

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Serbia

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Serbia is hiring 1800 new Agriculture Extension Assistants

Report Categories:

Agricultural Situation

Approved By:

Hoa Huynh

Prepared By:

Tatjana Maslac

Report Highlights:

In order to support long term program of improving agriculture production, Serbian Government decided to employ and educate 1,800 new agriculture extension assistants in October 2011. Assistants will be hired for one-year contracts from a large number of unemployed agronomists that passed Ministry of Agriculture tests of knowledge and will be paid through the government budget. For this purpose Serbia will set aside around 2.5 billion dinars (\$34 millions).

General Information:

As part of the Serbian Government plan of hiring agriculture extension agents during October 2011, Ministry of Agriculture organized selection of unemployed agronomists in 35 cities in Serbia. Some 1,959 of unemployed agronomists were tested and 1,800 passed the test and will be hired by the Ministry of Agriculture for a one-year contract. For this purpose Serbian Government set aside around 2.5 billion dinars (\$34 millions) from the state budget, of which 2 billion dinars (\$27 millions) will be used to cover their wages and remaining 500 million dinars (\$7 million) will be used for their further trainings and education. Serbia has 35 regional agriculture extension stations and is currently employing 260 agriculture extension agents.

Currently, Serbian Ministry of Agriculture is in the process of restructuring of the national agricultural extension program which includes changes of legislation, policies and capacity strengthening through training and education of Ministry officials and agricultural extension workers. Serbia has established a five-year outline work program for development of extension service and has set targets for the total number of specified activities to be carried out in each year of the program. Serbian Government has set out the following ten tasks for the extension service:

1. Providing advice to “chosen” and other farms, and monitoring the performance of “chosen” farms („chosen“ farms are farms whose level of production will be monitored depending on the level of activity of the agriculture extension agents);
2. Educating farmers and the public through presentations, publications and mass media;
3. Conducting field trials and annual “Field Days”;
4. Informing farmers about agricultural policy and helping them to use subsidies and credits;
5. Monitoring and promoting rural development and tourism;
6. Supporting the formation and operation of Farmer Associations and community groups;
7. Promoting sustainable agricultural production and environmental protection;
8. Educating extension workers and carrying out support activities;
9. Running the Serbian agricultural market information system;
10. Monitoring seasonal agricultural activities.

USDA/OCBD activities in Serbia on Agriculture Extension Development Program

Agriculture extension program is a part of USDA/OCBD technical assistance programs for Serbia that are implemented since 2001. The overarching goal of USDA’s work in Serbia is to help Serbia to enhance its economic growth by helping to reform agricultural sector, increase integration into world markets and strengthen agriculture industry. Since 2005, USDA has been working with the Ministry of Agriculture to strengthen their capacity to implement an agricultural extension system that effectively transfers agricultural technologies to farmers.

USDA/OCBD has carried an extension service development program in Serbia and successfully collaborated with Ministry of Agriculture and World Bank STAR project, in building capacity for Serbian agriculture extension network. One of the elements of developing Serbian agricultural extension service, USDA is in the process of helping Ministry of Agriculture to organize “train the trainers” by educating new 1,800 agriculture extension assistants. Assistance to extension service is being developed by USDA through programs farm management and communication skills that include assistance to

Serbian trainers and Institute for applied science in agriculture, in evaluating newly-employed agents and to provide ideas for further extension trainings such as: 4-H and young farmer programs, linking farm management spreadsheets (on-line) with Serbian marketing information system, including more integrated pest management trainings for fruits, field crops and vegetables. Also, through future cooperation with USDA/OCBD Extension Service Development Program, Serbian Ministry of Agriculture intends to strengthen Serbia's livestock sector through the following activities:

- Feed and Forage education for agriculture extension agents;
- Improvement of animal genetics with introduction of new breeds and cross-breeds and training for extension service and artificial insemination centers;
- Provide link with grades and standards project in order to improve animal quality grades to achieve better prices from meatpackers and thus to avoid farmers often dissatisfaction with market prices and to meet EU requirements;
- Link with animal health project to improve animal health status and biosecurity, food safety measures on the farm in order to meet internationally recognized standards and to increase export chances.