



# GENDER SENSITIVE POST-EARTHQUAKE RECOVERY AND RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT

Gender Sensitive Value Chain Analysis (GSVCA)  
in the Municipality of Mirdita

DECEMBER 2021



# GENDER SENSITIVE VALUE CHAIN ANALYSIS (GSVCA) IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF MIRDITË

December 2021

The Gender Sensitive Value Chain Analysis (GSVCA) in the Municipality of Mirditë was conducted by Smart ICT on behalf of the Gender Sensitive Post-Earthquake Recovery and Reconstruction Project, implemented by UN Women in Albania, with the financial support of the Government of Sweden.

Contract No. ALB-2021-03

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*Disclaimer:*

This analysis is prepared in the framework of the Gender Sensitive Post-Earthquake Recovery and Reconstruction Project, implemented by UN Women in Albania, with the financial support of the Government of Sweden, through the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Fund in Albania.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AU	Administrative Units
APP	Albanian-Austrian Partnership Foundation
ARDA	Agricultural and Rural Development Agency
ATTC	Agricultural Technology Transfer Centers
CBT	Community-Based Tourism
CEMR	Council of European Municipalities and Regions
DCED	Donors Committee for Economic Development
ETC	Etcetera
EU	European Union
GLP	General Local Plan
GSVCA	Gender Sensitive Value Chain Analysis
HACCP	Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point
INSTAT	Albanian National Institute of Statistics
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
IPARD	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance for Rural Development
LED	Local Economic Development
MAP	Medicinal and Aromatic Plants
NFA	National Food Authority
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PDNA	Post-Disaster Needs Assessment
PDyV	Mandatory Local Plan
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
TDP	Territorial Development Plan
TS	Territorial Strategy

UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UN Women	The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VC	Value Chain
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
AU	Administrative Units

# 1. GENERAL INFORMATION

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

As part of the post-earthquake reconstruction efforts of 2019, UN Women in Albania, with the financial support of the Swedish government, is implementing the “Gender Sensitive Recovery and Reconstruction Project” focusing on supporting and empowering women in 11 affected municipalities - Shijak, Durrës, Kruja, Tirana, Kamëz, Kavaja, Vora, Rrogozhina, Kurbin, Mirditë and Lezha, both in rural and urban areas.

Past experiences have shown that girls and women are differently and often disproportionately affected by natural disasters and crises and have unequal levels of recovery. That was also the same with the deadly earthquake of November 2019 in Albania, which had a disproportional impact on girls and women. In particular the earthquake, followed by the COVID-19 health crisis, has affected women in rural areas who face the risk of losing vital agricultural production; single mothers or women who are head of the family, that are at risk of poverty and losing their homes; victims of domestic violence and/or intimate partner violence and other highly vulnerable groups, such as women and men with disabilities, the elderly, LGBTI and women and men of the Roma and Egyptian communities.

The project focuses on three main areas:

1. Supporting national and local authorities in preparing and developing risk reduction plans, including the priorities of girls and women.
  - The objective of these plans is to increase the capacity of LGUs, by providing immediate relief to the disaster-affected population as well as by taking into account the specific needs of girls and women and providing support for their long-term economic and social recovery.
2. Supporting girls and women in affected areas to access and benefit from economic opportunities. Concrete activities include:
  - Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) through the development of Gender Sensitive Value Chain Analysis (GSVCA) to identify employment opportunities and market access for women;
  - Full implementation of activities for the post-earthquake sustainability through the development of the value chain, economic inclusion and empowerment of women by aiming to increase the family income;
  - Local Economic Development (LED) through gender equality approaches and women's empowerment activities to bring sustainable local economic growth and improved livelihoods;
  - Providing legal support and legal assistance to women and men in affected communities for registering new homes and apartments, as well as reconstructed buildings on behalf of both spouses, based on the Albanian legislation;
3. Treating domestic violence and gender-based violence in earthquake-affected areas through:

- Creating capacities of referral mechanisms and other service providers for managing cases of violence towards women and their preparation to provide these services even during emergency situations.
- Providing direct legal and psychological assistance as well as other services to girls and women in the affected areas.

Gender sensitive analysis of the value chain analysis in the Municipality of Mirditë was conducted within the framework of the area number 2. *Supporting girls and women in the affected areas for accessing and benefiting from economic opportunities.* The primary objective of the analysis was to identify the main sectors in this municipality which present opportunities for inclusive economic growth and development, as well as evaluating the involvement of women in the processes and their opportunities for empowerment; and secondly, focusing on value chains with the greatest potential for development, by providing recommendations for specific measures to enhance the role of women and eliminate gender-biased initiatives.

Inclusive development will be achieved by: (i) supporting creation of new job positions for women in those sectors where women can get involved; (ii) increasing the number of women (poor, marginalized and vulnerable) in employment, production, processing and marketing; and (iii) increasing the productivity and competitiveness of the products produced by these women.

This objective translates into specific intervention to increase the number of farmers/workers/producers - especially poor, earthquake-affected, vulnerable and marginalized women - who effectively and formally engage in employment or self-employment, take part in value chains and market systems, earn higher returns and enjoy economic security.

This approach is based on the Market Systems Development methodology ("Making Markets Work for the Poor" - M4P) and follows the guidelines of the Donors Committee for Economic Development (DCED) for Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) in the context of private sector development. The activities will be coordinated and supervised by UN Women and implemented by professionals who provide NGOs/associations with a solid history of technical engagement in inclusive private sector development and gender responsive, as well as knowledge for communities.

The specific activities are fully in line with the short-term solutions suggested by the OECD for the Western Balkans<sup>1</sup> and are based on the recent experience of gender-sensitive interventions in improving value chains in the country<sup>2</sup>.

The focus of this study is the practical analysis of the main value chains in the Municipality of Mirditë, from the perspective of the gender attribute. The main purpose of the gender-sensitive value chain analysis is to provide the municipality of Mirditë with practical recommendations that affect the population of the municipality as a whole (with a special

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1 OECD (2020). COVID-19 crisis in Western Balkans. Economic impact, policy responses and long-term sustainable solutions. <http://www.oecd.org/south-east-europe/COVID-19-Crisis-Response-Western-Balkans.pdf>

2 Gender sensitive approach to the value chain development: Summary document. Prepared and published by TETRA TECH for the USAID project of Planning and Local Governance in Albania 2020.

focus on women in rural areas), that will create employment or self-employment of women, strengthen their role in selected VCs, their grouping and cooperation to increase their influence as main actors in VCs and as the result improving the living conditions of women (and families) and their role in community.

This analysis was made possible due to the excellent cooperation with the staff of the Municipality of Mirditë.

*This study is directly related to these objectives by supporting the women economic empowerment and promoting gender equality, at the same time improving the selected value chains (VC) in the Municipality of Mirditë. This activity supports capacity building of local value chain actors and supporting functions, as a better way to support value chain development by taking into account the gender aspect.*

## 1.2 NATIONAL CONTEXT FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Gender equality describes the concept according to which all human beings, both women and men, are free to develop their personality skills and make their choices without restrictions set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles or prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behaviors, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favored equally. It does not mean that women and men should be made equal, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born female or male. (UN Women, 2011)

Over the years, Albania has developed a sustainable legal and institutional framework to promote gender equality and the protection of women's rights. The legal framework for promoting legal equality has been significantly improved by the ratification of a large number of important international instruments and other amendments. Below are some of the most important documents:

- The Constitution of Albania adopted in 1998 provides and guarantees equality between men and women and provides policies for equal opportunities and prevention of discrimination, among other causes, based on gender (Article 18).
- The Law on Gender Equality was adopted in 2008. This law regulates the basic principles of gender equality, requiring equal participation of women and men in all areas of life, equal status between women and men, equal opportunities and to enjoy rights and fulfill their obligations in society and to receive equal benefits from their achievements. The law defines "gender-based discrimination" (Article 11).
- The Law on Protection from Discrimination was adopted in 2010. Under this law, no one can discriminate on any grounds such as gender, race, color, ethnicity, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, political, religious or philosophical beliefs, economic, educational or social status, pregnancy, family background, parental responsibility, age, family or marital status, civil status, place of residence, health status, genetic predisposition, disability, belonging to a particular group or based on some other cause.
- National Strategy for Gender Equality, 2021-2030, approved by decision of the Council of Ministers no. 400, dated 30.6.2021, is a guide to a society where all individuals women, men, youngsters, girls and boys, regardless of age, gender, place of birth and residence, ethnic or social group, disability, affiliation of religious belief, expression of gender identity and sexual orientation, as well as other individual characteristics, are given equal opportunities to develop their potentials; to

participate equally in political and public decision-making; to elect and be elected; to be educated and trained throughout life; to be employed and employ by advancing towards new professions, challenging stereotypes and gender division of labor; to influence the social and economic development of the country and to be supported of their socially and economically development; create healthy families, where parents share responsibilities equally and where communication is the key to problem solving; to live free from harmful practices and violence; and where vulnerable groups are treated with priority until they are empowered and enjoy equal rights and opportunities in all walks of life - a society where equality is not confused with uniformity and where no one should be left behind.

*Strategic goal I - Fulfillment of economic and social rights for women, youngsters, girls and men, young people, boys in society and empowerment of women, youngsters from all groups, aiming at the growth and sustainability of the (green) environmental economy, as well as their equal participation in digitalization.*

- o Application of the legal framework and improved policies that provide equal sharing of work and unpaid family care between women and men, youngsters, girls and boys.*
- o Increasing the access of women, youngsters from all groups (to financial services and products, as well as to productive resources.*
- o Reducing barriers that keep women and girls away from the job market, as well as increasing the access of women and girls from all groups, to decent work even in non-traditional sectors of employment (in particular in science, technology, engineering, mathematics).*

At the local level, the promotion of inclusion and equality is a component of legal frameworks and policies, which highlight the obligations of local government units in the aspect of gender equality (UN Women, 2019). For example, the Law on “Gender Equality” addresses the need to promote gender equality in local government and the specific units that are responsible for presenting, overseeing and monitoring performance and service, including gender equality. Efforts have been made by several municipalities to meet the regulation of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and EU standards, adopting a clear structure, priorities, responsibilities and budgets that respond equally to the needs of women, men, youth (UN Women, 2018).

As a result of such proactive laws, policies and principles, Albania has made improvements in many aspects of gender equality, for example, at the role that women play in private sector development. Compared to 2016, the percentage of enterprises owned or run by women has increased in all regions of Albania in 2017. However, decentralization and successful implementation of legal and development frameworks is still challenging, and the pace of change in terms of women's economic empowerment through private sector is slow, especially for women in rural areas. Gender norms, roles, responsibilities and prejudices in women's ability to access productive resources (such as land, finance, networks, technology and equipment) and business services show that women and men still do not have an equal level in the economic and social aspect.

Some obvious impacts of gender prejudices in Albania in terms of economic empowerment through enterprises, are for example:

- The employment rate for the population aged 15-64 is 77.1% for men and 61.2% for women of this age group. About 22.8% of women are unpaid workers in the family business, while for men this percentage is only 13.1%. A significant proportion of men are self-employed 33.3%, while the share of self-employed women goes up to 21.5%.<sup>3</sup>
- Women and men aged 15-64, are mostly employed in the agricultural sector. In 2020, 41.4% of female employees were employed in the agricultural sector. The second sector that occupies the largest share in the employment of women and men after the agricultural sector is trade, transport, hotels, business and administrative services, respectively with 21.6% employed women and 31.7% men. The gender pay gap is 6.6%. So, men have an average gross monthly salary 6.6% higher than women. Compared to 2019, in 2020 there is a reduction of the gender pay gap by 3.5 percentage point.
- Women own or manage 25.5% of all enterprises. <sup>4</sup> Divided by business size, it turns out:
  - Business up to 4 employees 25.8%
  - Business with 05-09 employees 23.9%
  - Business with 10-49 employees 22%
  - Business with +50 employees 22.8%
- In Albania, more than 80 percent of land titles are under the name of "head of household" or former head of household (father-in-law, father or grandfather). Women in rural areas have limited access to land information, limited access to support services, and perceive high levels of inequality in family decision-making and land rights compared to male family members (Zhllima, Edvin et al., 2016).

Women in agricultural farm management represent only 7% of the total number of farms in Albania (INSTAT 2020). Although the number of female and male farm workers is at comparable levels in rural areas (224,639 males and 267,098 females), there is a large difference between them in terms of non-farm work (UNDP, 2016).

In most cases, on family farms there is a noticeable division by gender of farm work processes. Men's roles are work-related that include control over decision-making, agricultural assets, commodity mobility, and the market; while women's roles are related to manual labor in agriculture and livestock, including activities related to the cultivation or feeding of animals, harvesting, milking, processing of agricultural and livestock products and food, also household chores. This distribution of labor has resulted in women having limited opportunities and control over agricultural assets, decision-making processes, and commercial transactions. Although rural women have been a priority of support programs offered to the agricultural sector, only 64 of them have benefited from IPARD funds, approximately 10.1 million Euros. Of the support schemes implemented during 2020, only 15% of the beneficiary farmers were women (MARD 2021).

### 1.3 UN WOMEN IN ALBANIA

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, also known as **UN Women**, is a United Nations entity working for the empowerment of women. UN Women is a member of the United Nations Development Group. UN Women was created to accelerate progress in meeting the needs of women and girls, worldwide. UN Women

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<sup>3</sup> Men and Women in Albania 2021. INSTAT

<sup>4</sup> Men and Women in Albania 2021. INSTAT

supports the United Nations Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality and works with governments and civil society to design the laws, policies, programs and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and to really benefit women and girls all over the world. It works globally to make the vision of the **Goal for Sustainable Development** a reality for women and girls in all aspects of life.

UN Women, based on the vision for equality embodied in the United Nations Charter, aims to eliminate discrimination against women and girls; women's empowerment; and achieving equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action, peace and security. By putting women's rights at the heart of all its efforts, UN Women leads and coordinates the efforts of the United Nations system to ensure that commitments to gender equality and gender integration to go into action around the world.

Active in Albania since establishing the Country Program in 2007, UN Women works closely with government and civil society to design and implement laws, policies, programs and services needed to improve the status of women and achieve global standards for gender equality. Within the **"One UN"** Program in Albania, **UN Women Albania** leads in gender equality issues and provides coordination and support for related activities by focusing on initiatives in four priority areas that are fundamental to women's equality and that can pave the way for all in Albania:

- ❖ Leadership and political participation
- ❖ Economic empowerment
- ❖ Ending of violence against women
- ❖ National planning and budgeting

To address some of these post-earthquake needs of November 26, 2019, and as part of post-earthquake reconstruction efforts in 2019, UN Women in Albania, with financial support from the Swedish government, is implementing a project focusing on supporting and strengthening women in the 11 affected municipalities - Shijak, Durrës, Krujë, Tirana, Kamëz, Kavaja, Vora, Rogozhinë, Kurbin, Mirditë and Lezha, both in rural and urban areas.

The "Gender Sensitive for Post-Earthquake Recovery and Reconstruction" project, which is implemented in close cooperation with the Municipality of Mirditë, provides support to local authorities in preparing and developing risk reduction plans, which include the priorities of girls and women; supporting women and girls in affected areas to access and benefit from economic opportunities.

The overall purpose of this report, prepared by Smart ICT Services Ltd, in the framework of the above-mentioned project, is the analysis and identification of key sectors in the Municipality of Mirditë, which present opportunities for economic growth and development, assessing the involvement of women in processes and their chances for empowerment.

An important part of this report is also the in-depth analysis of 1-2 value chains with more potential for development, as well as the preparation of specific recommendations and development plans, which aim to increase the role of women and eliminate actions with gender prejudice.

## 1.4 METHODOLOGY

The selected method for evaluation has been adapted from the methodologies successfully applied in several other countries, and is particularly suitable for countries which are in the initial stages of local government reform and have limited statistical data. This methodology combines information collected and processed in the field (primary sources) with those administered by the Municipality and various government institutions (secondary sources).

This report developed by Smart ICT Services has as its primary objective the identification of key sectors in the municipality of Mirditë, presenting opportunities for growth and economic development, as well as assessing the involvement of women in the processes and their opportunities for empowerment, and secondly, focusing on value chains with the greatest potential for development, providing recommendations for specific measures to enhance the role of women and eliminate gender-biased initiatives.

Data and information regarding the general description of the municipality of Mirditë, its economic development and the main sectors of economic potential are taken from the main reports prepared in the framework of the "General Local Plan of the Municipality of Mirditë (GLP)", respectively "Territorial Development Plan (TDP)", and "Territorial Strategy" (TS), approved by the Decision of the National Council of the Territory no. 2 dated 20.06.2018; as well as the report "Strategic Environmental Assessment of Mirditë (SEA)". The information was also supplemented with data from the official website of the Municipality of Mirditë and official publications and statistical information from the Institute of Statistics in Albania. The information was updated and the data were obtained and processed from the statistical database of the Institute of Statistics in Albania (INSTAT) in 2021, for the period 2018-2020.

During the subsequent evaluation of value chains in the agricultural sector, the methodologies considered were "Market and value chain analysis of selected sectors in Albania for rural economic diversification and women's economic empowerment" (FAO 2018), "Chapter 4: Value Chain Sketching Tool" and "Module II: Sustainable Value Chains" (GIZ), which served as a reference during the construction of the value chain map (sketch).

Regarding the information from the earthquake analysis and the effects it had on the affected municipalities, and specifically the municipality of Mirditë, the information was obtained from the "Volume A Report of the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment of Albania (PDNA)", developed in the February Report "Situation Assessment of the Earthquake of Families with Children Living in Temporary Shelters in Albania", developed by the UNICEF Office in Albania & IDRA Research and Consulting

**Sector Selection.** Primary resources such as field research, were used to select sectors, including group consultations and discussion sessions with municipal representatives, producers and experts were used to select sectors. This step was split into two phases. In the first phase, a preliminary evaluation of value chains was conducted, through discussions and meetings with representatives of the municipality, producers, representatives of supporting organizations and field coordinators of the project, as a way to identify value chain opportunities. This phase ended with the organization of groups of interest meeting, during which participants had the opportunity to present and discuss additional details, share the opportunities and constraints and get a clear picture and understanding of the

value chains which helped them to select value chains in the following sectors: **Agriculture**, with a focus on fruit and vegetable products, the cultivation of medicinal and aromatic plants; **Livestock**, with a focus on goat breeding and their dairy products processing; as well as cultural and culinary **Tourism as the main areas where to focus**.

In the second phase, field visits, observations of activities, surveys and semi-structured interviews were conducted with questionnaires adapted for different actors in the value chain, namely: with the director of the center "Info Kulla", a private initiative and a gift of "Albanian-Austrian Partnership - Marianne Graf (AAP)" for the Municipality of Mirditë, to analyze the potentials and opportunities of ecotourism and with several groups of farmers to closely analyze the livestock sector, focusing on goat dairy productions.

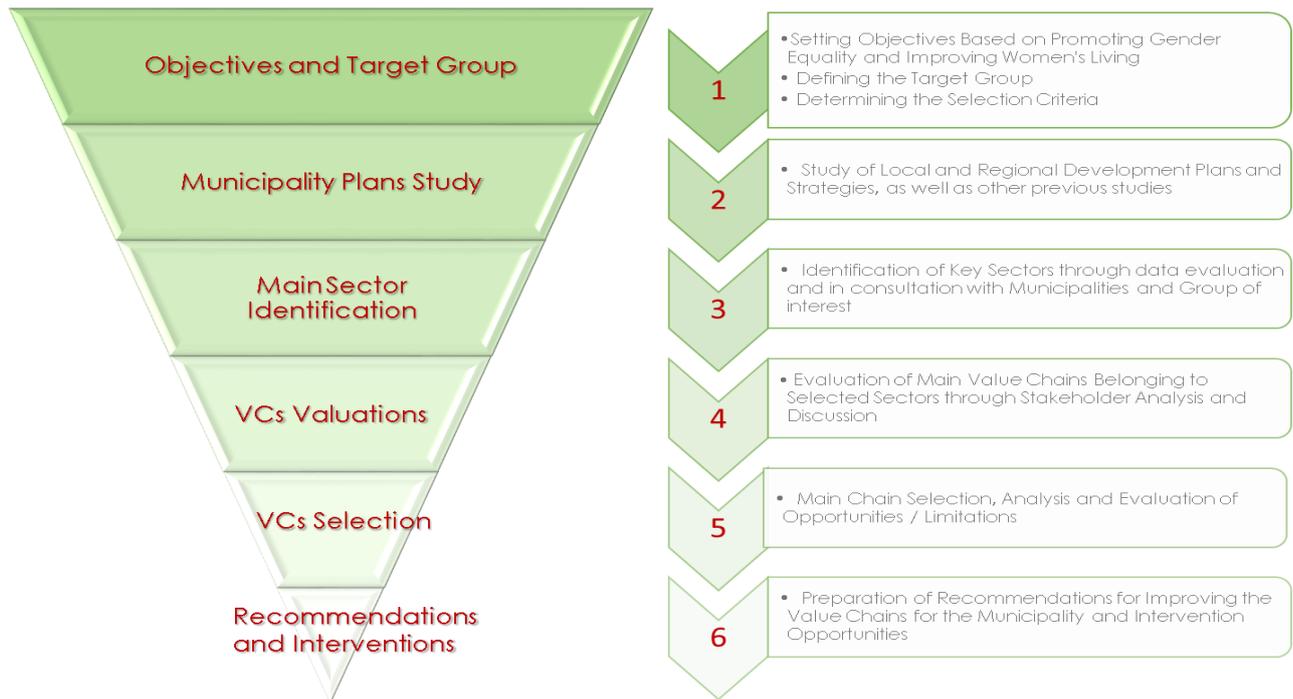


Figure 1. Methodology Approach

The main steps of the process are described below:

1. **Objectives and Target Group:** Defining objectives based on national and municipal goals (improving living and promoting gender equality) and defining the target group and selection criteria:
  - a. Target group: Women and men with low-income at the municipal level.
  - b. Criteria: the importance of the sector in creating living conditions for women and men.
2. **Study of Municipal Plans:** Initial study of municipal plans and research work, based on plans, strategies, previous studies, etc.
3. **Main Sectors:** Identification of main sectors using various reports, data and publications.
4. **Evaluation of VCs:** Evaluation of the main value chains belonging to the selected sectors through the brain storming, discussions, focus groups.
5. **Selection of VCs:** Selection of one or two main value chains and evaluation of opportunities, constraints and areas of intervention, through field research.

6. **Recommendations:** Prepare recommendations for improving the value chain for the municipality and the possibilities of intervention.

**Limits of Research Work.** The focus of this report is the practical analysis of the main value chains in the Municipality of Mirditë, seen from the gender perspective. One of the biggest challenges faced during this study is the lack of secondary resources.

Currently, in Albania, do not exist reliable statistical data, due to two factors: i) high level of informality, ii) differences in methodologies used by local authorities and INSTAT for statistical analysis utilized. Therefore, the results of research work (for main sectors/value chains) often did not match the results obtained during the group work sessions and groups of interest interviews. Moreover, most public data are often not disaggregated by gender and a large part of the statistical data published by INSTAT are not disaggregated by municipalities. The biggest problem with this data is that, with the exception of CENSUS 2011 data, there is no data on the resident population. The most recent data on the resident population is that of the 2011 CENSUS, making it quite difficult to obtain reliable statistical data.

Conceptually, implementing gender sensitivity analysis in value chains can often be problematic. Findings of research work are often general and depending on the purpose (improving women's lives or in other words, empowering women), can lead to the provision of intervention scenarios that aim more at economic development and not specifically improving the situation of women themselves. The purpose of this study is to provide the municipality of Mirditë with practical recommendations that affect the whole population of the municipality and that consequently lead to the improvement of women' living conditions in the municipality. It is important to mention, that in Albania and in those specific municipalities analyzed, the situation in the value chains is often so difficult (and poverty is so high) that any overall improvement and sustainable development regarding value chains would lead to higher incomes for the family, which would automatically mean betterment of the conditions of women and other actors in it. It's also necessary to remain attentive to the local context, including the diverse notions of masculinity.

Meeting sessions of the groups of interest, as well as the interviews conducted, are representative of the size of the study sample, which can be considered as very small (duration of the study - about 1 month). However, the use of municipal strategic plans, as well as field research, supported the hypotheses that the observed trends can be considered as representative of the groups of people, the results of which will be generalized or further transferred.

