Agricultural Policy Forum 2026

"Agricultural Policy Coherence in South-East Europe: EU Integration Dynamics, Institutional Reforms and Climate Adaptation"

2–5 June 2026

Prishtina, Kosovo*

Prishtina Agenda 2026

Representatives of ministries responsible for agriculture and rural development, public institutions, academia, rural networks, civil society organizations, regional organizations, international institutions, development partners and private-sector stakeholders from South-East Europe and the wider European region gathered in Prishtina, Kosovo*, from 2 to 5 June 2026, within the framework of the 26th Agricultural Policy Forum (APF) 2026, organized by the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South-East Europe (SWG). The Forum brought together more than 110 participants from 14 countries across Europe and provided a platform for structured policy dialogue, technical exchange and regional cooperation.

The Prishtina Agenda 2026 sets out the principal conclusions and recommendations of APF 2026 and provides strategic guidance for agriculture, forestry and rural development cooperation in South-East Europe. It reaffirms the European integration process as the central framework for reform, calls for stronger institutional capacity and policy coherence, and underlines the need to address climate resilience, biodiversity protection, sustainable forest management and integrated landscape fire management. The Agenda further emphasizes generational renewal, inclusive rural development, stronger Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS), food security crisis preparedness, and the sustainable development of the wine and viticulture sector.

Agriculture and rural development are central policy priorities for the Western Balkans and Moldova while they are intensifying efforts towards European Union. The Forum highlighted that the agricultural sector is expected to respond simultaneously to two major processes: alignment with European Union policies and standards, and adaptation to environmental and socio-economic changes affecting food production, natural resources and rural livelihoods. These parallel developments are shaping a policy agenda in which agriculture is recognized not only as an economic sector, but also as an important driver for resilience, regional cooperation and long-term stability and sustainability, in an environment of heightened geopolitical uncertainty, market volatility and persistent demographic challenges.

The Forum underlined the importance of accelerating alignment with the European Union acquis and the Common Agricultural Policy, while strengthening institutional capacity, governance arrangements and implementation structures necessary for the effective delivery of reforms. It further noted that regional cooperation remains essential to addressing shared challenges related to climate adaptation, biodiversity protection, sustainable resource management, innovation uptake, trade development, market integration and rural resilience.

Strategic priorities identified by the Forum

The Forum identified the following strategic priorities: further alignment with the Common Agricultural Policy and the broader EU acquis in the Western Balkans and Moldova; stronger institutional capacity and policy monitoring under Chapter 11 and related negotiation chapters; integration of climate adaptation and mitigation into agricultural and rural development policy frameworks; enhanced biodiversity protection, sustainable forest management and integrated landscape fire management; promotion of generational renewal and social inclusion in rural areas; reinforcement of AKIS as a catalyst for innovation, technology and knowledge transfer; economic cooperation, free trade and investments; support for the sustainable development of the wine and viticulture sector; and, the consolidation of the role of the Berlin Process and regional policy dialogue in fostering policy coherence in South-East European agriculture and rural development.

Drawing on the panel and group discussions, the Forum adopted the following conclusions and recommendations, reflecting the shared priorities, commitments and strategic direction of the participating institutions and stakeholders:

EU integration, policy coherence and institutional reforms

The Forum reaffirmed the strategic importance of European integration for the Western Balkans and Moldova and called for accelerated alignment of agricultural and rural development policies with the Common Agricultural Policy and the broader EU acquis. Particular attention was given to recent developments in the EU enlargement process and to the role of the Common Agricultural Policy in preparing the sector for accession. Discussions focused on agricultural policy monitoring and implementation, including progress achieved across the region and the remaining institutional and policy challenges.

The Forum encouraged further strengthening of administrative capacity and inter-institutional coordination for the effective implementation of the acquis in agriculture, rural development, food safety, forestry and environmental protection, while underlining the importance of continuous policy monitoring and evidence-based policymaking. It called for stronger regional cooperation and the systematic exchange of good practices in support of harmonisation and institutional reform, highlighted the relevance of the Berlin Process as a framework for political dialogue, economic cooperation and agricultural policy coordination, and stressed the importance of transparency, stakeholder participation and structured policy dialogue, including closer cooperation among governments, research institutions and development partners in preparing policy analysis, strategic documents and monitoring tools that support the accession process.

