



Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy
Republic of Macedonia



Agricultural Policy Forum 2012

Policy perspectives on environmentally sustainable agriculture and rural development in South Eastern Europe

16th – 19th October 2012, Ohrid, Macedonia

The 2012 Ohrid Agenda

The 12th Agricultural Policy Forum (APF) held in Ohrid, Macedonia in the period 16th – 19th October 2012, provided an opportunity to review the outstanding accomplishments achieved by the APF process over the past period, while considering the challenges and opportunities for the development of agriculture and rural areas in South Eastern Europe (SEE) over the next decade up to 2020.

The APF 2012 addressed the implementation of future EU common agricultural and rural development policy and the reflection towards the countries of SEE, focusing on environmentally sustainable agriculture and rural development, climate-related challenges and territorial and regional cooperation.

The Forum promoted and stimulated debate and discussion on policy issues among policy makers, governmental and non-governmental organizations from the agriculture and rural development, water and forestry sectors in SEE, relevant international policy and development institutions, national and international experts and academics in order to provide technical background for the policy making process and confront the current challenges and perspectives on environmentally sustainable agriculture and rural development.

In this respect, sharing national and international experiences was stressed as a precondition for the continuous improvement of policy settings towards the EU integration process.



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Information was provided about the new orientation of EU Common Agricultural and Rural Development policy and the Forum strongly encourages the governments to use the opportunity of the EU policy reform process to review their national agricultural and rural development policies and develop national strategies which include the perspective of European integration over the 2014-20 planning period.

In this context the countries of SEE invite the European Commission to continue and intensify the dialogues with the region in the period leading up to the adoption of the 2014-20 CAP reforms and pre-accession policies to facilitate the preparations in the SEE countries of their national strategies for EU integration.

The Forum recalled the need for major reforms and restructuring of the agri-food sector and developing rural areas to enhance competitiveness and sustainable use of natural resources facing new challenges like climate change or food security.

The Forum directed the discussions especially towards the importance of the problem regarding climate change and rising prices of agricultural products, in particular the effects of drought in SEE. This issue becomes a matter of concern all across the globe, as well as the SEE region in respect of the consumer price index for food. Taking into consideration that our countries are particularly dependent on agriculture and agricultural production, the SEE countries should strongly consider the impacts and possible solutions which ought to be taken in the near future for the purpose of economic stability and growth.

In this regard, the Forum covered three policy topics of relevance to the current and future SEE agricultural and rural development policies.

1. Strengthening of joint water resource and forest management cooperation in South Eastern Europe;



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2. Area Based Development in the cross-border rural areas of the Western Balkans within the framework of territorial and regional cooperation;
3. Gap analysis between EC and SEE countries with special attention to agriculture and rural development policy.

The following specific findings and recommendations are output of the intensive plenary and working group discussions during the Forum.

Focus topic 1. Joint Water and Forest Management

Cooperation between the responsible sectors at national and regional levels is insufficient for tackling the challenges of an integrated water and forest management. Based on the feasibility study results, prepared in the period 2010-2012, a proposition has been made on establishment of a regional platform as an adequate solution for strengthening the cooperation between the water and the forest sectors in SEE.

As a result, a continuous communication platform with technical expert working group/monitoring group at local and regional level to stimulate cooperation between institutions responsible for national monitoring systems should be formed. Additionally, support should be given to the harmonization with and implementation of relevant EU legislation, including the design, financing and implementation of concrete cross-border projects and initiatives on best management practices on river basins.

As concrete road-map, the following action priorities were defined by the Forum:

- Assessment and improvement of Ecosystem Services in South Eastern Europe Region
- Harmonization of risk assessment methodologies concerning erosion and torrents
- Installation of a pro-active flood management system and



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- Assessment and promotion of the social, economic and ecological benefits from protective forests

For these action priorities, the development and improvement of regional project schemes on joint water resource and forest management in SEE should be provided to the SWG for communication with the relevant Ministries, stakeholders and Donor community.

Focus topic 2. Area Based Development Approach

The Forum agreed that the ABD approach has been confirmed to be relevant for rural cross-border areas in the South Eastern European countries. It reviewed the progress on activities related to the implementation of the Area Based Development (ABD) approach in the selected areas (Drina-Tara, Drina-Sava, Shara Mountain and Prespa Lake). It confirms that substantial progress has been made in establishing the local stakeholder structures and developing the strategic support framework for the respective areas.

The continuous support from the EC is acknowledged as essential for the lasting effort to establish the capacity for implementation and application of ABD approach within the framework of the regional and territorial cooperation policy in the period 2014-20.

- The stakeholders from the public sector, private sector and civil society should be owners of their development strategy and benefit from a supportive environment (political support, conducive legal framework).
- Hence, periodical re-discussion between stakeholders of all components of the strategy is encouraged (baseline development assessment, identified priorities, overall vision, action plans, etc).
- The facilitation of the stakeholder groups on behalf of the SWG will allow vertical circulation of information bottom-up and top-down on policies and development practices, at the advantage of local communities and national governments.



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- Concrete implementation of actions and measures considered as priorities by the established stakeholder groups is immediately required in order to maintain the momentum.

The Forum therefore encourages the governments to intensify their political and financial support to the process to sustain the efforts made by the local stakeholders in the cross-border areas.

Focus topic 3. CAP-Gap analysis

The need to address modernization and harmonization of agriculture and rural development policy with the current and future EU CAP policy has been stressed by the Forum as a high priority.

The capacity of the Ministries of Agriculture and other related institutions as key policy makers has to be strengthened. The importance of management of human resources as well as the coordination and communication within Government institutions has been strongly emphasized. The organizational structures should reflect the fact that all segments are affected by the EU harmonization.

The Forum agrees that long term strategies and programming for policy reforms and harmonization need to be coordinated with the development of appropriate structures for implementing support policies.

In this regard the Forum recommends:

- A stable funding and long term programming system, precise definition of needs and problems, better preparation of beneficiaries for fund absorption, neutral criteria regarding farm types, and improvement of the rural credit system.



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- Recognition of the role and introduction of institutional reforms of research, education and agricultural extension services (Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems - AKIS).
- Increase of awareness and intensification of application of agro-environmental policy and introduction of the cross-compliance concept.

The Forum strongly recommends to avoid introduction of new support measures which are not in line with WTO and EU policies and to phase out distorting and non-harmonized policies. Instead the focus should be on development, growth and strengthening of agriculture and rural areas.

As a general conclusion, participants on the Agricultural Policy Forum 2012 identified and agreed on the steps to be undertaken in the forthcoming period:

- On November, 16th in Pristina, the Ohrid Agenda 2012 will be presented and discussed at the 6th Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from South-Eastern Europe.
- Ohrid Agenda 2012 will be conveyed to the EU institutions, UN agencies and other international institutions.
- The 13th Agricultural Policy Forum will be held in autumn 2013 in Kosovo* holding the SWG Presidency for 2013.

The Agricultural Policy Forum 2012 in Ohrid was held under the joint auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of the Republic of Macedonia and the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South-Eastern Europe.

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Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), commissioned by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Central European Initiative (CEI).

Kosovo "This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence."*



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