## 2. PROFILE OF MIRDITË MUNICIPALITY

Based on the Law No. 139/2015 on Territorial Division in the Republic of Albania, for Statistical Purposes NUTSII, the Municipality of Mirditë is part of the Northern Region. It borders on the north with the Municipalities of Fushë-Arrëz and Pukë, on the west with that of Lezhë and on the east with Kukës. In the south-east with the municipality of Dibër, in the south with the Mat and in the south-west with the municipality of Kurbin. The center of this municipality is the city of Rrëshen.



Figure 2: Location of Mirditë Municipality

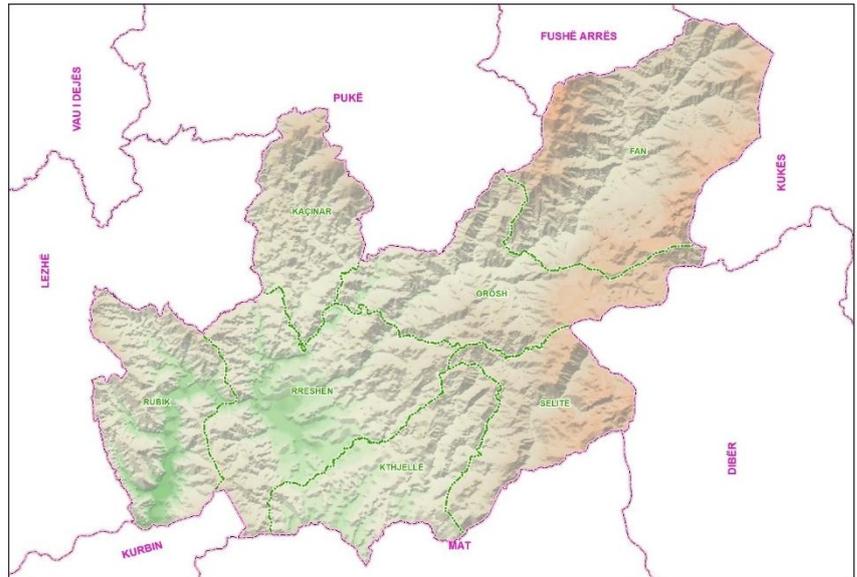


Figure 3: Administrative Map of Mirditë

This municipality consists of 7 administrative units, which are: Rrësheni, Rubiku, Selitë, Kthellë, Fan, Orosh and Kaçinar. The municipality has under its administration four cities (Rrëshen, Rubik, Kurbnesh and Repts) and 81 villages. The following table presents some of the main administrative and demographic indicators of the Municipality of Mirditë.

Data	Value	National Ranking	Ratio to national values	Average national value
Region according to NUTSII	Northern	-	-	-
Surface	909 Km <sup>2</sup>	5	3.21%	464.72 km <sup>2</sup>
Population by Civil Status	36,466	37	0.90%	73,876
Population according to the 2011 Census	22,103	38	0.79%	45,908.64
Density by Civil Status	40	52	-	159
Density according to the 2011	24	49	-	19
Number of Administrative Units (including Neighborhoods)	7	24	-	7.67
Number of Cities	4	-	-	-
Number of Villages	81	-	-	-

Table 1: Main Administrative-Demographic Data of Mirditë Municipality.

From the geophysical point of view, the territory is characterized by mountain formations, valleys, plateaus, plains and lowlands. The average altitude is 557 m above sea level, while the highest peak is Mali i Dejës 2,121 m. The territory is crossed by the rivers Fani i Madh, Fani i Vogël, Uraka, as well as other mountain streams. The climate is hilly, pre-mountainous and mountainous Mediterranean. The vegetation is quite rich and consists of shrubs, oaks, mixed forests, and mountain pastures. Medicinal plants are quite common.

The area has an economic profile consisting of mainly agricultural and livestock activities, while viticulture is turning into a very widespread activity, creating very good conditions for the development of agribusiness and agritourism. The subsoil is rich in minerals, especially copper, pyrite, chrome, the exploitation of which, in the middle of the last century, led to the creation of four cities associated with the mining industry. Most of this industry is currently out of order. This is one of the reasons that Mirditë had one of the highest levels of internal migration and emigration during the last 25 years.

The new municipality of Mirditë lies in a territory with diverse and unique cultural and ethnographic heritage. Costume, musical, architectural, and linguistic heritage constitute a separate asset. The local population is very hospitable and cultured.

After the construction of the A1 highway (Rruga e Kombit), Mirditë became important as a crossing road and as a natural gateway to Kosova. Although the construction of the Nation Road improved the volume of traffic and the quality of travel; it brought a modest impact on the socio-economic development of the area. Non-integration of rural with urban areas and internal migration to large cities are challenges that affect the quality of life and economic and social development of the municipality. Lack of public and private investments has hindered the realization of the natural potential that this municipality offers<sup>5</sup>.

## 2.1 VISION AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OF MIRDITË MUNICIPALITY

The development vision of the Municipality of Mirditë for 2030 is formulated as follows:

*"The Municipality of Mirditë will be a service and processing center, contemporary and competitive, based on the trans-European axis Albania-Kosovo (E851) and will be developed as a center of alternative forms of tourism, based on its outstanding cultural reserves natural resources"*<sup>6</sup>.

The strategy for achieving this vision is based on four strategic objectives as follows:

- 1: Economic revitalization of the area through the use of key position.
- 2: Protection and promotion of cultural heritage.
- 3: Preservation and Sustainable Management of Environment and Resources.
- 4: Improving the residents' quality of life.

For the Vision and Strategic Objectives realization, the Municipality will lead local development towards the stimulation of the tourism sector, taking advantage of the rich cultural reserves, the special architectural heritage of the Municipality in combination with its natural resources and identifying the key position of the Municipality as a bridge of

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5 <http://bashkiamirdite.gov.al/sq/plani-operacional-i-zhvillimit-vendor/>

6 General Local Plan of the Municipality of Mirdita

communication between the coast and the interior regions of the country. The Municipality plans to move towards alternative forms of tourism, such as (a) religious cultural - tourism which will be based on the numerous monuments that the Municipality has in its region (Orosh is an area with monuments in this region) and buildings outstanding architectural (Towers) and (b) in natural tourism and ecotourism that will be based on the rich natural environment of the Municipality.

The Municipality of Mirditë also aims to support the agricultural sector, mainly in the areas of the administrative units of Mirditë, Kthellë, and Selitë, which are areas with prominent rural characteristics and where there is a desire and willingness to maintain their productive activity by strengthening rural activities and ecological methods for the production of products of the area through the creation of agritourism units (such as rural farms with livestock, gastronomy, etc.).

## 2.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

According to the 2011 Census of the Institute of Statistics (INSTAT), the Municipality of Mirditë has a population of 22,103 inhabitants, while according to the Civil Registry, this municipality has 36,094 inhabitants, approximately 16.5% of the total population of Lezhë County, or about 1% of the population of the Republic of Albania. With an area of 869.71 km<sup>2</sup>, it has a density of 25.41 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup> according to CENSUS 2011 and 41.93 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>, according to the Civil Registry. Based on the data of CENSUS 2011, in the Municipality of Mirditë, live 4,839 families with, approximately, 4.57 members. The data show that large shifting demographic movements have occurred throughout the municipality, marking a population decrease of 40.35%.

Based on the 2011 Census data, approximately 50% of the population (11,062 inhabitants) is female. The 15-64 age group constitutes the largest number of the population, almost 66% of the population, both female and male. Table 2 provides the general population data divided by each Administrative Unit by age group, while Table 3 provides these data broken down by gender.

Administrative Unit	Total	Age Group		
		0-14	15-64	+65
Fan	2,977	750	1,925	302
Kaçinar	1,016	162	703	151
Kthellë	2,209	447	1,425	337
Orosh	1,899	371	1,293	235
Rrëshen	8,803	1,946	5,847	1,010
Rubik	4,454	807	2,991	656
Selitë	745	170	480	95
<b>Total of Mirditë Municipality</b>	<b>22,103</b>	<b>4,653</b>	<b>14,664</b>	<b>2,786</b>

Table 2: Population data for the Municipality of Mirdita divided by age group. (Source CENSUS 2011).

Administrative Unit	No. of Villages	No. Of Families	Total Population	Gender	
				Male	Female
Fan	14	746	2,977	1,508	1,469
Kaçinar	7	257	1,016	504	512
Kthellë	9	388	2,209	1,114	1,095
Orosh	16	344	1,899	980	919
Rrëshen	14	1,997	8,803	4,369	4,434
Rubik	12	1,000	4,454	2,183	2,271
Selitë	8	107	745	383	362
<b>Total Mirditë Municipality</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>4,839</b>	<b>22,103</b>	<b>11,041</b>	<b>11,062</b>

Table 3: Population data for Mirdita Municipality disaggregated by gender. (Source CENSUS 2011)

Figures 4 and 5 show the composition of the population divided by gender and age group for the Municipality of Mirditë in total, and divided by gender for each Administrative Unit.

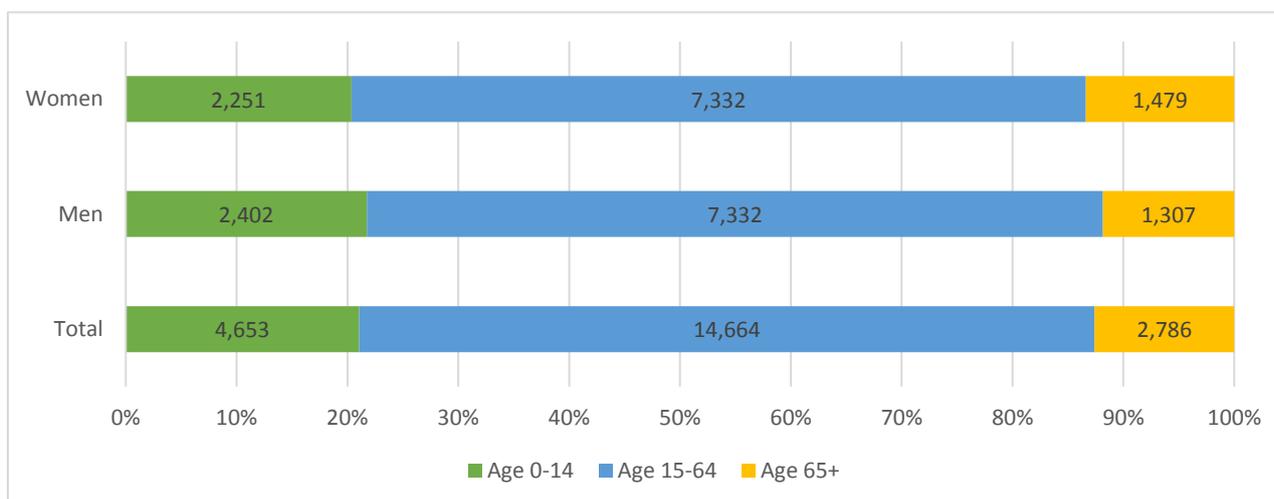


Figure 4: Population in% of Mirditë Municipality divided by gender and age group. (Source CENSUS 2011) 2011)

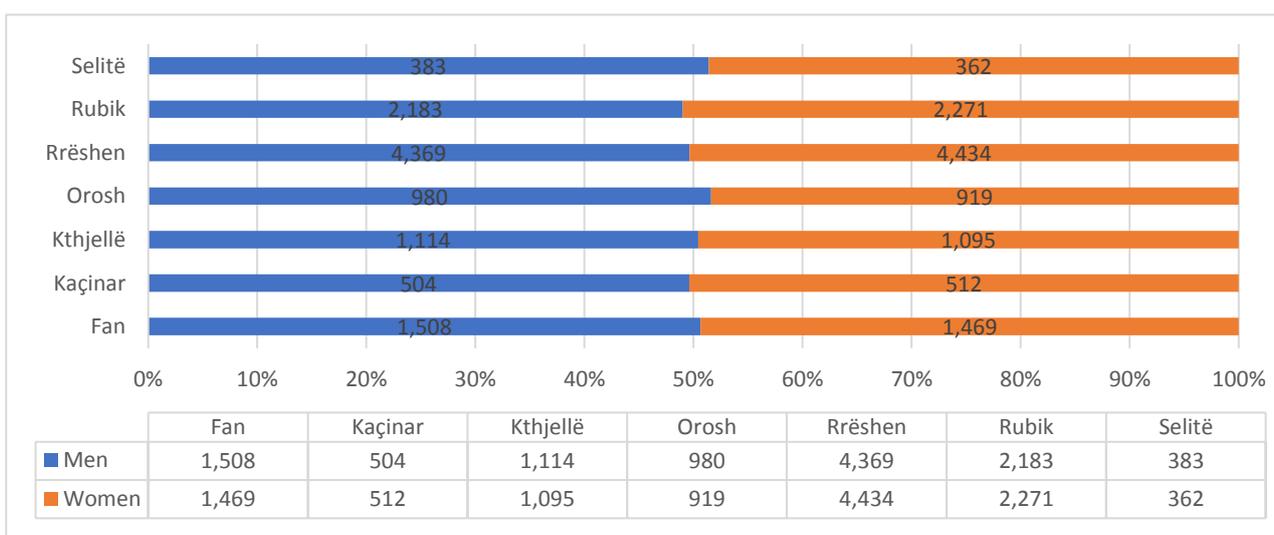


Figure 5: Population of Mirditë Municipality for each AU in% disaggregated by gender. (Source CENSUS 2011)

Based on the data of 2011 CENSUS in the Municipality of Mirditë live 4,839 families with a composition of approximately 4.57 members per family. According to the same source, we have the following distribution of the population according to the civil status for each Administrative Unit.

Administrative Unit	Marital Status			
	Single	Married	Divorced	Widow
Fan	1,558	1,283	12	124
Kaçinar	480	483	5	48
Kthellë	1,007	1,098	8	96
Orosh	922	891	6	80
Rrësheni	3,931	4,388	52	432
Rubiku	1,912	2,249	21	272
Selitë	362	345	1	37
<b>Total Municipality of Mirditë</b>	<b>10,172</b>	<b>10,737</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>1,089</b>

Table 4: Data on the Civil Status of the population of Municipality of Mirdita A.U.s. (Source CENSUS 2011).

### 2.3 ECONOMIC PROFILE

Very large structural changes have taken place in the economy, worsening the development of the area. Prior to the '90s, the economic profile was related to the underground mining industry, mainly copper and pyrite, where the number of workers in the mining industry reached 12,000. Most of this industry is currently out of order. Today the Municipality of Mirditë has an economic profile entirely agricultural and livestock.

On official data obtained from the statistical database of INSTAT<sup>7</sup> in the Municipality of Mirditë at the end of 2021 operated 607 active enterprises, which account for only 0.36% of

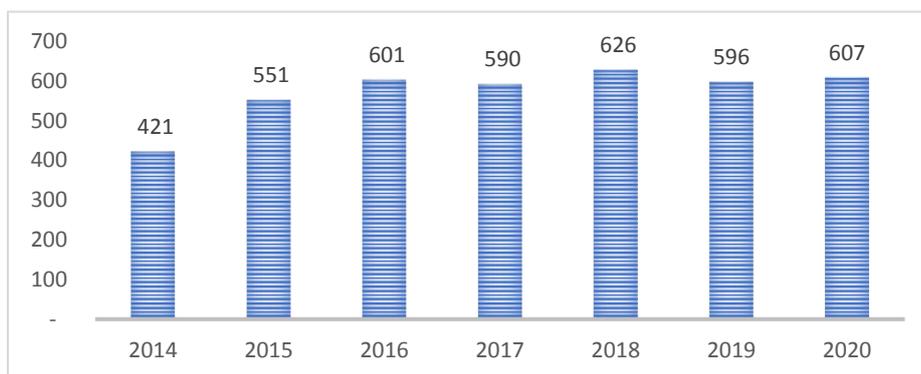


Figure 6: Number of Active Enterprises by Legal Form. (Source INSTAT)

all businesses registered in Albania and most of them are mainly concentrated in the city of Rrëshen. As noted in Figure 6, the number of these businesses in the last 5 years is almost constant, with a variation of +/- 2.9%.

Based on the legal form, these businesses are divided into: i) 137 Agricultural Farms; ii) 370 Natural Persons and iii) 100 Legal Entities. As can be seen from the figure, the variation of legal forms has an

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.instat.gov.al/al/temat/statistikat-e-p%C3%ABrgjiithshme-dhe-rajonale/tregues-sipas-bashkive>

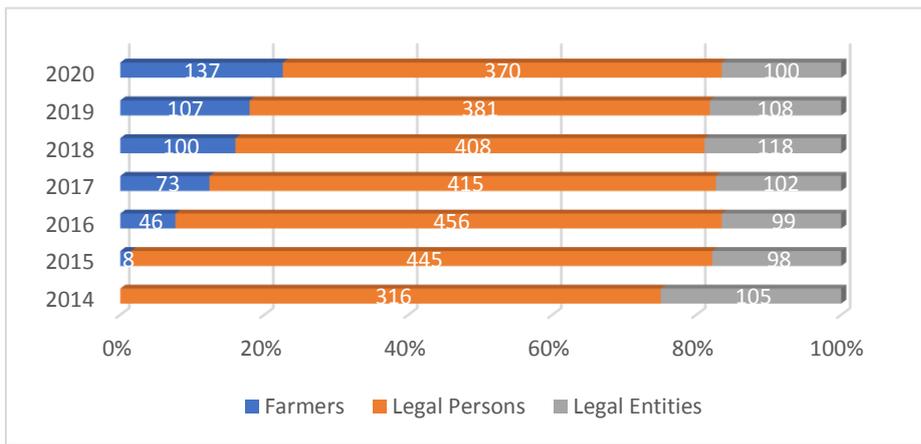


Figure 7: Percentage ratio of Businesses by legal form over the years. (Source INSTAT)

increasing trend of agricultural enterprises by about 3 times and a gradual decrease of other businesses.

The predominance of the Business type registrations as a Natural Person and Farmer of over 80% is also reflected by the small number of employees in the

private sector in this municipality. Looking at the business structure from this point of view, only 33 businesses or about 5% of them have over 10 employees, while about 90% of businesses have less than 4 employees.

According to unofficial information obtained from the Municipality of Mirditë, there are more than 2,400 families, with over 12,000 citizens living in this municipality's villages. Based on these data, the average number of agricultural farms should be about 10 times higher. The very small number of registered agricultural farms, only 137, is another indicator of the informality that exists in this municipality.

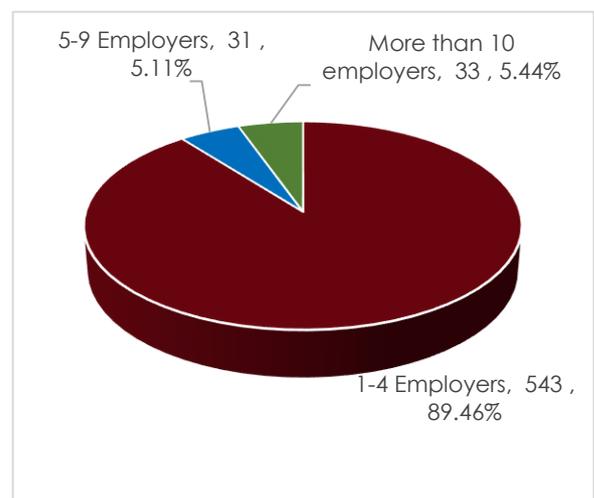


Figure 8: Number of Businesses grouped by number of employees. (Source INSTAT)

According to INSTAT, today, about 32% of businesses registered in the Municipality of Mirditë are owned probably by women. There has been no significant change in the number of businesses run by women, this variation in the last 5 years is in the values +/- 2.1%, as shown in figures 9 and 10 below:

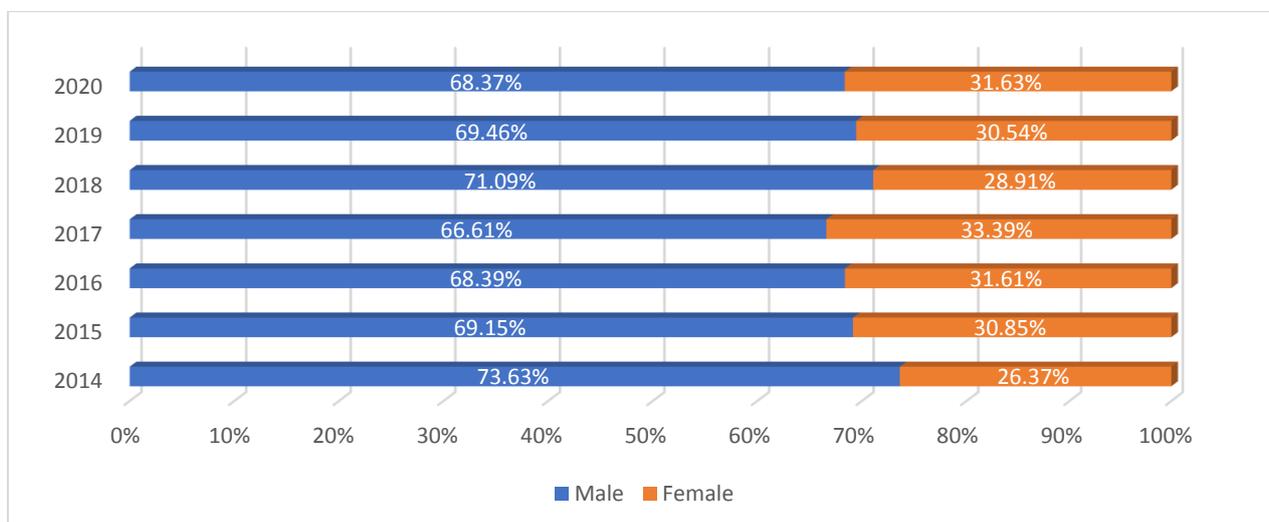


Figure 9: Percentage ratio by gender of administration/ownership of Businesses. (Source INSTAT)

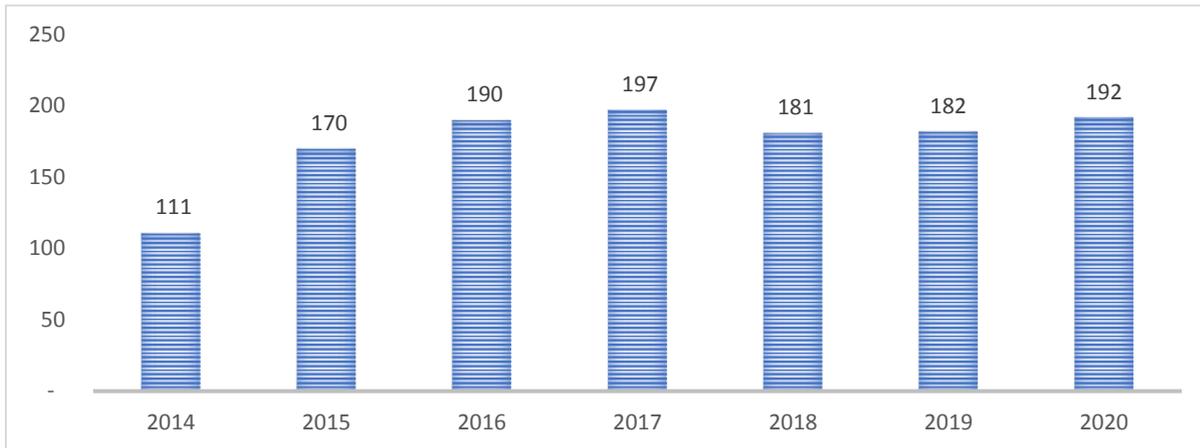


Figure 10: Difference in the Number of Businesses administered by Women over the years. (Source INSTAT)

According to the data of the local revenue office, in the Municipality of Mirditë, 607 active enterprises at the end of 2020 are divided by the main sectors as shown in Figure 11, in: i) 137 Agricultural Farms; ii) 68 Goods Manufacturing Enterprises; iii) 402 Service Providers.

