



Republic of North Macedonia
Ministry of agriculture,
forestry and water economy



Navigating EU Integration and impact of
Climate Change on Agriculture:

ENSURING THE FUTURE OF OUR FARMERS AND FOOD IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE



Welcome to the

AGRICULTURAL POLICY FORUM 2025!

A high-level regional gathering fostering dialogue and cooperation on sustainable agricultural and rural development policies in South East Europe, **themed “Navigating EU Integration and impact of Climate Change on Agriculture: Ensuring the future of our farmers and food in South East Europe”**. APF 2025 is being organized by the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of the Republic of North Macedonia.

In the context of ongoing EU integration and the rising impacts of climate change, agricultural policy in the Western Balkans is at a critical crossroads. The transformation of agricultural systems is essential - not only to meet EU accession requirements, but also to ensure long-term sustainability and resilience. The Forum will explore how aligning national policies with EU standards can drive climate-smart agriculture, support rural development, and encourage innovation. Discussions will examine both the challenges and the opportunities that arise in this dual transition, highlighting the need for adaptive strategies, investment in green technologies, and inclusive policymaking that empowers farmers and rural communities to thrive in a changing environment.

The APF aims to strengthen collaboration by fostering the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and innovative practices among policymakers, researchers, academics, and other key stakeholders. This joint effort addresses the pressing climate-related challenges facing agriculture and rural development in Southeast Europe (SEE), with the overarching goal of building more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable food systems in the region. Additionally, through the development of the „APF Ohrid Agenda 2025“ policy brief, the Forum seeks to lay the groundwork for discussions at the forthcoming meeting of SEE Agriculture Ministers, scheduled for late September 2025.

TOPICS:

- Climate Change Adaptation in agriculture in the WBs
- The future of animal production in the region and modalities of response toward the climate change
- Unlocking the Potential of Agri-Photovoltaics for Climate-Resilient Agriculture
- Concept for Introduction of Short Food Supply Chains in the Western Balkans
- The EU enlargement process and the Common Agricultural Policy: recent and expected developments
- Priorities in EU accession processes from the Agricultural point of view and related adjustments of the current Agricultural Policies
- Implementation of Green Agenda for the Western Balkans: update of ongoing processes and challenges for the future
- Towards a new Agricultural Policy Dialogue South East Europe

PROGRAM

Monday, 02 June 2025

- 19:00 On-site registration begins at Hotel “Bellevue”
20:00 Welcoming reception at Hotel “Bellevue”

Tuesday, 03 June 2025

- 08:30 - 09:00 On-site registration concludes at Hotel “Metropol”
09:00 - 09:10 **Welcome address - Mr. Borce Serafimovski**, *State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of the Republic of North Macedonia*
09:10 - 09:20 **Welcome address and introduction to the APF 2025 objectives and the program - Mr. Boban Ilic**, *Secretary General, Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in SEE (SWG)*
09:20 - 09:40 **Climate Change Adaptation in agriculture in the WBs - Ms. Aleksandra Martinovska Stojcheska**, *PhD, Professor, Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food - Skopje, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje*
09:40 - 10:00 **The future of animal production in the region and modalities of response toward the climate change - Mr. Sreten Andonov**, *PhD, Professor, Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food - Skopje, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje*
10:00 - 10:30 **Unlocking the Potential of Agri-Photovoltaics for Climate-Resilient Agriculture - Prof. Kerstin Wydra**, *Chair of Plant Production and Climate Change, University of Applied Sciences Erfurt*



10:30 - 11:00

Coffee break and family photo

11:00 - 11:15

Concept for Introduction of Short Food Supply Chains in the Western Balkans, Mr. Vlado Kovacevic,
Director, Commodity Exchange, Novi Sad

11:15 - 11:35

The EU enlargement process and the Common Agricultural Policy: recent and expected developments -
Mr. Vincent Cordonnier, *Deputy Head of Unit, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, Neighbourhood, Enlargement
and Pre-accession assistance Unit, European Commission*

11:35 - 11:55

Agriculture and EU Accession: Priorities and Policy Adjustments for Alignment - Ms. Ana Kotevska,
PhD, Professor, Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food - Skopje, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje

11:55 - 12:15

**Implementation of Green Agenda for the Western Balkans: update of ongoing processes and challenges for the
future - Mr. Boban Illic,** *Secretary General, Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in SEE (SWG)*

12:15 - 12:35

Towards a new Agricultural Policy Dialogue South East Europe

Mr. Stephan Framke, *Senior Policy Advisor, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Regional Identity of the Federal
Republic of Germany (BMLEH) and*

Dr. Tilman Reinhardt - *Project Manager, General Agent, Bilateral Cooperation Programme of the Federal Ministry
of Food and Agriculture (BMLEH)*

12:35 - 12:40

Introduction to the working groups topics

12:40 - 14:00

Lunch at Hotel "Metropol"

14:00 - 18:00

Working groups (Coffee break 16:00 - 16:30)

WG1: Organic Production

WG2: Climate Change Adaptation in Agriculture

WG3: Agricultural Policy Developments

20:00

Dinner at Hotel "Bellevue"

Wednesday, 04 June 2025

09:00 - 09:20	Presentation of the working group results WG 1
09:20 - 09:40	Presentation of the working group results WG 2
09:40 - 10:00	Presentation of the working group results WG 3
10:00 - 10:30	Discussion
10:30 - 11:00	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11:00 - 12:30	Formulation of the Ohrid Agenda 2025
12:30 - 12:45	Official closing of the Forum
12:45 - 14:00	<i>Lunch at Hotel “Metropol”</i>
15:30 - 19:30	Field trip <i>(departure from the parking in front of Hotel “Metropol”)</i> • Visit of Company “Podgorka”, distribution of dairy and meat products - IPARD funded project • Visit of Natural Monument - “Vevchani Springs”
19:30	<i>Dinner at restaurant “Domakjinska Kukja” - Vevchani</i>
23:00	Departure to the Hotel

Thursday, 05 June 2025

- ***Departure after breakfast***

PLENARY SESSION SPEAKERS

Boban Ilic

Secretary General, Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in SEE (SWG).

Secretary General of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in Southeastern Europe since 2010 and chair of SWG Assembly Sessions. In charge of execution and implementation of SWG strategies and policies; establishing and maintaining effective high level protocolary and diplomatic relations with government and international officials as well as maintaining effective liaison and developing co-operative programs with international organizations and agencies, in particular with international organizations dealing in agriculture and rural development. Responsible for initiation and preparation of regional development projects in Southeastern Europe.

Over 20 years' experience in South Eastern Europe with public and private sector in developmental projects and programs in agro and food industries; food security and agricultural; rural development programs and reforms, principle advisory services for government agricultural policies; planning and reforms (legislation and implementation) related to the process of integration into the European Union.



Stephan Framke

Senior Policy Advisor Division 624 "International Projects, Twinning

Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Regional Identity (BMLEH) of the Federal Republic of Germany

Stephan Framke joined the Federal Ministry in 2018 as a specialist for strategic communication and campaigning, online, video and social media. He reported directly to the federal Minister. Since then he worked in the minister's staff and focused on the international policy of the ministry. He accompanied international Minister meetings in the Western Balkans, Moldova, Africa, Brazil, Colombia, China, Japan and was also involved in the preparations of the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA). Since April 2025 he is responsible for BMELH's Bilateral Cooperation ProjektPortfolio in Southeast Europe, Ukraine, Vietnam and Thailand.

Before his career at BMLEH he worked as a TV-Journalist for the largest private broadcaster in Europe with international engagements in various countries worldwide including Croatia, North Macedonia and Serbia during the 2015/2016 refugee crisis.



