

RCI  
Regional Buyers/Producers Conference  
17-18 November, 2005 - Belgrade

**Final Report**  
**03/01/06**

Project Description: **The Regional Agribusiness Buyer/Producer Forum was held on November 17-18, 2005, in Belgrade, Serbia, at the Best Western Hotel M.**

**The main objective of the Forum was to offer an opportunity for purchasing managers of the largest buyers in the region to meet with producers of food and agricultural products.**

Yes	No	Overall Status — At a Glance
<b>X</b>		Was the project completed on time?
<b>X</b>		Was the project completed within budget?
<b>X</b>		Were the project deliverables completed within acceptable quality levels?
<b>X</b>		Were scope change requests being managed successfully?
<b>X</b>		Were project issues being addressed successfully?
<b>X</b>		Are the parties satisfied with the organization and logistical support of the event?
<i>Accomplishments during This Period:</i>		
<p><b>This Forum demonstrated the dedication of the Regional Competitiveness Initiative to work for the benefits of the region through strengthening the business. There was a good turnout of producers from most countries in the region. Most large retail chains were represented. Producers had the unique chance to hear directly from buyers about their “needs and wants”, about the requirements of a rapidly changing market.</b></p>		
<p><b>BC Serdon organized, coordinated, and managed the event that took place in Belgrade, Serbia, e.g. on a regional level.</b></p>		
<p><b>BC Serdon undertook two preliminary visits of the hotel for the Forum in order to ensure that the venue and subcontractors are able and ready to provide high quality service.</b></p>		
<p><b>Outside of the context of the conference, participants had the opportunity to socialize with each other and with the organizers, creating bonds of friendship and opportunities for further cooperation in the future.</b></p>		

*Issues during the preparation of the event and action taken henceforth:*

**The organization of the event turned out to be rather problematic. There were a lot of issues with the hotel. The BW Hotel M changed several times their terms for reservations, as well as for organizing events along side of the conference – lunches, receptions, coffee breaks. Reserving rooms for all anticipated participants was the major issue, since in the beginning the Sales Department of the hotel refused to make any reservations unless Serdon paid the full cost of the rooms and the halls prior the event. After long negotiations, BC Serdon managed to achieve acceptable terms of handling the financial side of the event. The Sales Manager of the hotel “changed her mind” a week later, disregarding all previous agreements made. Due to its flexibility and fast reactions, BC Serdon sent its representative to an additional pre-visit of the hotel, thus managing to convince the hotel management to follow the preliminary agreements made.**

**Many events were taking place in Belgrade at the same time and all hotels were fully booked. Generally, the participants at the Forum disregarded the deadline for reservations and confirmed their participation only several days before the start of the event. This created additional difficulties with ensuring rooms for all participants. Through perseverance and creativity, BC Serdon overcame these obstacles in time.**

**There were no agenda, no final list of participants and no presentations until the very beginning of the forum. As a result, BC Serdon typed, printed, and distributed conference materials and the agenda after arriving at the BW Hotel M.**

**There were problems with finding proper technical equipment to support simultaneous translation in five languages. Using its extensive networks of contacts, BC Serdon managed to find the right subcontractors to provide technical support and translation for the Forum.**

*Issues during the event and action taken henceforth:*

**At all times there was at least one BC Serdon staff member working with the hotel staff to ensure the smooth running of events. All complimentary events – breaks, lunches, receptions – needed extra supervision by BC Serdon. In general, the organizing team met difficulties with making credit card payments in Serbia. With flexibility, BC Serdon overcame that problem, and all participants received help whenever problems with payment occurred.**

**The management of the “Dva Jelena” Restaurant, where the official dinner was scheduled demonstrated a lack of business ethics and broke the initial arrangements made by BC Serdon, changing the dinner seating without preliminary announcement. Due to this unprofessional act, a small group of participants could not find the rest of the group.**

**Some of the speakers cancelled their participation at the last moment causing last minute changes of the agenda and slight annoyance among the audience. Both workdays started with delay. Unfortunately, hardly anyone filled the feedback questionnaire, so it is very difficult to state the overall impression of the conference. However, in conversations, participants and speakers expressed their satisfaction with the event.**

**Minor problems that occurred with some of the translators were solved rapidly and did not disturb the work process.**