Climate change adaptation, biodiversity and forestry

The Forum recognized climate change as a systemic, long-term challenge affecting agricultural productivity, rural livelihoods, biodiversity, forestry and natural resources in South-East Europe. It called for increased investment in climate-resilient agricultural systems, sustainable water management, soil conservation, risk-management instruments and targeted capacity development for agricultural producers, policymakers, advisory services and other relevant stakeholders. It also welcomed efforts by Western Balkans governments to integrate climate adaptation and mitigation measures more fully into national agricultural and rural development policy frameworks through strategic outlines and action plans.

The Forum underlined the need to strengthen research and innovation systems, improve access to reliable climate data, establish comprehensive national databases and support pilot initiatives that contribute to evidence-based policymaking and more effective climate adaptation measures. It further encouraged closer cooperation among agricultural, environmental and forestry institutions to enhance policy coherence and implementation effectiveness, in line with the objectives of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans and broader sustainability frameworks.

Sustainable forest management and integrated landscape fire management

The Forum welcomed enhanced regional cooperation on biodiversity protection, sustainable forest management and the prevention of land degradation. It recognized sustainable forest management, forest multifunctionality and close-to-nature forest management as important approaches to maintaining forest health, productivity and long-term sustainability in South-East Europe.

The Forum acknowledged the growing risks associated with landscape fires in the Western Balkans and recognized integrated landscape fire management as a key cross-sectoral approach to addressing increasing climate - and fire-related risks to agriculture, forests, biodiversity, rural livelihoods and human safety. It called for stronger prevention and preparedness, regional early warning systems, coordinated cross-border measures, and climate-and fire-resilient landscapes grounded in sustainable land use and forest management. Participants underlined the importance of a participatory approach and a strong science-practice-policy interface, enabling closer coordination among the competent authorities for agriculture, forestry, environment and civil protection, stronger cooperation within the Western Balkans Six, and the active involvement of local communities and land users. The Forum encouraged the integration of landscape fire management into relevant policies, strategies and funding instruments.

Generational renewal and rural development

Within the rural development dimension, the Forum recognized demographic decline and ageing rural populations as major structural challenges for food security, long-term sustainability, competitiveness and resilience of agriculture and rural areas in the region. It encouraged the design and implementation of targeted support measures for young farmers, women in rural areas and rural entrepreneurs, extending beyond financial aid to include improved access to land, credit, education, advisory services and skills development, digitalisation and innovation.

The Forum supported the design of national generational renewal strategies and the development of integrated policies aimed at improving rural attractiveness, access to services, digitalisation, rural infrastructure and employment opportunities in rural areas, while calling for increased investment in education, vocational training and advisory services for young agricultural professionals. It further underlined the importance of balanced territorial development, encouraged innovative financial instruments, incentive and association schemes to support generational renewal and entrepreneurship in agriculture and rural areas. Persistent implementation barriers were also noted, including limited institutional coordination, bureaucracy and unequal access to support schemes.

Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS)

The Forum emphasized the strategic importance of effective Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) as a foundation for modernization, competitiveness, innovation and sustainable agricultural development in the Western Balkans and Moldova. It encouraged governments, research institutions, advisory services, producer organizations, farmers, private-sector stakeholders and civil society actors to strengthen cooperation and knowledge-exchange mechanisms. For governing the AKIS, a coordinating body involving key AKIS actors should be established, in a networking role, to oversee and facilitate AKIS-related strategies and activities, while ensuring effective collaboration among all actors within the system.

Participants stressed the need to enhance knowledge exchange, improve innovation uptake and strengthen advisory and extension services to ensure that research outputs and practical solutions are effectively transferred to agricultural producers and rural communities. The Forum called for stronger regional cooperation in the application of digital solutions in agriculture, innovation transfer, research networking and advisory systems, while recognizing the importance of improved access to data, agricultural statistics and evidence-based decision-support tools. It further encouraged greater investment in digital infrastructure, smart and climate-resilient agricultural technologies, and capacity development for farmers and rural stakeholders, together with stronger regional networking among research institutions and innovation platforms across South-East Europe.

