



## Regional cooperation and networking in the field of agriculture, rural and economic development of cross-border areas

Minutes from the capacity building activity in the region in “Prokletije Bjeshket e namuna” region and Value chain mapping – “ Shortening food supply chains through tourism” “ Prokletije -Bjeshket e namuna”

23-25th April 2018

Berane , Montenegro

### 1. List of participants

*Annex 1: List of participants*



## 2. Agenda

### Day 1- 23th.04.2018

Introduction and presentation of participants

Global trends in food supply chains

Comparative advantages of Prokletije-Bjeshket e Namuna region in shortening food supply

Demands of tourists coming to Prokletije - Bjeshket e Namuna region

Adventure tourism offer and how it should be built

### Day 2: 24.04.2018

Best practice examples - Katun roads Montenegro and Kosovo

A short movie presentation on katun roads

Best practice examples - Traditional gastronomy in rural households and local hotels and restaurants Montenegro and Albania

Best practice examples – Value Cheese - how to market local cheese and connect dairy sector with tourism market

Rural tourism offer and how to start - tips, advice, offer, resources, linkages with tour operators, marketing opportunities

Experience of tour operator from Rozaje

How to mobilize resources and start

Diversifying offer in rural tourism - outdoor opportunities, handicrafts and souvenirs, packaging and selling agricultural and non-timber forest products.

Introduction in group work

Group work - developing project ideas around NTFP and outdoor activities in rural areas

### Day 3 - 25<sup>th</sup> 04.2018:

Presentation of group work

Discussion related with concrete value chains: Adventure tourism on mountains, packaging and marketing of non wood products in the region Prokletije Bjeshket e nemuna

Continuation of discussion about of value chains conclusion and next steps



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## Minutes of the CB event

The Capacity building event “Shortening food supply chains through tourism” organized for the cross-border region of “Prokletije-Bjeshket e Namuna” was held on the from 23<sup>th</sup> -25<sup>th</sup> of April ,2018, in hotel “Berane”, Municipality of Berane, Montenegro. The 32 participants on the event were representatives from Kosovo, Albania and Montenegro, and represented a mix of tourism workers (private and public sector) and agricultural producers.

### 3. Topics during the meeting:

The agenda topics discussed have been arranged in following manner:

Global trends in food supply chains – in this presentation the participants were informed about how the global trends in supply chains function, how supply chains have through years become complex and large, involving large producers, processors and retailers, and how in recent decades there are trends opposed to this structure, favoring smaller, local producers, quality food, on-farm sales and purchases from a known producers. These new trends are socially and environmentally responsible, as local economies are strengthened in this manner, less energy is consumed and safer food is favored. One of the ways of shortening food supply chains is also rural tourism.

Comparative advantages of Prokletije-Bjeshket e Namuna region in shortening food supply chains – In this presentation the group has been engaged in interactive manner to provide inputs in how this particular region can shorten the food supply chain, and what are its particular strengths in this regard. Key strengths identified are related to natural resources – protected areas in all three countries, low industrial production which means low or no pollution from industry, low usage of pesticides and herbicides and practically organic production. The agriculture is the main economic sector, though scale of production is small, thus costs of production are high. Culturally this is diverse area, and the production is mainly traditional, which adds value to the products. In recent years tourism has become an important economic sector, and this represents an important opportunity for producers, and linkages between tourism and agriculture on local level must be established for the benefit of local economy. Key tourist groups are outdoor enthusiasts who look for services in vicinity of their routes. The group agreed that main ways to shorten food supply chains are rural tourism activities, providing tourism services on farms, but also through collaboration between farmers and local market (shops, restaurants, hotels) so that local products and dishes can be sold locally. This would require better food safety procedures, better collaboration between farmers, better packaging and marketing of local products.

Demands of tourists coming to Prokletije – Bjeshket e Namuna region – to show the group how to fill in the market gaps, this part of agenda has been dedicated to presenting data collected from a survey conducted by Montenegro Ministry of Tourism and GIZ and Trendscape company. This survey clearly shows what are the interests of tourists coming to this region, how outdoor tourism plays an important role, and how they mostly get the information about destination from online research and how aside from being interested in

nature and outdoor activities, they also want to be exposed to local culture, try traditional food, have contacts with local people. Through interactive discussion with participants it has been concluded that the whole region lacks online marketing, that it is mostly foreign guests who write about our region, that local hotels and restaurants usually offer western dishes, and that rural population is usually on the margins of tourism offer.

Adventure tourism offer and how it should be built – this presentation focused on outdoor offer of the region, and the fact that this area is extremely attractive for mountaineers and hikers, and that mountain biking is another important activity. However, the state of signalization is poor in all three countries, signposts are being devastated while the maintenance is poor. For this reason GPS information about the trails is being more and more important for better safety of the guests. It is also important to strengthen the network of trails, not to develop only mountaineering trails, but also thematic, rural trails connecting villages and rural areas, as such trails can also be used by less physically fit people. All rural households offering tourism services need to work on developing local trails so that their guests have options to fill their time. Waste disposal in rural areas is an enormous problem that requires engagement of local and national bodies. Villages that have biggest chance in providing tourism services are those in vicinity of protected areas, villages that are clean and unpolluted, villages that can demonstrate their culture and tradition through authentic architecture and various traditions.

