

# A CENTURY OF PRODUCTION WITH A VISION OF NO WASTE

## INTERVIEW WITH **JAKA AŠKERC**

Interview by Solski Center Celje

### CASE STUDY: NO WASTE IN THE PRODUCTION PHASE



Sadjarstvo Aškerc is a family-run business with a tradition of apple production dating back more than a century. Their story dates back to the mid-19th century, and today they combine modern techniques, sustainable approaches and innovative methods to reduce waste and offer quality fresh apples and natural apple juice.

#### **HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN GROWING APPLES AND WHAT IS YOUR HISTORY?**

Our tradition dates back to the mid-19th century. The farm has evolved over the generations - from meadow orchards to modern plantations. We focus on sustainable production methods and innovation in apple processing through continuous training.

#### **HOW DO YOU PLAN THE PLANTATION DESIGN TO MINIMISE CROP LOSSES?**

We start by choosing the optimal micro-location, as sunlight and warmth are crucial for tree growth. The soil is levelled, analysed and prepared by deep tillage. We also make sure that there is adequate drainage. Trees are planted in rows to achieve optimum light for all parts of the canopy.



## HOW DO YOU PREVENT YIELD LOSS DURING THE SEASON?

We use hail nets, irrigation systems and advanced technology such as weather stations to protect against the elements. We work with the Hop Institute to tackle diseases and pests. Harvesting is carried out carefully and in two stages to ensure optimum ripeness. Harvesting trailers are used for transport to prevent damage to the fruit.

## HOW ARE APPLES STORED AND PROCESSED?

Apples are stored in cold stores at a temperature of around 1°C, which allows them to stay fresh until late spring. To produce the juice, the apples are washed, ground, pressed and then the juice is pasteurised with chips from our trees. A small proportion of the rotten apples, branches, leaves and processing residues such as pomace are used for animal feed or as organic compost, which reduces waste and improves soil quality.



## HOW DO YOU MEET THE DEMANDS OF CONSUMERS AND TRADERS?

Consumers and retailers expect high quality, so production has to be very precise and apples are carefully sorted according to colour, size and firmness. We deliver locally to schools, nurseries, spas and businesses within a 30 kilometre radius, ensuring freshness and reducing our carbon footprint.

## WHAT IS YOUR MESSAGE ON FOOD AND SUSTAINABILITY?

Food should be valued and handled responsibly. We believe that by taking small steps, such as careful production, we can contribute to a more sustainable future. We also encourage local communities to support home-grown produce. We have enough food for now, but if times get tough, that will change quickly.