



knowledge without boundaries

EIFL-PLIP

Improving lives and livelihoods through innovative public library services

IMPACT CASE STUDY

Library services helps farmers apply for grants Public & University Library 'Goce Delcev' Stip, Macedonia

The library's service for farmers supports Macedonia's national strategy for rural development. Librarians and trainers travel to villages in an INFOBUS to guide farmers in using information and communication technology (ICT) to access grants and subsidies. The service –

- Contributed to a 20% increase in the number of farmers applying for agricultural production subsidies in the municipalities of Stip and Karbinici in 2012.
- Encouraged 48 farmers to apply for machinery grants in 2012.
- Increased farmers' interest in organic agriculture.
- Expanded the library's mobile INFOBUS service to include the wider community. The service now attracts over 100 visits from farmers per month.

Macedonia is in the process of acquiring full membership of the European Union (EU) and has received Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance for Rural Development (IPARD) funding. IPARD includes funding to promote sustainable agriculture, modernize farming, make farming more competitive and prepare farmers to comply with EU regulations. Agriculture has the potential to be the key economic driver in Eastern Macedonia, where the climate and soil are favourable for growing rice, wheat, barley, maize, fruit and vegetables. However, production is low because farmers rely on traditional farming methods and use outdated equipment. In 2012, the government made €120 million (about US\$164 million) available for agricultural subsidies. But accessing funding is complex, and increasingly, farmers are expected to apply for grants online. Many farmers do not know how to apply and do not have internet access or skills.

The library service helps farmers overcome these problems. With a one-year grant of US\$15,000 from EIFL-PLIP, the library created an Agricultural Corner in their INFOBUS, equipped with wi-fi internet, laptop computers and stocked with books and journals on agriculture. The service targeted four villages that do not have libraries: Karbinici, Tarinci, Karaorman and Chardaklija.



"It is knowledge we can apply in practice"
– Zvezdan Gjorgov farmer from Tarinci village, commenting after a lecture on organic farming.

"My husband and I participated in this training, and we learned that we can apply for subsidies for the maintenance of sour cherry trees. Thanks to this training! Before, we were not aware of this information!" – Lepa Stolkovska, Tarinci village.



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“By working with this library service, we help farmers to prepare their documents more easily and quickly, so that they can access the funds they need. They are now applying for different kinds of funds and subsidies.” – Mr Riste Ognanov, Agency for Support of Rural Agriculture Development.

In less than a year, the library...

- Organized 30 seminars – 7 in each of the four villages, and two in other nearby communities, attracting 357 participants. Lectures and discussion focused on the government’s rural development goals, how to access subsidies, keeping livestock, growing crops and organic farming.
- Trained 42 farmers in the four villages to use ICT.
- Provided individual guidance to over 145 farmers to help them apply for grants and subsidies.
- Created the [Agrokorner](#) web portal for farmers, with links to information about subsidies, support agencies, and where farmers can read about modern farming methods

The future

The Ministry of Culture has committed funding for the INFOBUS to continue visiting the four villages in 2013. The Rural Development Office at the University ‘Goce Delcev’ Stip has agreed to train wine farmers, and all the library’s partners are eager to carry on mobilizing farmers, training and contributing content for the website.

The EIFL-PLIP grant was awarded in November 2011. A year later, the library assessed the impact of the service. Information presented here is based on the library’s impact assessment. For further information, contact service coordinator, Ms Vilma Jovanova - j_vilma21@yahoo.com.

[EIFL](#) (Electronic Information for Libraries) is an international not-for-profit organization dedicated to enabling access to knowledge through libraries in more than 60 developing and transition countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. EIFL’s Public Library Innovation Programme (EIFL-PLIP) supports libraries to implement community development projects. Learn more at www.eifl.net/plip. EIFL’s Public Library Innovation Programme is supported by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Public libraries - partners in development

Strategic partnerships were central to the success of the service –

- The government Agency for Support of Rural Agriculture Development provided expertise on how to apply for subsidies. They reported that 20% more farmers applied for subsidies in 2012.
- Stip and Karbinici municipalities helped mobilize farmers and arranged access to meeting space (local schools) in villages where there are no public libraries.
- The community development NGO, Synergy-Stip, supported implementation and provided content for the website.
- University ‘Goce Delcev’- Stip seconded a skilled trainer from the university’s Office of Rural Development.

“Creating agents of change in agriculture is one of the most difficult tasks worldwide.

A future more intensive programme is a

must!” – M. A. Vasko Zlatkovski, trainer,

Office of Rural Development at the

University ‘Goce Delcev’ Stip.