



USAID In Serbia Increases Farmers' Incomes

In Vojvodina, the largest agricultural region in Serbia, many jobs have been lost over the past decade as industrial facilities have closed or reduced employment. Local residents of Kikinda Municipality (Vojvodina) in Serbia, who relied on agricultural production to supplement household income, are forced to pursue full-time agricultural activities as the primary source of household income.

Farmers in the Kikinda municipality needed financial resources and new equipment to revitalize production, increase sales, and enhance incomes. Farmers learned about USAID's Community Revitalization through Democratic Action (CRDA) program through a local town hall meeting organized by the project-established Community Development Group in their community.

With USAID help, the farmers organized an association called Kikinda Farmers' Cooperative to better represent their interests and to supply local markets with fresh produce. To achieve this, they utilized educational services provided through the CRDA program to learn how to start up intensive greenhouse vegetable production.



Photo: ADF Serbia

Nada will use the income to support her daughters' education.

In Vojvodina, USAID supports many activities aimed at not only increasing household incomes and revenues of small enterprises, but also creating employment. These activities include fifty-six income-generating projects in agriculture with participation of forty-three farmer organizations, cooperatives, and the Cooperative Union of Vojvodina, which benefit 69,156 people. The CRDA program has provided funding and technical assistance to 490 community projects with nearly four million beneficiaries.

USAID helped the Kikinda Farmers' Cooperative purchase thirty metal greenhouse frames and seedling containers, and secure individual commercial bank loans to purchase plastic tarpaulins and other equipment for their new greenhouses. The association's successful production of tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and melons has enabled them to repay their bank loans and apply for new credit to further increase production.

USAID's agricultural projects in Serbia have generated employment of 13,425 person months and increased income for cooperatives by \$1.5 million in Vojvodina.

The number of farmers in the Kikinda Farmers' Cooperative is increasing – its membership has more than tripled. The number of co-op greenhouses has more than tripled with seventy-five additional greenhouses being purchased by new association members for their farms with support of commercial bank loans.

In 2003, USAID helped twenty-five of the association's leading farmers establish a modern agricultural cooperative. The Farmers Vegetable Association and Kikinda Farmers' Cooperative now have a combined membership of 153 farmers located in five neighboring municipalities. In 2003, one year after the project started, eighty farmers produced 278 tons of greenhouse vegetables, generating total revenues of \$185,000, a twenty-three fold increase.

