



Agricultural Policy Forum 2013

New Prospects for Agriculture and Rural Development in South Eastern Europe towards Sustainable Future

15th – 18th October 2013

Pristina, Kosovo*

2013 Pristina Agenda

The 13th Agricultural Policy Forum (APF) held in Pristina, Kosovo* on 15 – 18 October 2013, provided an opportunity to review the 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 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.

This 2013 Pristina Agenda resumes the main outputs from these discussions in the different plenary and working group sessions.

Presentation on the **European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform** outlined the process and focused on the main changes in the policy. Regarding the first pillar of the CAP, covering direct aid to farmers and market measures, the new architecture of direct payments will be made up of a Basic Payment Scheme complemented by a "Green Payment" and a top-up for the young farmers. CAP leaves the option of maintaining some limited payments coupled with production and providing special assistance for areas under natural constraints in order to maintain agricultural activity in vulnerable regions.

As for rural development (Pillar II), a menu of 17 measures and the cross-cutting LEADER approach will be available in the coming period. Overall, a large share of the CAP budget will have to be devoted to the agri-environment-climate measures (30% in each pillar) to make the CAP greener.

Focusing on the **Agriculture and rural development assistance under IPA 2014-**

2020 (IPARD), the Forum was informed about the main forthcoming changes compared to the current IPA, including the legal architecture of IPA II and the main principles of IPARD. Continuity will be ensured during the new period by keeping the existing menu of measures (while two new ones are being added - forestry and advisory services) and maintaining very similar management and control structures. To assure the timely start of IPARD implementation, countries are urged to concentrate on developing agriculture and rural development strategies, sector analyses and start preparing the programmes. Management and control structures should not wait for finalisation and conclusion of the Framework and Sector Agreements. The countries should also be active in ensuring that agriculture and rural development are properly addressed in the IPA country strategy papers and national development strategies and programmes.

While preparing for IPA II and adapting to the new CAP 2014-2020, SWG members should intensify their efforts in **streamlining agricultural and rural development policies** with the requirements of the *aquis*. The establishment of national and regional platforms for cooperation between the academic institutions and the Ministries competent for agriculture, forestry, water and rural development serves to increase the capacity for proper policy analysis. The work so far has identified a number of issues to be addressed: targets- and results-based programming, rules and responsibilities for institutions in implementation of rural development policies, providing sufficient means for a proper policy formulation and implementation. Continuity should be ensured by retention of a critical mass of senior and key civil servants, harmonizing agriculture support measures to CAP requirements and giving more attention to structural and rural development support measures.

Given the strategic priorities regarding the “Greening” of EU Policies and Programmes, the Forum directed its discussions towards the **Green Economy in the context of sustainable development** as the main outcome from the Rio + 20 process. Ensuring ecosystem resilience, improving resource efficiency and enhancing social equity as well as fair burden-sharing, countries will have to develop new approaches to eradicate poverty through a sustained economic growth, creating new opportunities and improving human welfare.

The Forum recognized the need to improve transparency of market information on prices and foster the exchange of goods and services. Therefore, farmers should be supported through training and education in utilizing innovative information technologies.

The Forum debated in detail on the following three policy topics relevant to the SEE countries:

Focus topic 1. Area Based Development in the cross-border rural areas of the Western Balkans within the framework of territorial and regional cooperation

One of the critical problems of the cross-border areas of the Western Balkan countries is that with emergence of the borders, some of the previously strong economic centers have become administratively divided and marginalized becoming a periphery of the newly founded states. This is leading to decline in remote border rural areas, dominated by poverty and lack of sufficient economic activities and subsequently resulting in outmigration.

During the last 3-4 years activities have been intensified to address these common problems by initiating planning for implementation of rural economic development actions using the Area Based Development approach (ABD) with the objective of providing incentives for sustainable economic development in cross-border areas in order to try to turn the wave.

In particular, the Forum concluded:

- Although the mandate of the SWG does not cover all sectors of importance to solve common problems in the selected cross-border areas, the SWG should continue facilitating actions to resolve such issues. This relates, in particular, to addressing environmental and physical infrastructure.
In this regard, the Forum recommends that the SWG member institutions through Ministers of Agriculture ensure close cooperation with the respective line Ministries to facilitate economic growth and quality of life as well as the attractiveness of the areas.
The Forum recommends to the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) to address the issue of agriculture, rural development and use of natural resources within the SEE Strategy 2020. The Forum also calls to the attention of the RCC, that SWG as a well established regional organization and a network of Ministries of Agriculture from South Eastern Europe needs to be considered in the implementation of the SEE Strategy 2020 in the fields of agriculture, rural development and natural resources management, including agricultural land use, water, forestry and agro-environment.
- The Forum welcomes the very active support from the European Commission (EC) in the preparation for implementation of an ABD programme and urges the EC to enhance the dialogue with the SWG and member governments on the legal requirements for strategic planning, programming and implementation in the Regional and Territorial Cooperation policy area.
In this regard, the Forum recommends to the SWG Member Institutions to coordinate with the NIPAC offices in order to ensure that the respective country

strategies reflect the possibilities to foster rural economic development in the cross-border regions concerned through the ABD.