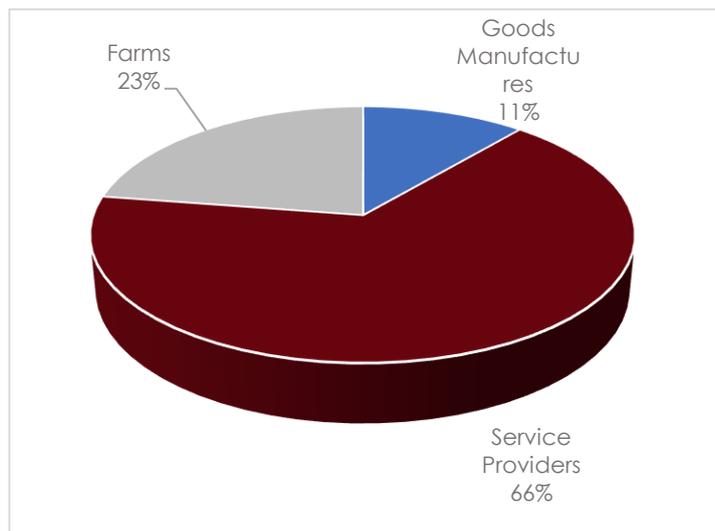


Figure 11: Ratio to the number of Businesses by main sectors. (Sources INSTAT and Mirdita Municipality)

**Agriculture.** Due to the fact that over 60% of the population of the Municipality of Mirditë lives in rural areas, the Agriculture Sector is the most important sector of the economy of this municipality. But as shown from the research work, this sector, as everywhere in Albania, is also the sector suffering most from informality. In 2020, we have only 137 officially registered farmers who, as can be seen from figure 11, constitute only 23% of all businesses registered in the Municipality of Mirditë.

In 2020, we have only 137 officially registered farmers who, as can be seen from figure 11, constitute only 23% of all businesses registered in the Municipality of Mirditë.

According to the cadastral office, the agricultural land fund of 6,284 ha is divided into 5,467 ha of arable land and 158 ha of orchards, of which 101 ha are vineyards. In general, the farmers of Mirditë have little land, but there are also villages and farmers, especially in the units of Rrëshen e Kthellë that have sufficient land. State land makes up approximately 90% of the land surface. The land was not taken ownership, due to low fertility and remoteness from inhabited centers. Ownership is also very fragmented, and this is one of the factors why agriculture does not have an intensive development.

Based on the information gathered in Mirditë Municipality, the area of arable land (planted) in 2020 is 2,778 Ha, about 50%. Nationwide, the area of land planted in the Municipality of Mirditë constitutes only 0.66% of the total area planted. This low percentage, apart from ownership problems, results from lack of irrigation due to damage to the irrigation and drainage system, and the difficulty of farmers in securing key inputs and adequate mechanization. It should be noted that not all production chain links exist for different agricultural products.

In terms of agricultural crops, cereals, vegetables, potatoes and beans, viticulture, fodder, fruit trees, and nuts are cultivated. Here, the main crop is fodder, which is cultivated in over 50% of the area. The second group is field plants with about 21% of the planted area, although this area is relatively low compared to other municipalities in the country. Here, the most important one is corn, which is part of the tradition of Mirditë farmers. Besides its function as bread grain, its straws are used as food for livestock. Thanks to this tradition and the care shown by the farmers of this area, corn here has one the highest yields in the whole country. The third is vegetables, although Mirditë does not offer favorable conditions for the development of their intensive production. It should be noted that Mirditë farmers plant only the first vegetable crops due

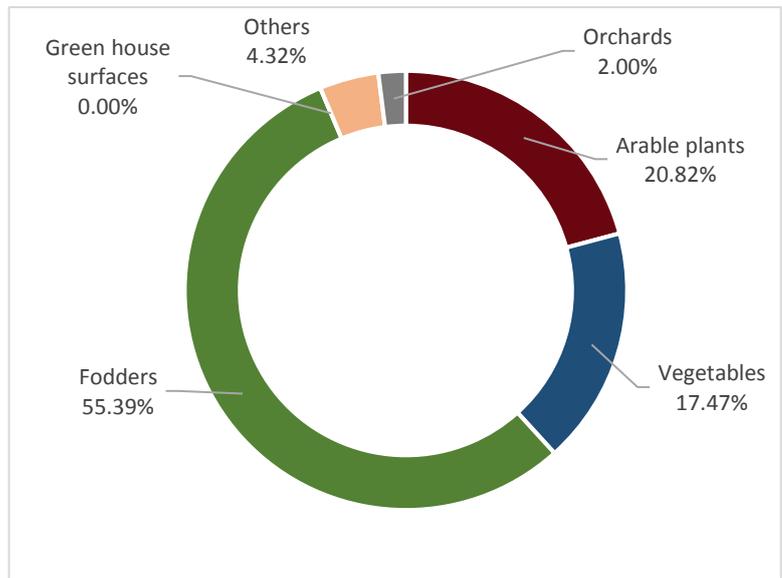


Figure 12 Structure of Agricultural Crop Groups (Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and Mirditë Municipality)

to natural conditions generally with strong and long winters. This vegetable production is mainly used for the needs of farming families and its surpluses go only to the regional market of this municipality and not elsewhere. A good part of the needs of this market is met with vegetables coming from other municipalities. Vineyards are also widespread due to the favorable climatic conditions and the provision of the production chain. However, the main problem is the lack of adequate irrigation systems that have hindered the further expansion of this activity.

**Industry.** Until the 1990s, the Municipality of Mirditë was known for its mining activity, especially in the industrial area of Rubik and in the area of the copper processing industry in Rrëshen. This industry today is totally unusable, but the Municipality of Mirditë, in its long-term development strategy, aims at the regeneration of mining activities, which will bring the revival of this industry, with the aim of full development of industrial activity and an increase in processing rate of copper in Albania.

Today, there is a slight development in the light industry, in terms of processing livestock products and fruits. These developments are still in their beginnings and in most cases are family businesses. This industry is not yet formalized and fails to provide the proper certifications of the standards required for their sale in the local, national market or to ensure their export.

Manufacturing Industry during the last 5 years has shrunk 16%, a significant change that shows the difficulties that this municipality is going through in terms of economic growth and empowerment.

This decline is observed since 2018, but is significant during 2019. This indicator shows that the manufacturing industry does not decline due to two major factors such as the earthquake of November 26, 2019 and the pandemic during 2020.

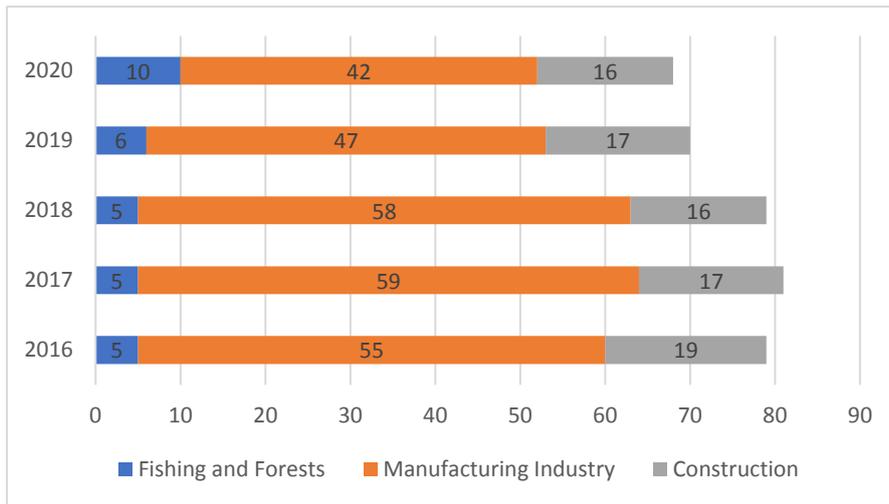


Figure 13: Manufacturing Industry Structure by 3 official classifications over the last 5 years. (Source: INSTAT and Mirditë Municipality)

The most declining class is the manufacturing industry with about 30%. As shown in Figure 13, the construction industry is at constant levels over the last 5 years, while the wood industry and the fishing industry have a growth of about 2 times in 2020. The specific weight of each class during 2020 is shown in Figure 13. Although with a decrease with 10%, the manufacturing industry is still the leading class in the Municipality of Mirditë with over 60% of the entire industry sector.

**Services.** The services sector is also the sector with the largest share and constitutes 66% of the local economic structure in terms of the number of economic operators. This sector has also shrunk 15.55% over the last 5 years. What differs from the manufacturing sector is that shrinkage is almost proportionally divided into all its 5 classes. This trend makes us think that the main factor is the reduction of the services due to the emigration of the population of this municipality to the most economically developed areas.

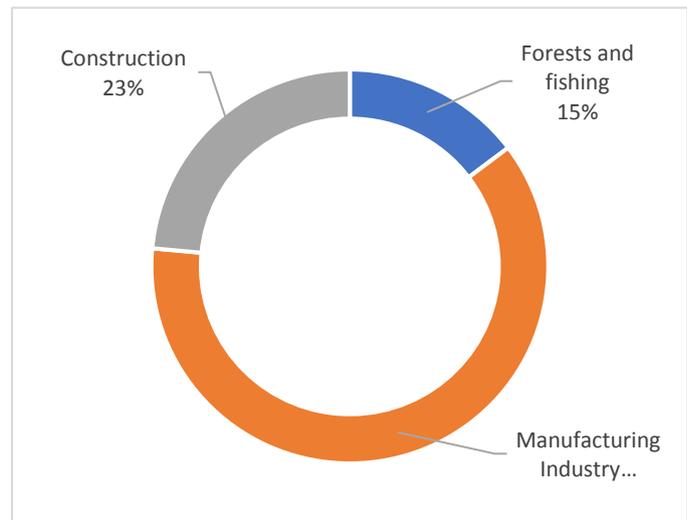


Figure 14: Report of the main classes of the Industry for 2020. (Source: INSTAT and Mirditë Municipality)

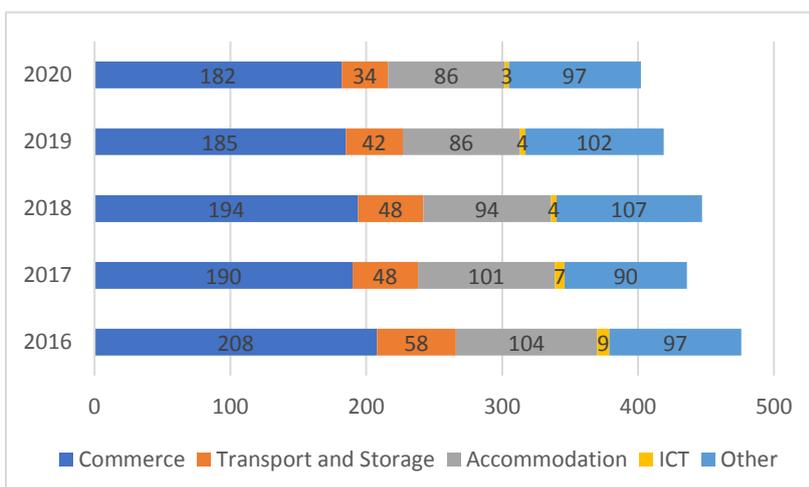


Figure 15: Structure of the Services Industry according to 5 official classifications during the last 5 years. (Source: INSTAT and Mirditë Municipality)

By a more detailed classification of this sector for 2020, as can be seen from Figure 16, it shows that in the Municipality of Mirditë, 182 or 45% of 402 registered businesses operate in the trade sub-sector; 34 or 9% operate in the transport and storage sub-sector; 86 or 21% in that of accommodation and food and 100 or 25% operate in the sector of other services.

During the last year, especially in terms of accommodation and food, some investments are taking place in this sector in settlements and small rural areas in order to attract a number of visitors who prefer historical and natural tourism.

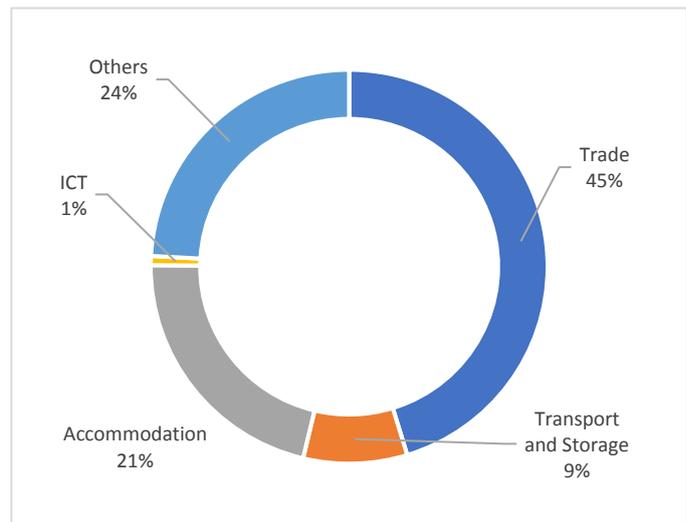


Figure 16: Report of the main classes of the Manufacturing Industry for 2020. (Source: INSTAT and Mirditë Municipality)

## 2.4 SOCIAL PROFILE

**Employment** in the Municipality of Mirditë is a sharp problem. Structural changes in the local economy, lack of a modern infrastructure, non-utilization of potentials in agriculture, livestock, tourism, forestry, services, etc., have created an unemployment rate of 25%. According to the 2011 Census, the work-able population reaches 14,664 people, or 66.3% of the municipality's population, with men and women accounting for an equal 50%.

Based on the information obtained from the Mirditë Labor Office, 529 individuals in the Municipality of Mirditë are registered as jobseekers. 59% of jobseekers are female and 41% are male. This is official information, but the municipality confirms that the number of unemployed for the population aged 18-65 reaches about 2,200 people, with a distribution of approximately 50% of men and women. There is a lack of in-depth analysis of the reasons that keep women and girls away from the labor market.

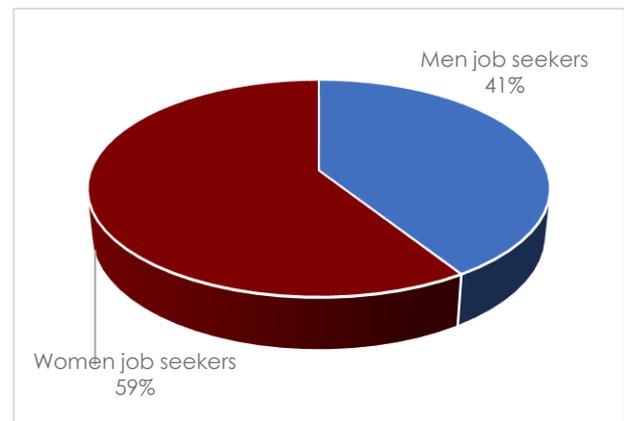


Figure 17: Ratio between male and female jobseekers. (Source: Mirditë Municipality)

Only 6.6% of unemployed jobseekers have vocational education and 6% higher education. 85% of them have 9 years of education and/or general secondary education. This characteristic is higher in women (60% of them) than in men, which is one of the reasons why they are in a higher percentage than men looking for a job. More in-depth reasons should be obtained through specific analyses. Jobseekers over the age of 40 also find it more difficult to get a job. For young people aged 18-29, the number of unemployed is 24.1% of total unemployed jobseekers. The age group that records the highest number of unemployed is the population over 50 years with 30.3% of unemployed jobseekers.

Of the unemployed jobseekers, 5.6% receive unemployment fees, while 46.1% receive economic assistance. It is even noted that according to the educational level, the highest unemployment was recorded by the group of the population with 9 years of education, followed by the group of the population with general secondary education. High unemployment is recorded in the Roma community due to the low level of education which is round 60%. Long-term unemployed jobseekers make up the majority of unemployed jobseekers and here unemployed males predominate with 50.5%.

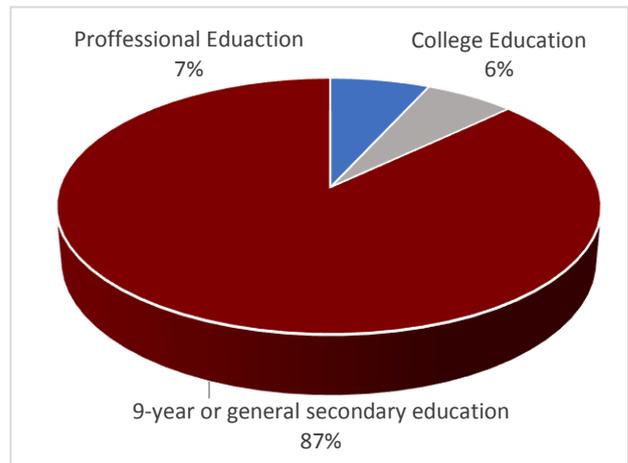


Figure 18: Breakdown by jobseekers by education. (Source: Mirditë Municipality)

**Individuals in need** for at least one form of social care service, identified at the end of 2020 in the territory of the Municipality of Mirditë, are about 5,959 individuals, which constitute 17% of the population registered according to the civil status, or about 27% of the resident population.

Administrative Unit	Total	Individuals in Need of Social Care Services	
		Numbers	%
Fan	2,977	1,224	41,12%
Kaçinar	1,016	401	39,47%
Kthellë	2,209	631	28,56%
Orosh	1,899	473	24,91%
Rrëshen	8,803	1,939	22,03%
Rubik	4,454	879	19,74%
Selitë	745	412	55,30%
<b>Total Municipality of Mirditë</b>	<b>22,103</b>	<b>5,959</b>	<b>26,96%</b>

Table 5: Data on the number of individuals in need of social care services in the Municipality of Mirditë divided by Administrative Units. (Source Mirditë Municipality)

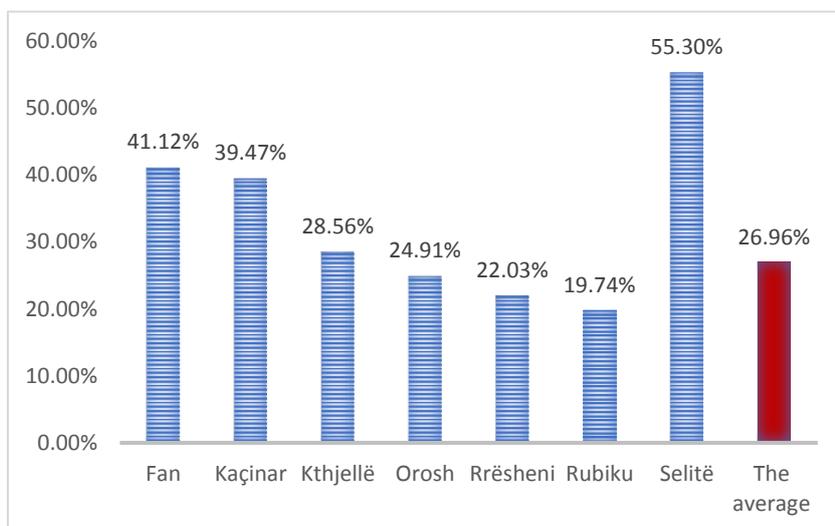


Figure 19: Percentage of individuals in need versus population for each A.U. (Source Mirditë Municipality)

As can be seen from the data above, all Administrative Units have a high percentage of individuals in need, as compared to the total population, but in the administrative units Selitë, Fan and Kaçinar, this percentage is higher than the average at the Municipality level.

The level of poverty in the Municipality of Mirditë can be considered high, because 7.9% of households in this

Municipality are included in the **economic aid** program and if we were to refer to the 2011 Census, their percentage against the total is 13%. Thus, 932 families are currently without income or with insufficient income, and consequently, receive economic assistance from the national social protection program. The analysis of the characteristics of the beneficiary families in economic assistance shows that the families with the largest number of members are generally the poorest families. 13% of children in the Municipality of Mirditë are part of families that receive economic assistance. It also turns out that there is a very low inclusion in the scheme of the age group over 64 years old, as only 2% of the families' members receiving economic assistance belong to this age group. Meanwhile, there are many elderly people in need not included in the economic assistance scheme that are living alone and renting a house. 8% of beneficiary families have female-headed households, while 50% of the Roma and Egyptian community lives on economic assistance. 3% of households have at least one member with a disability.

Regarding **people with disabilities**, 818 people in the Municipality of Mirditë have been referred to by medical commissions as having at least one form of disability. As compared to the total population, we conclude that 2.3% of the population of this Municipality is included in the disability benefits program funded by the national budget. This percentage reaches approximately 4% of the resident population. 26% of people with disabilities have at least one severe form of disability and are assisted by a helper. The largest group of people with disabilities includes those with physical and mental health problems. The administrative units of Rrëshen, Rubik and Fan have the highest number of people with disabilities. Children with disabilities make up 2.1% of children in the Municipality of Mirditë and 21% of people with disabilities in this Municipality. In each administrative unit, there are children with disabilities, but a higher percentage can be observed in Rrëshen, Rubik and Fan.

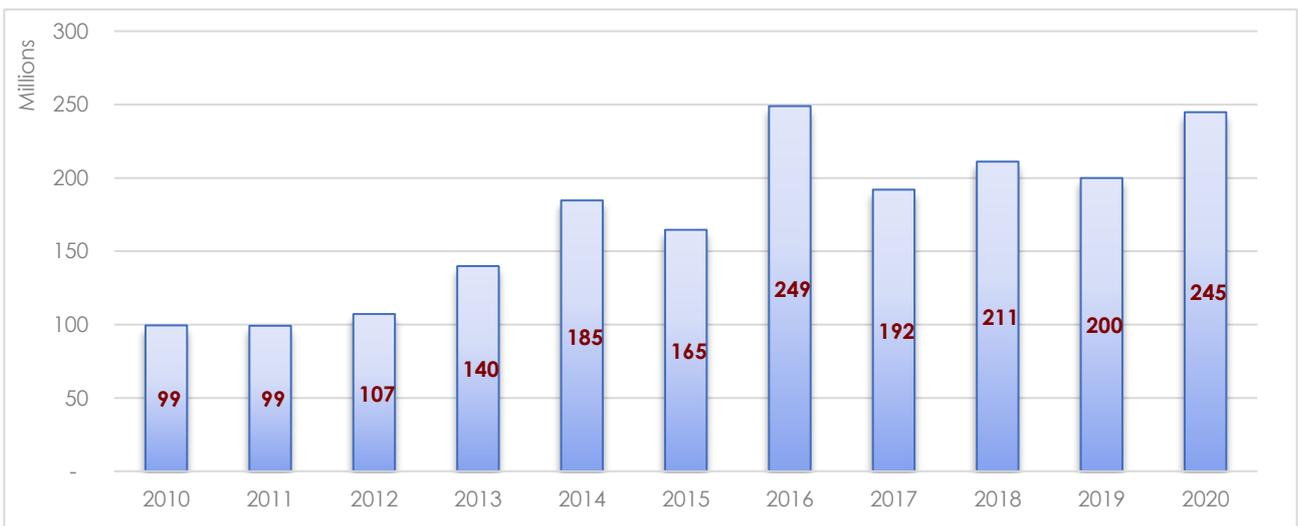
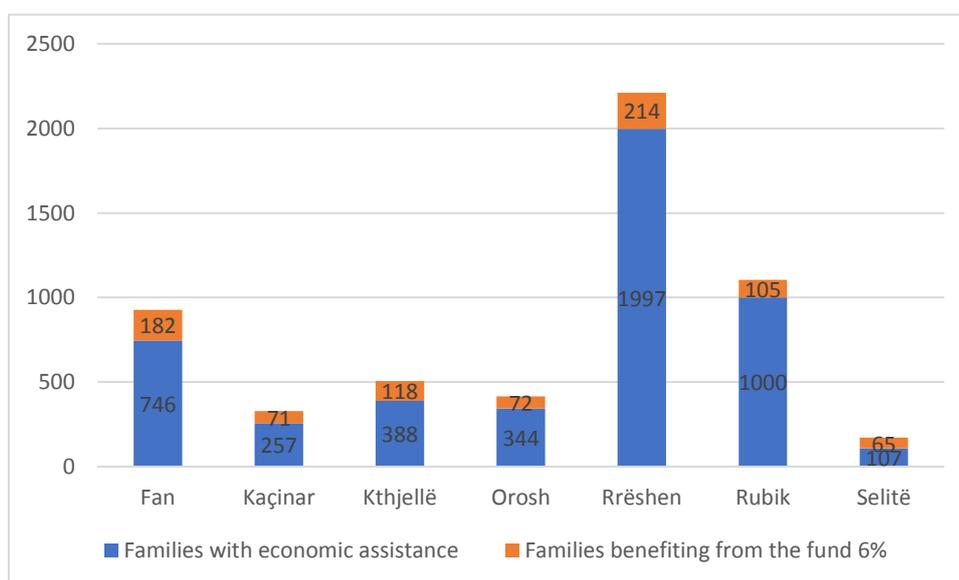


Figure 20: Budget used by the Municipality of Mirditë in 10 years. (Source Mirditë Municipality)

The graph above presents the budget used by the Municipality of Mirditë in the last 10 years for the payments to Individuals in Need. This budget is covered to the extent of 94% of the conditional transfer and 6% of the municipality's revenues. The municipality fund is mainly used to support poor families who did not receive assistance from the national program.

