

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF  
FARMERS' ANNUAL REPORT

2024

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## About the National Federation of Farmers (NFF)

In 2024, NGOs in the Republic of Macedonia, including the National Federation of Farmers (NFF), operated in a complex socio-economic environment, which significantly impacted both farmers and rural communities. Agriculture remained a key pillar of the national economy, but the sector continued to face a persistent negative trade balance. This problem was further exacerbated by constraints on domestic production capacity and growing consumer demand. Economic pressures placed an additional burden on the rural population members, many of whom had already been facing significant hardship.

Rural areas in Macedonia continued to face the burden of widespread economic and social poverty, limited access to basic services such as health and education, and the increasingly pronounced climate change impact. These challenges highlight the need for strategic and targeted interventions to support small-scale farmers, improve rural living conditions, and promote sustainable agricultural practices. The National Federation of Farmers has been continuously pointing to these burning issues, advocating for comprehensive policies and programs that will help improve the situation of vulnerable rural communities.

One of the biggest and most worrying challenges we face as farmers is the continued migration and the lack of interest among young people to see their future in agriculture. This problem is particularly visible among young people and women from rural areas, who are increasingly migrating to either urban centers or European countries in search of better economic opportunities. It is concerning that the rate of migration from rural areas has already reached an alarming level of 50%, which strongly disrupts the demographic structure of these communities and their economic survival.

Another critical issue in the agricultural sector is the accelerated workforce aging and the clear shortcoming in the number of new workers. There is a serious shortage of labor in all segments of agriculture, and currently the majority of active workers in this sector are over 50 years old. This calls into question the sustainability of agricultural production in the long run, because without refreshing the workforce and stimulating young people to engage in this sector, agriculture in the country may face even greater challenges in the future.

To overcome these problems, strategic policies and concrete measures are required in order to make agriculture a more attractive profession for young people, by improving working conditions, providing financial incentives and increasing investments in agricultural infrastructure modernization, which will contribute to a better agricultural career perspective that can also be viewed as a sustainable and sound business, in line with sustainable development and climate change at a global level. It is also necessary to develop programs for education and support of young farmers and better opportunities to be created for women in rural areas, in order to reduce the emigration trend and ensure the sustainable development of rural communities on the long term.

One of the most significant factors in addressing these challenges has been the support and partnership with We Effect, financially supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). Their expertise and long-standing experience in the region, along with the strong strategic partnerships, has played a significant role in strengthening rural communities, the economic independence of smallholder farmers and the promotion of gender equality in agriculture. However, in recent times, some uncertainties have emerged regarding the future of SIDA's Civil Society Programme (CIVSAM) in Macedonia, which has raised concerns regarding the continuity and stability of existing partnerships.

Given these challenges, it is essential that the National federation of farmers adapts to the fluctuating financial environment, advocate for new, ongoing international support, and explore alternative sources of funding in order to ensure lasting resilience and visible progress of rural communities in Macedonia.

During 2024, the National federation of farmers has implemented the project “Supporting Small-Scale Farmers in North Macedonia” as a key support mechanism of We Effect within NFF 2023 – 2027 Strategy. This support is based on the main goal of providing the funding and resources required to meet the needs of NFF members and establishing sustainable mechanisms for the development of the National Federation of Farmers.

The support is structured around four core strategic goals, each clearly defined and focused on fostering growth, inclusion and empowerment of rural communities. The main beneficiaries of the NFF support and strategy include: smallholder farmers, women and youth, marginalized rural communities, local agricultural organizations and agricultural cooperatives across the country.

In addition, we continued with the implementation of the Project “Income Increase and Socio-Economic Empowerment of Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups from Rural and Sub-Urban Areas” for a period of 4 years, i.e. in the period from 2021 to the current year of 2025.

In 2024, the project’s efforts were focused on the intervention for producer groups, structured along three main directions, namely:

- **Formation of producer groups,**
- **Improving the legal framework and support measures,**
- **Promoting increased market connectivity for smallholder farmers and registered food operators.**

Significant results were achieved in each of these areas. In the first area, more than 150 farmers – men, women, and especially young people – were informed and trained, where most of them expressed a strong interest in joining producer groups. Knowledge about the benefits of these groups’ actions increased, and any important information was shared. However, there are challenges and barriers in terms of awareness, information, and engagement, which require continuous efforts to be overcome and improved.

In terms of the second direction, significant progress was achieved in the Law on Agriculture and Rural Development, where the working group invested intensive efforts to align it with the EU Directives, while addressing the specific needs of small producers.

