

Lavender and saffron are displacing traditional crops - potatoes and tobacco

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The traditional crops for Bulgaria – potatoes and tobacco – are gradually giving way to the production of the exotic spice saffron and aromatic lavender. In the Rhodope Mountains, farmers are redirecting their efforts towards alternative agriculture because they see no prospects for their traditional regional livelihood.

A large part of the Rhodope villages in the municipality of Banite started engaging in lavender production as early as three years ago. According to Neven Belchev, mayor of the village of Oryahovets, a total of 10 million seedlings of the aromatic herb have been planted in the area this year. Farmers believe that lavender can fully replace traditional agriculture because its purchase prices are significantly higher than those of potatoes. Expectations are that by the end of the season, in September, after the seedlings are purchased, about BGN 1 million will enter the

municipality. The only concern of the mountain farmers is the issue of abuses related to the purchase price of lavender.

Tobacco is also losing its popularity among the local population for the same reason, namely the very low purchase prices and the speculations of middlemen. At present, for example, tobacco producers are satisfied with a purchase price of 7 leva per kilogram of tobacco. In the well-known tobacco-growing regions such as Satovcha and Gotse Delchev, they are also beginning to turn towards profitable crops – saffron and lavender.

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