Administrative Unit	No. of Families according to the Census 2011	Families with EA	Families beneficiaries of the fund 6%	% e families EA /total families
Fan	746	182	47	30.70%
Kaçinar	257	71	9	31.13%
Kthellë	388	118	5	31.70%
Orosh	344	72	6	22.67%
Rrëshen	1,997	214	9	11.17%
Rubik	1,000	105	21	12.60%
Selitë	107	65	8	68.22%
<b>Total Municipality of Mirditë</b>	<b>4,839</b>	<b>827</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>19.26%</b>

Table 6: Data on the number of households receiving Economic Assistance in the Municipality of Mirditë divided by Administrative Units. (Source: Mirditë Municipality)



As can be seen from Table 6, about 20% of households are part of the Economic Assistance plan, which shows once again the high level of poverty in this municipality.

Finally, based on municipality data, victims of domestic violence, for 2018

Figure 21: Nr. of families that benefit from EA (Source: Mirditë Municipality)

were registered 12 cases of domestic violence, while for 2019 were registered 11 cases of violence. These figures show that the phenomenon of domestic violence exists in the Municipality of Mirditë, but due to the mentality, not every case of violence is reported.

**Education.** Territory of the Municipality of Mirditë has 24 nine-year schools, with 1621 students and 7 high schools, of which 2 are professional schools, with 928 students. In these 31 schools, there are 301 teachers. There are also 2 preschools and 21 kindergartens with 53 educators employed. Figure 22 shows the educational structures by type.

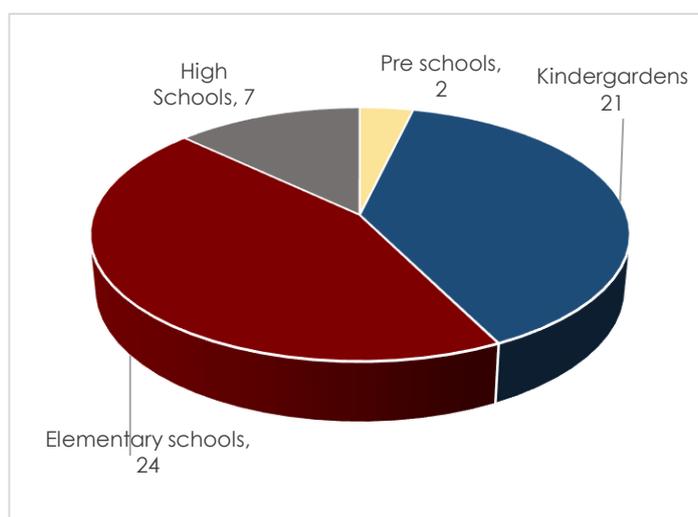


Figure 22: Nr. of educational structures by types (Source: Mirditë Municipality)

Based on data collected in the Municipality of Mirditë, as well as comparing them with data from the Ministry of Education and Science, the number of children attending preschool institutions in the last 5 years is almost the same (from 510 in 2016 to 522 in 2020), with an increase of about 2%. The following table shows the number of children and teachers, separated by Administrative Units. In preschool cycles, the ratio of child educators for the municipality of Mirditë is approximately 1 educator per 10 children, which is lower compared to the national ratio which is at the level of 18.40 children per educator.

Administrative Unit	Preschools		Kindergartens		Elementary Schools		High Schools	
	Children	Educator	Children	Educator	Pupils	Teachers	Pupils	Teachers
Fan			42	3	211	19	61	7
Kaçinar			4	1	11	6	0	0
Kthellë			31	3	81	17	28	8
Orosh			27	2	110	17	24	6
Rrëshen	66	8	247	22	907	94	655	61
Rubik	11	3	86	10	270	31	160	22
Selitë			8	1	41	13	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>1631</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>928</b>	<b>104</b>

Table 7. Number of students and teachers according to educational structures (Source: Mirditë Municipality)

### 3. EARTHQUAKE IMPACT

On November 26, 2019, at 03:54, Albania was hit by an earthquake, which was considered by national authorities to be the strongest to hit the country in the last 30 years. According to the Albanian Institute of Geophysics, Water and Energy, based on the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment Report in Albania (PDNA) <sup>8</sup>, the magnitude of the earthquake was 6.3 on the Richter scale at a depth of 38 kilometers. Its epicenter was 22 kilometers from Durres and 30 kilometers from Tiranë, and the main damage was caused in 11 municipalities of Albania, where Tiranë and Durres were the most affected municipalities, followed by the municipalities of Shijak, Mirditë, Lezhë, Kurbin, Kamëz, Vorë, Kavajë and Rogozhinë. The tremors were felt nearly 370 kilometers from the quake's epicenter. Between November 26 and 29, 17 more earthquakes with magnitudes above 4 on the Richter scale were recorded.

Based on the PDNA report, after the assessment, it is estimated that the total impact of the disaster in all affected municipalities amounts to 985.1 million Euros, of which, 843.9 million Euros represent the value of destroyed physical assets and 141.2 million Euros the value of losses. This data is summarized in table 8 and figure 23 below:

Sector	Damages	Losses	Total
Education	63.59	8.76	72.35
Health	8.02	1.91	9.93
Housing (Buildings)	662.30	34.00	696.30
Infrastructure	30.41	3.01	33.42
Production	70.82	79.66	150.48
Social Protection	0.00	0.62	0.62
Civil Protection	8.75	13.22	21.97
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>843.89</b>	<b>141.18</b>	<b>985.07</b>

Table 8: Damages and Losses in Million Euros by sectors at Republic level. Source PDNA

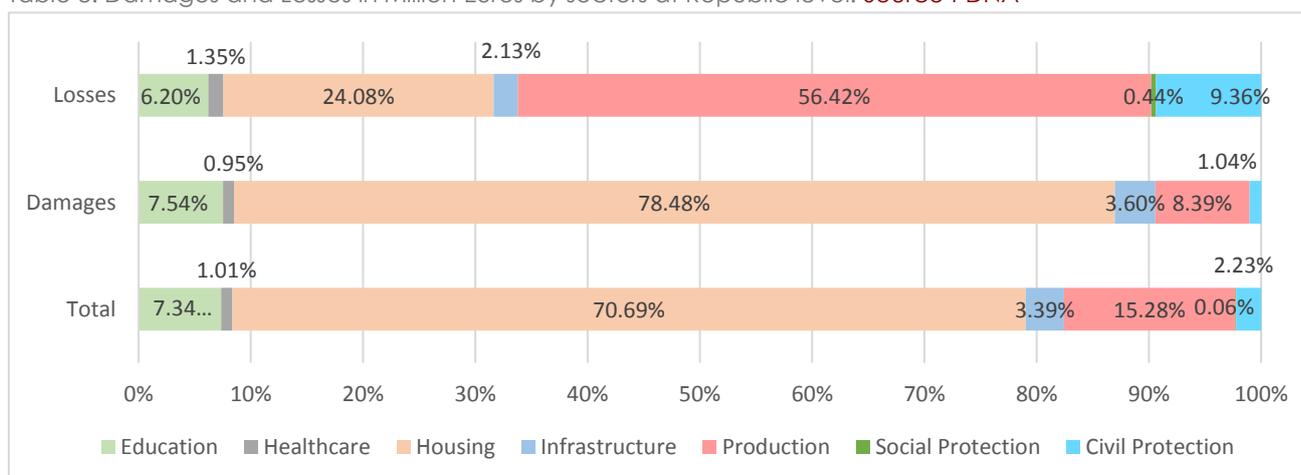


Figure 23: Specific Weight of Injuries and Losses by sectors at Republic level. Source PDNA

8 [https://albania.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/no.4-Albania Post-Disaster Needs Assessment \(PDNA\) Volume A Report 20 February 2020.pdf](https://albania.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/no.4-Albania_Post-Disaster_Needs_Assessment_(PDNA)_Volume_A_Report_20_February_2020.pdf)

As can be seen from the data presented above, the **Housing Sector** accounts for the majority of claims, with 78.5%, followed by the **Manufacturing Sector** with 8.4% and the **Education Sector** with 7.5%. Meanwhile, in terms of losses, the Manufacturing sector occupies the largest part of the amount (56.4%), followed by the Housing sector (24.1%) and the Civil Protection Sector and the Disaster Risk Reduction sector (9.4%). Based on the same report, "Damage is defined as the cost of repairing or rebuilding infrastructure or physical assets that are partially or completely destroyed. Losses are changes in economic flows, expressed as the value of output of goods and services (income or losses in kind), as well as changes in production costs (such as output decline and higher than normal cost of production)) as well as unexpected additional costs. "

Based on the sectoral assessments, reflected in the PDNA report and with their accuracy from the information provided by the municipalities, the two basic sectors of the economy, after housing, which occupies 70% of the earthquake damages, the most damaged are the infrastructure and that of production, including buildings. Practically, the losses and damages in these two sectors are presented in % according to subsectors in figures 24 and 25.



Figure 24: Specific Weight of Injuries and Losses by production subsector. Source PDNA

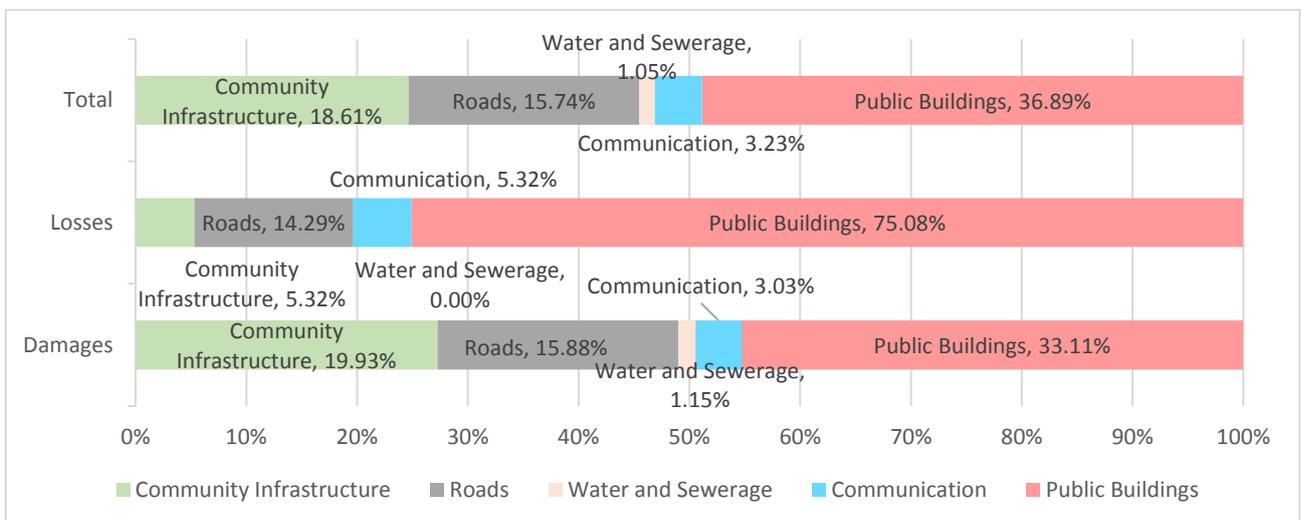


Figure 25: Specific Weight of Damages and Losses by Infrastructure subsector. Source PDNA

Finally, the total number of people who have lost or their homes were severely damaged is estimated to be around 204,000 people in the eleven municipalities. The chart below shows the distribution of the affected population by municipalities:

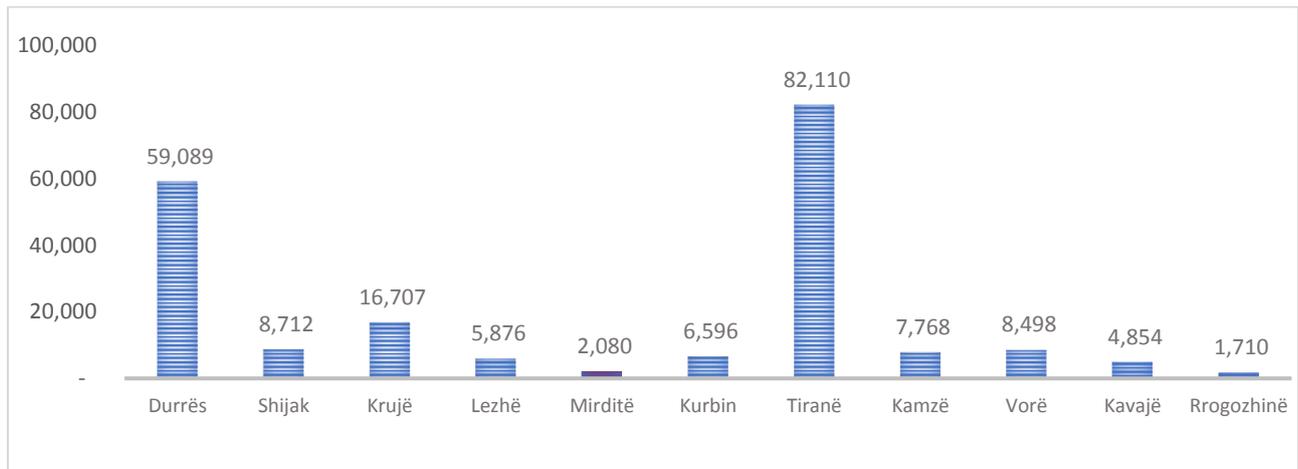


Figure 26: Number of population whose dwellings have been damaged or destroyed by Municipalities. (Source PDNA dhe municipalities)

As it appears from the data in figure 26, in the Municipality of Mirditë a small number of the total population of Albania is affected by the earthquake, approximately 1%. In relation to the resident population, the number of affected persons is about 9.41% which is substantial for this municipality and places it as the seventh most affected municipality among the 11 affected municipalities.

As we mentioned above, the financial losses (damages and losses) are estimated at 985.07 million Euros. From this point of view, the Municipality of Mirditë with 6.73 million losses and damages is classified as the 10th damaged municipality. Figure 27 presents the values of losses and damages for each municipality in absolute value.

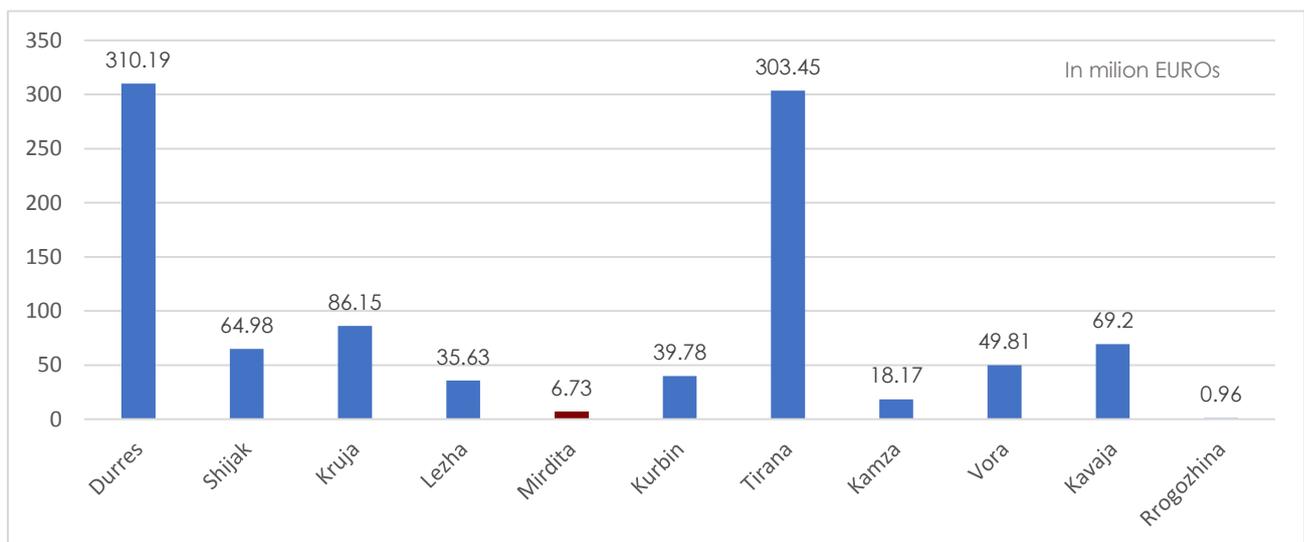


Figure 27: Financial damages in damages and losses by Municipalities. (Source PDNA and Municipalities)

While calculating the losses per capita of the resident population, it ranks 9th, well below the national average. Figure 28 presents the values of losses and damages for each municipality, as well as the national average per farm of the resident population.

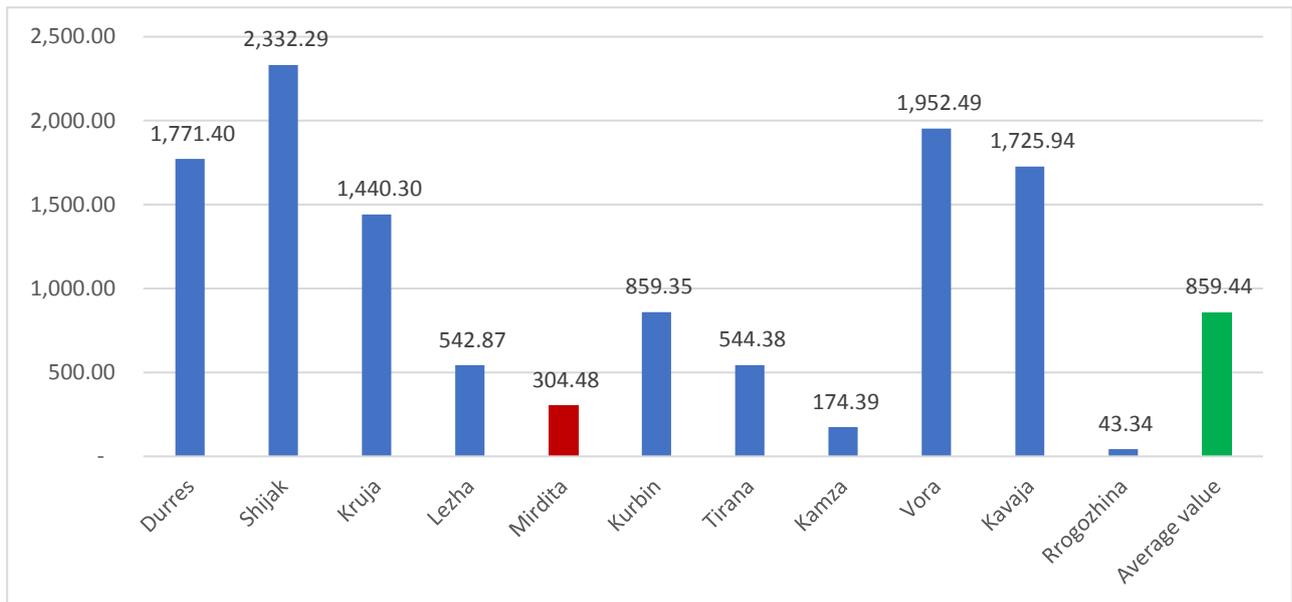


Figure 28: Financial damages in damages and losses per capita by Municipalities. (Source PDNA and Municipalities)

In the Municipality of Mirditë, from the total damages and losses of 6.73 million Euros, the housing sector is the most affected with 4.42 million Euros or 65.68%, followed by the infrastructure and manufacturing sector with approximately 0.8 and 0.75 million Euros or 11.89% and 11.14% respectively. Fortunately, the Education sector in this municipality has not suffered any losses or damage. The Civil Protection and DRR sectors have suffered losses or damages in the amount of 0.7 million Euros or 10.40%.

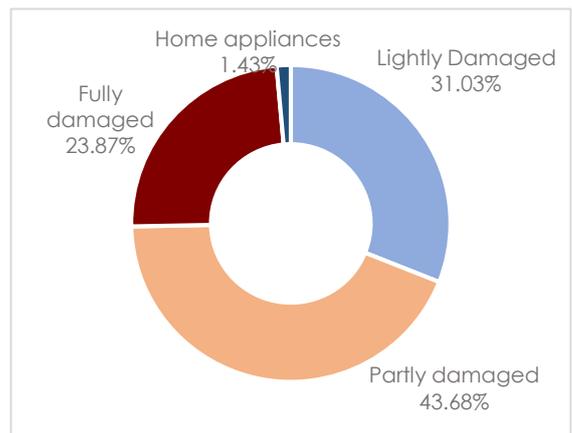


Figure 29: Financial losses of the Housing Sector. (Source PDNA and Mirdita Municipality)

Regarding the Housing sector, damages include damaged buildings as well as losses in interior equipment. The total earthquake damage in Albania in this sector amounts to 662.3 million Euros, while for the Municipality of Mirditë these damages are estimated at 4.3 million Euros, almost 0.65% of the losses of this sector. Figure 18 shows the distribution by type of damage. Total damages and losses of the production sector, which includes the sub-sectors of Business and Employment, Tourism, Cultural Heritage and Agriculture, in the Municipality of Mirditë is in the amount of 0.06 million Euros and is only in the Cultural Heritage sector.

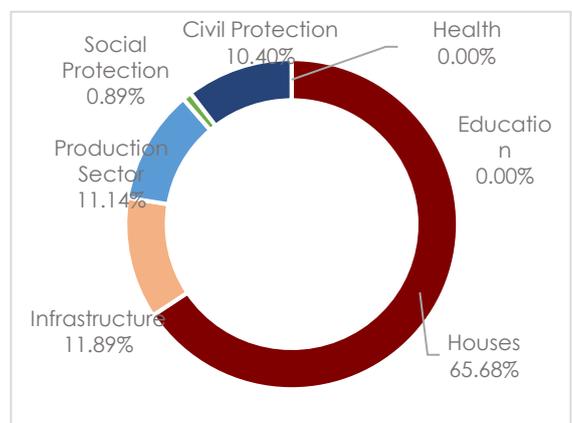


Figure 30: Financial losses by sectors in the Municipality of Mirditë. (Source PDNA and Municipality)

### Earthquake damage analysis and accommodation needs analysis.

In the Municipality of Mirditë, the great tremors of the earthquake of November 26, 2019 caused damage to apartments, service units and administrative buildings. After determining and assessing the damages, the Municipality of Mirditë went through the reconstruction process. For this purpose, two Compulsory Local Plans (PDyV) were implemented, which were approved by the National Council of Territorial Regulation respectively with decision no. 18 dated. 04.09.2020 and with decision no.41 dated 11.11.2020. Based on these PDyV will enable:

- a) Development and/or re-development of an area damaged by a natural disaster:
- b) Development of a new area to meet the housing needs of families affected by the disaster
- c) Construction of public infrastructures

Work has begun on housing construction, as follows:

- Collective residences - 28 families or 117 inhabitants
- Businesses in total - 5
- Individual residences - 50

Divided by size/structure, the residences are grouped as follows:

No. ordinal	Residence structure	Number
1	Residences with structure for 1-2 members	7
2	Residences with structure for 2-3 members	14
3	Residences with structure for 4+ members	7

In the table below are the applications made by each administrative unit:

No.	Administrative Unit	Number of applications
1	Administrative Unit Rrëshen	17
2	Administrative Unit Rubik	11
3	Administrative Unit Selitë	6
4	Administrative Unit Kthellë	8
5	Administrative Unit Fan	8
8	<i>Total</i>	50

## 4. VALUE CHAINS ANALYSIS IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF MIRDITË

Economic growth and the markets that enable it are some of the best-proven drivers in reducing poverty. Markets are the main means through which women and men participate in economic activities. However, the assumption that markets and economic growth work in everyone's favor does not mean that all types of economic growth lead to equal results. Gender discrimination may mean that the benefits of economic growth are concentrated in the hands of experienced participants in market systems, rather than in the hands of those who need them the most.

Where markets operate inclusively, they serve both women and men by providing the tools, jobs, opportunities, skills, financial resources, and services to increase their income. The roles of women in value chains are essential for the development of market systems, especially rural and agricultural value chains but are also increasing in the manufacturing sector, in which women occupy the highest number in "production base". Women and men can be involved in different stages of a value chain. In general, women's roles are less visible in the development process, although they often serve as the key link in which change and improvement must take place in order for it to lead the chain development.

**Value Chain Development and Market System.** The gender-sensitive value chain development and market system development can be used as effective frameworks to improve the productivity and competitiveness of the sector, at the same time reducing gender-based barriers that hinder women's full economic participation. Initiatives for the development of the market system should take into account the multiple roles women play and the systematic disadvantage, as well as utilize the possibilities of using remedial measures that actively promote the transformation of gender norms and equal opportunities for women.

