



SUCCESS STORY

Women's Entrepreneurship in Serbia

Project Grant funds for Agropress will enable women trainees to start and manage businesses



At the event in Novi Sad, the audience was addressed by Ms. Roslyn Waters-Jensen from USAID (2nd from left) and Dr. Mirjana Milosevic (3rd from left) from the Ministry of Agriculture.

Agropress presented a series of training seminars in six cities in Serbia, with 94 attendees. The women received training on management and technical issues, to give them skills needed to establish new businesses. One of the trainees from Valjevo has already established a new business using the skills she learned.

The overall socio-economic position of women in rural areas of Serbia is rather marginalized. In most cases they only play a supporting role on the farm, and have no role in farm management and decision making. The Serbian Association of Agricultural Journalists - "Agropress" - has recognized this issue, as well as the significant potential that women can bring to Serbian agriculture, if they have the necessary skills. Agropress is made up of more than 50 Serbian journalists who specialize in agriculture, and it has significant experience in addressing the issues of Serbian agricultural competitiveness, rural development, and entrepreneurship in agriculture.

The USAID Agribusiness Project has given Agropress a grant to design and implement a training program for rural women aimed at improving their business and marketing skills, and their technical knowledge on the production and processing of food products. The training modules for this program were delivered by recognized experts in the fields of finance, management, environment, and agriculture production and processing. In addition, representatives from the banking sector and the Government of Serbia provided information on finance programs to support start-ups by women entrepreneurs.

During six workshops held around Serbia in 2009, a total of 94 women attended these training programs. The women participants also attended the 76th International Agricultural Fair in Novi Sad, and the conference on Women in Agribusiness organized on this occasion. Twenty-four women from two Agribusiness associations attended, along with women from the Rural Development Agency of Indjija Municipality (ARRI).

One month following completion of the training program, Ms. Ljiljana Kovačević, a training attendee from Valjevo, started her own new agricultural business. Ms. Kovačević invested \$30,000 in the production of honey with fruits, and this new business also provides employment for two persons. By acquiring new business and marketing skills from the seminar, Ms. Kovačević is now able to manage the production, marketing, and sales of her products.