

REPORT

from the

“2nd Working meeting of the Expert Advisory Group on Organic Agriculture in SEE within the SWG”



26th February – 01st March 2013
Hotel “Astra-Garni”, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Introduction

The facilitation of the development of Organic Agriculture in the Region was on the agenda of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group for SEE (SWG RRD) since its establishment in 2005. Activities were implemented through various projects for promotion, education, capacity building, technical discussions etc.

Being aware of the competitive values of the countries from the Balkan region as such: unpolluted soil, biodiversity, traditional way of production which we would like to protect as a “planetary heritage”..., the participants of the Technical discussion on “Development of Organic Agriculture in the SEE Countries - Trade Procedures and Recognition of National Organic Certificates between the SEE Countries”, organized through SWG - GIZ ORF Project, in November 2011 in Herceg Novi, Montenegro, concluded that the regional cooperation/network between the Balkan countries aiming to protect the above mentioned values and to create sustainable market for organic products is an appropriate tool to stimulate the development of the organic agriculture in the Balkan region.

This was the start towards the process of establishing an Expert Advisory Group (EAG) on Organic Agriculture in SEE within the SWG *(the Expert Advisory Groups within the SWG are of a temporary character and are mobilized upon a specific need expressed by the Member Institutions and/or other stakeholders. Their main role is to support the SWG in development/implementation of specific activities. They represent bodies from the SWG structure including wider stakeholders, but are facilitated, managed or sometimes chaired by SWG staff. If needed the expert advisory groups could develop and work within specific defined protocols related to their work, reporting and other issues. Membership in the expert working groups is not a professional occupation and it is organized on a voluntary basis. Each of the groups is comprised of experts assigned by the Member Institutions (and) representatives of other partner/stakeholder institutions).*

The 1st Coordinative meeting of the EAG was held in Subotica, Serbia (Oct.30th – Nov. 2nd 2012). In that occasion, the SWG Secretariat/Head office supported the Association TERRA'S in the organization of the International Conference: “Organic Agriculture – achievements and perspectives on the way to Green economy and sustainable development” which took part within the “8th International Festival of the Organic Products – BIOFEST”.

Based on the previous discussions and according to the plan, the participants of the 1st coordination meeting agreed on the composition of the EAG (one permanent and one deputy member from each of the SWG member institution and from BON). At the same time, priority topics for further elaboration were identified and the activities of the next meeting were planned. The EAG on Organic Agriculture is formed by representatives from the Ministries of Agriculture from the Balkan region, namely from Albania, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Srpska, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia, as well as representatives of the Balkan Organic Network (BON).

Purpose of the 2nd Working meeting of the EAG on OA

The 2nd Working meeting of the EAG on Organic Agriculture in SEE within the SWG was organized on behalf of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in

* 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.

South Eastern Europe (SWG) within the “2nd International Fair for Organic Products and Eco-Tourism - ORGANC SARAJEVO 2013”.

The working meeting took part from February 26th to March 01st in Hotel “Astra-Garni” in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Annex I – Program of the meeting*).

In total 14 members from 7 countries of the EAG participated at the meeting (*Annex 2 – List of participating members of the EAG*).

The aim of the 2nd Working meeting of the EAG on Organic Agriculture in SEE within the SWG was to discuss the three identified priorities for the Regional cooperation which were set up during the 1st Coordinative meeting previously held in Subotica, from which to elaborate project concepts for the specific future actions.

The three priorities that were discussed during the 2nd working meeting in 3 different sessions are:

- Facilitation of the **harmonization** of the national legislations for organic agriculture in the SEE countries;
- Joint approach for a regional **promotion** of organic production in the Balkan area
- **Trade** of organic products between the SEE Countries

Summary from the Working sessions and Outputs

The members of the EAG, who took over responsibilities to develop concept ideas for the identified priorities, presented their work to the other attending members through ppt presentations followed by a plenary and guided discussion facilitated by SWG and CIHEAM-IAMB.

The outputs of the three working sessions are summarized as follow:

Session I - Facilitation of the harmonization of the national legislations for organic agriculture in the SEE countries

The Croatian team (Mr. Tomislav Petrovic on behalf of the Ministry and Ms. Matija Vukusic on behalf of BON) responsible to work on the concept idea after the coordinative meeting in Subotica presented their proposal to the participants. They made a very concise presentation pointing out on the important items which should be taken into consideration when developing the project proposal: Regulation, Current Situation, Objective, the Key Questions, core Activities and expected Results.



After the presentation, the group members discussed in plenary and answered the attendants' questions. The brainstorming exercise of the plenary work summarized the follow:

- *The current situation in terms of legislation on organic agriculture and its harmonisation in accordance with the EU legislation (refer to the law number):*

Countries	National legislation	Harmonization with the EU started?	Level of harmonization (in %)
Albania	✓ 2004	✓	On going
BiH national level	-	-	-
Federation of BiH	In preparation since 2009	✓	On going
Republic of Srpska	✓ Into force 2013	✓	On going
Bulgaria	✓	✓	100%
Croatia	✓	✓	100%
Kosovo*	Draft	-	-
Macedonia	✓	✓	85%
Montenegro	✓ In parliament procedure	✓	On going
Serbia	✓	✓	90%

- *The representatives from the Ministries of Agriculture identified the following problematic areas in the process of harmonization:*

- Trade of organic products issue
- CBs accreditation issue
- CBs communication with the Ministries of Agriculture
- Authorized CBs with national legislation
- Cooperation with other competent authorities
- Harmonisation with existing national legislation
- Organic seeds availability

They finally express the need for assistance in the harmonisation process.