Developing the value chain and market system means performing actions that improve productivity and include value chains, as well as change the way market support functions and rules operate to support the development of the value chain in the future. Approaches to market system development, such as value chain development, have been used to improve sector productivity and competitiveness and to promote economic development. Markets serve as the main means by which women and men participate in economic activity. The analysis and development of the value chain and the market system are increasingly being used as a way to identify effective strategies to support the poor. They aim to identify:

- *Appropriate intervention points to improve industries, so that they compete in domestic, regional, and international markets; and*
- *Opportunities to improve the situation of disadvantaged persons in the value chain*

Despite the role that women have together with men in the realization of economic development, they are often excluded from the development, direction, decision-making of value chains, as well as the benefits that come as a result of the development of market systems. This is partly due to the socio-economic status of women in their families and the community but also due to the direct (and sometimes even indirect) discrimination encountered in institutions that regulate and develop markets, such as governing units and sector representation organizations.

The gender-sensitive value chain analysis and development is an approach that helps achieve gender equality and broader goals in Albania, through the identification of value chain solutions that improve productivity. They reduce gender-related barriers to achieve women's full participation and inclusion, and to promote equality between women and men. Table 9 highlights some of the benefits that come as a result of analyzing and developing the value chain according to gender sensitivity and the market system.

BENEFITS OF INTERVENTION WITH GENDER BASIS IN THE VALUE CHAIN			
ECONOMY	SOCIETY	FAMILY	WOMEN
More competition: all human resources of society are used.	Long-term development: investment in the education and health sectors of future generations.	Improving living conditions in the family, reducing vulnerability and increasing resilience.	Family contribution and household chores.
Higher productivity: manufacturers, mainly women in rural areas can improve the quantity and product quality.	Economically secure and healthier society. More balanced roles and responsibilities of women and men resulting in lower gender discrimination.	Reducing the economic burden of men in their role as "single provider". More investment in children's education and health.	Self-realization, more trust, improved social capital. Increasing women's skills. Women's economic independence
Highest demand: increasing spending power, stimulating domestic demand.	Strengthening the roles of women in sub-represented areas of society, such as political representation and decision-making.	Improving the common understanding between men and women about roles and responsibilities.	Higher productivity and income through access to investment and training.
The most powerful market ecosystem by offering enterprises higher support, productivity, and competitiveness.	Strengthening legal and supportive functions for market systems, improving governance and stability.	Reducing vulnerability and increasing resilience, increasing social and health insurance coverage and pension benefits.	More formalized businesses and more equitable and equal access to business development support services.

Table 8. Benefits of gender-based interventions in the value chain.

All the main economic sectors in the municipality of Mirditë were initially assessed using the criteria of gender sensitivity analysis in value chains (GSVCA), among the most important of which we mention:

- 1) *Is there a growing demand for the product?*
- 2) *Are women involved in the chain steps?*
- 3) *Do most of the chain steps happen in the municipality?*
- 4) *Are there any existing or recent initiatives to get involved in the value chain?*
- 5) *Are there development opportunities for the value chain?*
- 6) *Is there a connection between what women do and prospects for growth/diversification in the value chain?*

The main sectors that turned out to be most likely to be analyzed during the research work in the municipality of Mirditë turned out to be as follows:

Fruits and Vegetables

Cultivation of Medicinal Plants

Livestock

Cultural and Culinary Tourism

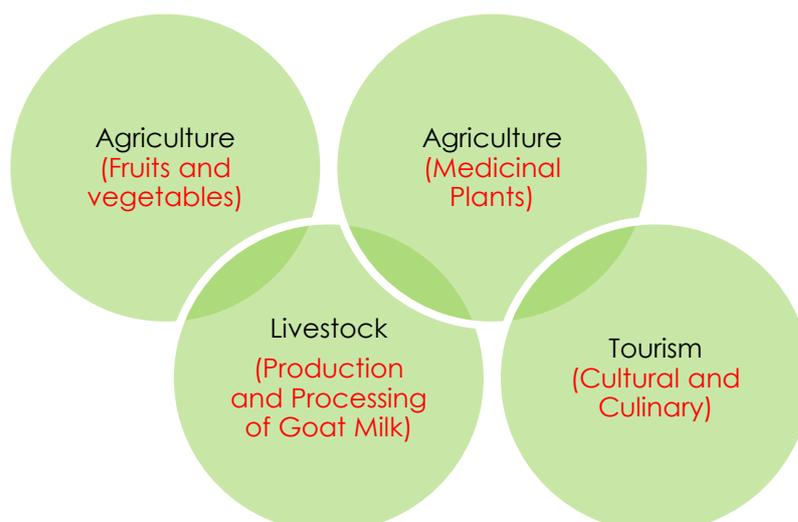


Figure 31. Identified Value Chains

Further, in cooperation with the Municipality and groups of interest, a detailed assessment was conducted based on six pre-defined basic criteria. After identifying the value chains or sub-chains in the main sectors, discussions and suggestions led to the further presentation of problems, constraints, possible solutions, etc., which in a macro analysis are presented and summarized in the following table:

Criteria	Tourism (Cultural and Culinary)	Agriculture (Fruits and Vegetables)	Livestock	Aromatic and Medicinal Plants
Is there a link between what women do and prospects for growth/diversification in the value chain?	Not exactly. Despite the natural attractions in the Municipality of Mirditë, the prospects for growth are low.	Women are involved in family businesses and formal employment in this sector would be a good opportunity for them.	Women are involved in family businesses and formal employment in this sector would be a good opportunity for them.	Women are involved in almost all activities, although their involvement is informal.
Do women (or can they) acquire the skills needed to add value through product processing or diversification?	Women can gain the necessary skills, but this sector is perceived as attractive.	They can still acquire and improve their skills, especially skills related to the use of new technologies.	Women are involved in almost the same activities as men. The necessary skills exist but they need to be increased in terms of technological improvement.	They possess some skills, mainly transmitted from other family members, but there is an opportunity to increase their skills, which is very necessary.
Does this value chain offer new opportunities for women?	There are not many new opportunities, considering that nature tourism is	If steps are taken to modernize and increase interest in the sector, opportunities for	If modernization steps are taken in this sector, opportunities for women will	If they acquired other skills, the value of in this sector would

	the only type of tourism with potential in Mirditë.	women will also increase.	increase along with market growth.	increase significantly.
<b>Can this value chain improve living conditions for women/families?</b>	Yes, if the employment rate in this sector will be high but the sector is not attractive to them.	Yes, if the sector is formalized, the inclusion of women will be higher.	If the right initiatives and investments are applied, then there are great opportunities for women.	Considering profitability, women and families can improve their conditions if more involved.
<b>Is there an organization in the value chain committed to supporting/representing value chain actors so that they can develop further?</b>	"Info Kulla" is supporting the marketing sector to turn it into a potential sector for Mirditë.	Yes, there is support from "Info Kulla", whose contribution lies mainly in the creation of local brands and fruit processing.	To date, there are no organizations supporting this sector.	To date, there are no organizations supporting this sector.
<b>Are there opportunities to make changes with small investments?</b>	The Municipality in cooperation with "Info Kulla" has started the implementation of a project in this sector within the project Interreg "Adrionet" IPA.	There are opportunities, especially in making the sector more attractive and changing people's mentality and investing in technology.	There are opportunities, especially if investments are made with a focus on storage and processing technology for the market.	There are several possibilities, especially if relevant institutions and organizations contribute to the development of the sector.

Table 9. Ranking and Selection of Value Chains, using the Gender Sensitivity criteria.

Since agriculture and livestock are the two main economic directions in the Municipality of Mirditë, we have conducted a more detailed analysis of these sectors and focusing on the three main sub-sectors of agriculture for this municipality that are the production of vegetables, medical and aromatic plants, and agrotourism, as well as in the livestock sub-sector that is goat milk production and processing.

## 4.1 FRUIT AND VEGETABLES VALUE CHAIN

### 4.1.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITUATION

Although the Municipality of Mirditë does not offer favorable conditions for the development of intensive vegetable production, it offers good conditions for the medium and late production of vegetable plants. Consequently, the vegetables in this district are not planted in areas as large as in other districts of the western lowlands of the country. In 2020, in the Municipality of Mirditë, were planted only 313 ha. This area is always in these figures in recent years. Even the production gained from vegetable plants is always around the same figures and last year it was at the value of 4,508 tons. This vegetable production is mainly used for the needs of farming families and its surpluses go only to the regional

market of this municipality and not elsewhere. A good part of the needs of this market is met with vegetables coming from other municipalities.

In the Municipality of Mirditë, farmers plant only the first vegetable crops and do not plant second crops, which means that there is only one season of planting and production of vegetable plants. This comes on the basis of natural conditions generally with strong and long winters and does not allow that vegetable plants to be planted in two different periods of the year.

### **Fresh vegetables.**

In the Municipality of Mirditë, the area cultivated with raw vegetables in 2020 was 232 ha, and the total production exceeded 3,470 tons. Among the main vegetables we can mention:

- **Tomato**, with which 29 ha were planted and a total production of 558 tons was realized. It should be noted that in this district the production is very low compared to other municipalities in the country.
- **Cucumber** is the second crop in terms of area planted with fresh vegetables in the Municipality of Mirditë. In 2020, a total of 29 ha was planted and the same total production of 558 tons was harvested, a production which changes slightly from year to year.
- **Pepper** is an important vegetable crop for the municipality of Mirditë cultivated almost as much as tomatoes and cucumbers. In 2020, 23 ha of peppers were planted or 3 ha more than the previous year, and a total production of 322 tons of peppers was harvested.

**Dried Vegetables.** Mirditë Municipality has a consolidated tradition for the production of dried vegetables, as the farmers of this area prioritize the cultivation of dried vegetables to meet their needs. The area planted with dried vegetables last year was 71 ha, which is almost the same compared to a year ago, and a total production of 830 tons was realized. The main crop among dried vegetables in the district of Mirditë is dried onions, where last year 51 ha were planted, which is almost the same compared to a year ago, and a total production of 730 tons of onions was achieved with an average yield of 14.31 tons/ha, which should be said to be lower than the country average by a large margin.

**Melons** are not planted much in the district of Mirditë and this comes as a result of agro-ecological and climatic conditions of this area. Areas planted with melon are at minimum values and specifically last year in this district were planted only 10 ha with melon plants where a total production of 208 tons was realized. These areas and production values are almost the same in recent years except in 2018 where an area of 15 ha was planted and a total production of 315 tons was harvested.

**Watermelon.** Last year 6 ha were planted, same as a year ago (with a slight variation in 2018), and the same can be said for the production, which is only 250 tons per year. Its yield is low, which makes the cultivation of watermelon in this area unprofitable and is only 25 tons/ha of watermelon.

**Cantaloupe Melon** is also a vegetable crop that is cultivated by the farmers of this district. Last year only 4 ha of melon were planted, this area is almost always in these valleys in recent years in Mirditë. The total production of melon last year was only 58 tons where an

average yield of only 16.6 tons/ha was realized, which is certainly lower than the national average.

**Greenhouses.** In the Municipality of Mirditë there is no area with greenhouses that grow vegetables. This comes as a result of the climatic conditions that this area has and that makes it economically unprofitable to invest in this agricultural sector and the production of vegetables from protected areas. Moreover, the distance from other areas where fresh vegetable products can come is small.

**Potato.** In Municipality of Mirditë, potato cultivation is a tradition of farmers, and this is especially true in the higher areas of this district. Almost everywhere in the villages of this district the farmers plant potatoes, which they use mainly for their family needs. The surplus of their production they send always to the local market, as their quantities are not very large. Last year, 285 ha potatoes were planted in this district, which is almost the same area that has been planted in recent years, and a total production of 4,500 tons of potatoes was achieved. The average yield in the whole surface was in the value of 20 tons/ha, which is quite low compared to areas similar to those of Mirditë.

**Beans.** Bean cultivation by farmers in this area is a historical tradition. In the current conditions, beans are cultivated to meet family needs, but also for the market, as they provide a good part of the income for the families. Beans are planted everywhere in the district of Mirditë, and last year, 180 ha were planted with beans and a total production of 250 tons of beans was achieved. Production in this district is low compared to the surrounding areas, but also that of our country, and a very low yield of only 1.39 tons/ha has been achieved.

It should be noted that agro-environmental and soil conditions are very favorable for the successful cultivation of beans in this district, especially in the lowlands of Mirditë.

**Strawberry.** There is no strawberry cultivation in this municipality. This plant is planted only in rare cases and only for the personal needs of some farming families.

## ORCHARDS

Fruit growing in the Municipality of Mirditë, is a permanent agricultural activity carried out by the farmers of this area, as everywhere in Albania, which is generally sporadic and there are no blocks of fruit trees where intensive technologies of their production are applied. In this district there are very good conditions for the cultivation of a wide range of fruit trees, especially nut plants.

**Fruit trees.** Fruit trees in the Municipality of Mirditë, last year, numbered 113 thousand tree trees. These fruit trees are spread throughout the territory of the district, but depending on the specific conditions of their agro-climate their diversity is also concentrated. It should be noted that fruit production is not significant in this district, and specifically, last year, a total production of only 1,410 tons was realized with a much lower yield than that of the country with only 13.2 kg/tree.

The entire production of orchards in this district is the main result of orchard trees, where from 50 thousand trees a total of 49 thousand roots are in full production, of which a total production of 614 tons of fruit is realized.

As for the seed fruit trees in this municipality, a total of 18 thousand trees are fruit-giving of 19 thousand planted, which yielded 188 tons last year.

Subtropical fruit trees are also located in this area, although in very small numbers, where 13 thousand trees are giving yield out of 15 thousand roots in total, with 209 tons harvested each year.

Walnuts are fruit trees that find good conditions for development in the hilly and mountainous areas of Municipality of Mirditë. Additional trees are being planted in this district. The total number of trees reaches 18 thousand, of which only 16 thousand are fruit bearing, which produce around 280 tons of walnuts each year.

Mulberries are fruit trees that have existed but are no longer grown much. These are mainly located in the yards of the villagers. In the district of Mirditë there are about 7 thousand white mulberry trees, all of them in production, and it is estimated that the production of mulberries in this district is around 130 tons in total.

Other miscellaneous fruit trees are also present in the district of Mirditë, around 4 thousand trees providing a total yield of 10 tons.

**Olives.** Olive trees are still present in this municipality, although it should be noted that this terrain is not their typical cultivation area. Normally, they are found only in the lowlands and in the valleys directly affected by the air currents of the Adriatic Sea. It should be noted that these have been planted in the recent decades, caused by the climate change which made some of Mirditë areas suitable for cultivation. However, we believe that the Mirditë area, in general is not suitable for olive cultivation.

**Vineyards.** The vineyards are an old tradition of Mirditë farmers and this tradition can be observed especially in some specific areas of the municipality, such as Bukëmirë, whose vineyards were cultivated since centuries ago. Today, in the vineyards of this area, high quality wines are produced that are recognized for their quality even in some foreign markets.

Currently in the municipality, there is a total of 101 ha planted with vineyards and last year was realized a total production of 390 tons of grapes, almost all of which goes for processing, as the varieties of this district are not suitable for the table. The realized yield of the vineyard is in very low values and last year an average yield of only 3.98 tons/ha was realized (among the lowest values in the country).

In addition to the production of grapes from plots planted with vineyards, we also have the production that comes from pergolas. The pergolas in this district have a total of 208 thousand trees, which realize a total production of 1,630 tons of grapes. The average yield of vine roots of these pergolas is estimated to be around 6.0 kg/root, which should be noted as a very low productivity.

**Citrus.** In the Municipality of Mirditë there is no cultivation of citrus in large areas. Citrus fruits in Mirditë are planted only in rare cases and only for the needs of some farming families in their gardens, but they need protection during the winter.

#### 4.1.2 GENERAL ASSESSMENT BASED ON BASIC CRITERIA

The assessment of women's empowerment and gender equality in the fruit and vegetable production chain based on expert analysis and group of interest discussions and interviews with key actors is presented below.

Question	Points*	Weight	Total	Description
Is the participation of employed women in the value chain relatively high?	4	2	8	Yes, women are more involved than men, even though they are not formally registered (by law).
Are there many female entrepreneurs in the value chain?	2	2	4	Women are involved in the processes but the decision-making authority and business owners are the men. This is rather a matter of mentality, as, based on tradition, men are considered the head of the family who make decisions, are landowners, and represent the family to third parties.
Do women control/own equipment and assets?	1	2	2	The need for technology is low, except for a tractor for tillage, which is controlled by men.
Do women (or can they) acquire the skills needed to add value through product processing or diversification?	3	1	3	Employees, and especially women, are usually trained in processes, but there is still a need for training in support services (most activities are carried out using traditional methods).
Do women have control over sales and enterprise revenue?	1	2	2	Men usually control the business, although women are involved in all processes. They are also the decision-making authority.
Can work be located near home?	4	1	4	The work is located near the house, as the houses are positioned close to the plantations.
Is this a value chain with small barriers to entry for poor entrepreneurs (small scale of production, low initial cost, not requiring large capital investment, using low technology)?	2	1	2	Among the mentioned barriers are the lack of financial resources, the lack of support from the relevant institutions, the lack of subsidy schemes and organization.
Is this a value chain with low barriers to women's involvement (time and movement, access to technology and assets, cultural constraints)?	2	2	4	As above, adding that it is more difficult for women to succeed as entrepreneurs in this business, given the obstacles mentioned. Poor or non-existent horizontal cooperation can be considered one of the general obstacles. Among the specific gender barriers can be mentioned: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited time,</li> <li>• Low access to property ownership,</li> <li>• Low access to skills and training.</li> </ul>
Does this value chain offer new opportunities for women?	4	4	16	Women are involved in almost every activity but the agriculture sector is not getting the attention it deserves. With the increase of production and processing, especially of the traditional products of Mirditë, a high potential is created for the work of women.
Is the activity in the value chain in line with living conditions (year-round income, use of domestic work, quick returns,	3	2	6	Overall, yes, but the actors are not satisfied with their businesses' level of performance, and this is mainly attributed to the lack of financial incentives and support from various stakeholders in the sector.

keeping the environment intact?

Is there a connection between what women do and prospects for growth/diversification in the value chain?	4	1	4	Women are already involved in the sector and participate in almost all activities, but their involvement is not formalized. There are funding schemes for women small business owners in this sector.
Are there gender norms (for example "women's work") that prevent women from taking full advantage of value chain opportunities?	4	2	8	Women may not perform specific activities that require special physical skills, such as driving tractors and plowing. Also, not registering as an employee in the business prevents them from taking advantage of all the opportunities.
<b>Total for gender potential</b>	<b>63/102</b>			

\* Points: 0 (very little, no, not at all) to 5 (very high, yes, very important).

Table 10. Assessing Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality in the Fruit and Vegetable Value Chain.

### 4.1.3 SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PRODUCTION VALUE CHAIN

Based on this assessment, we present a summary of the SWOT analysis for this sector.

SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PRODUCTION VALUE CHAIN	
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Willingness to participate in trainings;</li> <li>Willingness of key VC actors to increase product quality;</li> <li>Involvement of women in the whole process and awareness of its contribution;</li> <li>Short distance to large urban areas of Tiranë and Durres (1 hour).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of financial resources and consequently lack of proper investment in technology and processing activities;</li> <li>Lack of certification of safety and quality standards;</li> <li>Informal operations in the market (unregistered businesses).</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunity to benefit from the IPARD financing scheme;</li> <li>Increased demand for fresh fruits and vegetables in the domestic and foreign market.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of promotion and marketing strategies (regional brands);</li> <li>Lack of information from key institutions regarding the schemes and benefits of the sector;</li> <li>Lack of attention from institutions towards the needs of the sector.</li> </ul>

Table 11. SWOT Analysis of the Fruit and Vegetable Value Chain.

## 4.2 MEDICINAL AND AROMATIC PLANTS VALUE CHAIN

### 4.2.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITUATION

In the Municipality of Mirditë there is no considerable area cultivated with Aromatic and Medicinal Plants (MAPs), although it should be noted that, in this area, farmers attain significant income from the activity of collecting MAPs, in the natural biodiversity of their territory. But it is a fact that farmers have not yet started to cultivate considerable area with these types of plants. Demands and initiatives from both farmers and producer groups exist but require support and promotion to promote this lucrative agricultural activity. It should

be noted that this district has very good agro-climatic and terrestrial conditions for the successful cultivation of some species of MAPs.

It is worth mentioning the area of the Orosh Administrative Unit, located east of the city of Rrëshen, as a very attractive mountainous area where meadows, springs, steep slopes, and alpine pastures are widespread. This area is one of the richest areas of Mirditë with aromatic and medicinal plants and before the 90s it was the main area of plant collection. This tradition continues today, with all families in the villages of the Orosh area involved in the collection of medicinal and aromatic plants and women are the main harvesters in the area. Despite the existing tradition, the employees who deal with the cultivation and collection of these plants need to get acquainted with the modern techniques of harvesting, drying, and preserving aromatic and medicinal plants, based on organic standards. This is a crucial step, which will increase the harvesting capacity and quality and consequently increase the income for the women of the Orosh area.

### INDUSTRIAL PLANTS.

The area of Municipality of Mirditë has not had a tradition in the cultivation of industrial plants before, except for the cultivation of tobacco in some small areas. It should be said that in Mirditë, very insignificant areas are planted with industrial crops, which shows not only the trend of this municipality, but the general trend everywhere in our country. This has come as a result of the total dysfunction of the processing industry in Albania.

#### 4.2.2 GENERAL ASSESSMENT BASED ON BASIC CRITERIA

The assessment of women's empowerment and gender equality in the Aromatic and Medicinal Plants production chain based on expert analysis and discussions with groups of interest and interviews with key actors is presented as follows:

Question	Points*	Weight	Total	Description
Is the participation of employed women in the value chain relatively high?	3	2	6	There is an almost 60% to 40% distribution among women and men employed in this sector but informally. Moreover, the MAP VC in Mirditë is not well known and well-positioned, and still remains a sporadic activity, unorganized but formalized. Most MAPs are cultivated in small quantities.
Are there many female entrepreneurs in the value chain?	1	2	2	Women are involved in activities related to the collection and (cultivation) of plants, but interact with men in almost every activity. Business ownership belongs to men.
Do women control/own equipment and assets?	2	2	4	Women are involved in the processes of collecting cultivated MAPs and in household chores, while men are mainly involved in trade and cultivation activities. Not much equipment is used in the process; simple equipment according to the stages of the activity.
Do women (or can they) acquire the skills needed to add value through product processing or diversification?	2	1	2	Women possess some of the necessary skills, mostly learned from men (the father of the family) who for the most part have inherited from the families. But, they need to be

				trained professionally and specifically for MAP activities.
Do women have control over sales and enterprise revenue?	1	2	2	Although women are engaged in every step, the decision maker is the head of the family (husband).
Can work be located near home?	2	1	2	The workplace is usually far from home, as far as collecting wild plants is concerned. As for the cultivated plants it is not far from home; it is located on lands that are owned or rented. But the largest ratio is occupied by wild plants
Is this a value chain with small barriers to entry for poor entrepreneurs (small scale of production, low initial cost, not requiring large capital investment, using low technology)?	4	1	4	Setting up a MAP business does not face entry barriers. Initial costs are low, even they are almost non-existent. Usually owning a land or renting a land is what is considered an initial cost, adding to the costs of securing inputs.
Is this a value chain with low barriers to women's involvement (time and movement, access to technology and assets, cultural constraints)?	4	2	8	As above. Also, there are no restrictions based on gender. Although women work harder than men for the same processes. Cultural constraints are not very obvious as women are involved in various processes in the VC.
Does this value chain offer new opportunities for women?	3	4	12	Women are more involved in collection, processing and quality control activities. By gaining the right skills, more opportunities would arise, including the opportunity to get involved in more processes, which are currently the field of men.
Is the activity in the value chain in line with living conditions (year-round income, use of domestic work, quick returns, keeping the environment intact)?	3	2	6	In this business, people are paid depending on the quantity they send to the collection point. Preliminary arrangements are made with seed traders for the cultivation of specific plants, but the overall level of profitability is considered high.
Is there a connection between what women do and prospects for growth/diversification in the value chain?	3	1	3	Higher involvement of women would improve the overall efficiency of the VCs, thus contributing to better cultivation practices, better decision-making, better coordination, etc.
Are there gender norms (for example "women's work") that prevent women from taking full advantage of value chain opportunities?	3	2	6	No, both men and women are involved in gathering activities, but men are also involved in other farm-related activities. They are usually also involved in the trading process.
<b>Total of gender potential</b>			<b>57/102</b>	

\* Points: 0 (very little, no, not at all) to 5 (very high, yes, very important).

