

Title: “**Empowering women and protecting the environment through recycling and upcycling of waste**”

Project: **Sustainable Rural Development (SRD)**

Country: **Albania**

Category: **GG1**

Background information

The main aim and approach of the Sustainable Rural Development (SRD) Programme in Albania is to promote the potential for diversification for income and employment perspectives in rural areas of Albania. We aim to achieve this through upgrading of on-farm production, off-farm activities and promotion of selected agricultural products with focus on value chains of fruits, vegetables, small ruminants (dairy production) and medicinal and aromatic herbs (MAPs). In these value chains to the project will support the improvement and integration of environmental and biodiversity aspects in agricultural production.

SRD’s target group is the rural population of Albania with a focus on micro, small and medium enterprises in agriculture and rural tourism. In particular, the project aims to reach women and young people under the age of 40. Since many young people migrate from structurally weak rural regions temporarily or permanently to the cities or to other countries, rural areas in Albania face the challenge of aging and depopulation. This poses a real challenge especially but not only to the agriculture sector. For this reason, the project aims to provide income opportunities for local communities and particularly women in rural areas.

Project Name	Sustainable Rural Development (SRD)
Commissioned by	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ)
Duration	01/2019 – 12/2022
Regions	Countrywide (Agriculture); Vlora, Dibra, Shkodra (Rural Tourism)
Lead executing agency in Albania	Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development (MARD)

Income diversification for women empowerment through Soap and Detergent production

Motivation: In recent years Albania has improved the status of women and promoted gender equality. However, the country still faces many challenges in terms of fully displaying and utilizing the women’s potential in the labor market and economy, increasing participation in decision-making and eradicating the widespread violence against women, particularly in the family realm.

Difficult to be self-sufficient: In Albania, men have significant economic power compared to women. It is difficult for women to become self-sufficient due to a number of different factors including gender discrimination, time-consuming family responsibilities and a lack of childcare. Women are expected to take care of the children and do all the unpaid domestic work. For many girls it is their own families who hinder them from the opportunity

of getting a paid job in the future, by forcing them to leave school when they become teenagers. Since men are the ones who inherit property within the family, very few women own any land, real estate or capital.

Intervention's impact

The main aim of the intervention is to empower women through economic activities by (re)using wastewater resources from Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (MAPs) that are not used at the moment, and at the same time reduce the damage to the environment by upcycling and reusing the used cooking oil into by-products. The project is being implemented in two different MAPs producing regions, Shkoder and Korca:

- In Shkoder, the project will target at least 30 beneficiaries, (25 women, 5 men and 70 % under 35 years old) with the aim to create a mini value chain to build the capacity of young women in the region of Shkodra enabling them to create extra income by producing soaps/detergents from wasted water extracted during distillation of MAPS, Essential oil from the MAPS of the region, and the used cooking oil from restaurants and fast food,
- In Korca the project will train 15 people (80% unemployed women and 70% under 35 years old) how to use the Soapwort flowers and wild chestnut fruits which both have a great value but not used to generate income; at the same time the target group will be trained to produce organic detergents for washing machines and scented candles with essential oils extracted from Shkodra region

By the end of the project (April 2022), we will have 5 different products (hard soap, detergents, dry Soapwort flowers, candles, and washing machine detergents) packaged and ready to be sold using the value chain methodology, and trade connection with hotels, guesthouses, restaurants and other hospitality services in tourist areas of Albania that will lead to a mini circular economy cycle. For achieving the goal, different instruments will be used, including awareness, capacity building methods while developing the market of the products from each member of the value chain, creating links between the beneficiaries, businesses and public sector using innovative approaches, providing training, to integrate and formalize the activities of the target group into the economic eco-system, which is intended to promote sustainable and inclusive growth.



Picture 1: Soaps from women in Shkodra

The main activities to be carried out during the project so that the objectives are achieved and sustainability is ensured, consist in:



Picture 2: Women in training

III. Create seed stock products for the target group that have benefited from the training to be sold and the revenue to be partially invested in developing the activities



Picture 4: Soaps of different forms

I. Creation of a functional mini value chain (with unemployed women, at least 5 groups of farmers, MAPS processors, youth)

II. Create jobs for youth especially unemployed women (45 people direct beneficiaries)

Picture 3: Women in training



IV. Create alternative market for MAPS farmers, and processors (8 new products: Used cooking oil, distilled MAPS water, dry Soapwort, wild chestnut, detergent, soap, washing detergent, candles)

V. Reuse and use resources that are wasted at the moment (wastewater from MAPS processing, Soapwort, wild chestnut, and used cooking oil).