

Investing in Albania's future: creating opportunities for life

Albania **direct** funding target: £100,000

The transition from communism to democracy in Albania has been a difficult one. Inequality continues to grow, with people in rural areas worst affected. A quarter of the rural population still lives in poverty, and many people feel they have no choice but to find work elsewhere in Europe. By enabling rural Albanians to earn a secure, sustainable living, Oxfam is helping to create lasting opportunities, and rural communities are discovering new hope for the future.



A vineyard in Hajmel where winemakers are already working with Oxfam

The Project

This project will improve livelihoods and create new employment opportunities – particularly for young people – in the Shkodër and Dibër regions in the mountainous north, and in the southern Vlorë region. In the north, Oxfam will support the development of producer associations and co-operatives. In the coastal south, Oxfam will help people to earn a more secure living through agri-tourism. We will also provide vocational training for 50 young people in each region – offering them a realistic alternative to migration.

Project aims

This year:

- In Shkodër, Oxfam will support the Zadrime wine producers' co-operative, helping members to produce more wine and to improve the ways they store and preserve it. This will bring their wine up to the high standard required to sell it to a wider market.
- In Dibër, we will support rural women in the processing and packaging of fruit, vegetables, and home-made pastas and noodles, enabling them to make their goods attractive to local and national buyers.

- In Vlorë, Oxfam will help to establish a community-based agri-tourism scheme. With its stunning coastline and rich cultural heritage, Vlorë has huge potential for tourism and economic development. But away from the coast, poverty prevails. The project encourages visitors to experience farming life first-hand by staying on a farm or by visiting producers and buying local produce. We will work with farmers and local government to develop agri-tourism by improving accommodation, services and activities for tourists, and to promote the region's attractions.

Supporters, communities, local partners and Oxfam – working together to change lives

Background



Improved transportation is giving people better links with markets

Albania is the poorest country in Europe: almost one fifth of its people live in poverty. In rural areas, road and transport links are poor, electricity is unreliable, and government investment is minimal. There are few prospects for young people.

Albania's transition from communist dictatorship to a market economy has been an uneven and painful process. The last 16 years have seen a growing divide between rich and poor people, massive migration, a crumbling infrastructure, and the disintegration of Albania's education and health services.

The majority of Albania's poor people live in rural areas, where government investment is minimal. Young people are particularly vulnerable; 55 per cent of the poor are under 25, and many of them suffer from a lack of skills and education.

Many, forced to migrate by a lack of opportunities at home, work in unskilled, poorly paid jobs in Greece and Italy, often as seasonal workers in the tourist industry. Much of the work

is undertaken illegally, so people work without any job security and are left vulnerable to mistreatment. With the young generation missing, plantations are left unfarmed, and Albania is failing to make the most of its abundant agricultural and tourist resources.

Oxfam has been working with farmers and producer groups in Albania since 2002, helping people to develop innovative approaches to making a living from their land. We have already helped nearly 4,000 households and 200 producers' associations. This project has been developed through consultation with partner organisations in the three regions, including discussions at a youth forum in Shkodër.

The Plan

In each of the three regions, Oxfam will establish or strengthen rural co-operatives, helping members to develop profitable and sustainable economic activity (agri-tourism in Vlorë) or to improve an existing activity (wine production in Shkodër, and food processing and production in Dibër). At least 30 per cent of people in the co-operatives will be between 18 and 30 years old.

Linked to these activities, Oxfam will also provide vocational training for 150 young people aged between 15 and 30 in activities such as vineyard farming, wine production, agri-tourism, and food processing – increasing their chances of finding sustainable employment in Albania.

Activities

In Dibër and Shkodër Oxfam will:

- Help co-operatives to manage all of their activities – from business planning, to production, processing, transportation and marketing.
- Provide better storage facilities, processing equipment, and technical support, so producers can improve the quality of their produce and meet market standards.
- Provide legal assistance and training in financial and business management.

In Vlorë Oxfam will:

- Help farming families to improve the standard of accommodation and food that they can offer to tourists.



*A bottle of wine produced by the wine makers association in Hajmel
© Christian Guthrie/Oxfam*

- Help people to develop their businesses through market research, business plans, and visits to successful ventures in Italy and Greece.
- Work with local authorities, to plan leisure and cultural activities, and to promote local guest houses, attractions, and products. Oxfam will assemble a group of specialists to advise on adapting houses and farms specifically to attract tourism.

The Impact

By the end of this year:

- Economic initiatives in three rural areas will be established (or strengthened). By working in co-operatives, local producers will be better able to process and promote their products, and will have better links to local markets.
- The incomes and prospects of at least 300 families (a total of 1,500 people) will be improved. A further 150 young people will benefit from vocational training, to help them find sustainable employment in Albania. All will have better access to food and a greater ability to anticipate income and plan spending.
- The economies of rural communities in the three regions will be revitalised – and opportunities for long-term employment increased, particularly for young people. Communities are encouraged to re-invest profits from new ventures, and in other regions money has been spent previously to repair irrigation channels, repair and equip health clinics, and purchase saplings for poor farmers.
- Co-operation among rural producers will increase, and the improved status of young people in the region will help to improve relations between generations.



