

SUCCESS STORY

USAID supports Macedonian agribusinesses to expand into new export markets

The AgBiz Program is working on sustainably and significantly increasing the competitiveness of agribusinesses, producers, processors and traders, working individually or in groups, and participating in value chains that have good potential in export markets, especially for value added products, and where there is an opportunity for a broad-based positive impact.



The ten grantees joined by USAID Mission Director, Michael Fritz and AgBiz Program's staff

Photo: AgBiz Program's Staff

To date, the AgBiz has provided technical support to 241 agribusiness firms; made at least 35 improved technologies available to customers; identified nearly US\$3 million in financing for customers, signed 19 grants for business expansion projects; delivered short-term training to 394 individuals; and organized five study tours and seven trade fairs, the latter resulting in at least US\$1.1 million of export orders being signed.

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On October 3rd USAID's AgBiz Program held a Second Grant Agreements Signing Ceremony for Macedonian agribusinesses working in the wine, fresh vegetable, table grapes and wild gathered product value chains. The companies that signed grant agreements with USAID's AgBiz Program to support their competitiveness improvement and business expansion projects were "Intermak", "Vigan", "Flores", and "Koro" for wild gathered projects; "GD Tikves", "Ledra Agro", and "Peca Komerc" for table grape projects, "Valandovo" and "Bovin" for bottled wine projects; and "Agrohemija" for a fresh vegetables project.

The ten grant agreements with Macedonian agribusinesses will result in more than \$220,000 being contributed to the projects by AgBiz out of a total value for the projects of \$4.6 million. The projects will help recipients expand their exports of bottled wine, fresh vegetables, table grapes and wild gathered products and are projected to result in increased export sales of over US\$58 million by the end of 2010.

Examples of the projects include improving the capacity and adding value to table grapes by installing new lines for packaging grapes and equipment for making cardboard boxes; supporting companies to implement HACCP and ISO standards; finding new markets in Balkan and EU countries; training company personnel; purchasing and installing new equipment including a chiller and heat exchanger for fresh vegetables; constructing facilities for storing oak barrels that will be used for producing premium wines; and assisting businesses to modernize their post harvest handling technologies.

"Signing this Grant Agreement today means starting implementation of a project that will increase exports, stimulate value-added product sales and create new jobs in my company!" said Mr. Toshe Kostadinov, owner of "Intermak" wild gathered products processing company.

The goal of the AgBiz Program is to enable agribusinesses to identify, understand and sustainably enter export markets for value-added products; enhance market linkages between producers, processors and traders; improve business management, operations and competitiveness; achieve greater incomes for agricultural producers and processors; and create new employment opportunities.