

'See bulb crops with different eyes!'

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The topic of bulb crops as part of the vegetable production sub-sector is multifaceted, charged with energy, magnetism, speculation, structural deficits of economic interest, development ideas, approaches to achieving certain goals...

If we start the topic from the position of selection, we must recall that in the last century, domestic genetics achieved results that in most cases remain top global benchmarks to this day. We are talking about biotypes, varietal traits, source genetic material, a product range with authentic characteristics for pest resistance, pesticide tolerance, plasticity, adaptability, yield, taste qualities, content of biologically active substances. In other words: Bulgarian vegetable selection was among the world leaders, a recognizable brand, a respected factor.

If we add to this invaluable capital the high professional competencies of the strengthened agronomic presence and the technological skills of our native gardeners, known throughout

Europe, our agricultural community, and why not the entire nation, can quite justifiably be proud of this multifactorial wealth, these landmark achievements, the commercial invasion and the crushing competitive advantages.

And what of it, will say the few connoisseurs of the glorious past? And they will be right! After 1989, the countdown began. Horticulture, until then a flourishing and profitable business, was turned into a marginal practice, the collapse was massive and catastrophic. Overpowering destructive tensions and destructive whirlwinds were activated. The domino effect followed: selection activity was deeply frozen, seed production, the continuation of the selection process, was crushed and acquired disturbingly low-quality levels, the production of bulb crops was capsulated to negligibly tiny dimensions, almost within the limits of backyard gardens... An unprecedented miracle happened on the domestic market! Uncontrolled, in most cases illegal, imports of low-grade goods began – onions, garlic, leeks, not only from Macedonia and Turkey but also from distant exotic destinations – China, South America...

Be that as it may, it is unthinkable for this chaotic movement to continue forever! The time has come for this predatory bacchanalia to be revised. The time has come to revive traditions, to motivate multifunctional activity, to structure and launch key investment projects. To create an environment for entrepreneurship, for restoring the competitive advantages of our vegetables, including bulb crops. To define a common interest and adequate market thinking and behavior, including current protectionist policies. In the context of this possible and mandatory restart of production with a very specific and original biological profile, plant protection fits in successfully. It is capable of generating new dynamics, initiating the creation of flexible technological schemes for crop cultivation, launching production into a new orbit. The intensity of modern, high-class plant protection, a product of the world's leading agrochemical companies positioned on the Bulgarian market, is a tool for guaranteeing a high health status of bulb crops in an uncertain climatic environment. To put it definitively: modern plant protection is the engine for achieving high goals!

Bulgarian production of onions, garlic, and leeks has the potential to return to the world market "stage". Moreover, Europe is not the only location; the Arab destination is very promising – the need for these products in that part of the planet is limitless, the market is solvent. Of course, if the intentions to restart this business (signals of which are present from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food) are serious and sustainable, the transformation must be wide-ranging. Because what would be the effect, for example, of forcing production of foreign varieties? Virtually none! Bulgaria must produce Bulgarian onions, garlic, and leeks. Only these native varieties with unique qualities and visions have the inimitable opportunity and chance to make a breakthrough on the world market. Only they can impress and attract the attention of foreign traders.

The restoration of vegetable production should not be associated only with nostalgic memories and past exciting achievements. A modern Bulgarian horticulture, based on original and inimitable selection, innovative plant protection, technological competence, and agrotechnical skills means more jobs, more added value, more profits!