Regarding the third direction, three promotional events were successfully organized, each with more than 100 participating farmers, who presented a rich and diverse range of high-quality agricultural products from their domain. These activities have led to improved market connectivity, diversification of the products offered and increased income for farmers. Registered food operators have increased their business visibility, expanded their market reach and successfully positioned themselves in the competitive market.

In 2024, NFF continued implementing the Project “Improving rural women’s employability through *ProfilPASS*” supported by the regional Projects “Social Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups in the Western Balkans” and “Support to Economic Diversification of Rural Areas in Southeast Europe (SEDRA II)” implemented by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). One of the project goals is to contribute to the socio-economic status improvement of rural women in North Macedonia, through the

ProfilPass methodology, which enables the identification of skills and competences towards their integration into the labor market.

Furthermore, NFF continued with the successful implementation of the Project “Local Industry Development in Agricultural Regions by Strengthening Capacity of Management and Marketing”. This project was supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). The main goal of this project was to set up the “One Village, One Product” model in the village of Timjanik near Negotino with an emphasis on the promotion of majun as an authentic local product. The idea behind this goal was to promote the OVOP (One Village, One Product) principles and strategy by presenting a concrete example of a product that represents local community specificities. This innovative methodology was introduced through an action plan developed by an NFF participants’ representative, who was previously trained by JICA to establish this model and methodology in rural communities of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Later in 2024, NFF began implementing Hort2Future, which is part of the EU’s new Living Lab methodology. This four-year project, involving 18 EU partners, is being implemented under the coordination of the Copenhagen Business School. The aim of the project is to replace peat, which is widely used in agriculture, with other alternative substrates in order to reduce the negative impact on the biobalance and nature. As part of this project, NFF will carry out a number of activities in the next four years, including 2-3 pilot farms as part of the project.

As part of its regular information and education activities, in 2024, NFF has published 2 issues of the only agriculture and rural development magazine entitled “My Land” in November 2024 and December 2024. In its activities, aspecial attention was paid to the operation and economic empowerment of small food operators through intensive promotion of the regulations and state programs supporting small food operators, bringing them closer to these programs by active participation in fair events, including the organization of fairs intended for small food operators, rural women and young farmers, for the purpose of their better presentation, visibility and placement on the domestic market.

In the area of lobbying and advocacy, the National Federation of Farmers (NFF) played a vitalrole in the process of revising the Strategy on Agriculture and Rural Development, as well as the promotion of agriculture and rural sector-related legislation. Through its active participation in the creation of these policies, the NFF has significantly contributed to improving the position of farmers, giving them a voice and representing their interests, specifically of small-scale producers, thus ensuring their adequate representation and visibility.

Furthermore, NFF continued to actively facilitate the Coordination Group amending the Law on Agriculture and Rural Development, with a special focus on improving the status and conditions of producer groups. Also, the organization is actively leading the coordination process between all relevant institutions in order to find a systemic solution for maternity and sick leave of registered individual female and male farmers, which is a significant step towards agricultural population social protection.

One of the most significant aspects of NFF work is its gender sensitivity. All activities and commitments of the organization actively promote gender equality, which is one of the six main components in NFF Strategy for the period from 2023 to 2027. NFF implements its own gender policy that provides a clear framework for identifying, implementing and coordinating interventions aimed at achieving equal opportunities for women in rural areas. The main emphasis is placed on strengthening the capacities of rural women, promoting their economic independence and improving their access to resources and services.

As a result of NFF’s dedicated work, supported by We Effect, significant changes have been made in national policies to support women in rural areas, especially women farmers. These changes allow for the creation of effective measures for the economic empowerment and social security of women in the agricultural sector, which is a crucial step towards improving their social and economic status.

The National Federation of Farmers with all of its members, including the General Assembly, the Management Board and the Executive Office will continue its activities under the following unique slogan:

**TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER!**

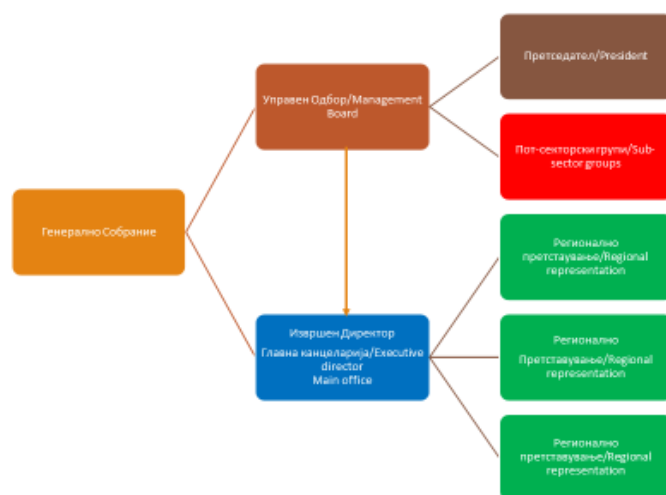
## VISION

The organisation, as an ideal, clear, desired and predictable prospect of its future, has the following vision, summarized in the short slogan: **“PROFITABLE AGRICULTURE – STABLE VILLAGE”**.

