



For Irina Pompuş-Mura it is a natural thing to combine science, pedagogy and agronomy. Involvement in these activities energises her and brings her a dose of emotion. Being active by nature, in the morning she is a teacher or scientific researcher, and in the evening she can be found in the field, where she takes care of her own plantations. Passionate about biology and especially plants, Irina decided to start a business in the field of agriculture, being one of the few agronomists in the country who is very well familiarised with blackberry culture. Now, the entrepreneur has over a hectare of blackberries, which she takes care of with dedication.

Irina has had a love for plants since she was a child, and the decision to study biology was a well-thought-out one and guided by passion.

‘During the period when I went to study, economics and law were a bit fashionable,’ she says, ‘and I don't know why, being the best student in the class, people looked at me a little strangely because I was going to do

biology, but I had such a special love for small plants. As a child, I wandered; I studied them; I knew them. I think by the time I finished school I knew the Latin names, and what each one was good for.’



During her student years, she discovered the wild blackberry, and wrote about it in her bachelor's thesis. At that time, Irina had no idea that this culture would turn into a successful business for her.

‘For me then it was a wow discovery,’ she says. ‘Somehow it was imprinted somewhere in my consciousness and in the subconscious that I have to see it, I have to get it and somehow, in a few years, I had an opportunity to buy some land. After that I didn't think at all about what I should plant it with, I knew I wanted blackberries.’

The beginning was not easy for the entrepreneur. Irina's family looked with distrust at the field in which their daughter had ventured, and the first cultivated bushes were not very successful.



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'There were almost a thousand plants, and it was still a very large area and my family was very skeptical,' she says, 'I didn't even tell them much about what I wanted to do or to plant because I knew they would tell me - why do you need that, why are you are working on the land?'

Unfortunately, with the first cultivated plants, Irina had a bitter taste, they did not come out as she hoped for.



'I think there were over a thousand of plants, I just took them out and threw them away,' she admits.

After countless attempts, however, the agronomist's business gradually came to life, and the love for blackberries managed to be transferred. Her family is now actively involved in the care and preparation of bushes for the new season. This is creating benefits for Irina, because she has the opportunity to work as a scientific researcher, and to go to the field to watch how the plantation evolves.

'Since I am a biologist, I do not teach at university,' she says, 'but I am a scientific researcher and in fact my activity is very closely related to what I do. To be more precise the study plant is blackberry and these fruits are very interconnected and are not separated in any way from the scientific part.'

Her love for nature led her to teach biology at the school in her hometown of Teleşeu.



'At school, in addition to teaching biology, I also have an optional class, which is called ecological education and where I try again to build up a brand new project which is called the School Garden where I initiate students in the field.'

Being an active person, she does not hesitate to get involved in various activities. For example, Irina has participated in agricultural development projects like the Horizon 2020 Programme, a Programme that finances Research, Development and Innovation. The BOND Project built up

her capacities on how to cooperate using cooperatives. She participated in the LAB Experiment and her desire to progress in this field of activity helped her to see such countries as France and Spain. The purpose of the visits was the exchange of experience with the specialists and interconnect with various colleagues and experts.

‘I participated in the forum in Cordoba in Spain,’ she says, ‘where I met numerous farmers who want to cooperate and work together in the agriculture field. There we shared good practices through various exercises and developed action plans for the future.’

Because it was an international forum, we have met more farmers; we became acquainted with their methods of working in groups. It was very interactive also because in our country we have challenges in terms of association and cooperation.



At the moment, the team that deals with Irina’s cultivated land is herself

and her family. She confessed to us that only during the harvest can she count on the help of other people.



BETWEEN BLACKBERRIES AND SCIENCE

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