Table 12. Assessing Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality in the MAP Value Chain.

### 4.2.3 SWOT ANALYSIS OF AROMATIC AND MEDICINAL PLANTS VALUE CHAIN

SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE MAP VALUE CHAIN	
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Willingness to cooperate and considering the sector as a good opportunity to achieve individual goals;</li> <li>▪ Willingness to participate in trainings;</li> <li>▪ Willingness of the main actors of the Office to increase the quality of products through the application of better processing and drying processes</li> <li>▪ Involve women in the whole process and raise awareness of their contribution.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of financial resources and consequently lack of proper investments in technology and processing;</li> <li>▪ Lack of certification on safety and quality standards;</li> <li>▪ Existence of technical skills gap to complete all processes (e.g., better processing and drying);</li> <li>▪ Informal functioning in the market (unregistered businesses);</li> <li>▪ Lack of information about market developments;</li> <li>▪ Lack of financial resources and little access to funding opportunities (high-interest rates) due to informality.</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Wide species diversity and high demand for wild MAPs;</li> <li>▪ Obtaining support from non-governmental organizations on technical and business skills;</li> <li>▪ Ability to work and cultivate on demand, thus having a secure market demand;</li> <li>▪ Organic certification is required by markets in urban areas and adds value to the production.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Weather conditions, sometimes unfavorable for increasing MAPs production;</li> <li>▪ Production dependence on climatic conditions;</li> <li>▪ Lack of a stable market and access to the desired market;</li> <li>▪ Lack of promotion and marketing strategies (regional brand).</li> </ul>

Table 13. SWOT analysis of the MAPs value chain.

## 4.3 RURAL TOURISM VALUE CHAIN

### 4.3.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITUATION

The Municipality of Mirditë has a rich natural and cultural heritage, which can be classified as of national importance. Regarding the protected identified natural areas according to Law 8906/2002 "For protected areas", within the boundaries of the municipality of Mirditë we can mention Bjeshka e Oroshit, Lura National Park, Natural Park of Ulëz, Nature Reserve of Bërzanë, Vlashaj Natural Monument, Kthellë Regional Natural Park, etc. Outside of these protected areas, there is also a number of natural monuments, including canyons, caves, areas with important ecological features. The cultural element is much highlighted in the entire geographical space of the municipality and is reflected in the great variety of religious sites, educational facilities, castles, dwellings and tower-type houses, which show the historical development of the area and local architecture, as well as dedicated spaces for the historical figures coming from the area.

In the cross-sectoral strategy for rural and agricultural development, as well as the "program of 100 villages", the priority is given to the development of agritourism, ecotourism, and other alternative forms of tourism in the area of Orosh and Kryezeza. In these areas, there are potential opportunities for recreational activities related to rural areas, nature,

accommodation services, and entertainment, as one of the forms for the development of the rural economy. Mainly in the administrative units of Rrëshen and Orosh, there are many tower-type buildings which can be converted into hospitable spaces bringing economic benefits to the local population.

The main Cultural Monuments in the territory of the Municipality of Mirditë are listed in the following table:

No.	Name of Monument	Administrative Unit	Village
1	Kalaja Antike e Rubikut	Rubik	Rubik
2	Kisha e Manastirit të Rubikut	Rubik	Rubik
3	Pictogramet në strehën shkëmbore pranë Rubikut	Rubik	Rubik
4	Banesa e Abat Prend Ndocit	Rubik	Rubik
5	Gradishta në Domgjon	Fan	Domgjon
6	Ujësjiellësi i Domgjonit	Fan	Domgjon
7	Banesa e Preng Lleshit	Selitë	Kurbnesh
8	Banesa dhe Kulla e Zef Nocajt	Orosh	Mashtëkor
9	Banesa e Dod Nikollës	Orosh	Kodër – Spaç
10	Burgu i Spacit	Orosh	Spaç
11	Banesa e Gjet Markut	Kthellë	Perlat i Sipërm
12	Shpella e Nezirit	Kthellë	Laç
13	Shpella e Pëllumbave	Kthellë	Laç
14	Shpella e Blazit	Kthellë	Laç
15	Qarri Verdhë	Rrëshen	Sheshaj
16	Shpella e Pashës	Orosh	Fushë Lugë
17	Shpella e Vertikale e Stërçokut	Orosh	Fushë Lugë
18	Shpella e Akullit	Orosh	Frashë
19	Bjeshka dhe Kanioni i Kaçinarit	Kaçinar	Kaçinar
20	Shpella e Valit	Selitë	Perlat i Epërm
21	Shpella e Mërkurhit	Selitë	Mërkur
22	Shpella Vertikale e Didhës	Selitë	Didhë

Table 14. Cultural Monuments in the territory of the Municipality of Mirditë.

Traditional products are the vineyards with special emphasis on the "local" varieties, the wine produced from grapes, and some types of dried fruits. Today the processing of these products, as well as the production intended for trade and their exposure to markets outside the municipality's territory are limited. The development strategy of the Municipality of Mirditë envisages the creation of favorable conditions for the promotion of these products.

Today there are 38 new mountain trails in the territory of the Municipality, with a total length of 415 km, with signage and maps, thanks to an Austrian-Swiss project, as well as a website, "[hiking Mirditë](#)", where you can find orienting information on how to walk in the mountains of Mirditë. These paths cross areas with centuries-old towers in the mountains of Munellë, Zepa, Orosh Mountains, Gurra e Domgjonit, or the place where the Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini

was created. In addition to the natural beauties during the trip, it is possible to enjoy very special cuisine based on corn and grapes. Among the most popular itineraries of these trails we would mention:

**Kthella Itinerary.** The trail in this itinerary starts in the town of Rrëshen, the administrative center of Mirditë since 1949, and continues to the Church of St. Vlash in the village of Malaj, from where it branches in two directions. On the one side, the pilgrimage continues towards the village of Kullaxhi, ending just under Reps and, on the other side, towards the village of Shebë, Kthellë e Epër and end in the village of Ndërshenë. The terrain is hilly, which makes the trek easy to handle. These trails have been used for centuries by locals to travel from one area to another. There are 5 artificial lakes of different sizes in this area, which were used for agriculture and electricity production. Flora and fauna are rich in numerous species. Through the path from Rrëshen in the direction of Kullaxhiu, the well-known archeological site of Bukli (which belongs to Blinisht) can be visited, where traces of Illyrian-Arab heritage have been found. The dwellings in the villages are of the "tower" type, in which their authentic architecture and stone carvings with pagan, religious and national symbols can be observed.

**Kulme – Derven Itinerary.** The trail starts at the Rubik Info Kulla and ends at Lake Ulëz. The maximum altitude in this area is about 800 m above sea level. Also in this area is the former copper mine of the '30s of the twentieth century. The itinerary includes the village of Lurth and several hilly-mountainous ranges covered with oak. Walking along this trail offers 360 ° panoramic views from the Adriatic Sea, Lake Ulëz, Deja Mountain to the Albanian Alps. This trail, one of the longest mountain trails in Mirditë, is considered one of the most special for the nature it offers, and the exploration of a terrain slightly disrupted by the lack of road infrastructure.

**Munellë Itinerary.** Munellë Mountain in its extension has a considerable number of caves and karstic pits, which are protected natural monuments. Its ridge, more or less flat, is connected with syncline structures and probably with the surface of erosive neogenic structures processed by karstic activities, which give the area the features of plateaus with some funnels, pits and karstic valleys; worth mentioning here Shpella e Stërçokëve Cave, and some caves in the northeastern part of the mountain, where the ice is permanent. Walking in the paths of Munellë offers a rare panoramic landscape, historical and religious objects, among which: Memorial of the Political Prison of Spaç, copper mines, tower of Zef Ndoci of the XIX century, Gurra e Domgjonit.

**Orosh Itinerary.** The karst plateau "Bjeshka e Oroshit" is distinguished for its physico-geographical features. The immediate ascent from the Fan River to its western part gives it special charm. The development of karst processes is interesting. Throughout the plateau you will encounter various shapes, mainly tunnels karst caves on highly soluble limestone rocks. Apart from nature, in the Orosh area, history is the dominant side. On the Holy Mountain was one of the most famous Benedictine Convents in the country and beyond. There are other places with interesting toponyms and history, such as: Shkalla e Shenjtit, Shpella e akullit, Barmuzhak, Sharkëz, Qafa e Qerepit, Maja e Shelbumit, etc. The dwellings in the villages are of the "tower" type. The two main monuments: the Abbey of Saint Llezhdri of Orosh (Mirditë); Ruins of Sarajet e Gjomarkajve, as well as two natural monuments: Shpella e Pashës Cave and Shpella e Stërçokëve Cave.

**Rubik Itinerary.** The trails lie in the massif of Vela Mountain, with an altitude of 1171 m above sea level. The climate in this area is Mediterranean and the valley is located only 70 m above sea level. Altitude contrasts provide variety of terrain, flora and fauna. The walking categories in the Rubik area have different themes, such as: panoramic, historical, cultural, religious, etc. The village of Katund i Vjetër is the center of ecotourism in the area of Mirditë, where the accommodation, accompanied by delicious cuisine, is an incentive that pushes you to visit it again. On Mount Vela, the trails cross limestone terrain offering a variety of karst forms. Every year, on the first Saturday of June, pilgrims from all regions climb to the "Lady of Veles", located at the top. Historical monuments that can be visited are: "Pictograms", "Rubik Castle," Church of the Redeemer" while natural monuments: are the Mountains of Velë, Erza, Bërshemi, etc.

**Selitë Itinerary.** The karst plateau of Valmor-Didhe, located along the Urakë River, is distinguished for its physical-geographical features. The immediate rise from the river gives it special charm. Throughout the plateau there are various forms, mainly tunnels, karst caves on highly soluble limestone rocks. Among the most mentioned caves is Shpella e Fatmirave in Valmorë and Shpella e Borës in Didhe. In the latter snow is present during both winter and summer. Also, Shpella e Ndue Gjonit Cave, Kusia, Shpella e Shutrisë Cave, and Shpella e Mërkuthit Cave constitute an interesting complex. During the contact of the limestone with the magmatics, the karst springs of Urakë emerge, which are the main inflows of this river, in which trout grows.

Based on its natural beauty, the best solution for the development of the area and the increase of employment is tourism and agritourism. This area is one of the most pristine in Albania and that is why it deserves to be developed. Local producers have a lot to sell, from handicrafts to food, but they do not have the amount of sales they would like.

#### 4.3.2 OVERALL EVALUATION BASED ON BASIC CRITERIA

The assessment of women's empowerment and gender equality in the value chain based on expert analysis and discussions with groups and interviews with main actors is presented as follows:

Question	Points*	Weight	Total	Description
Is the participation of employed women in the value chain relatively high?	3	2	6	In agritourism, women are involved in many processes (cooking, service, hospitality, etc.). As for the typology of Mirditë, men are involved in tours and service.
Are there many female entrepreneurs in the value chain?	1	2	2	Entrepreneurship is still considered a men's field due to cultural constraints and mentality. However, the situation is changing; also grant programs give a greater priority to women entrepreneurs, which are soon expected to lead to the establishment of new agritourism businesses, led by women.
Do women control/own equipment and assets?	2	2	4	Equipment and assets are mostly owned by men; however, women have access to them.

Do women (or can they) acquire the skills needed to add value through product processing or diversification?	3	1	3	Women are becoming more and more aware of the importance of diversifying the family farm by adding the agritourism component. There is a high willingness to learn about agritourism management, proper hospitality, English language skills, on-farm tours, off-farm tours in attractive surrounding areas, etc.
Do women have control over sales and enterprise revenue?	2	3	6	Income is controlled and managed mainly by men, but there is often consensus among family members.
Can work be located near home?	4	1	4	Yes. Usually, the old dwellings are close to the houses where the families live, and it is often the same building with two floors or separate spaces that is used simultaneously for tourists and family. So, accommodation and food activities are very close to home.
Is this a value chain with small barriers to entry for poor entrepreneurs (small scale of production, low initial cost, not requiring large capital investment, using low technology)?	3	1	3	No, there are some legal barriers to entering this value chain. The initial costs are somewhat high. Based on various studies and estimates, about 10-20 thousand EUR would be needed to transform the assets and the old apartment into a building with traditional renovated architecture. Given the opportunities available in the form of grants, this investment would be affordable for many rural families in the Municipality of Mirditë.
Is this a value chain with low barriers to women's involvement (time and movement, access to technology and assets, cultural constraints)?	4	2	8	There are no mandatory restrictions that prevent women from entering the VC. Women are involved in daily farming activities, traditional cooking for family and tourists, and other activities.
Does this value chain offer new opportunities for women?	3	4	12	Adding the tourism component to a family farm creates many opportunities for higher involvement of women in various processes. With the right skills and knowledge, women can play an important role in the family agritourism business.
Is the activity in the value chain in line with living conditions (year-round income, use of domestic work, quick returns, keeping the environment intact)?	3	2	6	Agritourism activity is considered a diversification activity for farms; thus, in the period of low sales in agriculture, farms can compensate for this effect by providing accommodation services and cooking for tourists. Agritourism can provide sufficient income for families for most of the year, except during the winter season, where many roads are blocked due to heavy snow and very low temperatures.
Is there a connection between what women do and prospects for growth/diversification in the value chain?	3	1	3	Women are involved and can be involved in various processes of an agritourism business. By improving skills and knowledge, women can boost the growth of the agritourism VC.

Are there gender norms (for example, "women's work") that prevent women from taking full advantage of value chain opportunities?	3	2	6	Housework and childcare take a considerable amount of time, and this often deprives women of taking full advantage of value chain opportunities. However, the short distance from home offers opportunities for women to play an important role in this sector.
<b>Total for gender potential</b>	<b>63/102</b>			

Table 15. Evaluating women's empowerment and gender equality in the rural tourism value chain.

### 4.3.3 SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE VALUE CHAIN

SWOT ANALYSIS OF CULINARY AND CULTURAL TOURISM VALUE CHAIN	
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Area based on agriculture and livestock;</li> <li>Good geographical location, which brings high opportunities for mountain and cultural tourism</li> <li>Tradition of hospitality and cooking;</li> <li>Investments made in natural trails and their marketing by the program "Hiking Mirditë";</li> <li>Low-cost services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of experience and business management skills in agritourism;</li> <li>Lack of specific training programs for agritourism management.</li> <li>Poor road infrastructure and poor public transport in rural areas;</li> <li>Low access to financial resources.</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High priority in the Government Agenda (100 villages program);</li> <li>Investment funds provided by various grant programs (ARDA, IPARD, others)</li> <li>Increasing demand for agritourism experience from both domestic and foreign tourists;</li> <li>Employment opportunities for women and youth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property rights issues can hamper investment;</li> <li>Mismanagement of waste in rural areas;</li> <li>Growing trend of young people leaving rural areas for a better life in big cities.</li> </ul>

Table 16. SWOT Analysis of rural tourism value chain.

## 4.4 GOAT MILK PRODUCTION AND PROCESSING VALUE CHAIN

### 4.4.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITUATION

The production of milk and dairy products in Albania has suffered a sharp decline during the beginning of the transition after the restructuring of the post-communist agricultural sector. However, its production began to increase rapidly from the first decade of the transition - relying mainly on small farms producing for their own consumption and sales, and stimulating the growth of domestic demand.

The growth of milk production (and dairy products) has continued throughout the 2000s. While the number of cattle and dairy livestock has decreased during this period, milk production has increased, enabled by better management associated with a consolidation trend in terms of the size of livestock farms.

The regions with the highest concentration of small milk production are Vlora, Gjirokastra, Korça, and Elbasan, which together account for more than 1/2 of total production. In general, regions with the highest wool concentrations usually tend to have woolly ones as well, as both of these species are more common in mountainous areas.

In terms of goats, Albania currently has 618,580 heads. In the first place for the number of goats is the municipality of Himara with 31,573 heads followed by: Tiranë 27,813 heads, Skrapar 27,400 heads, Selenica 22,940 heads, Pogradec 21,380 heads, Vlora 20,084 heads, Kolonje 19,700 heads, Elbasan 17,800 heads and Mirditë with 17,000 heads or only 2.7% of the total number of the country.

Milk production in Albania is 1,052,192 tons per year, where the main place is occupied by cow's milk with 897,349 tons and goat's milk with 80,194 tons or 7.8% of total production and finally is sheep's milk with 74,649 tons.

In terms of goat milk in the country, the first place is occupied by the municipality of Gramsh 3,791 tons while the municipality of Mirditë is in 13th place with a total production of goat milk of 1,853 tons or 2.3% of the amount nationwide.

### SMALL RUMINANTS SITUATION

Livestock or breeding of sheep, goats, cows is an old tradition in the Mirditë area as everywhere in our country. Some families have turned their breeding into a means of livelihood, although this is simply an increase in small numbers to serve the family economy in the village. In the territory of the Municipality of Mirditë, in all its administrative units, there are considerable numbers of goats that are grown and bred mainly for the production of cheese and meat. This number is estimated at up to 17 thousand herd in total throughout the territory. Being a large territory of 867 km<sup>2</sup> and where all the vegetation is located. Thanks to this natural feature so valuable in terms of biodiversity, it makes it possible for the entire territory of this district to be quite suitable for goat breeding.

The breeding of goats is mainly done on a family basis, so every work process is managed only by the family. This is a characteristic of the goat breeding situation in this district.



Figure 31: Herds of goats in Mirdita.

Some families, in order to have the highest possible quality production but above all mainly to allow the renewal of the pastures near their permanent residences, choose to spend the summers migrating with the herds. Specifically, some spend summers in Munellë Mountain, Xhuxhi Mountain, Orosh Mountain as well as in Valmor and Didha Plateaus. In these summer destinations, we can find herds of up to 800 goats which are always managed only by families.

Goat's milk is generally used to make cheese. The production of goat cheese in this municipality is done in an artisanal way

and the whole territory lacks large dairy processing plants that can collect and produce a unique product on the market.

Over 70% of the milk of these goats is used for the production of cheese and over 30% of it goes to the local market with an increased presence in the restaurants of the tourist village Katundi Vjeter in Rubik. The rest are traded informally with traders who go and get the cheese from the families in large quantities without establishing regular legal contractual relations between the buyers and the suppliers.

The goat cheese trade is largely informal. However, we notice a tendency to be formalized by farmers, though still in small numbers.

The women and girls of the families take care of the herds and produce their dairy by-products and mainly cheese, in most cases. Since the production of cheese is still done in a traditional way, it is the premises of the house that are used for its production and not separate structures (dairy processing facilities). The conditions in which the cheese is produced are not correct ones, possibly because the materials that make up the packing used for storage and production of milk by-products are often not suitable. Even the conditions in which the cheese is stored do not enable the preservation at maximum quality as plastic packaging is often used. The cheese is kept in the corners of fresh rooms but not refrigerated. Also, when the product is taken to market, the packaging in which it is stored is often not the appropriate one.

Around 5 families that have a number of 50-120 goats and few economic opportunities to invest in improving the quality of the product, while being located close to the markets of Rrëshen and Rubik and have the opportunity to go out on a daily basis to trade the cheese themselves as a street vendor could be subjects of support of projects.

## BREEDING

Since the economic categories of families that are involved in goat breeding are different, consequently, the conditions under which they keep and breed herds are different. There are many who have invested in good conditions for the preservation of livestock or even have stables that meet many conditions for dignified treatment.

Most of the stables are traditionally built with wooden structures mainly surrounded by steel nets with special earrings for small kids during the season when they are bred.

There are some families who, when migrating to summer pastures, choose to do it with traditional methods of herding on foot, but in recent years they have mostly chosen to transport them by truck or trucks that have the opportunity to move on the rural roads of these areas.

In addition to the type of plants, shrubs and trees that the mountains of Mirditë offer, farmers who do not own meadows from where they can get the grass, buy mainly lucerne or soybean blocks in the western lowlands and mainly from traders who choose the Milot bazaar (25 km from Rresheni) for trade. In the process of breeding goats but also in the production of by-products that it provides, all operations are managed by family



Figure 32: Goat stable near family premises.

members. The men are mainly engaged in grazing the herd and providing food for them, while it is the women and girls of the family who are engaged in the process of milking and milk processing. Regardless of the structure of the family, everyone is involved in this type of family economy, with women having the most difficult processes of producing a quality product, although often without the right tools and using traditional methods.

## PASTURES

The climate of the municipality is hilly, pre-mountainous and mountainous Mediterranean. The vegetation is quite rich and consists of shrubs, oaks, mixed forests, beaches and mountain pastures where medicinal plants are quite widespread. From the physical point of view, the territory is characterized by mountain formations, valleys, plateaus, plains and plains.

The average height is 557 m above sea level, while the highest peak is Mali i Kunorës Mountain 2121 m. The territory is crossed by the rivers Fani i Madh, Fani i Vogël, Urakë as well as a large number of streams that descend from the heights of the mountains and feed the latter. 74% of the territory of the municipality consists of forests, making it possible to breed goats in each administrative unit. During the summer, many of the owners of large herds with more than 150 heads migrate to the main mountain destinations (over 1300 meters) such as Munellë



Figure 33: Views of natural cattle pastures in Mirdita.



Figure 34: Milk processing at the farm.

Mountain, Mali i Xhuxhit Mountain in Fan Administrative Unit, Oros Mountain in Oros Administrative Unit, Valmor Plateaus, and Didhës in the Administrative Unit Headquarters where the number of heads is even greater.

## MILK COLLECTION AND PROCESSING

The goat cheese production and trade sector situation in the territory of Municipality of Mirditë is presented as a market with big problems and completely informal. Although there are some families or investors investing in stables, production base (dairy) for their herds, the conclusion of long-term contracts for the use of public forest fund owned by the municipality remains a small percentage.

To a large extent, this sector relies on the family as a basis for livestock breeding and cheese production, without having the opportunity to return to manufacturing industry since cheese

production is still done in an artisanal way. Even its trade is largely done in informal markets and mainly through agreements with traders who buy the product near them without contracts that protect the parties and bring order in this type of market. Milot Bazaar is still a favorite point of the farmers for the cheese trade but also for the provision of food base (mainly for the winter period) for the herds.

Production with traditional methods of cheese but also grazing in areas with abundant vegetation provides a very high-quality product for the market, although this product in recent years is being affected by the use of improper means of production and transportation.

#### 4.4.2 GENERAL EVALUATION BASED ON BASIC CRITERIA

The assessment of women's empowerment and gender equality in the Goat Milk Production and Processing value chain based on expert analysis and discussions with groups of interest and interviews with key actors is presented below:

Question	Points*	Weight	Total	Description
Is the participation of employed women in the value chain relatively high?	4	2	8	Employed women are almost all family members. The wife and daughter-in-law work in business.
Are there many female entrepreneurs in the value chain?	3	2	6	There are some women entrepreneurs in this business, but women are mostly involved in all daily activities.
Do women control/own equipment and assets?	3	2	8	Apart from milk processing equipment that is simple and owned by men, no other specific equipment or asset is used in this sector.
Do women (or can they) acquire the skills needed to add value through product processing or diversification?	4	1	4	Women have the right skills for getting and processing products, but can gain specific skills, not only technical skills but also other skills related to business and the market.
Do women have control over sales and enterprise revenue?	1	2	2	Sales and enterprise revenues are controlled 100 percent by men; this is the main source of income for these families. However, women do budget planning when it comes to essentials – food and children's needs.
Can work be located near home?	5	1	5	Yes. The farm is located close to the family (home).
Is this a value chain with small barriers to entry for poor entrepreneurs (small scale of production, low initial cost, not requiring large capital investment, using low technology)?	4	1	4	The costs are not too high. The main cost is animal feed in the winter period as well as veterinary and sanitary costs, etc.
Is this a value chain with low barriers to women's involvement (time and movement, access to technology and assets, cultural constraints)?	4	2	8	Yes, women get used to the process of making and processing products from an early age. Technology is rarely used in this sector. There is only a need to use new storage and marketing methods to ensure standards.
Does this value chain offer new opportunities for women?	4	4	16	Yes, this value chain offers a lot of new opportunities for women.
Is the activity in the value chain in line with living	3	2	6	The income generated by this sector is not very high, but it can be fully returned as the

conditions (year-round income, use of domestic work, quick returns, keeping the environment intact?)

only source of funding to support families by improving the quality and safety of products.

