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**USAID Kosovo EMPOWER Private Sector
Newsletter No. 16, July 2016**

EMPOWER THROUGH JOB CREATION!

Kosovo Pellet Producers Gain from the Austrian Experience

FAST FACTS

Grant Awarding Continues Through July

A grant will support Unipek, bakery in North Mitrovicë/a to purchase specialized equipment to diversify and expand pastry production, and along the way create some 17 new jobs.

A grant agreement signed with Fontana, a cabinetry producer in Zubin Potok will help co-finance a new edge banding machine that will result in doubling production capacities and increased quality of Fontana's products, creating at least 19 new jobs, 4 of which for women.

The grant awarded to Ciao Berto, kitchen cabinet and other furniture producer, will support the company to expand production capacities and meet the constantly increasing domestic and export market opportunities. Some 50 new jobs are expected.

In July, USAID EMPOWER Private Sector organized a study tour in Austria for a group of pellet producers from Kosovo. The purpose of the study tour was to provide an opportunity for pellet producers to be exposed to the best practices of pellet quality control schemes and product certification process in Austria.

The pellet production sector in Kosovo is increasing along with the increasing demand for it. USAID commissioned recently an analysis of the physical-chemical qualities of the wood pellet in Kosovo, which highlighted that better productivity and implementation of international standards can impact positively this rapidly growing sector.

Therefore, the study tour was designed to set the ground for the development of a national production capacity and quality management system. Group participants visited pellet plants, a laboratory and attended a training on standards and certification procedures, quality parameters, and chemical properties.

The group comprised of Jeta-H, Europa and Thes-Ari pellet producers, and representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development and "Sara&Meti".

"Larger pellet production means less pollution from the wood industry, better energy efficiency and increased cleaner wood biomass energy production, more economic benefit, job creation and overall better development perspective for our country," said Tahir Ahmeti, Director of Department of Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development who was part of the group.

*"The visit reiterated our need to focus on increasing the range of our ecological products and invest in this aspect."
– Besim Zejnullahu, Thes-Ari Company.*



Group of Kosovo pellet producers on a study tour to Austria finding out about best practices

The study tour was organized and supported by USAID's EMPOWER Private Sector, in partnership with Sida, as part of the overall support to increased quality of renewable energy and energy efficiency final products and processes, which would result in large-scale job creation in this sector.



USAID Visits the Agro Centar apple orchard

Supporting the Success of Kosovo Companies

USAID’s Brian Fahey joined Zlatko Sekulić, owner of Agro Centar, an apple production company in Leposavić/q to inaugurate its new aggregator facilities fully equipped with post-harvest calibration, storing and cooling equipment. The activity is facilitated by Kosovo Center for Business Support, and supported by USAID and Sida funding. Some 18 new jobs are expected.



Farmer Milovanović at his greenhouse in Dren village

Promoting Agricultural Sector in the North

USAID’s Brian Fahey visited “Milovanović Farm” in Leposavić/q to see the growth of its farming activity since 2012 when the owner received the first greenhouse with USAID support. The farm now has 710 square meters of greenhouses, used all year round, producing vegetables that are mostly sold in the local market in the North. This pilot project facilitated by Kosovo Center for Business support seeks to help build business relationships and trust among producers, farmers, processors, traders, and retailers in both north and south Kosovo as a way of upgrading the agricultural sector in the North and realizing more market opportunities. “I could not have done all this without USAID support” he Milovanović.



Vocational Education Training Local Council members

Strategy to Align Skills with Labor Market Needs

The second Vocational Education Training Local Council was established in Mitrovicë/a. USAID facilitated the discussion of over 60 representatives of the regional business sector and public institutions about this voluntary advisory mechanism for public-private dialog and action planning in the field of vocational education programs that match the real needs of the businesses. Mehmet Mehmeti, owner of Fat-Ari, a metal processing company, is the council chairman. Ryvë Prekorogja, from the MEST Department of VET said “The VETLC provides a good platform of dialogue to contribute to workforce skills development in the region that will benefit create more employment.”



Visit Kosovo! Picture from www.pastemagazine.com

Experiencing Adventure Tourism in Kosovo

Did you know that Kosovo as a tourism destination made it in the National Geographic’s list of ten places that deserve more travelers? Or that Lonely Planet and Paste Magazine featured stories that highlight Kosovo’s attraction as a tourism destination? You can access the full English stories at <http://on.natgeo.com/1tkoMh7> and <http://bit.ly/29UsSnh> and <http://bit.ly/2axEnUP> At USAID’s EMPOWER Private Sector, in partnership with Sida, we support the international promotion of adventure tourism in Kosovo and stimulates national level support. We expect more such stories in the international media.

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USAID’s EMPOWER Private Sector, which started in July 2014, is a five-year project designed to stimulate large-scale job creation by elevating the competitiveness of Kosovo firms. The project is funded by USAID and Sida, and is implemented by Cardno Emerging Markets USA, Ltd.