

Good Practice Example No. 10

Module 5: Interpersonal Skills and Leadership for Women in Agribusiness

Leadership Through Collaboration and Joint Problem-Solving

Industry:	Fruit Growing (Primarily Raspberries)
Location:	Arilje, Zlatibor District
Established in:	Transitioned from solo to collaborative model c. 2021-2022
Legal form:	Agricultural Cooperative
Business model:	B2B (Supply to cold storages/Exporters)
Core activity:	Cultivation of high-quality raspberries and joint equipment sharing

Jasmina and Milica live in Arilje, a region known as a “nursery” of successful fruit growers in Serbia. They decided to engage in raspberry cultivation - a crop that is both profitable and demanding. In the beginning, they worked independently, each balancing family responsibilities and business challenges. However, they shared a common experience often present in agriculture: uncertainty caused by climate challenges and limited resources for investment and growth.

Their story is an example of how interpersonal skills and a leadership-oriented approach can be decisive when navigating business challenges together, through mutual support and shared learning.

Key interpersonal and leadership dimensions

- 1) Facing challenges and the decision to collaborate:** The season before their collaboration was difficult: droughts significantly reduced yields, leading both of them to realize that running the business independently was no longer sustainable. Instead of withdrawing or continuing to work separately, Jasmina and Milica made a strategic decision to join forces. Together, they sought support from local training centers and advisory services, which helped them improve their business plans and secure essential equipment such as a sprayer and cultivator, making their work more efficient. This step also involved networking with organizations and the local community, demonstrating their ability to recognize the need for support beyond family and business boundaries - a key interpersonal and leadership skill.
- 2) Cooperation and mutual support:** Once they merged their operations, it was important for both to maintain a healthy relationship based on trust and support. Jasmina and Milica developed daily planning routines where they discussed priorities, shared information and jointly made decisions about work organization. This approach provided both emotional and practical support - essential when facing the demanding physical and logistical challenges of the fruit-growing season. Their ability to support each other during moments of doubt or fatigue was crucial for maintaining motivation and business stability.
- 3) Vision for the future and joint decision-making:** As a result of their collaboration, Jasmina and Milica not only improved their production capacities but also initiated the formalization

of their business through the establishment of a cooperative. The goal was to further enhance operations and enable additional support structures, such as cold storage facilities or office space. This step reflects their leadership - a transition from individual entrepreneurship to an organized community model better equipped to respond to market and logistical challenges.

Source: <https://www.startfinder.de/en/experiences/ser-two-women-fruit-growers-join-forces>