

Good Practice Example No. 9

Module 5: Interpersonal Skills and Leadership for Women in Agribusiness

Hazel House - Long-Term Vision, Strategic Leadership and Interpersonal Skills in Agribusiness

Industry:	Nut production and processing
Location:	Kikinda (production and processing)
Established in:	2017
Legal form:	Private Limited Company (Ltd.)
Business model:	B2B (Business to Business & B2C (Business to Consumer)
Core activity:	Production, processing and sale of certified organic hazelnuts and hazelnut products

“Hazel House” is an ambitious project founded by two young women, Katarina Đurović and Ana Suvačarov, who decided to develop hazelnut production in Serbia and build a long-term sustainable agribusiness.

Katarina and Ana are connected through family and friendship ties, but neither had professional experience in agriculture when the idea was conceived. Katarina was educated abroad and worked in administration, while Ana graduated from the University of Novi Sad. Nevertheless, their shared vision led them to take initiative and develop a business model that goes beyond traditional agricultural production.

The project began with an analysis of family heritage - Ana’s father had been growing hazelnuts for years on 15 hectares of land. After discussing the potential of this crop with him, they decided to invest in an additional 77 hectares of land in the Kikinda region and make hazelnuts the central activity of their business. The first planned plantations were established in 2016, but they also faced early setbacks (for example, the loss of seedlings in 2017), which tested their determination and ability to deal with challenges.

Key interpersonal and leadership dimensions

- 1) Vision and strategic decision-making:** Ana and Katarina recognized that the project needed to be sustainable in the long term - hazelnuts are a crop that provides the first significant harvest only after five years. Instead of focusing on short-term profits, they developed a strategic approach that includes production, processing and potentially marketing final products (such as hazelnut oil or spreads). This focus requires the ability to plan several seasons ahead, a skill characteristic of leadership-oriented thinking.
- 2) Learning and adaptation:** As they initially lacked experience in agriculture, Ana and Katarina had to quickly learn about planting technologies, irrigation systems, underground drainage and soil cultivation - all through collaboration, consultations and team feedback. Their readiness to learn and adapt became a core component of their leadership development.

- 3) Communication and collaboration:** Although they launched the idea together, the project's implementation involves partnerships with colleagues, the family farm, technical associates and potential financiers. Maintaining clear communication, transparent delegation of tasks and building mutual trust are key elements of their leadership approach.

As a result, Ana and Katarina not only manage a joint agribusiness today but are also planning further expansion, including investments in processing equipment and the broader market placement of hazelnut products.

Source: <https://srfp.bfconsulting.com/hazel-house-how-two-young-women-in-serbia-are-playing-the-hazelnut-long-game/>
<https://hazelhouse.rs/o-nama/>