A new truckload of grapes arrives at Zef Pashuku's wine processing facility
© Christian Guthier/Oxfam

Monitoring and evaluation

Oxfam staff visit all communities at least quarterly. Evaluation and progress reports are published every six months; three households are selected in each region and their progress is assessed twice a year.

The People



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I'm thrilled about this new venture

"At first I was doing agricultural work in Italy that was not related to grapes. I've now been back in Albania and producing wine for three years. I sell it to restaurants in Tirana. I try to improve the quality all the time. I'm thrilled about this new venture and I think about it all the time".

Petrit Cobo, a wine producer in Tirana, speaking at an Oxfam trade fair

My grandsons are working abroad

"I'm not sure if I'll live to see this dream realised – but I'd like to see the sons of my son live here and be able to make a living from the land. At the moment, my grandsons are working abroad. They left because there is not enough water, or land, no doctor here, and many problems with the school".

Kol Kola, 94, Ukbibaj, northern Albania

This was just a dream a few years ago

"Although things are not quite how we imagined they would be in the early 1990s, we have decided to say here and we will do our best. Oxfam found us at the right moment – this simple bottle was just a dream for us a few years ago."

Zef Pashuku, head of the wine-makers' association in Hajmel, Shkodër district

The Partners

The Local Initiative Support centre and Agritira-vizion Centre in Dibra are Oxfam's main partners in this project. Oxfam will also collaborate with regional government bodies, local development agency Auleda, the Vineyard Growers' Co-operative of Zadrima and the Vocational Training High School of Krajan.

This image shows one of the wine storage tanks used in the project

About **direct**

By supporting **direct projects** you're joining a global network of supporters, local people and partner organisations, all working with Oxfam to end poverty and suffering for good. From helping whole communities to protect themselves against disaster, to working with national governments to transform a country's schools, to helping individual families to earn a living, all **direct projects** offer you the chance to change lives.

Our commitment to you:

- One hundred per cent of your money is invested in your chosen project.
- You'll receive 6 and 12 month progress reports on your project.
- Email alerts when new information is posted on the website.
- A dedicated account manager to answer questions and keep you informed.

Other countries needing your support

Albania, Armenia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Honduras, India, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritania, Nepal, Philippines, Peru, Sudan, Tanzania.

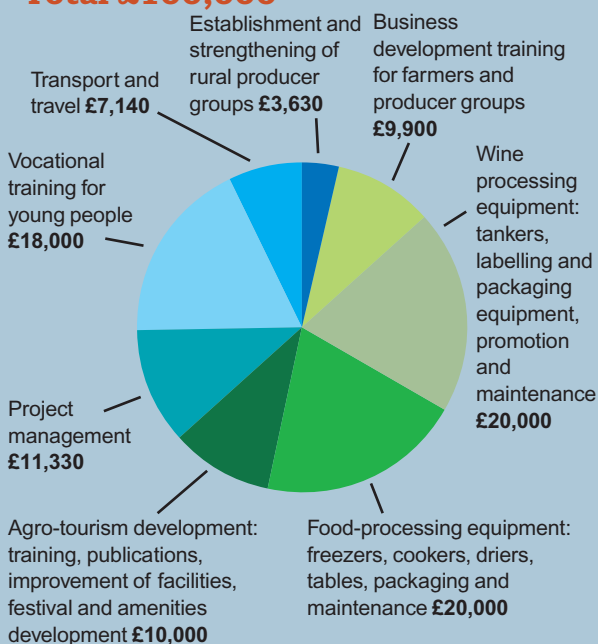
The Budget

Your money will pay for:

- Wine-processing equipment: tankers, labelling and packaging equipment, promotion and maintenance
- Food-processing equipment: freezers, cookers, driers, tables, packaging and maintenance
- Establishment and strengthening of rural producer groups
- Business development training for farmers and producer groups
- Agro-tourism development: training, publications, improvement of facilities, festival and amenities development

How we'll spend your money:

Total £100,000



Albania: country profile



Population	3.4 million
Life expectancy at birth	74 years
GDP per capita	\$5,000 (UK GDP per capita \$30,821)
Development	73rd (of 177) on the HDI ¹
Percentage of population living under poverty line*	18.5%
Unemployment rate	13.8%**
Percentage of GDP accounted for by agriculture	23%

Source: UNDP Human Development Report 2006 except * which is from the Living Standards measurement survey INSTAT Albania (and defines the poverty line as income of less than 4891 lek/capita/month), and ** which is from the Economist Intelligence Unit 2006.

¹The UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite measure of three dimensions of human development: life expectancy, education and standard of living.

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