



AGRO BELGRADE 2021 ONLINE CONFERENCE OPENED

Agro Belgrade 2021 conference was opened yesterday (March 5, 2021) at the Belgrade Fair.

The following topics were discussed at the conference: Perspectives of fruit and vegetable export markets, Potential of apple fruits and planting material in Serbia, Models of financing agribusiness in Serbia in 2021 and Advanced agrotechnologies in fruit and vegetables.

The importance of agriculture during the pandemic is great and investing in it ensures GDP growth, said Minister **Branislav Nedimovic** and announced the payment of a subsidy of 4,000 dinars per hectare in the next 15 days. Then, 70 million euros will be paid to the accounts of agricultural farms, explained the line minister who spoke at the AGRO BELGRADE 2021 conference. "We have more money for subsidies this year than in previous years. And I will only remind you that last year we paid 11.5 billion dinars for rural development measures. These are tractors, machines, irrigation systems and everything else. And the year before that, it was 6.5 billion. So, there have been almost 100% more allocations for subsidies and now we have state measures, plus we have a new competition that we are working on with the World Bank of 38 million dollars. "

Secretary for Agriculture of the City of Belgrade **Milinko Velickovic** said that Belgrade is increasing the amount of funds intended for incentives in agriculture from year to year: "Subsidies amounted to 20 million dinars in 2013, and this year despite the pandemic we will invest 200 million. We will share 100 tractors in Belgrade "After Vojvodina, it has the most agricultural land. As much as 250,000 hectares of land are arable and that obliges us to take care of agriculture," said Velickovic. He announced that in the next 10 days, four competitions will be announced for incentives: for the purchase of machines and tractors, for livestock, i.e. the purchase of heifers and herds of sheep and goats, incentives for fruit and vegetable growing and beekeeping.

The director of the USAID Office for Democratic and Economic Development, **Shanley Pinchotti**, also addressed the gathering with a video link, emphasizing that the importance of agriculture in Serbia is reflected in the fact that it accounted for 15 percent of GDP last year and engaged in agriculture for 15 percent employees: "However, there is room for improvement. In order to accelerate growth, agribusinesses can improve the quality of their products, improve exports and conquer new markets. Leaders in this path are fruit and vegetable producers, given that the



demand for fresh and "It's growing globally with healthy food," said Pinchotti. She added that Western markets offer opportunities for agribusiness with the adoption of new standards, innovation and the creation of new partnerships, in which USAID is helping.

"Connecting with the best and most demanding markets is crucial for our companies. It contributes promotion product quality, more stable and predictable business, and thus investments into advanced processing and new technologies. This proved to be very important in the previous year as well challenges due to COVID, where market opportunities have arisen due to the breakdown of supply chains in world, used by those who could meet the standards. An initiative such as Agro Belgrade, which deals with topics that are the future of the fruit and vegetable industry, thus has greater importance, "said Aleksandar Pavlovic, Director of the USAID Competitive Economy Project.

Branko Greganovic, President of NLB Bank, which recently bought Komercijalna Banka, said: "In the last seven years, we have seriously and responsibly approached the agro sector and positioned ourselves in the group of the strongest banks. We believe in that segment of the Serbian economy and offer all forms of financing, and we have placed special emphasis on financing equipment and buying land. In cooperation with large distributors, we have the opportunity to provide better support to farmers. "By integrating with Komercijalna Banka, we will become the number one bank in terms of agriculture, and we will certainly support the initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture and the World Bank." He emphasized that the financing of agriculture largely depends on the state, and this can be seen in the previous year: "There is no significant part of agricultural production that we do not support, either independently or with state measures." Greganovic added that they are agro-advisors of the bank and at all times with farmers in the field where, with the best financial advice, they help them to improve the business of the farm. He concluded that NLB Bank, in cooperation with local and national levels of government, can help farmers find funds more easily and meet conditions that may not be achievable at first glance.

Agro Belgrade aims to become a central place for the exchange of knowledge, experiences and business opportunities in this part of Europe in the fields of fruit growing, viticulture and vegetables. This year, due to the circumstances caused by the Covid 19 virus, an online conference was held without a part. The focus is on education and dissemination of knowledge related to successful agribusiness in Serbia during 2021. It is especially important to inform people about agribusiness financing models, given that incentives exist and are underused. That is why this is one of the important topics of this year's conference. In the second part of the year, we will organize a two-day Agro Belgrade Berry Business Forum, while the central fair



event is scheduled for January 27-29, 2022 at the Belgrade Fair, said **Vladimir Zivanovic**, director of Agro Belgrade.

The main partners of the Agro Belgrade 2021 conference are the **Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, the Secretariat for Economy of the City of Belgrade, USAID's Competitive Economy Project, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and NLB Bank.**

At the link <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsHJhhle1tZ7CDyE-KZ-VSw> you can watch and download the opening and all panels from the conference, without having to cite sources.