



Republic of Croatia

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development



Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group

### ***Agricultural Policy Forum 2011***

Policy Challenges in Agriculture and Rural Development in SEE – Global, European and Regional Dimensions

12<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> October 2011, Split, Croatia

#### **BACKGROUND:**

South - Eastern European (SEE) countries are undergoing necessary reforms of agriculture and rural development sector required by the EU accession process. The candidate and potential candidate countries from the SEE have been required to harmonize their legislation and national systems with the EU *acquis communautaire*, most importantly to implement and reform the institutions and economic policies and develop market oriented economies. The main pre-condition for full EU-membership is fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria. The second important pre-condition is extensive regional co-operation on all possible levels such as constant political and policy dialogue, development of regional trade, free movement of people and sharing common ideas for future development.

In terms of agriculture and rural areas in South Eastern Europe, agricultural resources and rural development play significant role in the overall development of national economies. Due to the process of EU integration and harmonization of agriculture and rural development sector, in recent years the countries of SEE have been confronted with a dual challenge: providing the main source of income for the majority of rural population and getting closer to the EU standards. Agriculture and rural development strategies, legislation and programming documents have been developed in most of the countries in the region, while in several countries it is still an on-going process. The implementation of respective policy measures and instruments has started or is foreseen to start.

To foster these processes, the Agricultural Policy Forum has been institutionalized as a platform for dialogue and mutual learning.

The first Agricultural Policy Forum was organized in November 2001. Subsequently the Agricultural Policy Forum has been annually held in the countries of South Eastern Europe (Romania, Albania, Macedonia, Serbia, Bulgaria and Montenegro). Together with three forums held in Leipzig and Dresden, Germany. The main theme of all agricultural policy forums was the agricultural and rural development of SEE countries in the process of EU integration. The main achievement based on the establishment of the APF as a platform for dialogue and regional cooperation was the formation of the regional initiative, *the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE*.

Based on the Dresden Agenda 2010 (the outcome of the Agricultural Policy Forum 2010), Republic of Croatia holding the Presidency of the SWG for 2010/ 2011 will be hosting the Eleventh Agricultural Policy Forum – APF 2011.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

The Agricultural Policy Forum 2011 once more will serve as a platform for international dialogue on policy settings and perspectives of common interest to agricultural policy makers and stakeholders.



The goal of the APF 2011 is to support the process of the implementation of EU-like agricultural and rural development policies in the countries of SEE specifically focusing on the integration and harmonization of the agricultural and rural sector within the EU. The purpose of the Forum is also to foster the cooperation on agricultural development issues among the SEE countries and support the research on agriculture and rural development issues towards improving the information base for policy decision-making.

The Forum will promote and stimulate debate and discussion on agricultural policy issues among policy makers, governmental and non-governmental organizations from the agri-food sector as well as rural development 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 obtain new ideas for policy advice activities.

As an outcome, the Forum will formulate an Agenda providing guidelines for suitable agricultural and rural development policies in SEE.

### **ORGANIZERS:**

The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE countries and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development of Republic of Croatia

### **TOPICS:**

The Forum will cover main policy topics of relevance to EU integration of the agriculture and rural development sector in the SEE countries. The topics will form a basis for discussion of how policy changes can lead further towards the development of the agriculture and rural sector in the region of SEE.

The topics for discussion are the following:

- Future IPARD post – 2013;
- Integrating Food and Nutrition Priorities in Programming in SEE countries;
- Area Based Development (ABD) approach & the development of cross-border areas: opportunities & challenges in SEE.

### **WORKING GROUPS:**

The Forum participants will be divided into three (3) working groups derived from the topics presented. The Working Groups will focus on facilitating more collaborative and informed approach to communicating the policy challenges in the agriculture and rural development sector. The results from the Working Groups will contribute to the formulation of the APF Agenda providing guidelines for suitable agricultural and rural development policies in SEE.

### **DESCRIPTION OF TOPICS**

#### ***Future of IPARD***

Preparations for the implementation of EU policies, particularly the Common Agricultural Policy, are an extremely demanding process for each candidate country for EU membership. Aware of this fact, the European Union provides an instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance which provides the candidate country with an opportunity to build its capacity both within administration and in the agriculture sector at large.



Discussions on the form of the instrument for pre-accession assistance (IPA) started in late 2010. By the time APF 2011 takes place, broad framework of pre-accession assistance post-2013 will probably be known. It will be the right time to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of IPARD during the current financial framework and engage in discussion on how to further improve it post-2013.

From the future IPARD, candidate countries (and potential candidates) expect precise guidelines for the programming of each measure (due to certain perceived complexity in some measure, for example, 501, LEADER), to simplify as much as possible the accreditation process of the Agency for payments and reduce the scope of accreditation of the Managing Authority.

### ***Integrating Food and Nutrition Security into country programming and links to agriculture policies in SEE countries***

The agriculture and rural development policies of both developing and developed countries are facing increased challenges based on the fact that a world population of 9 billion would need to be fed by 2050. Strong increase is expected particularly for South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa and it will result in the need to increase agriculture production by 70 percent by that time. Therefore, enormous investment needs for agriculture are required globally and will influence agriculture and rural development strongly in developing countries as well as developed countries. The increase of food prices and particularly the volatility of food prices in this context demonstrate such concerns. The main objective of this presentation is to outline this issue briefly and also indicate the linkages in this context to the CAP as well as a revised CAP. The group work with representatives from the Ministries of Agriculture and UN Country Team Members should then focus on how to integrate this issue in country framework planning for the UN activities as well as Country Programming Frameworks and its link to the national policies.

### ***ABD approach & the development of cross-border areas: opportunities & challenges in SEE***

Rural areas in South Eastern Europe have generally known a low level of economic development over the past decades, particularly those marginalised due to peripheral location at the edge of newly established nations. However, cross border areas in the region share a common cultural heritage and language and most of them have true potential for rural development. Problems faced by these regions have not been up to this date addressed at regional level and across borders in an integrated and participatory way. The European Commission in close cooperation with the SWG tested the established Area Based Development (ABD) approach to the case of the Drina – Tara area, drew lessons from this particular case and discussed opportunities and challenges for possible implementation in cross border areas of the region.

