Value-added Agricultural Development: Cooperative Projects Between Iowa State University, Montana State University and Faculty of Agriculture, University of Zagreb

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Abstract

For several years, Iowa State University and Montana State University in the United States of America have participated in a number of collaborative projects with the Faculty of Agriculture University of Zagreb in Croatia. This presentation will present brief backgrounds and overviews of the unique agricultural-development activities of the Value-added Agriculture Project at Iowa State University and the Cooperative Development Activities at Montana State University; and illustrate how these projects partnered with the Faculty of Agriculture University of Zagreb to create projects that strengthen and diversify Croatian agriculture and Croatian agricultural education extension activities.

The presentation comprises two parts. In the first part will be discussed the adoption of the American Agricultural Marketing Resource Center (AgMRC), an on-line computer-accessible information center and the development of Croatian Agricultural Marketing Center. The talk will discuss the principles of value-added agricultural development: information accessibility, adequate business planning, value-chain development and cooperative development based on communication within value-chains. In the second part will be presented an overview of a work made to develop cooperative-business leadership programs. The purpose of this project has been to help to meet USAID/Croatia's most important strategic objective - Reintegration of War-Affected Populations by institutionalizing and increasing community capacity for sustained cooperative business leadership development by educating faculty and students at the University of Zagreb and developing an educational outreach program to be directed at cooperative business practitioners.

This was done through creation of new cooperative business and outreach programs within Faculty of Agriculture; University of Zagreb, and by providing new faculty outreach activities for faculty in cooperation with the Croatian Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The program established a new university-level academic cooperative business principles and practices curriculum, and provided training to agricultural economics faculty at the University of Zagreb that focused on: 1.) the methods and techniques most applicable to delivering course material to university students; 2.) a new outreach program aimed at improving the strategic planning skills of Croatian agricultural cooperative directors; 3.) a university cooperative business program initiative that is expected to be fully sustainable through university and local and state governments support; and 4.) a model that can easily and successfully be replicated elsewhere in Croatia and Eastern Europe where formal and extension education efforts are being conducted to augment economic efficiency and commerce in the agriculture sector. Additional work will be directed at post-secondary agriculture institutions in Croatia.

These projects are creating a new educational-exchange opportunity for American students to study agricultural issues with the Faculty of Agriculture University of Zagreb.

Key words: education, American Agricultural Marketing Resource Center, Iowa State University, Montana State University, Faculty of Agriculture Zagreb, cooperative business program, practices curriculum