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“Agribusiness and renewable sources of energy – potential and problems”

With a goal to inform investors and public in Serbia about possibilities and responsibilities when it comes to renewable energy sources and agribusiness, AGROPRESS, in cooperation with the USAID Agribusiness Project, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management and Ministry of Mining and Energy, organized the conference **“Agribusiness and renewable sources of energy – potential and problems”**.

Welcoming spokespersons and participants, President of the Board of Directors of AGROPRESS, Goran Djakovic, spotlighted initiatives for investments in renewable sources of energy and stressed the fact that the sector meets the same obstacles around the world, and the only way for us to overcome them is by efforts of the whole community.

Louis Faoro, Director of USAID Agribusiness Project, underlined that world needs more and more energy, and that making new energy sources is a must. The fact is that there is a great potential, but also there are some obstacles in technicalities that a man needs to overcome in order to use the potential. He stressed that the conference is a promise for the sector, as participants will be able to hear not only about positive experiences and successes, but also about how to overcome certain problems and obstacles.

Minister of Agriculture, Sasa Dragin, announced: “Being a country with great forest surfaces, Serbia has a great potential for biomass production. Biomass makes 63% of the overall potential of renewable energy sources. Forests cover about 30% of the territory, and 55% is working land. Apart from agricultural crops’ residues, there is a possibility for purposely biomass growth.” Minister pointed out as well that Serbia has a much better position than, for example, northern countries, when it comes to solar energy source.

Jim Stein, Acting Head of the USAID Mission, stressed that the increase in biomass exploitation for energy generation can be a success for Serbia. “Expanding the use of biomass for energy production is a pure win-win for Serbia: Utilization of agricultural and wood waste biomass can help Serbia meet its energy needs in a more environmentally friendly manner, while also helping to transfer technology and create jobs in local, mostly rural communities.” A sign of willingness for this sector to grow is very well presented in the fact that the conference is being supported by representatives of ministries, private and non-governmental sector.

Dejan Stojadinovic, Minister Assistant for Renewable Energy Sources, presented potential and obstacles Serbia has on its way to renewable sources exploitation.

PhD Olivera Ecim Djuric, from the Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Belgrade, spoke about possibilities to exploit renewable sources of energy within the agricultural sector and stressed the connection of any kind of actions to the environmental protection and climate change.

Conference participants had the opportunity to see a case study “Biomass palletization” presented by Ian Mihajlovic, a representative of the USAID Competitiveness Project.

Danijela Ilic, USAID Agribusiness Project Consultant, had the presentation “Usage of renewable energy sources in dairy farms”.

Ivan Petronijevic, a representative of ProCredit Leasing, spoke about financial support for investments in new technology.

Aleksandar Bogunovic, Minister Assistant Advisor for Rural Development in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, gave a final review on the topic from the position of the Ministry.