***PRESS RELEASE***

*“Agribusiness beyond Borders” conference held*

**Banca Intesa, Embassy of the Republic of Italy and Italian Trade Agency (ITA) opened the program at the International Agricultural Fair in Novi Sad**

**Novi Sad, 20. May 2023** - At the opening of the 90th International Agricultural Fair in Novi Sad, Banca Intesa, a member of Intesa Sanpaolo Group, the Embassy of the Republic of Italy, and the Italian Trade Agency (ITA) held a conference titled "Agribusiness beyond Borders" on the topic of "Food quality and food safety: Opportunities for cooperation between Italy and Serbia", where they presented the importance of the food sector for economic development, as well as its potential for strengthening bilateral economic relations in the field of agriculture.

**Francesco Lollobrigida**, Minister for Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry of the Republic of Italy, **Jelena Tanasković**, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Serbia, and **Marco Elio Rottigni,** Head of International Subsidiary Banks Divison of Intesa Sanpaolo group (ISBD), spoke about the importance of exchanging international experience and expertise, as well as the support of financial institutions for the improvement of business cooperation between Italy and Serbia while **Boris Nadlukač**, a member of the Executive Board of the Novi Sad Fair, served as the moderator.

“The collaboration between the agricultural and food supply chains of Italy and Serbia is aimed at developing joint projects for our companies. This collaboration will involve the sectors of mechanization, automation and digitization of the production processes in the agricultural industry. We hope that Serbia's accession to the European Union could be completed soon in order to work together for the growth of our two economies, especially in the agri-food sector” said **Francesco Lollobrigida, Minister for Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry of the Republic of Italy.**

"Up until now, we have done a lot to develop relations between Italy and Serbia, especially in the agricultural segment, and we will continue to direct support for production and the creation of added value in agriculture in the future so that we can offer products, not only as raw materials, but also as finished products, to Italy, our 3rd most important partner in foreign trade exchange, as well as the world market. Food quality and safety remain a special focus, and in addition to the 49 certificates we have signed in the veterinary department, as well as 9 certified facilities for milk export, we expect to sign another important certificate in the coming period. Among other things, the Government of the Republic of Serbia, through support to farmers, will direct significant funds from the budget, which has been set aside for these purposes in a record amount of 900 million euros,'' said **Jelena Tanasković, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Serbia.**

“The Intesa Sanpaolo Group provides Serbian and Italian institutions and companies with resources that help strengthen cooperation between the two countries, with a special focus on agri-business also with a view of the development of a Euro-Mediterranean agricultural supply chain. In Serbia, through Banca Intesa Beograd, the Group is strongly committed to financing agricultural and agri-food production, and provides credit at favorable conditions for business projects that meet sustainability and circular economy criteria. We have successfully extended the Supply Chain Development Programme, by which SMEs benefit from the credit access conditions of the larger companies at the head of the supply chains,” said **Marco Elio Rottigni, Chief of the International Subsidiary Banks Division at Intesa Sanpaolo**.

The opportunities to boost business cooperation, in terms of improving the quality and safety of food, between the two countries, were presented by **Darko Popović**, President of the Executive Board of Banca Intesa, **Matteo Zoppas**, president of Italian Trade Agency (ITA), **Slobodan Cvetković**, CEO – Chairman of the Executive Board of Novi Sad Fair, **Luigi Scordamaglia**, CEO of Filiera Italia, **Veljko Jovanović**, Head of the Agriculture Department at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia (CCI), **Alessandro Malavolti**, President of FederUnacoma, **Vladimir Crnojević**, director of the BioSense Institute, and **Ettore Fontana**, General Manager of AgriSerbia, during a discussion moderated by RTS editor and reporter **Zoran Stanojević**.

"The exchange of experience in the agricultural sector is of great importance for the relations between our two countries. The Italian Trade Agency ITA has a special focus on agritech as an important topic for improving agricultural production. We covered it thoroughly at the Business and Scientific Forum Serbia - Italy, organized by ITA and the Serbian Chamber of Commerce (PKS), in cooperation with The Italian Embassy in Belgrade. In the coming period, two more important events await us at which we will share experiences and support the development of agriculture and technologies in agriculture - the Start Up and Innovation Festival in October and our presente At The Wine and Vision Fair, where we will have two collective exhibitions on food and organic topics from November 16 to 19,'' said **Matteo Zopas, president of the Italian Trade Agency (ITA)**.

“It is my great pleasure that we continue the natural partnership that we have been nourished for years with the Embassy of the Republic of Italy and the Italian Trade Agency, by supporting the development of agriculture. Strength, stability, and strategic focus on the Serbian market of our parent group Intesa Sanpaolo, encourage us to continuously keep up with the trends, introduce innovations and advanced practices on the local market. Thanks to that, Banca Intesa is still one of the leading creditors in agriculture, and posted a 36% y-o-y increase in new investments in 2022, both in the segment of registered agricultural holdings and small businesses, and in the major companies and SME sector. These results confirm the contribution that we strive to provide, not just to creating sustainable agricultural production and strong economic development, but also to overall enhancement of relations between our two countries,” said Darko Popović, President of the Executive Board of Banca Intesa.

Close to 200 representatives of government, financial, and scientific institutions, business and trade organizations, as well as local and Italian companies that operate in the sector of agriculture, gathered at the conference.

During the Fair, from May 20 to 26, as a link between experts and businesspeople on the one side, and individual agricultural producers and companies on the other, Banca Intesa will continue to connect the economies of the two countries through a comprehensive programme and presentation of trends, products and services that can enable visitors to learn about and use business opportunities not just on the local but also the international market.

Visitors will be able to hear about the implementation of new technologies, AI, and ESG principles in agriculture, and at two innovatively designed booths with digital exhibitions, the bank’s expert advisors will present the comprehensive Intesa Farmer offer, specially created to cater to their financing needs, with the goal of leveraging the full potential of agricultural production. In addition to investment loans and working capital loans, the bank will present the subsidized lending programme it is conducting in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, as well as special borrowing terms and additional benefits, such as lower insurance premium and education on the topic of digitalization in agriculture, provided to facilitate access to sources of financing to women-owned registered agricultural holdings and young farmers.

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***Banca Intesa ad Belgrade,*** *member of the  group, is a leading bank on the domestic market, reliable partner for 1.4 million clients, natural and legal persons. With the total assets of 7 billion euros, total client deposits of 5.2 billion euros and capital in the amount of 833.3 million euros, Banca Intesa leads the list of most successful banks in Serbia. Owing to a unique mix of digitalization of business processes and developed network of 146 branches all over Serbia, as well as constant focus on the needs of citizens and the economy, innovative products and top-quality service, the bank accomplished stable results in all areas of business.*

***Intesa Sanpaolo*** *is a leading banking group in Italy servicing the needs of households, companies and real economy, with significant international presence. Unique business model of Intesa Sanpaolo Group makes it a European leader in the area of wealth management, asset protection and advisory services, with the focus on digital sphere and financing technology. As efficient and resistant bank, its advantages include products in the area of asset management and insurance, completely owned by the group. Strong dedication to ESG topics of the group includes provision of 115 billion euros in impact loans by 2025 for communities and for green transition, and 500 million euros as support to most vulnerable social groups, positioning Intesa Sanpaolo as a global leader related to social impact. Intesa Sanpaolo is dedicated to reaching zero emissions by 2030 related to own emissions, and by 2050 related to own loan and investment portfolio. As a committed sponsor of Italian culture, Intesa Sanpaolo created its own network of museums, called Gallerie d’Italia, preserving the artistic heritage of the bank, used as a location for prestigious cultural projects.*

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