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PRESS RELEASE

USAID and Government of Serbia Support Serbian Food Producers to Open First Ever Halal Shop in Belgrade

Belgrade (December 4) – US Agency for International Development (USAID), The Governments' Office for Sustainable Development of Underdeveloped Areas and Belgrade-based Halal Certifying Agency signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Serbian Food Producers Cluster "Cuvari tradicije - Pester, Kopaonik i Golija" paving way to the first ever Halal Food Shop in Belgrade. The shop will be opened in early 2013.

This unique partnership between USAID, Serbian Government and local businesses will allow six small and medium food producers from South West Serbia to increase the profit from the sales of their prime quality Halal-certified food products in Serbia. USAID's will brand and provide equipment for the shop while the Government's Office will cover two years of rent and utility costs. Halal Certifying Agency will help companies maintain production standards required for the Halal certificate.

USAID Mission Director Susan Fritz, Serbian Minister without Portfolio Sulejman Ugljanin and Halal Agency Director Mufti Mustafa Jusufspahic attended the signing ceremony hosted by the Halal Agency.

The shop opening is a culmination of a 3 years long support provided by the USAID Economic Security Project. Companies received management, marketing and sales training assistance, support to attend domestic and international trade and to form an industry cluster - all in effort to fuel sales and expansion in to new markets.

This support is a part of the USIAD multi-faceted effort to spur the recovery of Serbian economy through strengthening small and medium enterprises in two of the most economically challenged areas of the country – South Serbia and Sandzak.

Halal certification verifies that products meet Islamic dietary guidelines and they have been made in accordance with Islamic law. Opening the Halal shop marks an important step for the six companies in their efforts to enter and compete on the global Halal market. With 1.5 billion Muslims worldwide, Halal is a growing global food market estimated at more than \$2.1 trillion. The potential market for Halal expands to 5 million customers in bordering countries alone.

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For more information visit <http://www.economicsecurity.rs>.

***Since 2001 USAID has invested more than \$662.7 million to stimulate economic growth, strengthen the justice system, and promote good governance in Serbia.
For more information about USAID, visit <http://serbia.usaid.gov>.***