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## **The Slovak Republic - International Investment Bank Technical Assistance Fund pilot project in Vietnam successfully accomplished**

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The Slovak Republic - International Investment Bank Technical Assistance Fund (SR-IIB TAF) has successfully finalized its first project in Vietnam.

Supporting the innovative technology transfer from Slovakia to Vietnam, and enhancing sustainability and economic strength of Vietnam's agricultural sector, the project fully meets the TAF mission and its goals.

The eight-month project "Provision of technical assistance to Pewas s.r.o. in regard to the verification of the Aquaholder® products and their suitability for agricultural production in Vietnam" was successfully completed. The project was focused on the verification of possibility how to improve agricultural output in dry areas of Vietnam through the innovative use of superabsorbents in agriculture.

The project was executed in partnership with PEDAL Consulting, which IIB selected as the provider of the technical assistance services through a public tender. Portfolio of partners consisted of Pewas s.r.o. as a client and Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology, Institute of Geography as a local partner.

The essence of the project was to test the positive effect of Aquaholder® products based on the unique water-retention properties of superabsorbents on the most grown crops under the real conditions of Vietnamese farming. Two products: Aquaholder® Agro (crystal form of superabsorbent for direct application into the soil where it acts as a water retention agent) and Aquaholder Seed® (highly innovative seed coating agent for growth support of plants in their initial phase by the effective binding of water around the seeds) were tested on 3 crops: corn, soya and peanuts.

Aquaholder® products showed its potential for Vietnamese agriculture by increasing germination rate in dry conditions (by more than 20% in case of soya) and speed of germination (approximately 95 percent more germinated seeds in very early stages of growth for corn). Achieved results create a real expectation of better yield as a major goal of farmers. Field tests also showed positive effects of Aquaholder® on qualitative parameters as a root system and biomass; prerequisites potentially leading to healthier plants and again to higher yield.

In addition, the consultant of the project PEDAL Consulting arranged in cooperation with the client and the local partner information seminar for local agricultural experts providing detailed project information and promoting positive effect of superabsorbent based products

for Vietnamese agriculture.

Commenting on the project, Nikolay Kosov, Chairperson of the IIB Management Board, said: "Agriculture plays one of the key roles in the economy of Vietnam, so it was important for the Bank to support Pewas s.r.o. and Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology, Institute of Geography in their testing of the Aquaholder® products in Vietnam. By this project IIB confirms its commitment to support priority sectors of economy in its member states." Nikolay Kosov also expressed his gratitude to the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic and PEDAL Consulting experts for an excellent job.

Nguyen Thanh HOAN (Ph.D), Chief of Administrative Dept., Head of Environmental Information Studies and Analysis Dept. Institute of Geography summarized the project as follows "Agriculture is a crucial area of human activity in every country. We are witnessing very serious climate change issues-that negatively affect agricultural efficiency. Even though Vietnam is considered as a country with sufficient moisture, drought waves do occur in some regions of Vietnam too. We are pleased that we have been involved in the testing activities of the products with potential to mitigate negative impacts of this new phenomenon. Achieved results from pilot tests are very encouraging and provide a premise for further testing and Aquaholder® use in real conditions of Vietnamese agriculture.

"Pewas has been performing validation tests of Aquaholder® products in more than dozen countries in the past 2 years. Drought is becoming the nightmare of farmers all over the world and solutions that mitigate its impact are highly sought-after. Vietnam is another destination where the potential for Aquaholder® products has been confirmed. I would like to emphasize the significant role of the Technical Assistance in helping SME's like Pewas in finding the right international partners and test the waters on a small scale. We appreciate the excellent collaboration of the involved professionals", said Jan Horvath, Pewas s.r.o. CEO.

Robert Miskuf, CEO of the PEDAL Consulting expressed his thanks to IIB and the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic for sponsoring of the project "The main mission of our company is to assist small and medium enterprises entering new markets across the borders, mainly through its flagship service [TENDERIO](#). It was new and useful experience in this part of the world for us. We are honored that IIB and the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic have chosen us to coordinate this project. We are glad our activities helped establish relationships among the right entities, helped to confirm potential of the new product for Vietnamese agriculture and created the solid base for a potentially fruitful business cooperation."

The Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic also welcomes the successful completion of this ambitious project.

### **Slovak Republic - IIB Technical Assistance Fund**

Slovak Republic - IIB Technical Assistance Fund was established in 2016, the SR-IIB TAF provides grant-type assistance for technical assistance projects in the IIB member states classified by the OECD as countries eligible for Official Development Assistance (Cuba, Mongolia and Vietnam).

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