Aleksandra Martinovska Stojcheska

PhD, Professor, University Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food-Skopje, Institute of Agricultural Economics

Aleksandra Martinovska Stojcheska is full professor and currently Head of the Institute of Agricultural Economics at the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje. Her research interests are in the area of economic and technical performance in agriculture, efficiency and productivity analysis, cost of production of agri-food products, cost-benefit analysis, and also socio-economic aspects of climate change, farmer behavior in decision-making and strategic choices, as well as agricultural and rural development policy. She participated in various national and international projects (SIDA, FAO, USAID, WB, FP7, JRC, HORIZON 2020, HORIZON EUROPE/COST etc.), development of national strategic documents, and edited and (co)authored a number of research publications and applicative studies. Has so far more than 100 research and technical papers and 2 university textbooks have been published. She is member of the National Council for Higher Education and Research; National Liaison to the European Association of Agricultural Economics; Key expert in the National Convention for the EU – MK; and EDP Coordinator of the Smart Specialisation S3 domain “Smart agriculture and food with higher added value”.



Vlado Kovacevic

PhD, Agricultural-economics expert

Dr Vlado Kovacevic (born 06 Aug 1971) is an agricultural-economics expert with 25 years' experience in commodity-market development and agri-policy. He earned a PhD in Agricultural Economics (Belgrade, 2014) on commodity-exchange risk management, an MSc in Economics (Belgrade, 2002) focusing on financial derivatives, and a BSc in Agriculture (Belgrade, 1997). Since Dec 2023 he has directed the Commodity Exchange Novi Sad, following senior roles as Special Adviser to the Serbian Minister of Agriculture (2012-16), Senior Research Associate at the Institute of Agricultural Economics (2016-23), assistant/PhD-course professor at universities in Bjeljina and Novi Sad, and earlier advisory posts shaping Serbia's public-warehouse, pre-harvest-financing and EU Chapter 11 alignment laws. Kovacevic has led or contributed to more than 30 international projects with FAO, USAID, UNDP, DG AGRI, GIZ and others, authored 70+ scientific papers, and sits on numerous national working groups for agricultural legislation. Fluent in English and proficient in MS Office and Stata, he is recognised for strong analytical, project-management and public-speaking skills.



Ana Kotevska

PhD, Professor, University Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food

Dr. Ana Kotevska is an expert with 20 years of professional experience in agricultural economics, with a focus on the agricultural policy in the North Macedonia. She is a Full Professor at the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje (UKIM), at the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food, where she teaches Agricultural Policy, as well as Human Resources Development, Management in Agriculture, and Strategic Management. Her research and consulting focus is on monitoring and evaluation of the agricultural policy, modelling agricultural commodity markets for ex-ante analyses, as well as understanding farmer behavior (for instance as a reaction to the governmental programs, i.e. rural development programs, organic support, etc.). She is author or co-author of about 50 research papers and technical studies and has participated in many national and international projects (funded by FP6, FP7, Tempus, SIDA, SCD, FAO, UN Women, COST, WB, etc.). For more than a decade, she participated in a series of projects on monitoring and evaluation of agricultural policy in the country, and in the last five years has been co-coordinator on the SWG RRD regional studies covering the Western Balkan countries.



Tilman Reinhardt

GFA – General Agent of the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture; Senior Researcher at the University of Bayreuth, Faculty of Life Sciences: Food, Nutrition and Health

Tilman Reinhardt works for GFA, General Agent of the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) and has been managing the Agricultural Policy Dialogue Germany - South East Europe since its beginning in 2018. He is also a senior researcher and lecturer at the University of Bayreuth and author of various publications on European agricultural and food law. He holds a PhD in European and International Law from Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, as well as degrees in law and agricultural economics from universities in Berlin, Paris and London. He is a member of the European Association of Agricultural Economists, the International Consortium on Applied Bioeconomy Research (ICABR) as well as the DROCON expert group at the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV).



Vincent Cordonnier

Deputy Head of the Unit responsible for Neighbourhood, enlargement and pre-accession assistance at the European Commission Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI).

In his career at the European Commission, he has held various positions focusing on policy development, international trade negotiations and policy analysis. He has contributed to the development of the Common Agricultural Policy, the Farm Sustainability Data Network, and the EU agricultural quality policy. He was part of the negotiating team for the EU-Japan Free Trade Agreement.

Vincent holds a Diplôme d'Ingénieur Agricole from AgroParisTech.