## MISSION

NFF, through association, organization, appropriate education of farmers and other factors that influence the development of Macedonian agriculture, has defined its mission as follows:

**“AN ORGANIZED FARMER LEADER IN AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA”**.



## MEMBERS OF NFF MANAGEMENT BOARD

### MEMBERS OF NFF MANAGEMENT BOARD IN 2019



Vaska Mojsovska, NFF President



Memet Sinani



Stevanche Jordanovski



Frosina Gjorgievska



Vancho Kirovski



Ivan Vangelov



Vasil Kocovski



Vangelina Parmachka





Stevan Orozovikj, NFF Executive Director



## NFF General Assembly, 2024

Ljube Pampulevski – Assembly Chairman

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

NFF organizational structure includes the following bodies:

### GENERAL ASSEMBLY (GA)

NFF General Assembly is the highest body composed of regular NFF members and it is held once a year.

- NFF organized its annual NFF General Assembly on 26 April 2024 in the amphitheater of the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food. This year's General Assembly was chaired by Ljube Pampulevski.

- On 26 April 2024, held its General Assembly in two parts, including:

Formal segment: Presentation of the results of key projects supported by Sweden, We Effect, GIZ and JICA, including initiatives aimed at supporting smallholder farmers, rural women and economic diversification in rural areas.

- Working segment: Discussions focused on empowerment of producer groups and formalization of legislative proposals.

The following key documents were adopted at NFF Annual Assembly:

- NFF Annual Report and Budget (2023)
- NFF Program and Budget (2024)
- NFF Development Strategy, including four strategic focuses as follows:
  1. Organizational development,
  2. Lobbying and advocacy,
  3. Economic empowerment of youth and women and market connectivity,
  4. Support to vulnerable groups in rural areas.

The Annual Assembly decided to increase the annual membership fee for individual members from 500 to 750 denars and for group members from 2000 to 3000 denars (MKD).

## **MANAGEMENT BOARD (MB)**

The Management Board consists of 9 members elected at an election session for a term of 4 years. The Management Board shall, from among its members, elect the President of the National Federation of Farmers of the Republic of Macedonia, who shall also be the President of the MB. The composition of the Management Board shall reflect the demographic composition of this association, especially its ethnic, gender and youth representation.

THE MANAGEMENT BOARD IS COMPOSED OF:

- Women's network representative;
- Youth network representative;
- Agricultural cooperatives' representative;
- Focus group representative;
- Small farmers' representative;
- Agricultural associations' representative;
- Ex Officio Executive Director.

**In the course of 2024, NFF Management Board held 4 sessions as follows:**

- **22 March 2024, ZOOM meeting** – at which NFF's ongoing activities were discussed, including the organization of the Assembly.
- **15-16 April 2024, Berovo** – The National Federation of Farmers held a meeting of NFF Management Board at which the delegate list and admission of regular NFF members

were adopted. Discussions at the meeting were mainly focused on producer groups and activities planned.

- **18-19 September 2024, Veles** – NFF held its third Management Board meeting, where work was done on challenges in agriculture, preparation of lobbying and advocacy material for meetings with the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, Cvetan Tripunovski, the status of activities with producer groups and future activities, as well as tackling climate change.
- **16-17 December 2024, Skopje** – NFF held its last meeting of NFF Management Board, at which the 2025 Plan and Budget were adopted and a review of activities with producer groups was made. NFF's recommendations for revising the Strategy on Agriculture and Rural Development were also considered and a document with recommendations for both the Direct Payments Program and Rural Development Program was drafted.

## EXECUTIVE OFFICE

The Executive Office includes the following positions:

- Executive Director, who is also a member of NFF Management Board,
- Project Manager,
- Administrative and Financial Coordinator,
- Administrative Assistant,
- Co -Facilitator.

## MEMBERSHIP

The National Federation of Farmers acts with a vision of profitable agriculture that will enable stable villages in the country. With a mission to unite farmers as an agricultural development driving force, the organization has existed for many years now, including **a large number of members** (such as: local associations, agricultural cooperatives, producer groups, individual farmers, small agricultural enterprises).

The association has both **associate and regular members**.

**An associate member** is considered as such when the member that has paid a membership fee and shows interest in agriculture and rural development.

