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Professional paper

THE PROGRESS OF THE CULTIVATION, COLLECTION, PROCESSING, AND MARKETING OF AROMATIC AND MEDICINAL PLANTS BY THE "GJEDRA" COMPANY, BERAT, ALBANIA

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Abstract

The company "GJEDRA" is one of the first to be created in Albania. It is the initiative of the intelligence and foresight of the late Gjergji Qosja. There were years when we discussed the name, and by chance, it came out as a principle to name it with the first letters of the family names, calling it a family business. And specifically: GJE-Gjergji, D-Donika, Gjergji's honorable lady, R-Rina, the daughter, A-Anisa, the little girl who runs the company. So, in this way, it received a meaningful and respectful name for the family. The technical, legal, and above all human correctness allowed it to be given with full confidence several different works in different municipalities that had a positive impact on both sides of the work, both of the Forest Service Directorate (FSD) and of the Company itself.

In September 2013, he received his Forestry Engineer diploma. After graduation, he expanded his work with the Forest Service Directorates (FSD). He continued his collaboration with the Faculty by welcoming students to carry out teaching and professional practices. He opened a special class for students. I (Prof. N. Bardhi) have continuously taken students to carry out teaching practices on Aromatic and Medicinal Plants in this company. A special contribution was made by his daughter Anisa, who worked with passion, reflecting her father's traits. She completed her PhD for the work done by the Company: "GJEDRA". Through his connections with people, he built his work in Albania and in over twenty countries around the world.

In particular, the cooperation with Germany, which began in 1993, the USA, Austria, etc., stands out. It has improved the processing technologies of Aromatic and Medicinal Plants (AMP).

Keywords: *Aromatic and Medicinal Plants, technology, professional, improvement, service.*

1. Introduction

Aromatic and medicinal plants are a broad field of study with many economic functions. The global market is placing increasing demands for quantity and variety in many areas: pharmaceutical, culinary, perfumery, cosmetics, as well as in direct and unprocessed uses (teas, soups, herbal mixtures, etc.). Albania is one of the richest countries due to its climate, territorial diversity, and soil, creating opportunities for the production of over 200 plants in significant quantities.

2. Scientific methodology

The aim of the study:
To present the history of the company: "GJEDRA". To analyze the progress of collection, cultivation, processing, packaging, and export of Aromatic and Medicinal Plants.
Objectives:
1.To study and present the history of the company: "GJEDRA".
2.To study the progress of the collection of Aromatic and medicinal plants by the company.
3.To study the progress of the processing of Aromatic and Medical Plants by the company as well as the improvement of the processing technology of Aromatic and Medical Plants.

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4.To study the progress of the packaging of Aromatic and Medical Plants by the company and the progress of the quality of the packaging.
5.To study the progress of exporting the production of Aromatic and Medicinal Plants in total and by country.
6.To study the performance of the financial values of the export of Aromatic and Medicinal Plants in total and by country.
7.To study the performance of the cultivation of Aromatic and Medicinal Plants as a total area and for each cultivated plant
Data on the collection, processing, packaging, and export of Aromatic and Medicinal Plants were used for the realization of this study. The data were extracted from invoices for the collection (purchase) of Aromatic and Medical Plants, export invoices, and financial invoices according to the countries where the Aromatic and Medical Plant products were exported.
At the same time, discussions were held with the Company Administrator and specialists in the relevant fields. A special item is the progress of cultivating "BIO" Aromatic and Medical Plants, without using chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Financial data for 2021 was obtained according to export for each country where it was exported.

3.Results and their interpretation

To carry out this study, the methodology designed before the start of the study was applied.

3.1. History of the Company: In 1993, it began working as a physical entity in the collection and packaging of Aromatic and Medicinal Plants (AMP). In 1996, it became a legal entity "sh.p.k" with the direction of export-import of Aromatic and Medicinal Plants (AMP). During this period, the Company has increased its financial capacity and has consolidated by exporting to: USA, Germany, Spain, France, Poland, Hungary, Greece, Macedonia, Egypt, etc.
The collection of Aromatic and Medicinal Plants is done fresh and dry.
Plants that are collected fresh are under the control of the Company's technical personnel, they are intensively treated for the highest quality drying, manipulation, packaging, and marketing.
The plants that arrive dried are under the quality control of the Company's personnel and are subjected to processes such as cleaning, pressing, packaging, and marketing.
Over the years, the Company has perfected the methods of processing Aromatic and Medicinal Plants (AMP) by purchasing processing and pressing machinery. The Company has expanded its activity by collecting Aromatic and Medicinal Plants throughout the territory of the Republic of Albania. The transportation of these plants is done with the company's own vehicles according to European conditions and standards.
The company has grown rapidly over the years. It has consolidated strength in all aspects of the business and is now exporting to many countries around the world.
There is a very wide range of wild collection products, which are collected by farmers who live and work in/or near collection areas throughout Albania. The products are processed in a dry state and undergo various processes, from cutting and cleaning (including passing through metal detectors and magnetic separators), pressing, packaging, and labeling, under very strict quality control and assurance. The company has its own chemical and physical laboratory in which all necessary analyses are carried out.

