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Serbia adopts new set of agriculture laws

Report Categories:

Agricultural Situation

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Report Highlights:

In early May, Serbian Parliament adopted seven new laws in the area of agriculture, water management and forestry. The set of new laws included Law on Forests, Law on Waters, Law on Beer, Law on Registration of Crop Varieties, Law on Organic Production, Amendments to the Veterinary Law and Amendments to the Law on Agriculture Extension and Expert Service.

General Information:

On May 5th, 2010 National Parliament of the Republic of Serbia passed a new set of laws and amendments to the laws related to agriculture. Those laws were proposed to the Parliament by the Serbian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management. After May 2009, when Serbian Parliament adopted 15 agriculture related laws, this is the second largest legislative activity in agriculture for the last ten years. In addition to further improvement of overall environment for agriculture production, this set of new laws will ensure Serbian compliance to international agriculture rules and will further harmonize Serbian agriculture legislative with the EU laws. They will also improve overall conditions for potential foreign or domestic investments in the agriculture sector in Serbia that represents the most prospective part of the Serbian economy.

The new adopted laws include:

- Law on Forests
- Law on Waters
- Law on Beer
- Law on Registration of Crop varieties
- Law on Organic Production
- Amendments to the Veterinary Law
- Amendments to the Agriculture Extension and Expert Service

1. Law on Forests

Serbian Parliament adopted Law on Forests that will regulate use of forests and forest land, obligations and constrains of owners and users of forests. Law will also define system of forest protection, managing of forests and obligatory registration of all forests. According to the new law Serbia will set up a forest fund that will be financed from fees from the use of forests and forest land, but also from other sources.

2. Law on Waters

The new Law on Waters will regulate the legal system of Serbia's waterways and water resources, including mineral and thermal springs. Under this law, Water Management is financed from the state and provincial budgets as well as from concessions and other fee income. The fees, which will be set by the government and will take effect in 2011, include charges to legal entities for water use, release, pollution, and drainage, the use of water supply facilities and systems and sewer water. It also introduces fees that will be used for incentives to build irrigation systems. The law stipulates that companies must pay 0.025 percent of their revenues into an irrigation fund, while agriculture producers are expected to pay a total some EUR 20 million annually into the fund.

3. Law on Beer

According to this new law, Serbia will for the first time have legal framework for regulation beer production and sales, and will seek to make beer industry more competitive on export markets. The law allows only registered breweries to produce beer. Serbian Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry will keep a register of breweries, which will be public and will contain data on annual production, consumption of raw materials and production of final products. After successful privatization process of several breweries in Serbia purchases mainly by foreign companies Serbia became a leading beer producer in this part of Europe. It has ten large breweries that increased their production from 500 million liters in 2002 to 650 million liters in 2008. Beer accounts for 20 percent of annual drinks consumption in Serbia.

4. Law on Registration of Crop Varieties

The Law on Registration of Crop Varieties regulates the registration of newly-created varieties of grains, vegetables, fruits, and vine and shortens registration time for varieties of crops and vegetables from 15 to 10 years, seeking to encourage the use of new varieties that would boost the competitiveness of domestic agriculture products. This law also defines a conditions for registration of crop varieties, procedure of crop registration, work of Central Register kept in the Ministry of Agriculture and conditions of maintaining crop varieties.

5. Law on Organic Production

The newly adopted Law on Organic Production changed the previously existed Law on Organic Production adopted in 2006. Law will further harmonize Serbian legislation with EU Ordinance on organic production and labeling. Law is defining production, processing, labeling, storing, transportation, domestic trade and export and import of organic products (vegetable and animal products). Law regulates production of organic agriculture products, systems and methods of organic farming, as well a system of controlling and certifying the whole chain of organic production.

6. Amendments to the Veterinary Law

With changes and amendments to the Veterinary Law Serbia is getting closer to the EU standards and will improve conditions for exports of animals and animal products to the EU. Amended law is defining new conditions for establishing Centers for storing and distribution of semen for artificial insemination, defining responsibilities of National Reference Laboratory, system of alert in the case of contagious diseases and defining the measures that will be undertaken, system of identification and registration of animals and as well as other changes and harmonization with EU rules.

7. Amendments to the Agriculture Extension and Expert Service

The Law on Agriculture Extension Service is improving regulated advisory system aimed at informing farmers about modern standards of products quality, farm management, and environmental protection. Law is defining activities of extension and advisory experts in the area of agriculture with defining exact type of work that those experts can provide to the Serbian farmers. Law is also regulation system of issuing licenses to the extension experts. Licenses will be issued and registered in the Central Register Office located in the Ministry of Agriculture. According to this law Serbia will form the Expert Committee for extension and advisory work and will define trainings must be completed by the

extension experts, as well the system of funding through Serbian and Vojodina budget.

Comment:

Serbia failed to amend its current GMO laws that prohibit cultivation of biotech crops and commercialization of biotech crops and products in this the spring parliamentary session.

It is expected that the GOS will submit the GMO amendments to the Parliament in the fall session after incorporating US and EU comments.