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PRESS STATEMENT

USAID AND MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND WATER MANAGEMENT LAUNCH TRAINING ON SAFE PESTICIDE USE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION THROUGHOUT SERBIA

BELGRADE, 09 March, 2009 - The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), through its Agribusiness Project, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management has launched a series of trainings on Safe Pesticide Use and Environmental Protection to be carried out in Serbia.

The training will be conducted in 24 cities and towns during the month of March.

The aim of the training is to educate agricultural producers, students and agricultural service providers on the safe use and handling of pesticides and pesticide risk management.

The training will also cover issues such as the necessity of use of appropriate safety clothing and equipment; appropriate storage, application, and disposal of unused pesticides and used containers, pest resistance and overall environmental considerations associated with pesticide use.

These trainings will be carried out by qualified personnel selected by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management that have previously undergone all necessary trainings supported by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The overall objective of this activity is to protect the environment from improper pesticides use and to advise those that use pesticides on alternatives to conventional use including the selection of proper non-chemical pest management strategies such as the Integrated Pest Management (IPM), amongst others. This activity also aims to build a network of qualified individuals and enterprises and strengthen their capacity for safer use and handling of pesticides as to avoid adverse environmental effects caused by the inapt use of pesticides.

Inappropriate use of pesticides can have adverse effects such as ground water contamination, poisoning hazards and residues in food that not only affect the environment but more over human health.

Integrated Pest Management is also an important aspect to be considered in the implementation of Food Quality and Safety Standards such as the GlobalG.A.P. standards, designed to reassure consumers about how food is produced by minimizing detrimental environmental impacts of farming and reducing the use of chemicals in farming .

The implementation of food safety standards and related certification is key for the Serbian economy. Many countries have adopted and now enforce strict requirements regarding standardization and certification of processes and the quality of products. This poses rising technical constraints to Serbian agricultural exports that can only be removed by successful implementation of quality management systems and international standards.

USAID has invested \$24 million through its Agribusiness Project which focuses on improving agricultural productivity, expanding value-added agricultural processing, opening new markets for export, and building the capacity of producer organizations and service providers which support Serbia's agribusiness sector. The USAID Agribusiness Project works with Serbian agricultural producers at all stages of the production cycle "from field to fork" to increase the value of Serbian agricultural products sales and agricultural employment.

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