3.2. Scheme of collection and processing of products
1. Handling of produce by the harvester
Harvesting the produce
Drying the produce
Cleaning the produce

2. Handling of production by the collector
Purchase of produce from collectors
Cleaning of produce
Drying if necessary
Delivery of produce to the central warehouse.
3. Central warehouse
A- The goods are entered into the warehouse.
B- The stored goods are coded.
C- The coded goods are packaged in the warehouse (in coded bags or bales).
D- The packaged goods are placed in the goods warehouse awaiting processing and cleaning. There, they are stored in a clean, "BIO" condition.
E- The goods are subjected to cleaning by hand or by machine.
F- After cleaning, the goods are processed and pressed in presses, and the goods are packaged in bales and or bags, i.e., products that are not pressed.
G- Packaged products are labeled according to the relevant label.
H- Labeled products are ready for sale.

Mbjelljet nga vetë firma (Plantings by the firm itself) In the years 2010 - 2015, the company cultivated bee grass (*Melissa officinalis*) on an area of 1.5 ha, providing a production of 2.2-2.5 tons for each season

3.3. Progress of collection and export of production

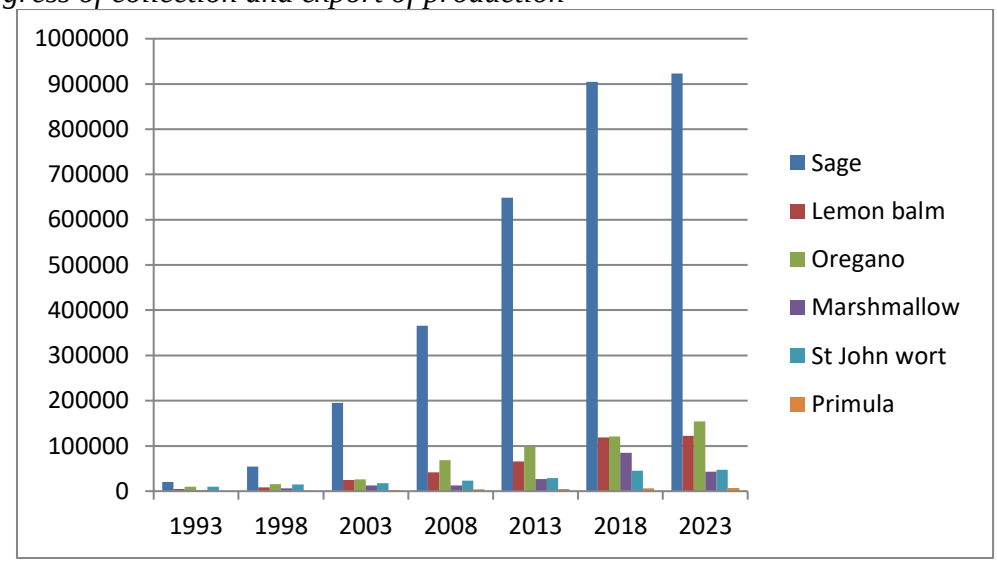

Chart No. 1 Progress of the collection of the most important plants over the years

More than 40 plants are included in the collection, of which about 21 plants occupy the greatest weight and have been in stable quantities. From the presentation of the graph, it is very clear that the sage has the largest weight in all years

