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Press release Donau Soja and ADA

Donau Soja and the Austrian Development Agency support the local agricultural and food sector in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe

New partnership promotes GMO-free agriculture, creates jobs and reduces poverty

Vienna. The Austrian Development Agency (ADA) - the operational unit of Austrian Development Cooperation - and the organisation Donau Soja are continuing their long-standing strategic partnership until 2029. Over the next five years, the two organisations will invest a total of eleven million euros in the private sector in Eastern and Southeastern Europe in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova and Ukraine. The partnership aims to increase the cultivation of sustainable, traceable, European and GMO-free protein crops such as soya. At the same time, agriculture in the four countries is to be made more friendly to the environment and protect the climate.

Sustainable agriculture connects Eastern and Western Europe

In contrast to the 2017-2024 period of the first strategic partnership between the two organisations, the focus in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova and Ukraine is no longer exclusively on the cultivation, marketing and sale of soya and soya products. ADA and Donau Soja now want to extend their initiative to maize, wheat, beans and other crops. The focus is on increasing economic efficiency, preserving the environment, developing digital agriculture and fighting poverty, as well as improving market opportunities for agricultural products from the four project countries in Western Europe. *"Farmers in the project countries and food production in the EU will also benefit from the new partnership, thanks to the systemic approach of building sustainable value chains. Our strategic partnership thus makes a valuable contribution both to poverty reduction in the project countries and to climate and environmental protection"*, says Susanne Fromwald, General Secretary of Donau Soja.

ADA: Second round for a successful partnership

"Looking back on five successful years with impressive results, we are now extending our solid cooperation with Donau Soja with a second strategic partnership. By 2029, we aim to provide even more support to farmers in Southeastern and Eastern Europe and thus contribute to reducing poverty in our neighbourhood. In Ukraine, we are particularly concerned with maintaining both the infrastructure and the jobs that we have created over the past five years. Together, we want to build on our accomplishments of the past and achieve more encouraging results", says ADA Managing Director Friedrich Stift. European soya helps farmers in Austria and the EU to reduce their dependence on soya grown in South America and imported to Europe. Moreover, soybeans certified with the Donau Soja or Europe Soya label avoid more than 90 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions compared to Brazilian soybeans with a deforestation background.

Massive increase in soya cultivation areas in project countries

The first strategic partnership between ADA and Donau Soja improved GMO-free, sustainable and deforestation-free soya cultivation in the four project countries. The overall objective was to increase the area under cultivation, sustainably increase yields and develop soya and soya products for the Western European market from field to fork. The first partnership resulted in 2.3 million tonnes of sustainably produced soybeans on more than one million hectares of arable land. More than 14,000 farmers and 160 processing companies have benefited. European food chains have supported the production and processing of soya through numerous Protein Partnerships. Since 2017, the area under soya cultivation has increased by 18% in Serbia, 40% in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 34% in Ukraine. Donau Soja and ADA have invested a total of nine million euros in the programme. "Donau Soja assists farmers and producers in Ukraine in

enhancing the quality of soybeans, elevating them from basic commodity standards to meet higher criteria. By establishing a level playing field in Europe, approximately 20% of Ukrainian soybeans now adhere to EU production rules and regulations. This represents a significant milestone and serves as a tangible demonstration of the viable EU membership pathway for Ukrainian agriculture”, says Sergiy Galashevskyy, General Manager of the Ukrainian certification body Organic Standard.

Regional soya farming in Europe protects the environment and climate

Donau Soja's work has supported the expansion of soya cultivation in crop rotation and improved knowledge for better yields. This has led to reduced use of pesticides and fertilisers and promoted more environmentally and climate-friendly farming techniques. In addition to expanding sustainable agriculture in the soya sector, other objectives included promoting organic soya, strengthening the competitiveness of structurally weak regions in the four target countries, and opening up international markets in Western Europe.

Knowledge transfer, networking and local activities

Since 2017, Donau Soja and the Austrian Development Agency have been working with numerous partners to promote and expand sustainable soya farming in the EU's neighbourhood. They have worked intensively with ministries, universities, research institutes, inspection bodies, seed companies, farmers' associations and food safety agencies. Numerous training sessions, seminars and field days have been organised in all countries. In addition to the office in Vienna, Donau Soja has its own offices in Novi Sad/Serbia, Kiev/Ukraine and Chişinău/Moldova.

Embedding EU environmental legislation

The five years of the second partnership, from 2024 to 2029, will focus on climate, environmental, soil and water protection, biodiversity and poverty reduction in the project countries. In particular, the partnership will support knowledge transfer in the use of digital agriculture, access to finance and the implementation of new EU legislation, from the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) to the new reporting requirements of the Green Deal.

Further information on the strategic partnership:

<https://www.donausoja.org/projects/ada/>

Download press release, factsheet and pictures:

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