**A regular member** is considered the member that meets certain criteria established by the organization, which shall be publicly and transparently published.

Regular members have the right to: elect members of the association's bodies; be elected as members of the association's bodies; and participate in the General Assembly. The association has two subtypes of regular and associate members as follows:

- **A group member** is considered to be agricultural association, regional or national union, agricultural cooperative or trading company or agricultural holding in the agricultural sector.
- **An individual member** could be any resident of the Republic of Macedonia involved in agriculture.

**In 2024, the organization implemented around 100 activities having impact on:**

- Improving farmers' working environment (by agricultural strategies, agricultural policy, agricultural support measures, etc.),
- Increasing competitiveness through new production technologies, marketing and management for agricultural cooperatives and small producers,
- Information and education through the only Macedonian magazine specialized in agriculture and rural development named "Moja Zemja",
- Organizing study visits, trade fairs, meetings between producers and processing entities,
- Supporting entrepreneurship among young people and women farmers, etc. The organization implemented its activities thanks to the support of SIDA, We Effect, GIZ, EU, JICA, FAO and in partnership with many similar organizations and institutions from both the country and the world.

## PROJECTS

### PROJECT “SUPPORT OF SMALL FARMERS IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA”

The Project “Support of Small Farmers in North Macedonia” is supported by the Swedish Development Organization We Effect and Sweden and it is characterized by a partnership with a high level of trust, continuous strategic development dialogue, moral and technical support.

Its financial support is aimed at full support for the implementation of NFF Strategy towards the development and realization of common interests of small farmers and vulnerable groups of citizens living in rural communities.

**GOAL:** The goal of the project is the implementation of NFF Development Strategy that runs from 2023 to 2027, as well as the preparation of the new NFF Strategy.

#### KEY ACTIVITIES IN 2024:

During 2024, NFF implemented various activities and took interactive part in important events.

The National Federation of Farmers (NFF) made significant progress in different areas, focusing on capacity building, improving existing processes, and strengthening and forming strategic collaborations.

#### Capacity Building

NFF continuously invested in training and improving the skills and competencies of its team members, especially regarding anti-corruption measures and project management. These efforts ensure that NFF shall remain a transparent and efficient organization.

#### Change Management and Process Improvement

To adjust to the new technologies and regulatory changes, NFF implemented structured change management processes. In addition, operational streamlining improved the organization’s efficiency and productivity. To improve NFF procedures, an Asset Management Manual was drafted and a Whistleblowing System was established. NFF Management Board held four meetings to strengthen NFF’s governance and advocacy efforts.

#### Strengthening Cooperation

NFF actively continued its collaboration with government institutions, private companies, and non-governmental organizations to address agricultural challenges and advocate for policy improvements.

#### NFF General Assembly

On 26 April 2024, NFF held its General Assembly in two parts, including:

Formal segment: Presentation of the results of key projects supported by Sweden, We Effect, GIZ and JICA, including initiatives aimed at supporting smallholder farmers, rural women and economic diversification in rural areas.

Working segment: Discussions focused on empowerment of producer groups and formalization of legislative proposals.

#### Advocacy at the United Nations – Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Pre-session

The NFF participated in the United Nations' Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Pre-session in Geneva from 11 to 15 February 2024, where in its report it focused on the pronounced rural poverty and marginalization of women, youth and persons with disabilities, including clear specific recommendations. In the framework of this pre-session, NFF held meetings with the embassies of Croatia, Sweden and the EU delegation in Geneva. Also, a meeting was initiated to start the process for membership in the World Rural Women's Organization.

### **Participation in Policy-Making Discussions**

NFF actively contributed to discussions on agricultural policy-making during 2024, including:

- Meetings of sub-sector groups for grapes, meat, wheat, milk, seeds and planting materials and fruit, and participation in the IPARD Committee.
- Consultations on the new National Land Consolidation Strategy (2024-2034).
- Meetings with the Minister of Agriculture (26 June 2024) on establishing producer organization interventions and climate change adaptation strategies.
- Meetings with the German agricultural attaché to strengthen cooperation.
- Active participation in the National Convention on the EU, focusing on agricultural knowledge and innovation transfer (AKIS) and the EU perspective.
- NFF held a meeting with the new Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, Cvetan Tripunovski, at which it was emphasized that agriculture in the country should be seen as a profession, rather than a social category. NFF drafted recommendations for both the Subsidy Program and the Rural Development Financial Support Program.
- NFF took active part at the Parliamentary Health Committee in January, where it presented its activities and commitments for registered individual female farmers to exercise their right to maternity leave.
- On 14 October 2024, NFF participated in the Parliamentary Committee on Equal Opportunities, where it presented the organization's efforts to improve the economic and social status of women from rural areas. The State Audit Office's report aimed at rural women was also presented at this session.