Is there a connection between what women do and prospects for growth/diversification in the value chain?	4	1	4	There are many growth opportunities for women in this value chain. The range of their activities is unlimited, taking into account that the most common processes performed by women, such as milking and/or cleaning animals, processing and storage of dairy products, etc.
Are there gender norms (for example, "women's work") that prevent women from taking full advantage of value chain opportunities?	4	2	8	Often, many activities performed by women are considered as ancillary activities to men. But during the processing process, which is the basis for the change and growth of this sector, women's work is paramount.
<b>Total gender potential</b>			<b>79/102</b>	

Table 17. Assessing women's empowerment and gender equality in the value chain.

### 4.4.3 SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE VALUE CHAIN

SWOT ANALYSIS OF GOAT MILK PRODUCTION AND PROCESSING VALUE CHAIN	
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Favorable geographical position of Mirditë with many forest areas and meadows, where the diversity of flora is very great</li> <li>▪ The high number of households in the sector and the significant percentage of income from this sector for Mirditë households.</li> <li>▪ Growing demand for organic livestock products</li> <li>▪ Pleasant interest rate on production.</li> <li>▪ Family traditions and experiences in collection/processing, including young people engaged.</li> <li>▪ Product diversity as well as the willingness of the main actors of the VC to increase the quality of products</li> <li>▪ Good image of this sector and high range of products.</li> <li>▪ Willingness to participate in trainings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of advisory service in the field of standards of both milk production and processing.</li> <li>▪ Lack of knowledge in on-farm diversity management, individual production in relatively small quantities, as well as the non-existence of a brand.</li> <li>▪ Lack of financial resources and consequently lack of proper investment in technology and processing activities;</li> <li>▪ Lack of support in building the missing/truncated capacities of technical and advisory support.</li> <li>▪ Relatively small herd size in part and poor horizontal cooperation between farms.</li> <li>▪ Lack of certification on safety and quality standards;</li> <li>▪ Informal functioning of the market and preference for the supply of cheap imported products.</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Creating a short-term processing model (at the farm level) creates employment opportunities for some employees, mainly women and girls, who are traditionally considered the most suitable.</li> <li>▪ The opportunity to increase the number of heads and increase yields, will enable more milk to be processed each year and consequently will employ even more people.</li> <li>▪ Existence of local specialists who have the skills to facilitate and coordinate a</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Decrease in the number of livestock heads in recent years.</li> <li>▪ Competition in products, especially with counterfeit products</li> <li>▪ Migration of the local population towards urban areas</li> <li>▪ Product hygiene, which comes from a lack of equipment.</li> <li>▪ Other sources of income, such as medicinal plants, mining, forestry, etc., are a threat to the livestock sector.</li> </ul>

- support to farmers, creating truly successful models
- Women and the desire to deal with goat breeding and is an employment opportunity for women since milking and processing of milk is done mainly by them.
- Existence of quite serious organizations in recognizing the standards of milk production and processing.
- Opportunity to benefit from IPARD scheme.
- Difficulties in accessing the financial market and high interest of bank loans
- Lack of investment by institutions in this sector, as well as lack of promotion and marketing strategies.
- Lack of information from key institutions on schemes and sector beneficiaries.
- Existence of cheap products imported in the market and small purchasing power in Mirditë.

Table 18. SWOT analysis of Goat Milk Production and Processing Value Chain.

## 4.5 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis of the above four sectors, using the criteria of gender sensitivity analysis in value chains (GSVCA) we have the following evaluation situation

Analyzed VC	Points	Notes
Fruits and vegetables	63	Requires significant funding for investments required in technology and mainly in processing activity. Therefore, it is a long-term intervention and not with high guarantees of success. The Albanian-Austrian Partnership Foundation - Marianne Graf (AAP) is investing in this direction.
Medicinal and aromatic plants	57	Dependence of production on climatic conditions, sometimes unfavorable for the growth of MAPs as well as the lack of a stable market in the territory of the Municipality of Mirditë. Today there are no cultivated MAPs in the territory of the Municipality of Mirditë.
Rural tourism	63	Property rights problems Poor road infrastructure and poor public transport in rural areas may hamper investment.
Milk Production and Processing	81	The favorable geographical position of Mirditë with many forest areas and meadows, where the diversity of flora is very large, the high number of families involved in the sector, the favorable interest rate in production and the considerable percentage of income from this sector are some of the key factors for success in this sector given the growing demand for organic livestock products.

In the following chapter we will analyze in details the Goat Milk Production and Processing Value Chain.

## 5. DETAILED ANALYSIS OF GOAT MILK PRODUCTION AND PROCESSING VC

### 5.1 VALUE CHAIN OVERVIEW

As described above, livestock or breeding of sheep, goats, cows is an old tradition in Albania. Some families have turned their breeding into a means of livelihood, not just growing in small numbers to serve the rural household. In the territory of the Municipality of Mirditë there are 3 main summer destinations where large herds (with over 100) spend their summer, specifically in Munellë Mountain, Mali i Xhuxhit Mountain, Orosh Mountain and Valmor and Fushat e Ddhës Plains. In these summer destinations, in Mirditë in general, we can find herds of up to 800 heads which are managed by families. Over 70% of the milk of these cattle is used for cheese production and about 30% of it goes to the local market with an increased presence in the restaurants of the tourist village Katund i Vjeter in Rubik.

Livestock in general and small livestock make up a vital sector, which provides the inhabitants of Mirditë with a substantial income. About 60% of the income of Mirditë families is provided by agriculture, where livestock occupies 73% of the total income from agriculture. Almost every family in the rural area keeps a cow and some small cattle. Apparently, only the distribution of pasture resources has caused the cows to be kept close to the house and the sheep or goats taken to distant pastures.

The Municipality of Mirditë currently has 31,000 small heads of livestock. Currently, this small sector has to employ over 650 people full time (100 small heads employ over 2 people), but due to the number of small households and the lack of cooperation between farmers only a few people can be considered full-time employees, as they have herds of over 50 small cattle.

No.	Types	Number	% by type
1	Cattle	3.800	9.10%
2	Sheep	7.200	17.40%
3	Pig	6.200	15.00%
4	One Hoof	434	1.00%
5	Goats and Sheep	23.800	57.50%
Total		41.434	100.00%

Table 19. Structure of Livestock in the Municipality of Mirditë.

In taking care of herds and in the production of their milk by-products and mainly cheese, it is the women and girls of the families who do the work in most cases. The conditions in which they live and produce cheese are not the best possible as the areas in which flocks spend the summer are in mountainous territories where basic elements of infrastructure and services are missing and thus, the product remains in temporary structures, often unsuitable for storage. Even for those who have stables near their homes, the conditions are often no longer optimal. The materials that the packaging that they use to store products is made of, is often not an appropriate one, so in order to have a quality product that suits the consumer, it is advisable to undertake visits to these households and perform an assessment

of the needs for the support case by case, verifying hygienic means for the storage and processing of milk that they collect from livestock.

The value chain in the area of Mirditë is oriented toward self-consumption. The Municipality of Mirditë produces 6,423 tons of milk per year, of which it needs for consumption no more than 3,000 kW per year. The rest is processed at home to produce cheese but is generally misused. Currently, in Mirditë, wherever there is livestock, there are milk processing units owned by individual families and no units which are intended for the collection of milk of other producers.

No	Name	Number	Village/ADM Unit	Type
1	Ndue Frrok Përgjoni	350	Lëkundë/Selitë	goats and sheep
2	Viktor Ndue Përgjoni	300	Lëkundë/Selitë	goats and sheep
3	Preng Dod Gjini	200	Lëkundë/Selitë	goats and sheep
4	Vladimir Kol Arapi	300	Zajs/Selitë	goats and sheep
5	Prena Bardhok Buraku	100	Zajs/Selitë	goats and sheep
6	Lufaj + Kurbnesh	1000	Selitë	small livestock
7	Nikoll Radaçi	100	Perlat Qendër/Kthellë	goats
8	Nikoll Mrruku	120	-II-	goats
9	Ndue Mrruku	80	-II-	goats
10	Erion Lleshaj	200	Prosek/Kthellë	goats
11	Marie Deda	50	Prosek/Kthellë	sheep
12	Ermal Duka	200	Trojez/Kthellë	goats
13	Rigerta Loku	220	Rrushkull/Rrëshen	goats
14	Prene Gjoka	70	Tarazh/Reshen	sheep
15	Armando Ndoj	200	Tarazh/Rëshen	goats
16	Agustin Prenga	150	Tarazh/Rrëshen	goats
17	Klodian Gjokolaj	200	Malaj/Rrëshen	sheep
18	Rudina Gjoka	300	Malaj/Rrëshen	goats and sheep
19	Anton Doçi	350	Malaj/Rrëshen	goats
20	Mark Deda	120	Malaj Eper/Rreshen	goats
21	Vitore Mrruku	200	Shtrez/Rrëshen	goats
22	Mrikë Gjini	250	Rrasfik/Rubik	goats
23	Pjetër Ndoj	180	Rreja e Zezë/Rubik	goats
24	Llesh Gjoka	330	Rreja e Velës/Rubik	goats
25	Florentin Gega	80	Rrethi i Epër/Rubik	goats
26	Kol Preçi	100	Bukëmirë/Rrëshen	goats
27	Ded Doda	300	Shperdhaz/Kaçinar	goats
28	Preng Nikolli	150	Simon/Kaçinar	goats

29	Preng Gjini	150	Gëziq/Rrëshen	goats
30	Mark Gjini	90	Gëziq/Rrëshen	goats
31	Gëzim Biba	110	Gëziq/Rrëshen	goats
32	Ndue Gjeta	70	Gëziq/Rrëshen	goats
33	Pjeter Gjoci	120	Nderfushaz/Rreshen	goats
34	Dritan Nikolli	70	Ndërfanë/Rrëshen	goats
35	Aleksandër Lleshi	200	Lajthizë/Orosh	goats
36	Bardhok Deda	300	Lajthizë/Orosh	sheep
37	Lizë Gjeçi	300	Konaj/Fan	goats
38	Ndue Pjeter Nikolli	240	Konaj/Fan	goats
39	Gjovalin Nikolli	540	Klos/Fan	Goats and sheep
40	Vlash Leka	100	Shëngjin/Fan	goats
41	Bardhok Lleshi	100	Blinisht/Orosh	goats
42	Gjergj Ndoj (Biba)	800	Xhuxhe/Fan	goats
43	Martin Marku	200	Xhuxhe/Fan	goats
44	Preng Marku	150	Munellë-Reps/Orosh	goats

Table 20. List of the main livestock breeders in the Municipality of Mirditë.

Based on the list of farmers who have registered their livestock (Table 20) obtained from the local sector of the Regional Veterinary Directorate and cross-referenced with the data of the Directorate of Agriculture in the Municipality, it results that 8 of the farmers or 15% of them are female. This figure is considerable, especially in an environment where ownership relationships have traditionally been dedicated to men. These 8 farmers make up 15% of the total amount of small ruminants' farmers. If we analyze only the goats, female farmers own about 20% of all herds that are present in the Municipality of Mirditë.

## 5.2 MAPPING OF THE VALUE CHAIN

The following figure shows a comprehensive outline of the Goat Cheese Production Value Chain. It identifies the main factors and interest groups, the turnover of products from securing inputs to reaching the final market, as well as the main problems. This scheme helps to identify gaps or obstacles in the production flow.

### GOAT CHEESE PRODUCTION VALUE CHAIN

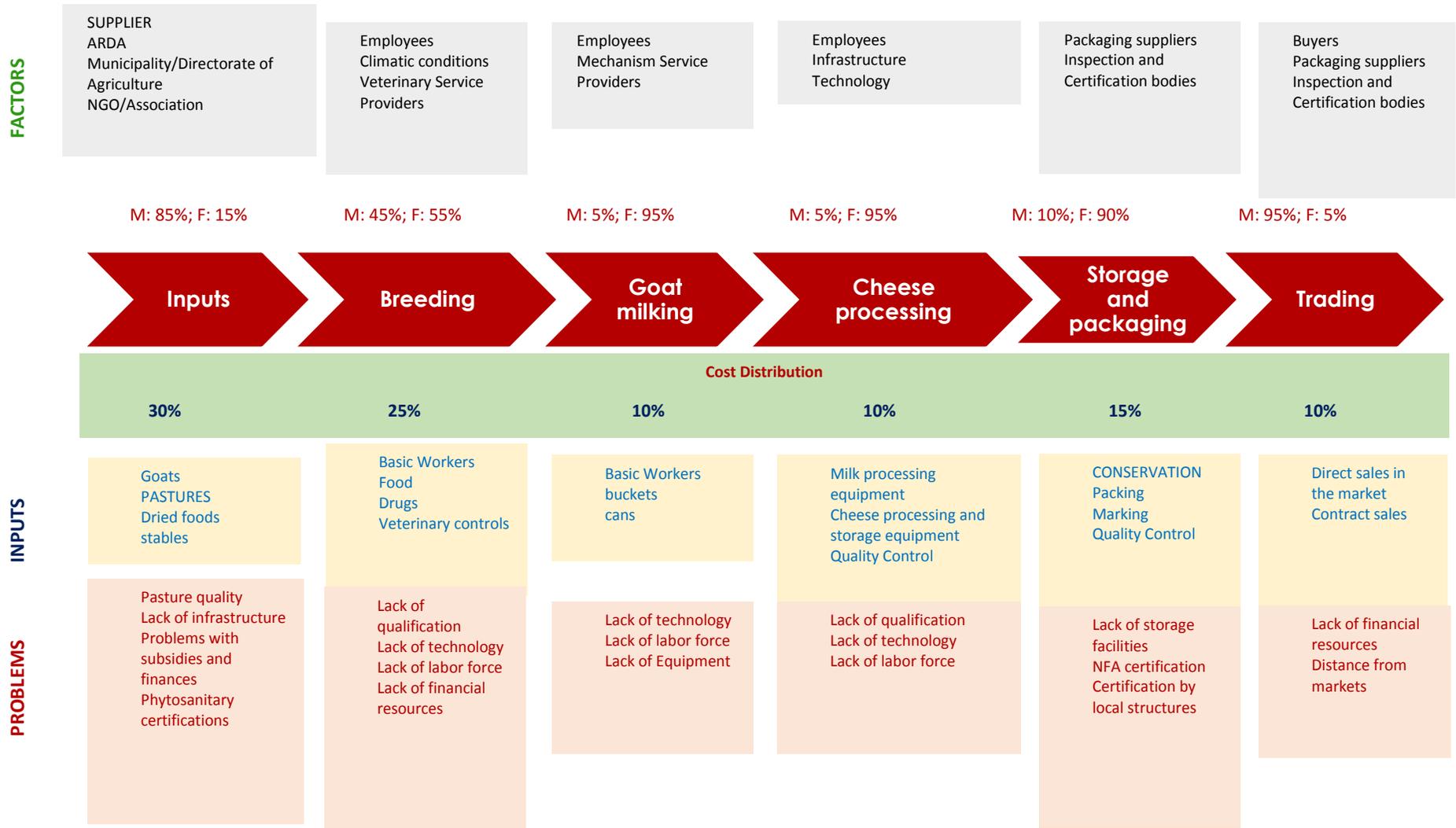


Figure 35. Sketch of Goat Cheese production Value Chain in Municipality of Mirditë.

## 5.3 VALUE CHAIN ACTORS

The livestock products sector is organized into three main levels:

1. *Dairy producers and individual producers of its by-products;*
2. *Collectors and consolidators, divided into two subcategories: individual collectors and regional collectors;*
3. *Processors and traders of small, medium, and large quantities.*

In the Municipality of Mirditë, among these categories, there is only the first one, i.e., individual producers and processors present. The analysis of these actors will be carried out during the detailed analysis of the main links of the value chain.

It should be noted at the outset that, as in any VC, even in the VC of Goat Cheese Production, some key actors indirectly influence the improvement of the chain. Given that these actors are present in almost every link, we are performing their assessment in the context of impact on the entire VC. Moreover, organizations and projects in other municipalities can be a way to ensure the use of best practices in the VC: organizations in the region of Kukës dealing with GI-registered (protected origin) kid goat meat and goat cheeses from Tropoja.

### 5.3.1 CENTRAL AND LOCAL SUPPORT STRUCTURES

A very important role in the sector is played by other stakeholders, including central and local structures that support the agricultural sector in general, as well as certification structures. Below is a brief description of each chain actor of the value of the goat milk production and processing sector.

**Support services** provide free technical assistance to farmers. This includes three levels: central, regional and local, which include a total of 285 employees nationwide (ISARD 2014-2020). At the regional level, each of the 12 Directorates of Agriculture has additional services provided by 5-6 vegetable, fruit, and plant protection specialists, livestock specialists, and agricultural economists. At the local level, for more than 4 years the municipalities had a functional duty to perform functions in the field of agriculture, rural development, forests and public pastures, nature and biodiversity. According to applicable law, municipalities are responsible for performing specific functions in this field.

Currently, in the Municipality of Mirditë, the services for performing these functions are provided by the Forest Service and Agriculture Agency, but which is mainly oriented towards the administration of the public forest and pasture fund of this municipality and does not have sufficient structures for the creation and administration of the local system, agricultural and rural information and counseling as well as the establishment and administration of local grant schemes for agriculture and rural development, funded by the local budget and/or co-financed by third parties, guaranteeing gender-balanced access. The information provided shows that there is no established structure for providing this service.

**Agricultural Technology Transfer Centers (ATTC)** has begun to play an active role in terms of technology transfer, aiming to improve competitiveness in the Albanian agricultural sector. There are five ATTCs in Albania, located in Korça, Lushnjë, Vlora, Shkodër, and Fushë-

Krujë. ATTCs are involved in the preparation and implementation of several programs related to olive plantation schemes, irrigation, and drainage, agricultural support schemes, food security, land consolidation, etc.

**National Food Authority (NFA)** is a government agency subordinate to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and is the competent authority with national management inspection functions in the field of consumer safety and protection, plant and animal protection. NFA performs interventions based on Law no. 10 433, dated 16.6.2011 on "Inspection in the Republic of Albania", article 7 "Principles of inspection program". The time of inspection is determined in the annual inspection program; however, random inspections occur in cases when provided by law. Article 4, in the same law, gives the purpose of the inspection, namely: (i) assessment of compliance with legal requirements; (ii) documenting good practices in complying with legal requirements; (iii) advising the inspected entity on the correct implementation of legal requirements; (iv) ordering the correction of violations of legal requirements and the elimination of the consequences arising therefrom; and (v) sentencing and taking other administrative measures to avoid risks that may be posed to the public interest.

Based on Article 26 "Annual inspection time", the maximum allowed inspection period varies from 5 to 15 days, and there is no inspection fee. The inspected business/farm must provide the necessary evidence and information required by the inspection authority. Inspections usually follow a predetermined schedule based on the Annual Inspection Schedule, but there may be occasional inspections. The nearest inspector is the Regional Office of the National Food Authority in Lezhë, which conducts inspections based on the Annual Inspection Program provided by the NFA office in Tiranë.

### 5.3.2 CERTIFICATION STRUCTURES

Regarding **Certification Institutions**, the basic standards are HACCP (Standard of Risk Analysis and Critical Control Point) and 'Organic' Certification. HACCP is mandatory by law in Albania for any farmer, business, or other entity that produces food products. 'Organic' certification is being sought by markets in urban areas and adds value to the product.

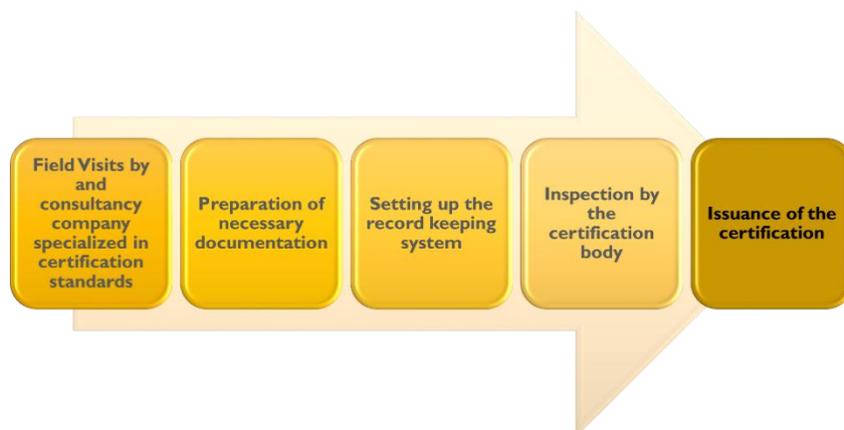


Figure 36. Steps for HACCP Certification.

The average time for HACCP certification is 14-30 days, and its process includes the following steps:

- *Field visit by a consulting company specializing in certification standards which provides recommendations for improvements and adaptations;*

- *Preparation of necessary documentation;*
- *Establishment of a system of keeping records and data;*
- *Inspection by the certification body;*
- *Issuance of certification.*

While 'Organic' certification is a more complex standard that can take 2-3 years to obtain, during this period, businesses receive an "Organic certification process" statement until the final certificate is issued. The main certification body for the Organic Standard is AlbInspekt, based in Tiranë. There are several certification bodies for HACCP certification. HACCP and Organic are provided by private companies and NGOs, while the phytosanitary certificate, which is required for export, is issued by the national phytosanitary service, part of the Regional Directorate of Agriculture, Lezhë.

### 5.3.3 PRIVATE SUPPORT STRUCTURES

**Raw material and technology suppliers** play an important role in Goat Cheese's value chain. They mainly provide livestock feed during the winter period and provide assistance to the villagers of the area for livestock breeding. Normally, these suppliers also provide the necessary technology for the mechanization of various processes, both milking and cheese production and preservation. Due to the development and fragmentation of this sector, the small number of goatherds, and consequently, the relatively small quantities of milk, the mechanism is almost non-existent throughout the entire process of goat cheese production in Mirditë. In special cases, these suppliers also offer good quality livestock that is used to improve the breed of goats.

**Veterinarians and Veterinary Pharmacies.** The existence of several veterinary specialists, zootechnicians, and technologists plays a very important role in advising and preventing goat diseases. They offer advice to support farmers and to create healthy herds. They provide medicines for livestock, as well as help the villagers of the area with knowledge to prevent various diseases and improve livestock breeding.

**Cheese Collectors.** Practically in the Municipality of Mirditë for the small quantities of goat cheese production, there are no collectors of the finished product. Mirditë producers sell their product directly to consumers or in the market of Rrëshen and Milot or among their regular customers.

Practically, the lack of these collectors directly affects the amount of cheese production because farmers without a guaranteed market are reluctant to increase production and often sell kid goats, limiting herd sizes and consequently milk production. It is necessary to create a cheese brand and certify it to make collectors attractive. The establishment of a brand of goat cheese, "Mirditë", enables the finding of new markets such as shops, restaurants, inns both within the region of Lezhë and outside it.

**Small processors** breed an average of 50 to 200 sheep. They have basic processing or packaging tools. They sell mainly to traditional customers but also to the domestic market.

**Medium-sized processors** breed on average 200 to 1000 sheep. About 10-15 farmers are classified as medium-sized processors in the Municipality of Mirditë. Even these often do not have optimal conditions for the production and storage of the products they produce. Even this category of processors sells mainly to regular clients but also small quantities in the domestic market.

## 5.4 ANALYSIS OF THE VALUE CHAIN STAGES

It should be taken into account that Mirditë herders breed mainly sheep and goats; in our analysis, we have focused on goat breeding, as an old tradition of this area, with natural and climatic conditions favoring this livestock. As shown in the above Figure 36, the Value Chain (VC) for Goat Cheese Production is composed of six main links. The following paragraphs analyze these links based on:

- ✓ The main inputs needed in each link.
- ✓ Influencing factors and their weight.
- ✓ The role of women in each link and the factors or opportunities for improving their role
- ✓ Problems identified, and opportunities and recommendations for their minimization.

Based on the fieldwork, observations and interviews conducted with the main actors of the value chain in the Municipality of Mirditë, the respective situations, as well as the following conclusions and recommendations, were identified.

