



REGIONAL COMPETITIVENESS INITIATIVE SPECIAL EDITION

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Special Agriculture Edition

RCI In Brief PEST CONTROL TRAINING

On April 7-8, RCI organized an Integrated Pest Management training with the USAID Macedonia AgBiz project. Dr. Slobodan Bandzo, from the Macedonian Institute of Agriculture, presented technical and practical advice to selected professional groups from the region. The participants were recommended and sponsored by each bilateral-USAID project working with agriculture. 15 participants attended from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Montenegro. Additionally, in an organized field trip, trainees visited a green house in Southern Macedonia.



ABOVE Trainees view the actual techniques of Integrated Pest Management at work and familiarize themselves with modern greenhouse operations.

REGIONAL AGRIBUSINESS WORKING GROUP MEETING



On January 31, the RCI Regional Agribusiness Working Group (RAGWG) met in Podgorica, Montenegro, with participants from six countries and seven USAID agribusiness projects. Participants discussed the following

topics: regional joint trainings, market information systems, and best practices sharing. New ideas for potential joint initiatives were presented by the Standing Working Group for Regional Rural Development (<http://www.seerural.org/>).

The RAGWG finalized issues around the upcoming joint Regional Post-harvest training with UC Davis, which will be held in cooperation with the Serbia Agribusiness Project on October 24-28 in Novi Sad, Serbia.

The group also discussed the regional joint training on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) on crops, which was held April 7-8 in Macedonia, in cooperation with the Macedonia Agribusiness Project [see article above].

RCI will continue to improve and expand best practices information sharing in the region through various channels such as email lists, the RCI website, and social networks. For more information contact RCI at rci@bcserdon.com.

AMERICAN DAIRY TECHNOLOGY ADOPTED

SERBIA



ABOVE Milan Vidojevic, the owner of Lazar Dairy, discussing the construction of GHD digesters with Steve Dvorak, on a visit to Wisconsin in May of 2010.

The Serbian Agribusiness Project worked with Lazar Dairy, helping the company adopt new marketing and management systems and enter new markets. Lazar has participated in international trade fairs and technical training programs, supported by the project. When the

USDA brought a U.S. bio-digester company to Serbia, Lazar was a top choice for a site visit. Steve Dvorak, President of GHD Inc., made a presentation of the GHD technology, which sparked Milan Vidojevic's interest in the technology.

Following the visit of GHD, the Agribusiness Project hired a local consultant to collect data on a number of dairy farms and provided it to GHD so they could prepare feasibility studies on the use of their technology. The study for Lazar showed that their digesters could significantly reduce their operating costs and the digester could pay for itself within three years. The Agribusiness Project organized a tour to Wisconsin for Milan Vidojevic and his farm manager, where they visited four operating GHD digesters. They initiated discussions on how GHD could design and build one for Lazar, leading to a new contract.

This contract is an important milestone in Serbia's efforts to increase its production and use of renewable energy sources and it is a significant new business relationship for an American company in Serbia. GHD is the leading U.S. company in the design and construction of anaerobic digesters and its' patented design is efficient, producing more gas per ton of waste than older digester designs. The Lazar digester will become a model that other Serbian dairies can emulate.

AGBIZ HELPS STREAMLINE REGISTRATION PROCESS

MACEDONIA

Macedonian agribusinesses make extensive use of seasonal labor due to the highly seasonal nature of their businesses. In accordance with the Law on Labor relations, the companies are legally obligated to register or terminate labor relations for their employees.

The registration has been a paper based process, creating a burden on employers particularly in the case of seasonal employees. Each employer had to complete several application forms, collect different types of documents, and submit these at the Employment Service Agency (ESA), which was a time investment and an additional cost for the employers.

Often agribusinesses pay high penalties as result of not fulfilling these procedures on time. Recognizing this long-standing issue, the AgBiz Program proposed a



ABOVE Biljana Masteva uses the system to register an employee.

solution to its customers. The solution included software that was developed by USAID's eGov project, which helps employers meet their legal obligations electronically. In order to introduce the system and familiarize Macedonian agribusinesses with this tool, AgBiz, in cooperation with eGov and Local Economic Development Units from four municipalities, organized workshops in Strumica, Kavadarci, Shtip, and Skopje to help Macedonian agribusiness exporters use the efficient, easy, and time-effective way to register and terminate their seasonal

employment contracts.

Seventy participants from 64 companies participated in the workshops in a two month period. The participants included mostly agribusinesses but also representatives of municipalities, NGOs, and Producer Organizations.

QUALITY STANDARDS IMPROVE BUSINESS PROSPECTS

SERBIA

Fortis is a young company which was founded by a group of friends in 2006, when they decided to purchase a former state-owned cold store and fruit processing facility located near Leskovac, in southern Serbia. The goal was to enter the sour cherry business, and to privatize the processing plant.

The early years were difficult for Fortis, but they managed to re-start the production facility. In addition to starting the plant, they had to meet customer quality standards and find new markets for their products.

Their main production is the purchase, sorting, freezing and storing of sour cherries, plums, raspberries, and blackberries. Their largest markets are Germany and Switzerland, where their frozen products are used in the food processing industry for jams, yogurt, and ice cream production, fruit preparations, and in bakeries. Being aware of increased competition and the quality demands of their newer customers, Fortis saw the need to introduce International Food Standards (IFS) in their production and supply chain. Having this certificate was a condition for deliveries to three new buyers from the EU.

For this reason, Fortis applied for the Agribusiness Project's International Standards Grant Program, and based on this assistance they obtained IFS certification for their plant in May of 2010. This certification was received just in time for their new buyer's first audit of their facility. Following



ABOVE Employees sorting sour cherries before freezing and packing.

a positive audit report, Fortis signed a contract for the annual delivery of 500 tons of sour cherry with three new buyers.

The contracts for the 2010/11 export season were valued at \$500,000, and at this time Fortis has delivered 250 tons of frozen sour cherries, valued at \$375,000. Fortis has also added five new full time employees in their facility as a result of the new sales contracts. Fortis purchases their sour cherries from farmers in southern Serbia and they have regular agreements with more than 300 small farmers.

NEW AGRICULTURAL PORTAL LAUNCHES

BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA

In April 2010, the Excellence in Innovation (EI) project helped launch AgroLink (www.agrolink.ba), a new agricultural Portal in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BH). AgroLink offers services for the agricultural industry, including information on grants and tenders from donors and government agencies, standards, agricultural policies of government agencies in BiH, fairs, educational events, and sources of loans and credit lines. AgroLink also has a

database of over 1,000 companies, which can be accessed through the Portal.

Customers can obtain the "market barometer" information either from the website at www.agrolink.ba or call/SMS for the information.

The EI project is funded by USAID and the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For more information, please contact Mr. Sanscho Ramhorst at sramhorst@edc.org.

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