### **Climate Change and Sustainability Efforts**

On 2 December 2024, NFF organized the Climate Change Forum, presenting in-depth analyses on agricultural policies and practices, crop irrigation, and marginalized groups.

The forum's main recommendations include:

- Prioritization of agriculture adaptation in the national development agenda.
- Development of a national plan for climate change adaptation and allocation of state funds to climate adaptation measures in agriculture. Improvement of rural infrastructure and irrigation systems.
- Formation of an Inter-Sectoral Climate Change Working Group within the Ministry of Agriculture, for the purpose of policy and measure coordination.

### **Visits Performed**

#### **1. Study Visit to Slovenia (January 2024)**

Representatives of NFF Young Farmers Network took part in a study visit to learn about the systems for young farmers' support in Slovenia.

#### **2. Field Visit with the Minister of Agriculture of the RNM (March 2024)**

The discussions during this field visit focused on the problems and challenges of rural area women and the promotion of the social security program for women engaged in agricultural activities.

#### **3. Visits with International Delegations**

During 2024, meetings were organized with the German State Secretary, a group of Swedish MPs, and the US Ambassador to the Republic of North Macedonia, focusing on rural development policies and support of women farmers. During these visits, meetings were held with individual farmers at the farms of Zorica Dimova from the village of Rzhanchino, Skopje region; Vaska Mojsavska from the village of Timjanik, Negotino region, and Milena Angelova from the village of Palikura, Kavadarci region.

### **Participation in Agricultural and Rural Fairs**

NFF actively participated in multiple fairs, including:

1. Fair “Brave and Loud” organized by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy in the village of Krivogashtani, Prilep region, which was attended by 15 food operators that are NFF members.
2. Fair in Kriva Palanka, attended by 7 food operators that are NFF members. The fair was organized by the Municipality of Kriva Palanka.
3. Agro Fair – Strumica, where 10 small food operators that are NFF members, participated. The fair was organized by Proagro Farmeri.
4. Fair organized by Slow Food Macedonia at the Limak Hotel – Skopje, where 5 small food operators that are NFF members, participated.
5. Macedonian Food and Products Fair “Taste the Tradition” organized by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, held in the Avionche Park neighborhood in Skopje with the participation of 22 food operators that are NFF members.
6. Macedonian traditional Food Fair named “Homemade, natural, delicious” organized by NFF in Skopje City Mall, where 28 food operators that are NFF members participated.

These events provided opportunities to promote agricultural products and smallholder farmers’ economic development, strengthen networking and advocate for better market access for farmers.

### **Establishing a Regional Platform for the Economic and Social Empowerment of Rural Women**

With the support of the Swedish Development Organization We Effect, the National Federation of Farmers played an important role in establishing the Regional Platform for Improving the Economic and Social Status of Rural Women in the Western Balkans. Coordination meetings in Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina resulted in the development of a Mission, Vision, Four-Year Strategy, Program of Activities and Action Plan. A multidimensional poverty analysis for rural women developed by NFF in cooperation with organizations from Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina was presented at the First Regional Conference on Rural Women Empowerment in the Entire South-West Europe Region, held in Tuzla.

### **Participation in Discussions on Gender Equality Policies**

The National Federation of Farmers participated in panel discussions organized by the National Network to End Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in May and November. These discussions addressed the gender wage gap, comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), and economic challenges faced by rural women. NFF used these two events to present the pressing issues, followed by policy-making recommendations to improve gender equality in rural areas.

### **Cooperation with the State Audit Office**

A considerable contribution was made to the preparation of the State Audit Office’s Report on Gender Equality and Rural Women’s Access to the Labor Market in 2023. This Report emphasizes the importance of involving NGOs in the creation of women farmer support programs that will lead to financial assistance measures and the introduction of maternity leave for registered women farmers, which is a particularly

significant achievement after 30 years of lobbying and advocacy. The Federation of National Farmers also participated in a series of consultative meetings before the publication of this Report in January 2024.

