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PRESS RELEASE

USAID enhances Macedonian Agribusiness through providing HACCP systems implementation, verification and maintenance workshops

Starting on 24 September USAID's AgBiz Program organized three days of training for Macedonian agribusinesses working in Table Grapes, Fresh Vegetables and Wild Gathered Products.

This workshop will enable the participating company representatives to obtain practical and hands-on information about their products and production technologies that will help them to understand where and what type of problems can arise concerning food safety and the implementation of food safety assurance systems based on HACCP principles.

In June 2008, the AgBiz Program organized this kind of training for companies working in the bottled wine business. Over the next three years the Program will provide a range of support to Macedonian agribusiness to enhance their competitiveness in regional and global markets, including implementing food safety and quality assurance standards demanded by export markets and Macedonian regulations.

To date, the AgBiz Program has succeeded in providing technical support to 241 agribusiness firms; made at least 35 improved technologies or management practices available to customers; and identified nearly US\$3 million in financing for customers. Nine business expansion projects have been signed and 11 more are expected to be signed in near future. In addition, seven trade fairs and five study tours were organized with 151 participants resulting in US\$1.1 million of export orders being signed. For more information please visit www.agbiz.com.mk.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

The American people, through USAID, have invested nearly \$500 million in Macedonia since 1993. USAID is implementing projects that create jobs, reduce corruption, and prepare Macedonian students for the workforce. These initiatives improve the quality of life and support Macedonia's transition to a stable and prosperous democracy. USAID provides economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries. For more information please visit <http://macedonia.usaid.gov>.