



## PRESS RELEASE

### USAID-supported Food Hubs Help Local Producers Bring New Products to Market

**BELGRADE** – On December 6, 2018, USAID’s Competitive Economy Project held a networking brunch and a panel discussion to mark the completion of the first cycle of the Premium Food Design Hub (PFDH) initiative, launched to kick-start innovation in Serbia’s food processing industry. Over the past eight months, four hubs - Impact Hub, Nova Iskra, Desing Taste Center and Business Innovation Programs - worked with 20 food producers to develop new, premium products targeting consumers in domestic and international markets.

“Today’s event serves to discuss the challenges and achievements made through the PFDH initiative, and to publicly showcase for the first time the new, high-quality products that emerged through the initiative. We believe this business support model can become a long-term sustainable way to help local small and mid-sized food producers to bring new products to market,” stated Aleksandar Pavlovic, Chief of Party of USAID Competitive Economy Project.

At the panel discussion titled “Tasty Talks” held between hub representatives, industry experts, and food companies, participants discussed how local SMEs leveraged the expertise of food hubs in key business areas, such as food processing and technology, product branding and design, and marketing services, to develop new products and gain access to retail shelves.

“A common mistake food companies make when developing a new product is that they pay too little attention to market research and customer demands. Frequently, they create products based on unvalidated assumptions of what customers want. That’s why we first validated companies’ new product ideas among targeted customers, and then provided them with support in core product and development areas, such as branding, marketing, and food technology, to go from concept to retail placement,” said Marijana Simic, Project Manager, Business Innovation Programs.

“Participation in this program represented an important turning point that helped take my business to the next level. I’m very pleased with the wide-ranging advice and insights I received from the experts at the food hub. My products are now available at Maxi retail stores across the country,” said Tatjana Avramov, Founder and Owner of Real Red Raspberry.

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***Since 2001 USAID has invested more than \$774 million to stimulate economic growth, strengthen the justice system and promote good governance in Serbia.***

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