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NEWS RELEASE

USAID AND THE DANISH GOVERNMENT JOIN EFFORTS IN PROVIDING SUPPORT TO THE SERBIAN BERRY AND FRUIT SECTORS

BELGRADE - Susan Fritz, Mission Director of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in Serbia and Mette Kjuel Nielsen, the Ambassador of Denmark to Serbia, signed a Memorandum of Understanding today to provide a framework for the future cooperation between USAID and the Danish Embassy, in providing assistance to Serbian berry and fruit sectors.

Through this alliance both parties seek to combine their respective strengths, experiences and resources to meet their collective goal of expanding and improving Serbia's berry and fruit sectors. In a joint effort, assistance will be provided to Government of Serbia institutions, business owners, and farmers for EU accession preparation; private sector development; increased exports; improved income generation; reduced migration; and job creation, particularly among youth and women.

Assistance will specifically be provided to the producers, processors and exporters of raspberry, sour cherry, strawberry, blueberry and plum in the southern Serbia districts of Jablanica, Nisava, Pcinj and Toplica. Some of the concrete areas of cooperation between the two parties include marketing and promotion activities locally and internationally, and training and capacity development.

In Serbia, the USAID's Agribusiness Project is part of a portfolio of activities aimed at generating rapid, sustained and broad-based economic growth. The overall objectives of the Project are to achieve higher value in agricultural product sales, increase agricultural employment, improve efficiency and competitiveness along the value-chain in high potential sectors, and improve agribusiness enabling environment. The Project provides assistance to six agricultural sectors: vegetable, livestock, dairy, mushroom, herb and forest fruit, and berry and tree fruit.

The long experience of USAID's Agribusiness Project contributed to the design of the newly established Danish Fruits and Berries Program. After the commencement of the Danish Program it was therefore natural to continue this fruitful cooperation. The American and Danish projects have overlapping targets and obvious synergy can be achieved. By working jointly in areas where both projects are active and by dovetailing each others' efforts even better results can be reached.

The Danish Fruits and Berries Program aims at supporting the development of high quality and competitive fruit and berry products produced in Southern Serbia. The overall objectives of the Program are to create employment, export and economic development through ensuring that high quality and value added products are produced. This will be achieved by supporting fruit and berry producers with training and capacity building. The Program targets all parts of the value chain of carefully selected fruits and berries. It is implemented through a very fruitful partnership with the Serbian Ministry of Agriculture, Trade, Forestry and Water Management.

For additional information on the USAID Agribusiness Project, please contact Ana Martinovic, Communication Adviser, Tel: +381 11 242 6611; E-mail: ana_martinovic@agrobiznis.net. / www.agrobiznis.net.

For additional information on the Fruits and Berries Program, please contact Mr. Dagfinn Moe, Senior Advisor, Tel: +381 66 9540 410; E-mail: dagfinn.moe@gmail.com.