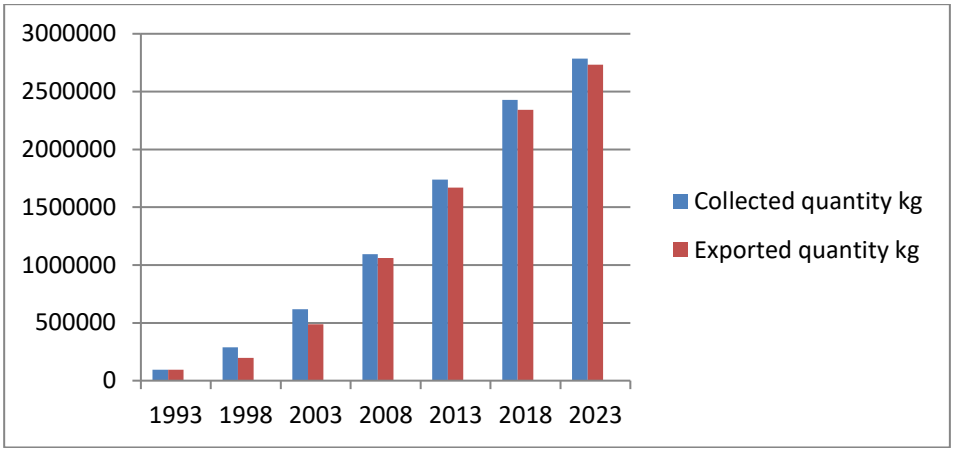

Chart No. 2 Progress of collection and export of AMPs

As can be seen from Chart No. 7, it results that the company has a systematic growth in both the collection and export of AMPs. In the first years, there is a sale in the domestic market, where mainly dominate: sage, St. John's wort, blueberry, tilia, oregano, wild rose, etc.

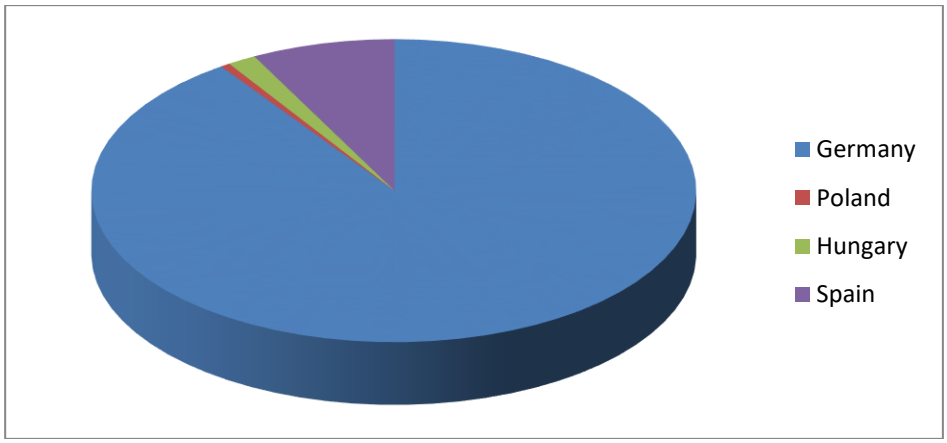

Chart No. 3 Exports by country for 1993

For 1993, exports were mostly from Germany and Turkey and less from Hungary and Spain.

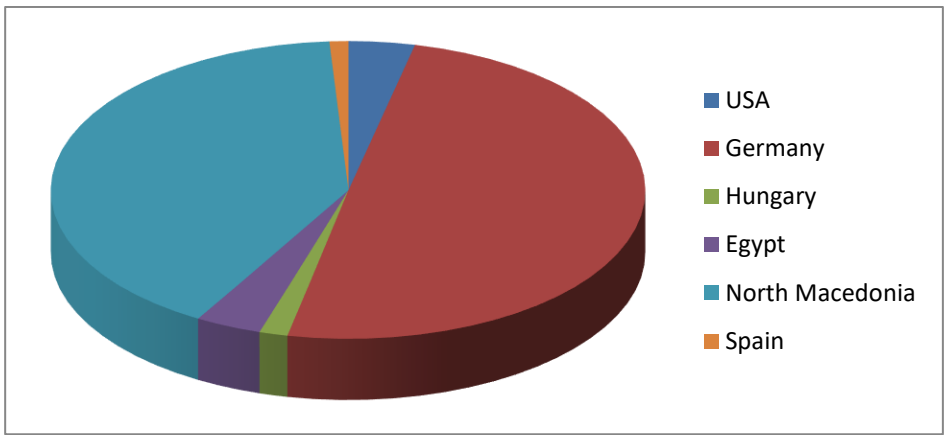

Chart No. 4 Exports by country for 2018

For 2018, we note an almost stable situation compared to 2003. There are very minor changes.

