



PRESS RELEASE

Agricultural journalists from around the world delighted with Serbian agriculture

Serbian Association of Agricultural Journalists AGROPRESS implemented the project of a five-day workshop for foreign journalists covering agriculture named *Balkan Tour 2011 - Serbia*. In the workshop, forty foreign and ten local journalists had the opportunity to become familiar with the agribusiness sector of Serbia visiting different locations. Serbia was visited by journalists from Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Macedonia, Germany, India, Ireland, Japan, Latvia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Holland, Ukraine and USA.

Journalists expressed their impressions about Serbian agriculture to local media.

Adrian Krebs, a reporter from Switzerland, was pleasantly surprised by the potential and current projects in the agribusiness sector of Serbia. Commenting on the apple production in orchard Celarevo he said: "Enormous surfaces, very impressive. Here we have an example of size of an apple production that's more than ten times bigger than the biggest production site we have in Switzerland."

Anita Rozentale was one of the representatives of journalists from Latvia and she expressed her impression: "Soul of every country is in countryside, and Serbia has such variety in landscape, form of farms and different forms of ownership. It's very colorful and I like it."

Mike Wilson from the US is the President of the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists IFAJ and during his visit to the agribusiness sector of Serbia he has come to some conclusions: "Agriculture is facing some problems here. It needs infrastructure, it needs some scale changes, some movement to modernize and it needs investment. Agriculture all across the world needs investment and this is the perfect area of the world to do that, because you've human capital as well as natural resources."

Jacques Van Outryve is agricultural journalist from Belgium: "What I have learned is that Serbia is just in the middle of two big markets – you have Russia and you have EU. Serbia can profit of both markets and I think that it will be a good future for Serbia."

Iurii Mykhailov, the Ukrainian journalist who follows agriculture, tried to compare the situation of the two countries. According to him, starting positions are the same for both countries, but Serbia is much closer to the European Union. "I hope that Serbia will join the family of European countries and it would be good for her. That will be a model for Ukraine. I am impressed with everything I saw during this visit. People work hard, but they know that, in the end, they will be happy," said Mykhailov.

Agricultural media began their stay in Serbia with a tour around the city organized by Tourist Organization of Belgrade.

Working visit of the foreign media started at the *78th International Agriculture Fair in Novi Sad*. During the conference "Manufacture and trade of agricultural products - domestic and world experiences"



journalists were most interested in what Serbia is doing to increase agricultural production, but also whether Serbia is near joining the European Union, WTO, and that whether it will liberalize the laws regarding GMO.

Pointing out that Serbia's goal is a candidature for EU membership by the end of the year, Minister of Agriculture Dusan Petrovic said that agriculture and trade are fully ready for that and recalled that the previous Ministry of Agriculture has done a great job in implementing the institutional and legislative reforms. On this occasion he said that Serbia has a free trade regime with many large countries such as Russia and Turkey, as well as with the EU, and there are serious contacts with many other Asian and African countries "that are reachable for companies from Serbia. "

Voazar family farm: First certified organic vegetable producer in Serbia

Household Voazar in Kisac was just one in a series which the journalists had the opportunity to visit. This household is specific due to its exclusive dedication to organic production and it has an international certificate for that purpose. In order to get the necessary certificates, three years of hard work in the field had to pass, and during that time they had to meet strictly defined conditions. The Novi Sad city authorities assist producers who decide to switch to organic production and there is a certain city budget to help farmers in this transitional period. For the current year, however the Ministry of Agriculture allocates 100€ per hectare of registered organic production. Andrija Voazar, the owner of the family brand says that he started organic farming more than 20 years ago but it was not until three years ago that he managed to get a certificate. His customers are in all markets and supermarkets in Novi Sad, and he has recently started placing his products in Belgrade.

Alltech: invested 25 million Euros in Serbia

One of the biggest investments in food and agricultural sector in Serbia is certainly Alltech investment from the U.S. This worldwide famous company produces raw materials and finished products for numerous markets. On this occasion, representatives of the local management said that they have so far invested 25 million Euros in plant in Serbia and that main reasons for investing were a good location and a good professional staff in Serbia. This Alltech plant has 99% of employees from local communities.