### **International Day of Rural Women 2024**

With the support of the Swedish Development Organization We Effect and Sweden, the National Federation of Farmers organized the International Day of Rural Women for the 17th time. The 2024 event was held in the village of Dihovo, Bitola region, including key stakeholders from institutions and civil society, as well as the President of the Republic of Macedonia, Mrs. Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova. The discussions highlighted the improvement of health care and social protection for rural women, the improvement of rural infrastructure, ensuring access to medical services, pension and maternity leave rights and enhancing the promotion of the Social Security Program for Women in Agriculture. The panel discussion highlighted the need to improve the statistical visibility of rural women in national data in order to enable better policy-making and a systemic solution for registered individual female farmers. At the event, in order to recognize the dedication to the work to improve the economic and social status of women in rural areas, as well as the success of active women farmers, certificates were awarded to Rahela Trantalovska, Tanja Oreshkova, Vesna Biljarska, Olga Jordanovska Grujoska, Elena Karajanova, Ruza Stoimilova, as well as to some organizations that have made a real contribution to rural women and women in the country, such as the National Network against Violence and Domestic Violence and the Association “Radika De” from the Debar region. The event was attended by representatives of institutions and rural women from all over the country.

### **PROJECT “ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF NFF AND IMPROVED MARKET LINKAGES FOR THE SMALL FARMERS AND PRODUCERS FROM RURAL AREAS AIMING AT INCREASED INCOME”**

The Project “Organizational development of NFF and improved market linkages for the small farmers and food producers from rural areas aiming at their increased income” is supported by Sweden and the Swedish Development Agency We Effect. The expected project outputs are the following: growth of rural area enterprises and smallholder farmers in order to increase and provide more income and employment opportunities in rural areas, especially for women and youth; and NFF enhanced organizational capacity and financial stability. The focus is to ensure organizational development and financial sustainability in order to continue the organization’s lobbying and activism, and also to develop new services that will ensure new sources of income.

**GOAL:** By re-establishing and introducing alternative market linkages for farmers, creating food hubs, and providing economic prospects for vulnerable populations, including women and rural youth, solutions are offered to improve livelihoods and protect vulnerable groups of people both now and in the future.

### **KEY ACTIVITIES IN 2024:**

#### **Producer Organizations**

Producer groups were recognized by a large number of farmers as a potential for economic association and improved market linkages. Producer organizations are formal entities that help agricultural producers maximize collective business benefits through shared resources, better price negotiations and improved market positioning. Currently, there are no formally registered producer groups. However, financial support and structured governance motivate producers to set up these organizations. Workshops with small farmers in this regard, illustrated that there are both challenges and opportunities, with skepticism



largely stemming from a lack of trust, fear of losing control and past unsuccessful collaborations. In 2024, 8 workshops were organized by NFF, attended by farmers who are otherwise NFF members that gained knowledge about what Producer Groups mean and how they operate in the EU. In addition, 6 more workshops were organized with more than 100 participants who were informed about the legal segments relating to producer group registration and business plan preparation in order for these producer groups to be recognized and able to operate. More than 86 workshop participants believe that the project is an excellent opportunity to provide support and guidance to the organizations of new producer groups in light of EU harmonisation and presentation of global agricultural market challenges. Out of eight potential producer groups to be formed, six have already started their process of preparation in both legal and business terms. Through these targeted workshops, farmers significantly improved their understanding of the meaning and joint impact of producer groups in agriculture. These workshops focused on educating farmers on the benefits of collective action, such as improved market access, shared resources and better bargaining power. These capacity building sessions provided practical knowledge on the establishment and management of producer organizations, covering topics such as governance, financial management and marketing strategies. The training also emphasized the importance of trust and collaboration, addressing common concerns such as loss of independence and unequal contributions.

#### **PROJECT “SUPPORT OF THE MARKET LINKAGES FOR RURAL POPULATION WITH STRONG ACCENT ON PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY, RURAL WOMEN AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS”**

The Project “Support of the Market Linkages for Rural Population with Strong Accent on People with Disability, Rural Women and Other Vulnerable Groups” is supported by the Project “Support to Economic Diversification of Rural Areas in Southeast Europe” (SEDRA II), supported by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

**GOAL:** The goal of the project is to enable the creation of market relations for the rural population, which will also include people with special needs, women and youth from rural areas and other vulnerable groups, in order to provide them with opportunities to create either new or additional jobs and increase their income. Improving the operation of the online platform [www.efarm.mk](http://www.efarm.mk) is part of the project and there are currently 133 platform accounts of farmers who promote and sell their products of high quality and grown in an ecologically healthy environment. This project also supported the implementation of a regional meeting of organizations from the region (including North Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro) in order to create a regional platform to improve the economic and social status of women from rural areas.

#### **KEY ACTIVITIES IN 2024:**

Within this project, a “Manual on Best Practices for People with Disabilities, Women and Other Vulnerable Groups in Rural Areas” was prepared in 2024.

