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BLACE FARMERS AND SCHOOL AWARDED GREENHOUSES AND COACHING FROM USAID AND MUNICIPALITY

BLACE – Nine young farmers will receive greenhouses on Saturday from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Municipality of Blace for writing the best business plans in a local competition. In addition, Blace Agricultural High School will receive a greenhouse to improve its education in modern agricultural production techniques.

The awards will be made at 2 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 27, at the Blace City Cultural Center.

The nine agro-entrepreneurs qualified for support by formulating greenhouse-based business plans in competition with 20 other farmers who attended a USAID-sponsored, week-long training program on successful greenhouse farming. The winners also will receive vouchers for consulting services to improve their crop yield.

The greenhouses, business training and consulting services were financed by USAID's Preparedness, Planning and Economic Security (PPES) Program and the municipality. USAID donated \$5,000 toward training and vouchers; Blace initially planned to match the donation, but increased its donation to \$7,000 for the greenhouses.

During the training, participants learned about contemporary farm management, business planning, finance, and how to apply for business development grants. Two teachers from Blace Agricultural High School also attended the classes.

The partnership between USAID and the Municipality of Blace stems from the local Youth Entrepreneurship Action Plan (YEAP), USAID-supported action plans designed to promote entrepreneurialism among young people and tackle youth unemployment. YEAPs currently are active in 23 municipalities across Serbia with projects tailored to address the specific needs of each community and its young people.

The vouchers for consulting services vouchers are an easily replicable incentive that could work throughout Serbia. The Municipality of Ruma applied a similar voucher system with its YEAP to help local youth entrepreneurs endure the difficult years following a start-up.

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For additional information about USAID's programs in Serbia, visit <http://serbia.usaid.gov>.

For information on USAID's PPES Program, visit <http://www.scopes-serbia.org>.