

OHR's Statement at the International Agency's Joint Press Conference in Banja Luka and Mostar

Bulldozer boosts agriculture exports

Yesterday's announcement of an agreement that will allow more BiH companies to export food products to Croatia is an important step forward in unleashing the significant economic potential that exists in the BiH farming sector. This issue, as you will remember, was one of the reforms that the Bulldozer Commission has been pushing.

Until now the farming sector – which has the capacity to create thousands of new jobs – has been held back by the failure of the relevant authorities to set in place appropriate certification systems, on which all exports depend.

BiH farmers have been producing high quality products – but the BiH authorities haven't been maintaining high quality inspections. Producing sausages and ham and potatoes of the finest quality is only half the battle – you have to be able to *show* that they are of the finest quality. Now that the State Veterinary Office is up and running it is beginning to deliver benefits to BiH farmers, BiH consumers and the BiH economy.

The agreement, which comes into force today, will allow 12 BiH companies, producing meat and dairy products, to start exporting to Croatia. Until now just seven BiH firms were licensed to do this. The 12 companies are spread throughout BiH.

The Croatian veterinary authorities have indicated that they are considering liberalizing imports of horses and lamb products from BiH, and the Veterinary Offices from the two countries will work together to produce a plan for efficient veterinary checks at the border.

Recommendations by the Agricultural Bulldozer Committee have promoted the establishment of a rational BiH inspection of agricultural products, and this in turn has helped create the trading environment for yesterday's agreement. As with many other aspects of regulatory reform, the details of this legislative change may seem somewhat dull – yet the benefits delivered by these reforms, as we have seen with the export boost given today to the BiH farming sector, will mean new jobs and rising prosperity for BiH citizens.