#### **PROJECT “STRENGTHENING THE EMPLOYABILITY OF RURAL WOMEN THROUGH PROFILPASS”**

The Project “Strengthening the Employability of Rural Women through *ProfilPASS*” is supported by the regional Projects “Social Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups in the Western Balkans” and “Support to Economic Diversification of Rural Areas in Southeast Europe (SEDRA II)” implemented by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ).

**GOAL:** Significant contribution to improving the socio-economic status of rural women in North Macedonia through the ProfillPASS methodology that identifies income-generating skills and entrepreneurial potential. Project activities enable rural women to either acquire or recognize and strengthen their existing skills and competencies in accordance with the local labor market needs, or to obtain the necessary support and resources to start their own business. ProfilPASS is a methodology that allows each person to assess their skills and competencies acquired throughout their life. ProfilPASS includes a portfolio used in the process guided by a certified counselor.

#### **KEY ACTIVITIES IN 2024:**

Within this project, training was organized for 12 female and male counselors that are members of the National Federation of Farmers, regarding the tool “ProfilPASS for Women – We Can Do It!”. As to the criteria for participation in this training, applicants were required to have: at least secondary education completed; experience in working with women of risk categories and other vulnerable groups in rural areas; and certainly, to be NFF members.

Through a public call, 12 applicants that are NFF members were selected, 10 of whom were women and 2 were men. The training for NFF members to become counselors was held by certified ProfillPASS trainers from the Lifelong Learning Center in Skopje. After successfully completing their training, these counselors received support to implement in practice this methodology in the field. This methodology helps counseled persons get encouraged, motivated, and become aware of their own value and abilities, and it supports their (re)integration into education and/or the labor market.

After the training, the counselors identified 36 rural women to be mentored using the ProfillPASS methodology for women – “We can do it!”. Each counselor selected three women based on predefined criteria, prioritizing vulnerable categories such as: unemployed women; low-income women; young women with potential for development, employment or starting a business; women farmers; victims of violence; girls from agricultural families; inactive women and unpaid family workers; women with potential for professional development; single mothers, widows, etc. The implementation of mentoring started late December 2023 and continued until the end of February 2024. The counselors conducted five sessions with each of their three participants, documenting the counseling process through forms and session notes. During the counseling process, the counselors received both individual and group support from certified trainers through mentoring sessions. Individual sessions were held throughout January and early February 2024, totaling 24 individual sessions (1 hour per session). A group session for certificate preparation was held on 16 February 2024, involving trainers, counselors, NFF Project Manager and a GlZ representative.

At the end of February and in March 2024, the needs for additional education and support were identified for 36 rural women beneficiaries mentored through the ProfillPASS methodology. By the mapping process, it was identified that training was needed in entrepreneurship and basic farm accounting, personal growth and development, and digital marketing. Within this support, the greatest interest was expressed in equipment for processing fruit, vegetables, and dairy products, as well as starting individual businesses related to elderly care, crafts, and child education. The selection of trainers and the implementation of 2 educational workshops (in Skopje and Debar) with three modules took place from April to May 2024, along with the selection and delivery of the respective equipment within the same period.

Between April and June 2024, NFF organized six information sessions to educate women farmers about the state support measures available. A total of 75 women from the regions of Prespa, Negotino, Berovo, Strumica, Kochani and Prilep participated in these sessions.

## **PROJECT “LOCAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT IN AGRICULTURAL REGIONS BY STRENGTHENING CAPACITY OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING”**

The Project “Local Industry Development in Agricultural Regions by Strengthening Capacity of Management and Marketing”, supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), is implemented through the National Federation of Farmers.

**GOAL:** The main goal of this project was to set up a One Village, One Product model in the village of Timjanik near Negotino using the product called majun. Behind this goal is the idea of promoting in rural communities of our country the OVOP (One Village, One Product) principles and strategy through one local product, that is majun in this case, based on NFF member’s action plan for the establishment of this methodology. The implementation should lead to further standardization and branding, as well as promotion of the entire village and additional recognition of Timjanik as a majun-producing village.

### **KEY ACTIVITIES IN 2024:**

As part of the ongoing efforts to improve the development of local industry in agricultural regions, NFF participated in the JICA KCCP program entitled as “Local Industry Development in Agricultural Regions by Strengthening Capacity of Management and Marketing”. The training was attended by Biljana Petrovska - Mitrevska, Project Manager at the National Federation of Farmers, who developed an action plan aimed at addressing the challenges of inadequate branding, promotion and marketing of local products, with a special focus on majun in the Negotino region. This action plan, inspired by the One Village, One Product (OVOP) concept, aims to introduce this approach in North Macedonia, specifically aimed at the promotion of majun in Negotino. To this end, the National Federation of Farmers organized the first info workshop in October 2023 in Negotino, where the “One Village, One Product” model was presented, which as a pilot project included the Negotino region village of Timjanik and the production of majun. This method was implemented for the first time in our country in the village of Timjanik and aims to be implemented in other regions for different products. All activities were carried out in cooperation with the Municipality of Negotino and the local association “Shira,” whose members are rural women dedicated to the production of this delicious product.

