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STRAWBERRY PRODUCTION IN CROATIA WITH FOCUS ON VRGORAC AREA

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Abstract

Last decade, we are witnessing increased production of strawberries in the world. In Croatia production is also constantly growing. The main Croatian areas of growing strawberries are the area of Vrgorac, Neretva river delta, surrounding of city of Zagreb, Podravina and county of Vukovar. In Vrgorac, growing strawberries for most of the producers is the semi-professional family business which presents additional family income. In Croatia are planted around 4 million seedlings on area of around 500 ha, of which 95% relates to frigo seedlings and only 5% of green seedlings. Total country production is around 3000t of strawberries yearly. Strawberries are produced on open fields and undercover in higher and smaller greenhouses. Concerning the low input costs and higher market prices it became an interesting fruit for farmers and chance to achieve higher incomes. Largest producers worldwide of strawberries are the United States of America and China. In the Europe, the largest producer is Spain. Biggest share of imported strawberries in Croatia are from Spain. Last five years strawberry production in Croatia has reached a level of self-sufficiency and achieved export potential. The main export of Croatian strawberries went the countries of European Union (EU) and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Agriculture plays an important role in country's total GDP and employment. European Union is the main trading partner, concerning that more than 60% of import and export are form the EU countries. Constraints for strawberry producers in Croatia are the level of production, uneven production techniques and land fragmentation.

Keywords: *strawberry, Croatia, rural development, Vrgoracka jagoda.*