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WOMEN LEARN HOW BUSINESS PLANNING LEADS TO SUCCESS AT NATIONAL WOMEN IN AGRIBUSINESS CONFERENCE IN BELGRADE

BELGRADE (September 21, 2011) – Five highly successful women agribusiness entrepreneurs told more than 100 participants at the Women in Agribusiness Conference how planning, financial management, and attention to packaging, marketing and sales made their businesses a success. Today's Belgrade conference attracted dozens of women entrepreneurs from throughout Serbia, as well as representatives of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, development agencies, women's associations, and businesses.

The conference was organized by the USAID Agribusiness Project and the Office for Sustainable Development of Under-Developed Areas with to goal of encouraging Serbian governmental and financial institutions to support entrepreneurship and take additional action to encourage female entrepreneurship.

The conference was opened by USAID Mission Director Susan K. Fritz; Professor and actress Mirjana Karanović; and University of Belgrade Economics Professor Dana Popović.

"Women are the backbone of Serbia's rural population," Fritz said. "Their value as an engine of growth must not be overlooked. Communities that create opportunities so women can own and operate enterprises grow faster and more sustainably."

Successful women entrepreneurs – owners of agribusinesses – discussed their challenges and successes in launching and sustaining their companies, providing advice and support to conference participants. Several had taken business training classes offered by the U.S. Agency for International Development and received further support from the Office for Sustainable Development.

Conference participants also addressed by Dr. Sulejman Ugljanin, Minister Without Portfolio; Dusan Petrovic, Minister of Agriculture, Trade, Forestry and Water Management; Dragijana Radonjić Petrović, State Secretary within the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development; Dejan Jovanović, Director of the National Employment Agency; Miroslav Vasin, Executive Council of The Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Secretary for Labor, Employment and Gender, Svetlana Tolmačeva, Procredit Bank, President of Managing Board and Vladimir Vukotić, Opportunity Bank, President of Managing Board.



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“Today, the Office for Sustainable Development of Under-Developed Areas will allocated RSD 3 million for the support of business plans originating from the areas within its authority and from those women that have undergone the first round of training organized by the USAID Agribusiness Project,” Minister Ugljanin stated. He added that the Office for Sustainable Development and the USAID Agribusiness Project will conduct additional training for women in southwest and eastern Serbia targeting a hundred women entrepreneurs.

Minister Ugljanin also mentioned that the public call for applications for the allocation of funds for agricultural development in the six under-developed municipalities of southwestern Serbia has ended and that the Office for Sustainable Development of Under-Developed Areas will disburse RSD 78 million as part of this activity.

At the end of the conference it was concluded that partnership between the relevant institutions, as well as partnership between those institutions, the financial sector and businesses is fundamental for advancing entrepreneurship in Serbia. It was also agreed that better provision of information about assistance available to women and entrepreneurship education are key aspects that will form the basis for future cooperation of all relevant institutions involved.

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