Sreten Andonov

PhD, Full Professor at the University “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” in Skopje, Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food, within the Institute of Animal Biotechnology

His research expertise encompasses animal genetic resources, climate change mitigation and adaptation in livestock, as well as animal breeding and genetics. Over the past decade, Professor Andonov has actively participated in more than 15 scientific projects under programs such as HORIZON and COST Actions, in addition to over 20 development and capacity-building initiatives supported by organizations including FAO, JICA, USAID, GIZ, and UNDP. He has significantly contributed to the formulation of national strategic documents addressing livestock breeding programs, the conservation and sustainable use of animal genetic resources, and climate change adaptation in the livestock sector.

Professor Andonov is the editor and (co-)author of over 100 peer-reviewed research articles, as well as numerous publications and applied research studies. Recognized as a national and regional expert in livestock production analysis, he has been involved in drafting strategic frameworks and policy recommendations aimed at enhancing climate resilience in agriculture across the Western Balkans. Furthermore, he has contributed to the development of national and regional studies on the status and future prospects of climate change adaptation in agriculture, with a specific focus on the livestock sector.



Kerstin Wydra

Chair of Plant Production and Climate Change

Erfurt University of Applied Sciences

Prof. Dr. Kerstin Wydra is Professor of Plant Production and Climate Change at Erfurt University of Applied Sciences. With over 30 years of leadership experience, she specializes in sustainable agriculture, climate adaptation, and renewable energy systems. She is a member of the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS-HLPE), serves on multiple advisory boards in the fields of agrivoltaics and renewable energy, and has led numerous international research projects across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Her work bridges science, policy, and practice, and she is widely published with over 100 scientific articles and more than 160 invited presentations worldwide.



WORKING GROUP 1: Organic Production

Moderator: Mr. Dusan Neskovic

PROGRAM

Tuesday 03rd of June

14:00 - 14:15	Welcome remarks and meeting introduction Mr. Dusan Neskovic, SWG
14:15 - 15:30	The National Organic Action Plans Implementation – Progress Review of activities conducted in the first half of the year Presentation by experts/ministry representatives (10 minutes per country/territory)
15:45 - 16:00	Discussion and outline for the next steps of the REAWG
15:45 - 16:00	Coffee break
16:00 - 16:30	Discussions and decisions regarding the advisory checklist, training on organic controls, and ‘Prominent Region’ initiatives for the Western Balkan Countries at the BIOFACH 2027.
16:30 - 17:30	Planning the organisation of the Organic Summer School for the SEE countries/territories
17:30 - 18:00	Final discussion and Policy brief conclusions for the Ohrid Agenda adoption.
18:00	End of meeting

WORKING GROUP 2: Climate Change Adaptation in Agriculture

First Regional Task Force Meeting Climate Change Adaptation in Agriculture

Moderator: Mr. Darko Konjević

PROGRAM

Tuesday 03rd of June

14:00 - 14:05	Welcome address - Mr. Darko Konjević, SWG
14:05 - 14:30	Key Considerations and Emerging Insights for Agri-Photovoltaic Planning - Professor Kerstin Wydra, Chair at University of Applied Sciences Erfurt (presentation and discussion)
14:30 - 15:30	Presentation on the activities within Green Agenda for the Western Balkan - Supporting the Western Balkan Countries in adapting the Climate Change – presentation by experts/ministry representatives regarding the conducted activities and future plans (10 minute per country/territory)
15:30 - 16:00	Review of the activities and timeline until the end of the year - presentation and discussion - Professor Aleksandra Martinovska Stojcheska, Regional coordinator
16:00	End of meeting
16:00 - 16:30	Coffee break

WORKING GROUP 3: Agriculture Policy Developments

REAWG Interim Meeting

Moderator: Mr. Darko Konjević

PROGRAM

Tuesday 03rd of June

16:00 - 16:05	Welcome address - Mr. Darko Konjević, SWG
16:05 - 16:40	Review of the activities related to the statistics and APMC collection (5 minutes per expert)
16:40 - 17:40	Presentation of the API Monitoring tool, Review and discussion – all participants
17:40 - 18:00	Review and discussion of the Policy brief – all participants
18:00	End of meeting