Press Release – 7th June 2012

A new union of agricultural co-operatives inaugurated in Macedonia

The new Union of Agricultural Co-operatives of Macedonia has just been created, an inauguration that introduces a reinvigorated element into the panorama of co-operative development in the Balkan region. Indeed, the Union is born out of a democratic decision of its now-members.

Cooperatives Europe, COSV and other co-operative unions and experts from Europe have served as a motor for the dynamic engine that drove the establishment of this new Union.

The new union was established in Skopje and comprises nascent agricultural co-operatives as well as long-standing agricultural co-operatives formerly convened under a defunct government co-operative union. The union, since its founding in March 2012 continues to collect new members. The new union’s objective include institutional representation of its members as well as information and service provision to its members with regard to economic growth and market access.

Macedonia boasts a huge agricultural potential – both in quantity and quality of products and production – in horticulture, dairy, and wine sectors alike. The opportunities for market growth are abundant, as are the opportunities for widened distribution, branding, the development of new products, collaborations, and investments.

Cooperatives Europe and COSV, along with 7 partners (DGRV, Euricse, Cecop, Confcooperative, Legacoop, ZZS, FNCuma), have been working on a co-operative development project in Montenegro since June 2011, with the support of the European Union. The aim is working together to reinforce a network of co-operative actors, extending out from Montenegro to reach Albania, Macedonia, and other Balkan countries. Through this network, partners and stakeholders alike wish to develop opportunities for investment, growth, and collaboration based on the local territory while bearing in mind the pre-accession context of many Balkan countries.
Notes to the editors

Cooperatives Europe – the Europe region of the International Co-operative Alliance – is the European cross-sectoral organization representing co-operative enterprises. On behalf of its 90 member co-operative organisations from 34 European countries across all business sectors it promotes the co-operative business model in Europe. Its members represent 123 million individual member co-operators owning 160,000 co-operative enterprises and providing jobs to 5.4 million individual citizens – a force for economic growth and social change.

A co-operative enterprise is a group of people acting together to meet the common needs and aspirations of its members, sharing ownership and making decisions democratically. Co-operatives have members – not shareholders – that take decisions democratically. Whether the members are employees, producers or customers, they are everyday people who have an equal say in what the business does and share in the profits.

COSV is an NGO which for the last 40 has been working on international development co-operation in Africa, South America, Middle East and the Balkans. Cosv is partner of Cooperatives Europe in the project aiming to enhance co-operative development in Montenegro. More information on www.cosv.org.

2012 International Year of Co-operatives – The United Nations has declared 2012 as the International Year of Co-operatives, encouraging all member states and relevant stakeholders to take advantage of it to establish policies, laws and regulations conducive to the formation, growth and stability of co-operatives. More information on www.2012.coop

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