Best practice examples – Katun roads Montenegro and Kosovo - The overall objective of the project is the economic development of the area through cooperation and joint initiatives, and the specific objective is to promote economic development through economic, sustainable valorization of tourism, forestry and agricultural potentials. The results achieved by the project are:

1. Improving the infrastructure necessary for providing tourism services in the katuns – the establishing of routes and signposting of thematic katun trail, allocation of solar systems for 49 households, construction of resting points and camping sites in 5 katuns along the trail.
2. Increased capacities of the rural population to provide tourist services – training for rural households, a study trip.
3. Promotion of unique values of katuns as the driver for development of agriculture and tourism – production of promotional brochures, billboards and info boards, production of promotional video materials, development of the web portal, promotional familiarization trip for the tourist agencies.

A short movie presentation on katun roads – to demonstrate the achievements of the project presented in previous section, a short movie has been shown to participants.

Best practice examples – Traditional gastronomy in rural households and local hotels and restaurants Montenegro and Albania – This is a new project of the RDA, developed as on of the priorities of Prokletije/Bjeshket e Nemuna strategy, focusing on local gastronomy and efforts for this local cuisine to be represented in local tourism offer. Overall objective of the



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project is to enhance the competitiveness of the tourism sector by the economic valorization of the cultural and natural heritage, while specific objective is to include local gastronomy into overall tourism offer of the cross-border area. The results to be achieved by the project are:

**Result 1:** Traditional local recipes included in the offer of local tourism industry – the activities in this result will be dedicated to researching the old, traditional recipes, their standardization and capacity building activities for local restaurants and hotels for including traditional cuisine in their offer.

**Result 2:** Thematic, gastronomy routes created – activities will involve development of tasting points at rural households, packaging and labelling of local products, development of gastro route and capacity building for rural families

**Result 3:** Local gastronomy offer promoted and marketed – activities include development of various promotional materials, organization of gastro fair in Montenegro, organization of familiarization trip for gastro journalists, agencies and bloggers.

RDA is the lead applicant in this project, partner from Montenegro is National Tourism Organization, and partners from Albania are Eco-Partners for Sustainable Development from Tiarana and Puke Municipality.

Best practice examples – ValueCheese – how to market local cheese and connect dairy sector with tourism market – food safety standards are of utmost importance in providing services to tourists, and that is why this project has been selected to be presented to the group. The overall objective of this project is to transfer know-how for improved dairy production and valorization of traditional dairy products in Montenegro. The specific objective is to add value in cheese production in the North of Montenegro through cooperation between academic and business sector in the field of food safety, quality and product standardization.

The results achieved through the implementation of this project are:

1. Improved capacities of the cheese producers in the field of food safety and quality within the dairy chain
2. Introduction of the standards in cheese production – improvement of conditions for production as well as creating of preconditions for fulfillment of complex demands in the future
3. Improvement of cheese production technology but with preservation of the traditional way of cheese production and introduction of new products at the same time.
4. Finding and establishing of marketing system for dairy producers - increase of products competitiveness.

Rural tourism offer and how to start – tips, advice, offer, resources, linkages with tour operators, marketing opportunities – this topic of the agenda has been highly interactive, and relied on experiences of those group members present who have already successfully initiated their tourism activities. Conclusions have been that a lot of work needs to be done in convincing rural families that what they have is attractive and that they really can start providing services. Usually rural families who are absolute beginners in tourism need significant guidance at the beginning, in terms of mentoring and capacity building. Marketing is an important part of this whole activity, and usually rural families lack capacities for it, and very often lack specific skills, mobility and contacts. For this reason it is always good to have local tourism organization or civil society organization or even association of rural tourism service providers to deal with marketing. The group also discussed mistakes that happened, and particular attention has been paid to investors who did invest significant financial resources but in the wrong way, disrupting the natural and traditional ambient of the rural areas, as was the case in Boge in Kosovo. What is also very important is to valorize all those resources that rural families have – aside from rural tourism (food and accommodation) to sell products, handicrafts, forest products etc.

Experience of outdoor tourism practitioners in Prokletije region - this part of the agenda has been dedicated to Semir Kadrovic from Rozaje, who presented his experiences in providing guiding services to variety of groups of outdoor enthusiasts who visited this region.

How to mobilize resources to start – In this section of the agenda, the financial resources available for all three countries have been analyzed. In Montenegro, national agriculture budget has been the main source of funding for beginners in rural tourism, and Kosovo has just started with similar activities. IPARD funds have been allocated to all three countries, and significant portion of IPARD has been designated for diversification of rural economy through rural tourism. Using these funds is of great importance for all three states, and of course for rural households.

### **Conclusions and elaboration of difficulties occurred:**

No major difficulties occurred during this training. As for conclusions, it can be stated that the situation in tourism and agriculture is more or less similar in all three countries, as well as the resources. :

- Rural tourism needs a stronger boost in all three countries. With IPARD funds being available for this sector, it is very important to build capacities among farmers and other local stakeholders in how to access these funds.
- Food safety regulations are extremely important for quality service in rural tourism, and since



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regulations have changed over the years, all three countries should make sure that farmers are informed, and assist them in complying with this important regulation.

- Diversifying incomes through variety of means is important for rural economy, and aside from rural tourism, Non-timber forest products are an important sector that provides economic opportunity to rural households, together with handicrafts and souvenirs sector.
- Adventure tourism will most probably remain key tourism offer of the region, and it should be built carefully and strategically, making sure that all three countries are connected and that rural families are included in all new offer.
- Preserving traditions and cultural heritage is very important while developing tourism offer, as this is what brings authenticity to Prokletije/Bjeshket e Namuna tourism. Tradition and culture needs to be reflected not only in products, but also in gastronomy offer and in architecture.

### 3. Presentations

Annex 2 of this report

Prepared by

Predrag Markovic Regional expert