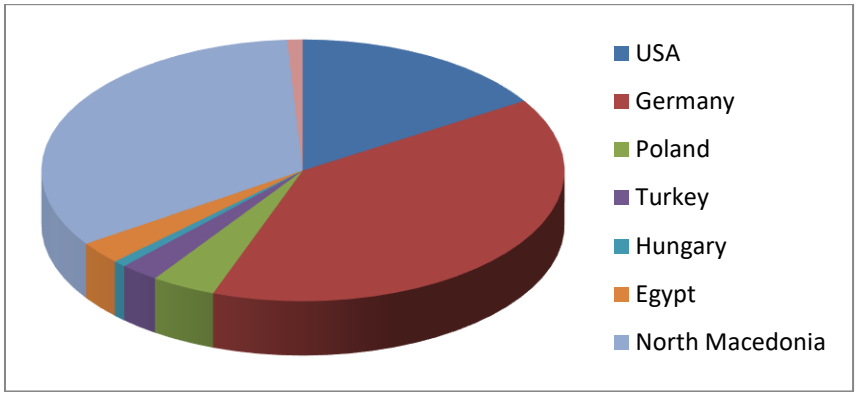

Chart No. 5 Exports by country for 2023

In 2023, we see a continued decline in exports to Germany and an increase in exports to North Macedonia. Spain and Poland are also entering the company's market in small quantities.

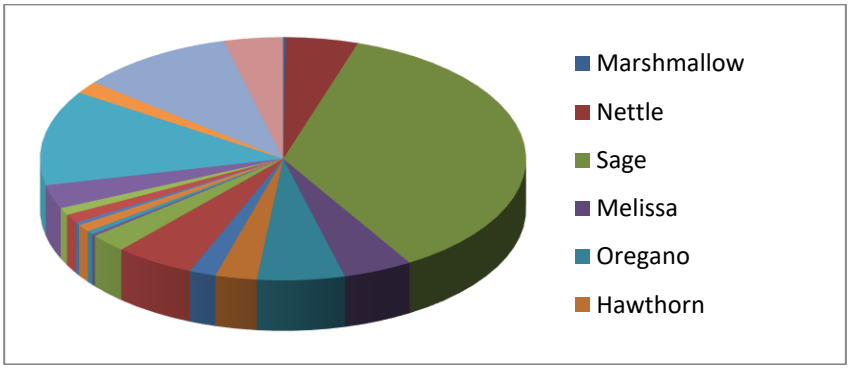

Chart No. 6 Report of the quantity of plants exported in 2023 (in %)

If we analyze the exported plants, we will see that sage is the main exported plant, followed by oregano, melissa, hawthorn, and St. John's wort. There are over 21 plants that are exported in the largest quantities.
The performance of the financial values of exports are:
First: constantly growing year after year.
Second: Germany occupies the main place of export, reaching 27% of the total production, and in second place is Cyprus, which also has a competitive price.
Third: for the first time, there are 21 countries where high financial values are exported.
Fourth: The USA has a share of 14%, which has remained stable for several years, and mainly sage and oregano are the largest exports.
Fifth: Italy and Egypt occupy 7.8% and 5% respectively, maintaining this ratio roughly.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

From the general analysis of production indicators and financial values of the export of AMP production to various countries by the company "GJEDRA", we are able to draw some conclusions and provide relevant recommendations.
Among the most important conclusions we can draw from the analysis of this company, we can mention:
1.The Albanian BAMs constitute a very important facility and source for the export and presentation of Albanian products in Europe, the USA, Egypt, etc.
2.The company "GJEDRA" has built a very successful business for many years in the collection and export of AMPs to many countries.

3.From 1993 to 2021, exported production increased tenfold, while in financial value itincreased over twelvefold.
4.The number of plants collected has been constantly increasing.
5.An important aspect is the cultivation of plants while maintaining BIO indicators, that is, without chemical and biochemical changes in the plants. This has been achieved mainly in: oregano, sage and melissa.
6.The improvement of drying, processing and packaging technologies has led to a significant increase in the price and presentation value of the "Made in ALBANIA" product. At the Nuremberg fair alone, the company's stand was visited by many firms and companies that have concluded agreements for the products.
7.The company's premises have been visited by many visitors and this has increased trust in the company. It has continuously conducted employee trainings.
8.The financial value in All is quite high, especially in recent years, due to the fact that the quality of the products has increased significantly.
From a detailed study of the indicators and performance of the collection, processing and trading of AMPs, financial values in All, we can advise:
1. Improving the processing technology of AMP products by achieving what is called "added value" of AMP production, which is usually 20 – 30% and in some cases goes up to 60%. The company "GJEDRA" has done it quite well
2. To switch to the cultivation of AMPs, respecting the original climatic and soil characteristics of the plants and not using chemical fertilizers but organic fertilizers and mainly sheep and goat manure.

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