- The Forum welcomes the approach of implementing integrated projects involving all relevant economic partners in the process and recommends taking account of the real situation at micro regional level to ensure concrete results.
- It was noted that the CBC and ABD programming activities are on-going but in parallel fora. Therefore the Forum recommends ensuring close coordination between the two programming activities to achieve the highest degree of synergies. The Forum also recommends that the SWG intensifies coordination with other donors to address all issues and problems identified in the ABD cross-border regions.
- Permanent and active involvement of all key stakeholders, local government, civil society and private business is essential for developing and implementing integrated cooperation actions based on the ABD approach. This includes commitments to enter into three partite partnerships.
- The Forum recommends involvement of business support organizations and associations active in the cross-border region to take active role in the work of the Stakeholder Groups.

Focus topic 2. The Balkan Rural Development Network (BRDN) in South Eastern Europe and its way ahead

Declaration on Networking among the SWG, National Rural Development Networks (NRDN) and initiatives for National Rural Development Networks of the South Eastern European countries has been signed on March 4th, 2011 in Skopje. The Declaration outlines the framework and provides directions for future cooperation in the area of rural development between the signatories' organizations. In May 2013 the Balkan Rural Development Network has been established on behalf of NRDNs from Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro.

The Forum discussed the importance and the role of the rural development networks in the overall concept of rural development and concluded:

- The detailed Operational Plan for 2014 has been developed in order to pursue the way ahead about the BRDN.
- The need for a comprehensive Action Plan for the period 2015-2017 as well as BRDN programming documents has been identified and in the upcoming period they will be developed and used to accelerate the activities of the BRDN.

- Inclusiveness and openness to all National Rural Networks from the SEE countries has been acknowledged as a core principle of BRDN.
- The Forum sees the need for intensification of the process for close cooperation and dialogue among the civil society sector and the Government institutions regarding rural development issues.

Focus topic 3. Rural development by sustainable water resource and forest management in South Eastern Europe

The Regional Expert Advisory Working Group (REAWG) on water and forest management established in 2010 under the SWG umbrella has been focusing its work on rural development by sustainable management of forests and water. Furthermore, issues related to forests and water have been included as main contributors to rural welfare considering the ecological and socio-economic balance of the rural areas, particularly the positive impact of social collaboration at local areas which contribute to the rural income by means of water and forest management.

The Forum discussed the future steps to be taken for the regional coordination of joint water resource and forest management in the region of South Eastern Europe and concluded the following:

- The Forum addressed the need for increased horizontal cooperation on national and regional level in the field of water and forest management for sustainable rural development in the region of South Eastern Europe.
- Promotion of Green Economy as a model for sustainable development based on three pillars for sustainability (socio, economic and environmental) with the benefits from forests, water and agriculture will create visible impacts (eradication of poverty and out migration, employment, increase of income and employment opportunities).
- In the framework of Rural Development programmes, the Forum expressed the need of including additional forest and water related measures, addressing interdependencies among agricultural and forest and water activities in RD policies and programmes.
- Support to enhancing institutional capacities on national level dedicated to environment, rural development, forests and water will improve the efficiency of governance systems and provide effective policy administration.
- Furthermore, policy and instruments should be developed for prevention of

natural hazards related to management of natural resources.

- Mainstreaming of ecosystem services in national policies. Develop policies and programmes for use of renewable energy in rural areas.
- The Forum recommended that regional cooperation in this area should be integrated under the IPA regional and territorial cooperation policy area.

Participants of the Forum agreed on the following steps.

- The Agenda will be presented and discussed at the 7th Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from South-Eastern Europe on November, 16th in Kopaonik, Serbia.
- The Agenda will be conveyed to the EU institutions, UN agencies and other international institutions.
- The 14th Agricultural Policy Forum will take place in autumn 2014 in the Republic of Serbia holding the SWG Presidency for 2014.

The Agricultural Policy Forum 2013 in Pristina was held under the joint auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development of Kosovo* and the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South-Eastern Europe.

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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.*