of better prospects and send back money to the rest of their families still in Albania.

The poorest people live in rural areas especially in the mountainous North. But Albania has a lot of natural resources, which could be used to support these impoverished people with food and income. There are possibilities for the people of Albania where they can get a 'quality of life' whilst being sustainable.



Partnerships for Sustainable Rural Poverty Alleviation In Eastern Europe

'Poverty Alleviation through Job Creation'

The aim of this project is to establish a replicable new approach to rural poverty alleviation in Eastern Europe, by working in partnership with groups of subsistence farmers, enabling them to generate income from sale of surplus produce or to gain employment in new enterprises.

Objectives

- To identify a cost effective model for rural poverty alleviation suitable for multiple replication base on a pioneering approach.
- Establish and develop associations of small farmers (2 hectares or less).
- Help generate income from cash crops and create new employment through associated agri-food micro enterprises.

Pro Agricultura

The Shkrel Mountain District Farmers Association

Pro Agricultura is a Christian led charitable programme, which seeks to enable impoverished rural communities and especially young people to fulfil their potential.

Pro Agricultura, started in 1998 in Romania and commenced in Albanian in 2000. It works primarily with local people (subsistence farmers), in liaison with the elected mayors of communities and with state agronomists where available.

The group establishes farmers' associations, like self-help groups, which assist the organisation of projects that can provide income, employment and other opportunities to a local area. Collectively as an association, people can get things done more effectively such as raising money for funding, joint business ventures etc. These associations are assisted by external groups like Pro Agricultura who help with the initial stages of forming the associations, providing money and training. Later hopefully the Farmer Associations become self-sustainable and can support local communities with a variety of projects that help alleviate rural poverty. It is hoped that these Associations will save profits from their projects to fund further projects in the future.



Herb trials



Stacked hemp stalks for drying

Pro Agricultura tries to use different organisational and funding approaches to the favoured indirect 'Top Down' approach, but instead uses the cheaper more direct 'Bottom Up' approach. Top Down means giving large amounts of funding and management to people at the top e.g. the government, who will spend a lot of it on paperwork instead of the needy people. The Bottom Up approach refers to funding and the control being given to the actual people who need it, but helping them to use it wisely.

'We endorse and encourage the application of sound management practices, transfer of appropriate technologies, principles of fair-trading, concern for the environment, provision of training to meet the needs and aspirations of employees, freedom from corruption and mal practice, a commitment to high standards of quality and safety and the generation of sales of products and services with sustainable profit margins.'

From www.proagricultura.ro

Partnership with the Shkrel Mountain District Farmers



The Shkrel District Farmers Association Albania

Shkrel is a rural mountain district with a community of 7,000 people many of whom live in poverty, which is why it was chosen as a project site.

Pro Agricultura approached the local community and a Farmers' Association was set up in 2000 with the support of the local district Mayor, Martin Pllumbi.

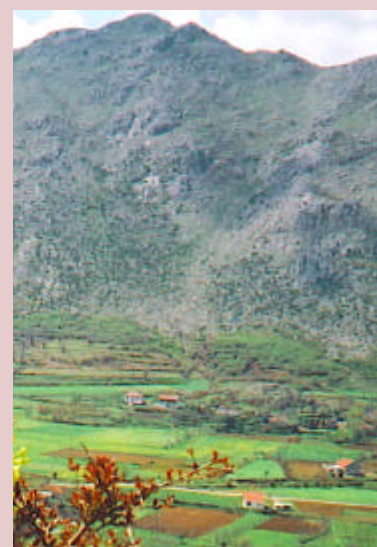
Stages of the Project

1. Liaison and establishing of Farmers Association
2. Planning and implementing crop development trials
3. Establishing trading/agricultural inputs supply
4. Market development (Local and potentially export)
5. Start of micro-enterprise job creation
6. Replication of model for rural poverty alleviation

It is planned that each association should become financially self-supporting after three years from initial set-up.

Projects so far

- Crop trials on different plants to see if they are valid for the area's needs and market.
- Wild herbs - local sources of medicine, which do not require any purchase.
- Fruit and vegetables - for personal use and public marketing.
- Hemp - to produce variety of products like oil, feed, fibres and fuel.
- Chestnuts - sold abroad in large quantities to places like Convent Garden, London.
- Introduction of micro-enterprises like chestnut export.



Outcomes

Good points

- There has been good progress on crop trials and market development. The first export trial of 20 tonnes of pre-packed Albanian chestnuts have been delivered to Covent Garden Market in London.
- It is expected to be in a position to trial an identified model for rural poverty alleviation by the end of 2004, subject to funding.

Bad Points

- Communication is an ongoing problem due to unreliable electricity and telephone systems.
- We find this type of 'bottom up' poverty alleviation work that is so desperately needed is, sadly, almost impossible to fund.
- The pace of progress is unacceptably slow, partly due to the lack of accessible funding and partly due to cultural traditions and the communist legacy of inertia.

Overall success

There has been some success already but to achieve the ultimate goal of rural sustainability for all, this project needs to be a long-term ongoing project, especially if the model for poverty alleviation can be demonstrated to work.

Plant trials



Hemp weaving

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