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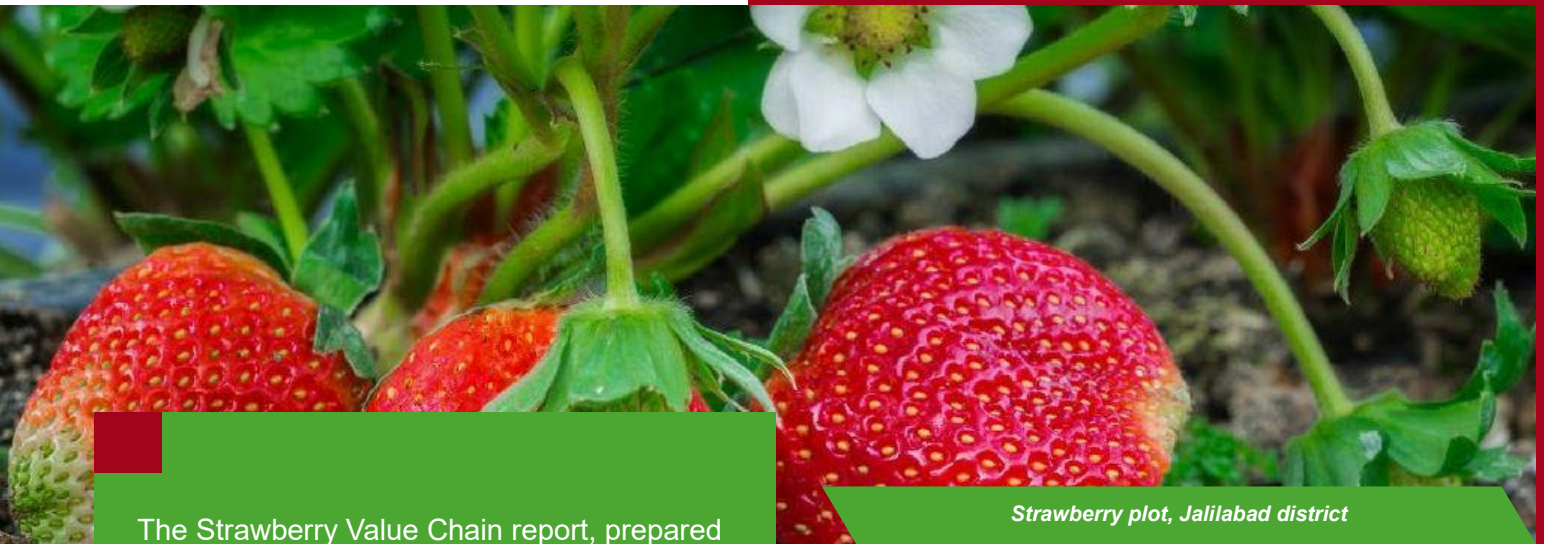
European Union Support to
Lankaran-Astara Economic
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EU4LANKARAN NEWS FLASH

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"EU4LANKARAN" PROJECT SUPPORTS JALILABAD'S STEADY GROWING STRAWBERRY INDUSTRY



Strawberry plot, Jalilabad district

The Strawberry Value Chain report, prepared by the EU4Lankaran project, highlights the significant role of strawberry production in Jalilabad district, located in the Lankaran-Astara economic region of Azerbaijan. Over the years, strawberry cultivation in the district has shown considerable growth, both in terms of area and yield, making it a key contributor to the local economy.

As of 2023, strawberries were grown on 505 hectares in Jalilabad, producing 12,946 tons. This is a steady increase from previous years, with 490 hectares producing 12,440 tons in 2021 and 607 hectares yielding 15,205 tons in 2022. Most of these strawberries are exported, with 85.8% of the 2023 crop sent to markets in Russia. This high level of export shows how important Jalilabad's strawberry production is, not only in Azerbaijan but also internationally.

One of the famous communities in Jalilabad is "Fadak" community, formed under Goytepe Baghi LLC in Goytepe city, unites 350 strawberry producers. Led by Miragha Hasanov, the community provides members with supplier credits for strawberry cultivation. Miragha also offers affordable cellophane mulches and purchases the members' produce, selling it in Baku and exporting it to Russia.



Strawberry plot, Jalilabad

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The economic significance of strawberry production in Jalilabad is underscored by the fact that it is one of the main income-generating crops in the district, alongside wheat, barley, and potatoes. However, strawberries offer a higher income potential due to their high value, even if the production volume is lower compared to other crops like wheat or potatoes.

The district benefits from a mild, hot semi-desert and dry steppe climate, which, coupled with the region's favorable soil conditions, supports the cultivation of remontant (always bearing) strawberry varieties like Murano, San-Andreas, and Albion. These varieties are well-suited to the climatic and soil conditions of Jalilabad, contributing to the district's reputation for producing high-quality strawberries that meet export standards.



Strawberry seedlings

To address some of these issues, the “EU4Lankaran” project provides significant support in improving the strawberry value chain in Jalilabad. This includes initiatives to enhance branding and marketing strategies, which are crucial for searching new markets beyond Russia. Additionally, the project aims to increase the capacity of local facilities in district to get a HACCP certification, thereby enabling the export of their products to other markets. The project also supports the development of bankable projects to introduce new technologies like Individual Quick Frozen (IQF) and Frigo Seedlings into the strawberry sectors. Such investments are essential for reducing post-harvest losses and for adding value to the raw strawberry product, thereby increasing the income of local producers.



Seedling plantation, Jalilabad

Despite these successes, there are challenges that strawberry producers in Jalilabad face, particularly in marketing and sales. The local market dynamics, where strawberries are primarily sold to exporters and domestic traders, highlight the need for better marketing strategies and infrastructure. Furthermore, the absence of advanced packaging solutions and the limited availability of cold storage facilities pose risks to maintaining the quality of strawberries during transport, especially for export.

In conclusion, while Jalilabad district has made impressive progress in strawberry production, ongoing challenges in marketing, infrastructure, and value addition need to be addressed to fully capitalize on the potential of this high-value crop. The continued support from “EU4Lankaran” projects will be instrumental in overcoming some of these challenges and ensuring that strawberry production remains a sustainable and profitable venture for the farmers of Jalilabad.

Stay tuned for more updates from the “EU Support to Lankaran-Astara Economic Region of Azerbaijan” project.