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WOMEN AWARDED US\$160,000 TO LAUNCH NEW AGRIBUSINESSES

BELGRADE (October 26, 2011) – Eleven women were awarded grants totaling US\$160,000 (RSD 11.7 million) to launch their own agribusinesses. The women were winners of a Business Plan Competition sponsored by the USAID Agribusiness Project.

The winners were presented certificates today by USAID Mission Director Susan K. Fritz

The start-up grants will enable these entrepreneurs to launch businesses in a variety of pursuits, including milk processing and the cultivation and processing of fruits, vegetables and medicinal herbs. They are among 300 women who completed an agribusiness training course organized by the USAID Agribusiness Project as part a program to promote entrepreneurship among rural women.

The Women Entrepreneurs Program has held training sessions in Leskovac , Kragujevac, Čačak Kraljevo , Valjevo, Užice Šabac , Niš, Gadžin Han , Prokuplje , Zaječar, Pirot and Bor .

USAID is now expanding this program to involve all relevant institutions locally and nationally.

The USAID Agribusiness Project will continue to provide support to all women entrepreneurs that have taken part in the training program and also will support implementation of the selected business plans with technical and advisory assistance.

“Women are the backbone of Serbia’s rural population,” said Susan K. Fritz, Mission Director of the U.S. Agency for International Development in Serbia. “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.”

For additional information about the USAID Agribusiness Project, contact Ana Martinovic, Communications Advisor, at +381-11 242-6611 or ana_martinovic@agrobiznis.net.

Since 2002 USAID has invested more than \$662.7 million to stimulate economic growth, strengthen the justice system, and promote good governance in Serbia.

For more information about USAID, visit <http://serbia.usaid.gov>.