DELTA AGRAR: Apple production plant 10 times bigger than the largest one in Switzerland

Visit of the orchard of Delta Agrar in Celarevo impressed the participants of the workshop due to its size and advanced technologies that are used. Professional team of the company gave detailed information to the workshop participants who observed in disbelief gigantic orchard. This is the biggest apple orchard in Eastern Europe and among the largest ones in the world. Julka Toskic, director of professional services and marketing of Delta Agrar, said that the area of orchard is 210 hectares and that each year the production expand by 50 hectares. She also stressed that they work intensively to expand, so it will not take long before the surface of orchard occupies more than 500 ha. Annually, over 85% of apples produced in the orchard Celarevo are labeled first-class quality, and a large part is exported to foreign markets, mainly to Russia.



Drier plant ready for the new season, fruit growers are working at full steam

After visits to companies and manufacturers in the plains of Vojvodina, the tour continued in the mountainous regions of Valjevo, and began with a visit of a facility of domestic company Agranela that produces dried fruits. Agranela needs material for drying and hardworking fruit growers from Valjevo are at this very moment required to ensure production.

One of them produces raspberries in the village Susica, located 550m above sea level. Radoje Rasa Maric, a 29 year old producer, hosted the press in yard of his family house and then showed them nursery garden of young raspberry plants. This visit began in a traditional manner - a glass of rakija, coffee and water from a well.

Priest Avakum: 50 years of love for God and the bees

On a visit to the monastery Lelic, in addition to the opportunity to enjoy the ambience of the monastery itself as well as in a Serbian wedding, reporters from around the world were introduced to the monastery honey and brandy production by priest Avakum, a family member of St. Nicholaj whose relics rest in monastery Lelic. He previously served in a monastery Tronosa and learned beekeeping from his father. "Honey is produced in an organic way, and the yearly yield is 70kg per hive," said priest Avakum in one breath while the press had numerous questions greeted with joy, as he has been producing honey for half a century.

Rural Tourism: For 15 Euros - three meals and a bed

So that journalists would not have gone from Serbia, creating impressions only on agriculture, the organizers of this unusual tour insured a visit to the best museum in Serbia, the National Museum in Valjevo, and then took guests to the farm of Dragica and Milovan Stepanovic in the village Stave. From sheep and cow farms, orchards and vegetable gardens, to rural tourism and handicrafts - all these are represented on this farm in the Medvednik Mountain. Journalists were surprised at the affordable price of accommodation – 15 Euros per bed and all-you-can-eat-and-drink service. Housewife Dragica Stepanovic celebrated her birthday together with journalists and toasted with many guests who were happy to buy her skillful hand work.

Chemical Agrosava: Knowledge created business

Just when they thought that the tour organizers had nothing more to show them as for the projects implemented in the Serbian agribusiness sector, journalists came to Simanovci where they visited Chemical Agrosava Company, despite being a non-working day. Visiting the plant of the company they got familiar with the production of pesticides and fertilizers, production seed corn, as well as technology for the production of packaging for sensitive goods. The owner of the company, Mr. Jovan Mirkovic, stressed that Chemical Agrosava built its own plant, without bank loans, and it is a company where knowledge is highly valued and where all employees share the profits at the end of the year. "The first investment were the people," said Mirkovic.



PKB: City company for food production

Padinska Skela and township enterprise PKB (Chamber of Commerce of Belgrade) were the new station. This time, journalists came to see the production of greenhouse vegetables. They were welcomed by members of the folk group of the corporation.

Rose Collection for pride

With notice that it is time to prepare their noses for the enjoyment the participants visited the garden of the largest rosary in Serbia, Petrovic Roses. With the advent of folk ensemble Vrcin in a private garden of the rosary, among the 18,000 varieties of roses, journalists enjoyed local aromas and flavors of famous Serbian grill. The bravest ones joined the ensemble for a traditional dance kolo. Bad weather prevented the visit to Avala Tower, so participants saw it up close, with the reminder that the view it provides from the top is a reason to join the workshop of Balkan Tour next year.