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

2025 AGRICULTURAL POLICY FORUM
2nd – 5th June Ohrid, North Macedonia

20 Years SWG RRD

Agricultural Policy Forum 2025

"Navigating EU Integration and impact of Climate Change on Agriculture: Ensuring the future of our farmers and food in South East Europe"

02 - 05 June 2025
Ohrid, North Macedonia

Ohrid Agenda 2025

The 25th Agricultural Policy Forum (the Forum) convened in Ohrid, North Macedonia, from 2 to 5 June 2025. It provided a platform to assess the progress of the APF process, address policy and operational issues, and to explore current challenges and opportunities in agriculture and rural development in South Eastern Europe (SEE).

The Forum brought together policymakers, governmental and non-governmental organizations, EU Member States, international institutions, and experts. Discussions focused on EU integration, the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB), and climate change. It provided a comprehensive overview of the regional agricultural policy in the context of the EU accession and cooperation process.

The outcomes of the Forum are consolidated in the **Ohrid Agenda 2025**.

EU Integration and Policy Alignment

Participants reviewed EU enlargement updates - including developments in screening process, progress in negotiation chapters and in pre-accession instruments.

The Forum emphasized the need for continued alignment with the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) framework and policy objectives, enhanced competitiveness, institutional adjustment and readiness. It encouraged the ongoing monitoring of agricultural policy reforms and recommended deepening the analysis of the negotiation chapters relevant to agriculture. In this respect, the Regional Expert Advisory Working Group will continue to update comparative policy reports for SEE countries and the EU.

The Forum supported the development of short supply chains for their contribution to the local economies, rural incomes and environmental sustainability.

It encouraged the South Eastern Europe governments to closely observe the policy developments regarding the EU Commission's Communication ***Vision for Agriculture and Food*** as well as realistic enlargement perspectives.

Green Agenda for the Western Balkans

The Forum acknowledged the progress achieved under the GAWB Action Plan, particularly Pillar IV – Sustainable Agriculture. It, nevertheless, noted that several measures remain under-implemented due to financial constraints and called for increased national investments and strengthened regional coordination.

Participants urged the EU, international partners and Member States to provide SWG with the required financial and technical support to accelerate GAWB implementation.

Climate Change Adaptation (CCAA)

Recognizing the growing impact of climate change on agriculture, the Forum highlighted the need for coordinated action to strengthen resilience and promote climate-smart systems.

In this direction, the Forum:

- Welcomed strategic guidelines and adaptation measures, encouraging integration into broader policy frameworks.
- Called for stronger institutional and technical capacity building, supported by EU policy instruments like IPARD III and the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans.
- Supported scaling investments in renewable energy and resource-efficient technologies.
- Advocated for the promotion of innovative and integrated Agri photovoltaic (Agri-PV) systems which offer potential to strengthen farm resilience enabling the simultaneous use of agricultural land for food production and renewable energy generation. A functional, non-bureaucratic regulatory framework needs to be designed to facilitate expansion of investments.
- Encouraged cross-sectoral collaboration to align CCAA with green transition, competitiveness and rural sustainability goals.
- Reaffirmed the need for stronger, participatory research and evidence-based policy development for climate change adaptation.

Organic Agriculture

The Forum reaffirmed its support for organic farming, as a cornerstone of sustainable agriculture, environmental protection, and rural development. It emphasized the potential prospects for value-added production, access to premium markets and employment growth.

In this regard, the Forum:

- Emphasized the need for strong commitment from decision-makers to reform organic agriculture in line with the EU acquis and ensure targeted investments.
- Urged the strengthening of certification and control bodies.
- Supported the implementation and the regular updating of national Action Plans.
- Advocated for awareness campaigns to promote organic practices among producers and consumers and to participate at the special organic trade fairs.
- Expressed willingness to utilize the SWG as a platform to enhance cooperation between the European Commission and SEE countries in advancing the regional organic sector.

The Forum highlighted regional coordination, exchange of best practices, and strengthened EU partnerships as key drivers for accelerating sector growth, calling for unified support from both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

Agricultural Policy Dialogue (APD)

The Forum validated the outcomes of the Agricultural Policy Dialogue (APD) between Germany and SEE, recognizing its importance in fostering cooperation and policy alignment.

It appreciated APD's role in promoting knowledge exchange, capacity building, and EU-oriented policy reforms. Participants welcomed the continuation of the dialogue, with the focus on climate change adaptation, forestry management and EU integration monitoring.

The Forum:

- Acknowledged the positive evaluation of the APD's achievements.
- Welcomed the continuation and encouraged further development of the APD model.
- Invited new partners to join and expand the platform.

Skopje Declaration

The Forum reaffirmed its commitment to the goals of the 2024 **Skopje Declaration**, which outlines a shared vision for sustainable agriculture in the Western Balkans. Key priorities of the Declaration include:

- Strong commitment to the EU integration process and full alignment to the EU Acquis by 2030,
- Determination to resolve all bilateral and/or multilateral conflicts related to the free movement of goods, services, people and capital related to food and agriculture.
- Advancing Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS).
- Supporting generational renewal through youth-focused policies.
- Promoting inclusive rural development and economic diversification.

The Forum **also took note of the conclusions of the 2024 Berlin Process Chairmanship** with reference to agriculture and rural development and welcomed the increased political recognition of the sector as a strategic pillar for security, EU integration, economic development, and environmental sustainability in the Western Balkans.

In this context, the Forum **called upon the current and future Presidencies of the Berlin Process** to **maintain a high level of political and technical attention to agriculture and rural development**. Continued support and prioritization under this regional cooperation framework are critical for ensuring policy coherence, investment initiatives, and institutional preparedness for the alignment with the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the broader Green Agenda for the Western Balkans.

The Forum emphasized that **agriculture and rural development must remain at the forefront of the regional cooperation agendas**.

The Forum agreed that:

- The Ohrid Agenda 2025 will be presented and discussed at the 19th Annual Working Meeting of Ministers of Agriculture from South Eastern Europe in September 2025 in Kosovo*
- The "Agenda" will be conveyed to the EU institutions, UN agencies and other relevant national and international institutions and organisations.
- The 26th Agricultural Policy Forum will take place in June 2026, in Kosovo*, in the course of their SWG Presidency for the year 2026.

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

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Agricultural Policy Forum 2025 was held under the joint auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of North Macedonia and the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE.

The participants of the Agricultural Policy Forum 2025 highly appreciated the support provided by the convening institutions and organisations: European Commission (DG Agriculture and Rural Development), German Government (Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Regional Identity - BMLEH, Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development - BMZ and German Agency for International Cooperation - GIZ).