Between October and November 2023, the National Federation of Farmers and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) conducted the process of selecting three experts to develop the One Village, One Product (OVOP) Strategy for majun in Timjanik. This phase included the engagement of three experts to draft the strategy, and their appointment took place in December 2023. By January, these experts prepared the strategy for majun in the village of Timjanik in accordance with the One Village, One Product methodology.

Then, in January 2024, the National Federation of Farmers in cooperation with JICA initiated a process to select two experts to develop a business plan for the “Shira” Association. This plan was intended to support the association consisting of 20 women from the village of Timjanik in the Negotino region, who produce the important traditional product of majun. This phase included the engagement of two experts

for the preparation of the business and marketing plan, and they were appointed on 30 January 2024 having a preparation time of 30 days.

National Federation of Farmers, in partnership with JICA, initiated the process of selecting a legal expert to assist in the registration of a barcode for the product of majun. According to the agreement, the legal expert offered support and guidance throughout the barcode registration process, which included the preparation of legal documents, submission of applications, review of procedures, and obtaining final approval. By 4 June 2024, GS1 completed the certification of the majun barcode, granting “Shira” all the rights required for business use. All required documents were provided to “Shira” on 11 June 2024, along with an explanation on how to use the GS1 system. The successful certification of the majun barcodes by “Shira”, facilitated by expert legal services and supported by NFF, highlights the key role of barcodes in modern commerce, especially in agricultural and rural development.

In April 2024, the National Federation of Farmers, in collaboration with JICA, selected a company to design and print 300 color copies of the “One Village, One Product” Strategy for Majun and selected a company to design and print 1000 copies of a Good Practice Manual on One Village, One Product Methodology.

In order to successfully promote this project, a banner was prepared that was displayed at all the events organized to promote the “One Village, One Product” methodology and the majun as an authentic local product. Additionally, two videos were produced within the project, including: one longer video (of 5 minutes) and one short video (of 35 seconds) that were broadcast on Channel 5 agricultural show “Furrows” and Channel 5 morning program “Hello Macedonia”, as well as on NFF’s social media.

On 13 June 2024, a National Workshop on the implemented project results was held, to which members of “Shira” and all stakeholders were invited. A significant highlight of this workshop was the presence of the Japanese Ambassador to the Republic of Macedonia, Mr. Kazuya Otsuka, and Ms. Nagashima Mana, the JICA representative. During this workshop, Biljana Petrovska-Mitrevska presented the methodology and results of the One Village, One Product (OVOP) Project, while Vaska Mojsovska, President of the “Shira” Association, spoke about the impact of the project on their organization. Thanks to the education, branding and promotion received through the project, “Shira” is now successfully selling branded majun on the domestic market.

This project motivated the local community to use their resources and skills to create a unique product to be sold on both the domestic and international markets.

## **MEDIA**

In the course of 2024, NFF had 180 media releases and all of its activities were shared on social media and NFF’s website, allowing for NFF’s high visibility and transparency. The number of visits to NFF Facebook page reached up to 15,000 visits per month. Within these projects, a video was also produced on the “One Village, One Product” methodology and ProfillPASS for Women methodology implemented with women from rural areas. Also, during the year, two issues of the magazine “Moja Zemja” were published, with the aim of educating and informing farmers about the latest developments in agriculture.

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT

<b>NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FARMERS</b> <i>FINANCIAL STATEMENT in MKD</i> <b>1 January – 31 December 2024 period</b>	
	<b>2024</b>
<b>1 Revenues (total)</b>	<b>15,505,345.00</b>
1.1. Project revenues	13,762,898.00
1.2. Revenues from membership fees and services	106,750.00
1.3. Revenues carried over from previous year for the purpose of ongoing activities	1,635,697.00
<b>2 Expenditures (total)</b>	<b>11,724,668.00</b>
2.1. Rental costs	296,640.00
2.2. Overheads (electricity, water supply, heating, maintenance, telephone, accounting)	836,974.00
2.3. Office costs (office supplies and equipment)	139,984.00
2.4. Travel costs	672,490.00
2.5. Social transfers and Personal Income Tax	1,283,894.00
2.6. Outsourcing	2,661,030.00
2.7. Taxes, commissions and depreciation	132,657.00
2.8. Activities	5,700,999.00

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