### 5.4.1 INPUTS

**Activities that take place.** This chain link includes activities related to the key elements to develop an activity in Goat Cheese Production VVs and summarizes:

- ✓ **Goat Purchase**, normally a good part of Mirditë herders has small or medium inherited herds. They may receive small new quantities in order to improve the breed.
- ✓ **Providing Pastures for goat feed**. Based on the relatively low number of herds, common areas, lawns, or even streams are used as pastures. Only 4 entities have rented pastures from the Municipality of Mirditë.
- ✓ **Provision of Dry Food**. Mostly during the winter season, the breeders use dry feed for the cattle. They collect a part of it themselves during the summer, but they always need supplementary food which they buy in the market.
- ✓ **Securing Stables**. With the exception of 3 entities who have set up stables in the rented pastures, all the others have built stables near the premises of the house.

This is one more opportunity for the work of women who are close to the workplace and have the opportunity to deal with child-rearing and other household chores. Normally, stables exist but occasionally need various repairs.

**Women's Participation.** This activity, in most cases, is dominated by men (they make up 85% of the total workforce) because it is related to activities that take place away from the place of residence. Men are mostly the ones who go out to the markets and also carry out the transportation of inputs. In some cases, women accompany men mainly to ensure the quality of the products taken to the market. Also, traditionally, men are the ones who deal with various stall repairs. In this chain there are few opportunities to increase the role of women and their empowerment.

**Cost of this link.** This stage constitutes about **30% of the production cost** of Goat Cheese value chain in the total cost, taking into account the cost of dry food in cases where it is not produced by the farmer families themselves.

## 5.4.2 BREEDING

**Activities that take place.** In this link all the activities related to the work necessary for the breeding of goats are realized and it includes daily activities for the well-being of the herd. The main activities in this process are:

- ✓ Food. Every day, except on very cold days, herders take out herds of goats in the pastures. In parallel with the pastures, during the winter season they give them dry food in the stables.
- ✓ Veterinary Controls and Medications. Periodically, breeders carry out veterinary inspections of livestock as well as carry out the necessary vaccinations.

**Women's Participation.** In this part of the process, women's participation is almost equal to men. Men perform these activities mainly when migrating with livestock to places with milder climates and more pastures or when they have stables far from home. In the Municipality of Mirditë, the pastures are generally near the houses and the activities of this link are carried out by them or the children when they are not at school.

**Cost of this link.** Due to the effect of the cost of medicines and dry food on the total cost, this process affects about **25% of the production cost** of Goat Cheese.

## 5.4.3 MILKING

**Activities that take place.** This link in the chain includes activities related to the daily milking process, once or twice a day for goats. It is a process that is performed manually. In the Municipality of Mirditë there is no farm or facility that uses automated milking equipment. Also, the equipment used for milk collection is simple, such as buckets, cans, etc. This is an important process both in terms of the amount of milk production that is obtained and mainly in terms of hygiene and quality of cheese to follow.

**Women's Participation.** This process is dominated by women's work to the extent of 95%, but sometimes men also help them. Modest interventions that can improve this link and eliminate any problems are only in terms of empowerment from the point of view of knowledge about the milking process mainly among young people. They can also be helped by supplying simple equipment (buckets and other containers) which will reduce women's ancillary work in terms of frequent washing equipment, as well as enable the increase of processing capacities to consequently lead to an increase in production.

**Cost of this link.** This process, being a daily process and from the point of view of cost should have a considerable weight, but based on the very low levels of payments, especially since it is done for the family, the process affects about **10% of the production cost** of Goat Cheese, including the renovation of basic equipment.

## 5.4.4 PROCESSING

**Activities that take place.** This link is related to the work needed for milk processing and cheese production. Generally, the work for the processing of dairy products in the Municipality of Mirditë is done on a family basis. Since the production of cheese is still done in a traditional way, the premises of the house are used for its production and not separate structures. The conditions in which they produce the cheese are not the best possible because the materials that make up the packaging that they use to store and produce the



packing the cheese and the cost of the containers in which it is sold. This process affects about 15% of the production cost of Goat Cheese in the Municipality of Mirditë.

### 5.4.6 TRADE

**Activities that take place.** There are generally two ways to trade cheese: a) Contract sales, or b) Direct market sales. This chain link includes activities related to:

- ✓ Production contracting. Currently, the practice of contracts, as everywhere in the agricultural sector in Albania, even for livestock products in the Municipality of Mirditë does not exist, despite the fact that in those cases it is always done by men.
- ✓ Transportation of the product to the collector or to the trailer. Generally, this process is performed by the men who are responsible for the transportation activities throughout the VC.
- ✓ Market sales process. Even in this activity, the participation of men is almost exclusive but women participate actively when men are absent.
- ✓ Promotion, this process includes the display of products in the dedicated space and offline or online promotion on social media, as well as the process of selling products to customers and the impact on buyers.

**Women's Participation.** These activities, also due to the mentality, in most cases are dominated by men (they make up 95% of the total workforce), because they are related to activities that take place away from the place of residence. Men are mostly those who go out to the markets and carry out the transportation of inputs. In some cases, women accompany men, mainly in cases of direct sales in the market.

**Cost of this link.** In terms of cost in the value chain this link makes up about 10% of the cost of the whole chain.

## 5.5 FINDINGS FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE VALUE CHAIN

### 5.5.1 OPPORTUNITIES

Regarding the **Opportunities** that the Goat Cheese Production and Processing value chain has to offer, the respondents mentioned the following:

During our analysis, as we have presented it summarized in the SWOT analysis, the following elements are the main factors that can contribute to the improvement of the Goat Cheese production sector in the Municipality of Mirditë. These

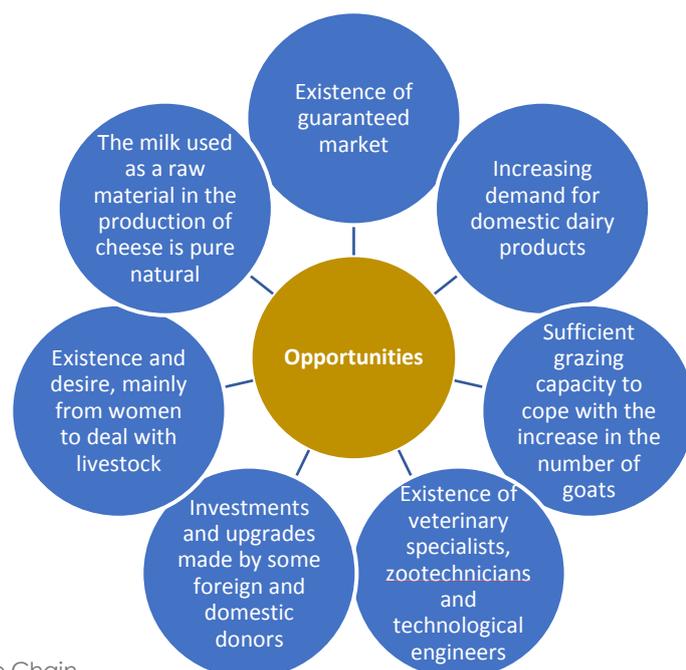


Figure 38. Opportunities in the Goat Cheese Value Chain.

factors directly affect the improvement of living conditions of women and consequently of Mirditë families.

**General Factors.** Among these factors we can mention:

- Favorable geographical position of Mirditë which has a large surface area and where the forest area occupies more than half of it and the diversity of flora is very large starting from the area of Mediterranean shrubs and continuing with the area of oaks, pines and beeches, and the area of mountain pastures.
- High number of families engaged in goat breeding.
- Significant percentage of income from this sector in the structure of total income of Mirditë families.
- The milk used as a raw material in the production of cheese.
- Significant unemployment.
- Pasture capacity, not only sufficient for the current number of goats, but also to cope with their growth.
- Growing demand for goat cheese in the market, where with support for increasing quality and production standards, Mirditë goat cheese can become competitive and attractive, as goats graze in natural forests without any impact from chemicals or urbanization.
- Good interest rate for cheese production.
- Knowledge of some existing market links to be exploited.
- The optimism of some farmers and businesses that with cheese production you can make savings.
- Existence of some unemployed veterinary, zootechnical and engineering technologists, who can be easily integrated as technical leaders or entrepreneurs in the business of goat cheese production.
- Current lack of competition.

**Manufacturers.** Currently, in Mirditë, wherever there is livestock, there are milk processing units (on a family basis). Among the main positive factors, we can mention:

- Family traditions and livestock experience.
- Continuous improvements of the goat breed
- Positive change in farm structure, increase in productivity and farm size
- Improving product quality
- Inclusion of young people in the workforce engaged in the sector
- Good image of this sector

**Trading.** In the conditions of an informal economy of the Goat Cheese production sector, trade is also informal. Yet, experience in commercial business (good standard) of service, relatively quality products, good image of this sector and wide range of products, have generally enabled the sale of the largest percentage of goat cheese produced.

**Opportunities.** Product processing, quality assurance, and moreover, product certification and the establishment of a local brand are the key factors, which will affect the growth of employment, mainly of women, reducing poverty, and increasing income for Mirditë families. Among the main possibilities we can mention

- Possibility to increase the number of goat herds. As the number of goats increases and the yield per herd increases, the amount of milk that will be processed each year will increase, and as a result, more people will be employed, reducing poverty and increasing incomes for Mirditë families.
- Existence of local specialists who have the skills to facilitate and coordinate support to farmers, creating truly successful models.
- The implementation of a short-term processing model (at the farm level) creates employment opportunities for some employees, mainly women and girls, who are traditionally considered to be more suitable for this type of work.
- Agricultural development strategy
- The Albanian Government has announced the youth as a strategic sector for the development of livestock and, consequently, of agriculture as a whole.
- Small support schemes for the agricultural sector are available.
- Investments and upgrades made by some foreign donors
- A number of donors have supported this agricultural sector throughout the transition period. Here we can mention USAID, GIZ, UNDP, FAO, Coperazione Italiana, SIDA, SARED, SNV, etc.
- The situation of farming families and the desire to continue with livestock sector development
- The economic situation of many farming families leaves much to be desired, especially in this municipality.
- There are many farmers who see the breeding of goats as an opportunity to provide enough income to support their living conditions instead of opting for emigration.
- There are farming families everywhere who are ready to increase the number of goat heads in this municipality.
- Women and their will to participate actively in the sector of goat breeding
- Generally, the work with livestock, both for breeding and processing dairy products, is done on a family basis.
- Generally, men go out to pasture with cattle while milk processing is done by women. But in the summer period, women always go to livestock migrations, and there they deal with grazing cattle just like men.
- Women everywhere in this municipality have a will to deal with the processing of goat milk, and practically they perform the processing of milk in their families.
- Existence of quite serious organizations in recognizing the standards of milk production and processing.

## 5.5.2 CONSTRAINTS

Regarding the **constraints** that the Goat Cheese value chain faces, they can be summarized as follows:

**Formalization.** Most businesses operating in this sector are not officially registered. Only a few of them are registered as farmers, not specifying a field of operation. Most workers are not officially registered and employed in accordance with Albanian law, and therefore cannot benefit from subsidy schemes or other benefits.

**Institutional cooperation.** There is almost no form of cooperation between the relevant institutions in the sector, namely between the municipality, ARDA, and farmers. Some of the criteria set by ARDA cannot be easily met, and not all categories of the population are included in national financing schemes. There is also a lack of access to financial services through agricultural schemes.

The focus groups' session highlighted the existence of a significant lack of information provided by various relevant institutions for stakeholders in this sector. On the one hand, the municipality did not have complete information about initiatives and funding schemes (such as IPARD) from which farmers could benefit and facilitate their operation; on the other hand, stakeholders did not have information on the conditions and criteria that must be met to participate in various trainings. All these restrictions reduce the level of attractiveness of the sector, as perceived mainly by young people in the Municipality of Mirditë.

**Workforce.** The migration of the population to the most populated centers or even outside the borders of Albania has resulted in the lack of the necessary manpower. Low pay and lack of workforce qualifications related to sector-specific skills were also mentioned as an issue, especially for those who can and want to establish links with the VC and/or invest in it.

**Lack of infrastructure, technology, and knowledge.** Lack of infrastructure facilities for collection, storage, and processing. Breeder groups and most individuals have little knowledge about post-milking operations (cheese production and storage). Post-production treatments have a major impact on the final quality and can be sources of contamination.

Other constraints identified during the analysis include: **climatic conditions, unresolved property issues, and lack of financial resources**

Regarding the **Problems of Gender Inequality and the Inclusion of Women** in the value chain, the information obtained from the focus groups and interviews shows that women are involved in most activities, especially in milking and cheese production process, while also contributing to household chores. They possess the necessary basic skills, which they have acquired across generations (from one generation to the next, or from qualified family

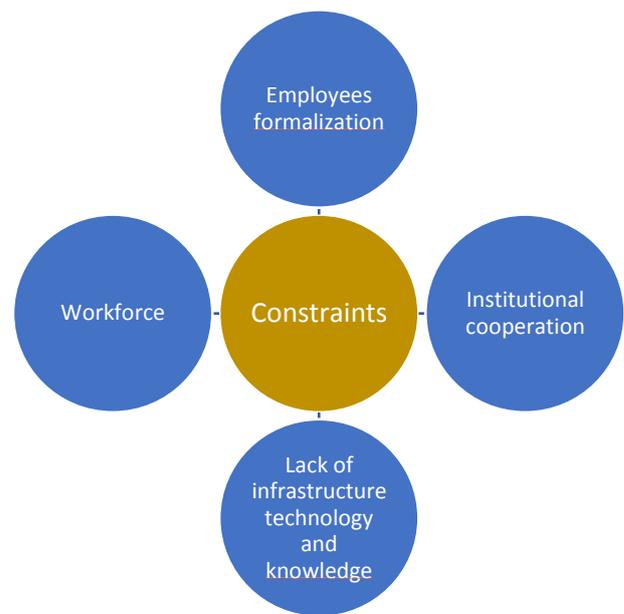


Figure 39. Constraints in the Goat Cheese Value Chain.

members), but they need more specific skills related to processes or the use of modern technology, which would increase process automation, increase efficiency and coordination for women. Usually, the women involved are family members and are not formally employed in the business.

Regarding **Financing Opportunities**, respondents mentioned that the income generated from engaging in cheese production is their only source of income. They perceive this business as profitable, especially if agreements are made with buyers. However, the interviewees mentioned the fact that the income generated from this activity does not meet all their needs. They do not have access to financial resources, but they are aware of the growing demand for their products and have therefore met in the past with large consolidators interested in investing in the sector, particularly in this municipality, because the environment is suitable for this activity.

**Lack of a Market in Rrëshen.** The trade of agricultural and livestock products of the villagers of Mirditë is done mainly in the city of Rrëshen where there is no market with approved standards but a space located in one of the neighborhoods of the city is used. This is mainly used for trading fruits and vegetables. Goat cheese rarely appears in this market as it is widely sold by ordering through relatives and known contacts.

In the town of Rubik, one of the farmers in the area sells their farm cheese and other products in a shop-type service unit on the town's main street. Rubik has no market, but mainly trade is made in stores.

### **Why should the goat cheese production value chain be supported?**

The goat cheese production and trade situation in Municipality of Mirditë is presented as a market with big problems and completely informal.

To a large extent, this sector relies on the family as a basis for livestock breeding and cheese production, without having the opportunity to transform to a manufacturing industry, since cheese production is still done in an artisanal way. Among the main reasons why this sector is supposed to be supported we can mention:

- The dairy processing VC in Mirditë is non-existent.
- There is an excellent tradition of breeding goats, which is fading. Young people and women are seeking to leave rural areas as a result of the lack of support.
- The small livestock number is falling due to lack of processing.
- The quality of the final product, as well as adherence to hygiene requirements, leaves much to be desired.
- The raw material for milk processing is generally safe.
- The profit rate per kg of processed cheese (and especially for goat cheese) is considerable.
- With greater support coming from the state, foreign projects, donors, or various organizations, farmers express high interest in milk processing as in this way they would be able to improve their living conditions.

- There is an opportunity to find a market for the sale of goat cheese within the district of Mirditë, the supply of shops, restaurants, inns as well as outside the municipality, in Tiranë, Shkodër, Lezhë, etc.
- The goat cheese brand "Mirditë" is needed, which should become as well-known as other cheese brands on the market, such as "Gjirokastra" etc.
- The way to understand the market is to choose three groups: 1- large farm, 2- farm with tourist destination and 3- business; initially aiming at the recognition and promotion of the successful models in other areas of the country such as Korçë, Shkodër, Dibër, Vlorë, etc.
- Existence of pre-conditions to enable women associations in the sector.
- High interest coming from artisanal food shops for the Mirditë products agricultural products.
- Other neighboring regions, such as Kukës and Shkodër, have gone through similar path of development and saw some positive results when in improving women's livelihoods.

These are general reasons why the sector should be supported. Nevertheless, supporting the sector as a whole would necessarily bring improvements to the women's situation as, at the moment, these families are suffering from a lack of food security and stable income, which often forces men to immigrate, which leaves women vulnerable.

### Potential for women economic interventions in the value chain.

Based on the assessment of the women situation and the SWOT analysis of goat cheese production in the Municipality of Mirditë, the following small-scale interventions can result to women empowerment and development of the value chain:

- Clustering programs for women to strengthen their representation and enhance knowledge exchange, building capacity in advocacy and facilitation dialogue between women producers and municipality as well as improving production processes jointly (especially led by the female entrepreneurs famous in the area)., organizing to access inputs and markets. There are some well-known female livestock specialists<sup>9</sup> that could be invited to speak to the women producers about various technical issues surrounding their trade.

Professional support to women producer clusters. In this regard, it is required:

- Continuous **technical assistance**, especially in the first year in the direction of:
  - ✓ *Drafting the development plan*
  - ✓ *Drafting the development plan of each breeding link that will have to be supervised throughout the year*
  - ✓ *Follow-up and advice on the processes of guaranteeing livestock hygiene and the final product for the market*
  - ✓ *Consulting on the elements of cheese processing*
  - ✓ *Following the marketing process until the product is delivered*

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<sup>9</sup> See Lumturi Papa from Agricultural University in Tirana.  
<https://ubt.edu.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Lumturi-PAPA.pdf>

- **Trainings** for raising the level of knowledge for livestock breeding and goat cheese processing
  - ✓ *for the values of the pastures and the way of raising the goats*
  - ✓ *for know-how for practical elements of goat breeding and cheese production*
  - ✓ *for the way cheese is produced and how the losses can be avoided*
  - ✓ *for the importance of the hygiene for the final product and all steps are realized*
  - ✓ *for the practical elements of the preservation of cheese*
  - ✓ *for the practical elements of marketing on farm level*

**Support with basic and technological tools.** Leaders (women) to be supported on a minimum material basis such as:

- ✓ *Work desk and stainless-steel packaging*
- ✓ *Cheese coagulation and baking boilers*
- ✓ *Baths and shells*
- ✓ *Electronic scale*
- ✓ *Cheese shape*
- ✓ *PH Meter*
- ✓ *Refrigerating room*
- ✓ *Vacuum cheese packer*
- ✓ *Cloth, cheese seed, etc.*

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERVENTION

As we have analyzed above, based on their potential and the involvement and empowerment of women, the Goat Cheese Production VC was rated as having the most potential for development and presenting the most opportunities for women and as one that needs a certain level of intervention. With this in mind, the following recommendations are presented:

- **Contracts Implemented with breeders and cheese producers**, which can help them overcome market failures by establishing links between producers and high-value food markets and thus guaranteeing a market for their products. Currently, the practice of contracts, as everywhere in the agricultural sector in Albania, in the municipality of Mirditë does not exist. Execution of contracts is another assurance for the increase of production. Goat Cheese producers have expressed interest in learning more about production under better conditions, an investment which they cannot make without a good guarantee of the final market.
- **Focus on agriculture**, which in the current situation faces some difficulties. Relevant institutions, especially the municipality, provide training in sectors that are not attractive to the population or unrelated to their activities. Consequently, they prove unsuccessful, or the level of participants is very low. The municipality is mainly focused on the tourism sector (where there are not many promises, as resulted from the seminar and interviews), forgetting the focus on agriculture. Furthermore, there is a lack of knowledge on the existence of IPARD schemes and national financing schemes, which directly contribute to improving the sector's conditions
- **Processing and Preserving Goat Cheese**. One of the weak points of the livestock sector in the Municipality of Mirditë is the lack of milk collection and cheese processing facilities. We estimate that one of the challenges of Mirditë producers is to improve the physical, content, and hygienic standards of Goat Cheese production. In other words, they often suffer from problematic production storage and packaging equipment, which leads to lower cheese standards and consequently loss of revenue. Starting from the producers, it should be possible to increase the value of the Goat Cheese product during the production and processing, which have a great impact on the final quality and can be a source of their contamination.
- **Marketing of the Products**. In recent years, there has been a trend of improving the marketing of various types of Agricultural Products both everywhere in our country and the Municipality of Mirditë. Many initiatives are being taken through various international and government organizations to promote authentic products from various areas in Albania.

The following sections present some general recommendations for the goat cheese processing value chain for the Municipality of Mirditë and categorize them by their impact on the sector (short/medium/long term) and budget requirements (low/medium/high):

## VALUE CHAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

NO.	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPACT			BUDGET		
		Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term	Low	Average	High
<b>1 PROFESSIONAL GROWTH OF FARMERS</b>							
1.1	<p>Information and awareness sessions for IPARD financing schemes and other national schemes.</p> <p>Continuous technical assistance, especially in the first year, towards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Drafting the development plan</li> <li>✓ Drafting the development plan of each breeding link that will have to be followed throughout the year</li> </ul>			X	X		
1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Follow-up and advice on the processes of guaranteeing livestock hygiene and the final product for the market</li> <li>✓ Consulting on the elements of cheese processing</li> <li>✓ Follow the marketing process until the product is delivered</li> </ul>		X		X		
1.3	<p>Clustering programs for women to strengthen their representation and enhance knowledge exchange, building capacity in advocacy and facilitation dialogue between women producers and municipality, and improving production processes jointly (especially led by the female entrepreneurs famous in the area)., organizing to access inputs and markets. There are some well-known female livestock specialists that could be invited to speak to the women producers about various technical issues surrounding their trade.</p>			X	X		
1.3	<p>Trainings for raising the level of knowledge for livestock breeding and goat cheese processing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ For the values of pastures and the way of raising livestock</li> <li>✓ For know-how for practical elements of breeding and cheese production</li> <li>✓ On the way of producing cheese and avoiding its losses</li> <li>✓ For the importance of the final hygiene of the product and how practically all the elements related to it are realized</li> <li>✓ For the practical elements of the treatment of its preservation</li> <li>✓ For practical elements of marketing at the farm level</li> </ul>		X		X		

## VALUE CHAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

NO.	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPACT			BUDGET		
		Short-term	Medium-term	Long-term	Low	Average	High
<b>2 SMALL GRANTS FOR TECHNOLOGY IMPROVEMENT</b>							
Support with basic and technological elements							
2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Work desk and stainless-steel packaging</li> <li>✓ Cheese coagulation and baking boilers</li> <li>✓ Baths and shells</li> <li>✓ Electronic scale</li> <li>✓ Cheese shape</li> <li>✓ PH Meter</li> <li>✓ Cloth, cheese seed, etc.</li> </ul>	X			X		
Support by increasing the quality value of the product							
2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Refrigerating room</li> <li>✓ Vacuum cheese packer</li> <li>✓ Defining a processing facility in cooperation with the Municipality of Mirditë.</li> </ul>		X				X
<b>3 QUALITY AND SAFETY STANDARDS CERTIFICATION</b>							
3.1	Awareness session on the importance of certification in reaching high-value markets and the steps needed to be certified.			X	X		
3.2	Manufacturer support in HACCP and Organic certification as the most basic requirements from buyers.			X		X	
<b>4 MARKET SUPPORT</b>							
4.1	<b>Mirditë Trademark Registration.</b> There is a need for the goat cheese brand "Mirditë ", which should become as well known as the cheese brand "Gjirokastra", by finding a market for the supply of shops, restaurants, inns both within the region of Lezhë and outside it.		X				X
4.2	<b>Mirditë Brand Promotion.</b> The way to understand the market is to choose three groups: 1- large farm, 2- farm with tourist destination and 3- business; initially aiming at recognizing and promoting the successful in other areas of the country such as Korçë, Shkodër, Dibër, Vlorë.	X			X		

Table 21. Recommendations for Gender Sensitive Value Chain development intervention.

## 7. REFERENCES

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# EMPOWER WOMEN EARTHQUAKE RECOVERY

Gender Sensitive Value Chain Analysis (GSVCA)  
in the Municipality of Mirdita

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