Food security preparedness and the role of the Western Balkans in the European architecture

The Forum took note of the growing importance of the European Food Security Crisis Preparedness and Response Mechanism (EFSCM), established by the European Commission under the 2021 contingency plan to ensure food supply and food security in times of crisis and further reinforced through the evolving European preparedness agenda. It noted that the six Western Balkans partners participate in the EFSCM as non-EU authorities alongside Member States and food-chain stakeholders, thereby providing an important basis for dialogue, early warning, information exchange and coordinated responses in situations of severe market disruption, geopolitical shocks, climate-related events and animal or plant health emergencies.

The Forum highlighted that the EFSCM is increasingly supported by tools such as food security dashboards, qualitative risk assessments, thematic working groups and emerging stress-testing approaches aimed at identifying systemic vulnerabilities across food supply chains. At the same time, it recognized that publicly available dashboards, qualitative assessments and vulnerability-mapping tools remain primarily EU-centred and do not yet systematically capture the specific risks, interdependencies and crisis-response capacities of the Western Balkans, creating a gap between formal participation and operational preparedness integration.

In that regard, the Forum underlined the need to strengthen the region's operational integration within the broader European preparedness architecture, including through improved structured data exchange, enhanced availability and comparability of agricultural and food security statistics, greater visibility of regional

stocks and supply-chain bottlenecks, closer coordination on transport and logistics corridors, and possible future participation of Western Balkans actors in food-system stress-testing, crisis simulation exercises and thematic working groups. It further considered that stronger regional cooperation in this field would be in the mutual interest of both the Western Balkans and the European Union and could usefully inform future dialogue with EU institutions within the framework of the Berlin Process and related regional initiatives.

Wine, viticulture and sustainable value chains

The Forum recognized the economic, cultural and territorial significance of the wine and viticulture sector in South-East Europe, including its role in rural development and identity preservation. It encouraged governments and sector stakeholders to strengthen adaptation measures in response to climate change impacts. The Forum recommends to the governments to rethink and recalibrate existing policy measures to adequately respond to the current situation at the wine market.

The Forum supported regional cooperation in wine promotion, geographical indications, quality standards and market access, and encouraged the development of high-quality, sustainable wines that reflect regional heritage. It also encouraged the exchange of regional experience and good practice in branding, eco- and oeno-tourism, while supporting stronger, sustainable and resilient wine value chains capable of responding to future economic and environmental challenges. The Forum further underlined the importance of knowledge exchange with other countries regarding the information related to viticulture in other climate zones.

SWG as a regional platform for cooperation

The Forum acknowledged the important role of SWG as a regional platform for strengthening cooperation among South-East European countries and territories, the European Union and its Member States, as well as other international partners. It encouraged SWG to further expand its regional and thematic scope, deepen political dialogue, and engage more systematically with non-constituent ministries, regional and international institutions, academia, civil society and the private sector. Greater efforts are needed to ensure stronger private-sector involvement and to link policy dialogue more closely with practical reform implementation, innovation and economic cooperation.

The Forum called on the European Union and international partners to continue supporting SWG, including through the possible expansion of its mandate and institutional capacities, in order to reinforce its role as a representative and proactive partner in the EU integration process and in the sustainable transformation of agriculture, forestry and rural development in South-East Europe.

The Forum agreed the following:

The Prishtina Agenda 2026 shall be presented and discussed at the 20th Annual Working Meeting of Ministers of Agriculture from South-East Europe, to be held in 2026 in Serbia. The purpose of the Ministerial Meeting shall be to endorse the conclusions and adopt a Joint Declaration, which should be duly reflected in the Berlin Process Summit.

- This Agenda shall be transmitted to the institutions of the European Union, United Nations agencies, and other relevant national and international institutions and organizations.
- The 27th Agricultural Policy Forum shall take place in autumn 2027 in Serbia, which will hold the SWG Presidency in 2027.
- The Agricultural Policy Forum 2026 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-East Europe.
- The participants in Agricultural Policy Forum 2026 expressed their sincere appreciation for the support provided by the convening institutions and organizations: the European Commission (Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development), the German Government (Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Regional Identity - BMLEH, and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development - BMZ), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM), and all partner institutions, experts and speakers who contributed to the successful implementation of APF 2026 in Prishtina.

Adopted in Prishtina on 4 June 2026.

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSC Resolution 1244 (1999) and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.