- *BON members, representing the private sector, identified the obstacles they are facing due to the current national legislation*

- Trade (within the region and on international level) obstacle: unclear/incomplete legislation
- Recertification of imported products
- National certificate not valid for trade
- Limited farmers' knowledge about the Regulation
- Dialogue between the Ministry of Agriculture & national associations (producers, processors, traders...)
- Communication / coordination between different authorities
- Organic inputs issue

During the session, some questions were raised towards finding solutions to the identified problems. For example:

- i) Whether the need for expert assistance should be addressed by an External, EU or local expert?! Or maybe both?!
- ii) How should the proposed project deal with the problems? By working group on revising the law in each country (country by country)?! Or by combining 2-3 countries to work together within one initiative?!

A working group was designated to develop a project proposal on this topic. The group is formed by the Croatian team, Bulgarian EAG member, Ministry representatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH and Rep.S)

Session II - Joint approach for a regional promotion of organic production in the Balkan area

The initial concept idea for this topic, as agreed during the coordinative meeting in Subotica, was developed by the Macedonian team, Ms. Olivera Bicikliski on behalf of the Ministry and Mr. Goran Angelovski on behalf of BON. Ms. Bicikliski illustrated through a ppt presentation an example of a national promotional campaign from Macedonia conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture. Ms Bicikliski explained that even though this campaign started successfully, it was not very fruitful and was interrupted before its complete accomplishment due to financial problems (a bureaucratic tendering procedure). The reasons for/and the benefits from a Regional campaign were mentioned and some key questions for further discussion were proposed..

After an animated discussion involving all presents, eight tools for the development of the national and regional markets of organic products were identified by the EAG and prioritized:

[11 votes] Common video spot (general on Organic agriculture an not product oriented)

[9 votes] Local fairs (as part of regional events, caravan)

[7 votes] Printed material (newsletters, informational and educational material as well as billboards)

[4 votes] Common slogan (It was agreed that the slogan would be used on billboards and in the video spot!)

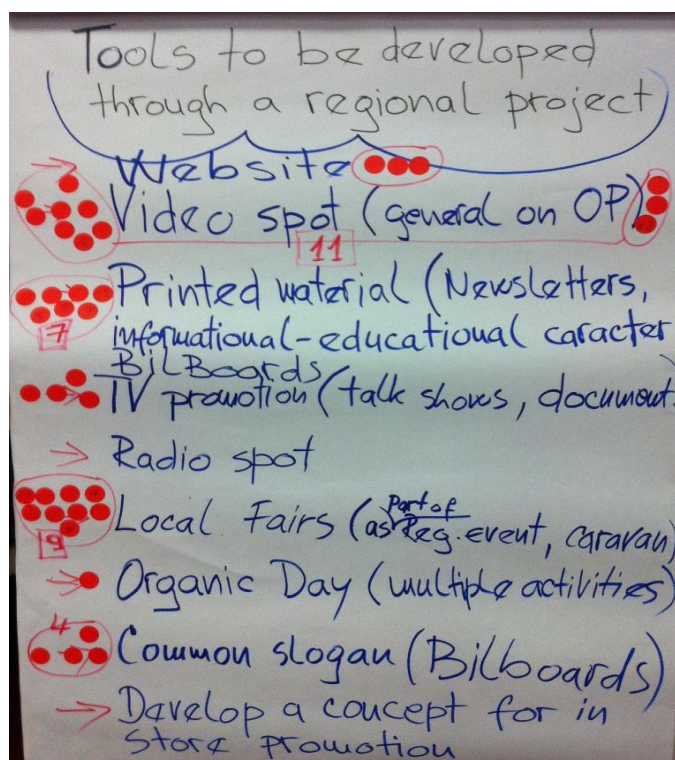
[4 votes] TV promotion (talk shows and documentary)

[3 votes] Website

[1 vote] Organic day with multiple activities and open farms

[0 votes] Radio spot

[0 votes] Develop a concept for in store promotion



The first three of the identified tools were commonly chosen to be further developed for promoting the organic agriculture through a regional project targeting at the development of the production and the markets of organic agriculture at both national and regional level.

In support to the discussion and to the tools identification and choice, the representative of Bioland Markt GmbH&Co.KG the Managing Director - Mr. Amos Ramsauer, concluded the debate by shortly introducing the seven principles of Bioland for agriculture of the future:

1. Circuit flow
2. Soil protection
3. Animal welfare
4. Good and healthy products
5. Biological diversification
6. Protection of own resources
7. Human resources



Mr. Ramsauer underlined that these principles can be developed within the regional and national campaign for organic agriculture development in the Balkan region, as well.

At the same time, he mentioned some important services that this company offers to the farmers and manufacturers in order to satisfy the market demand and the customers (Support to the establishment of farmers' groups for supply chains, advisory structures for farmers and manufacturers with a HOTLINE for both).

Due to the increasing market of organic products in Germany, this company is in a search for partners from the Balkan countries.

To conclude the session, a working group was designated to develop a project proposal on this second topic. The group is formed by the Croatian, Albanian and Macedonian country teams.

.

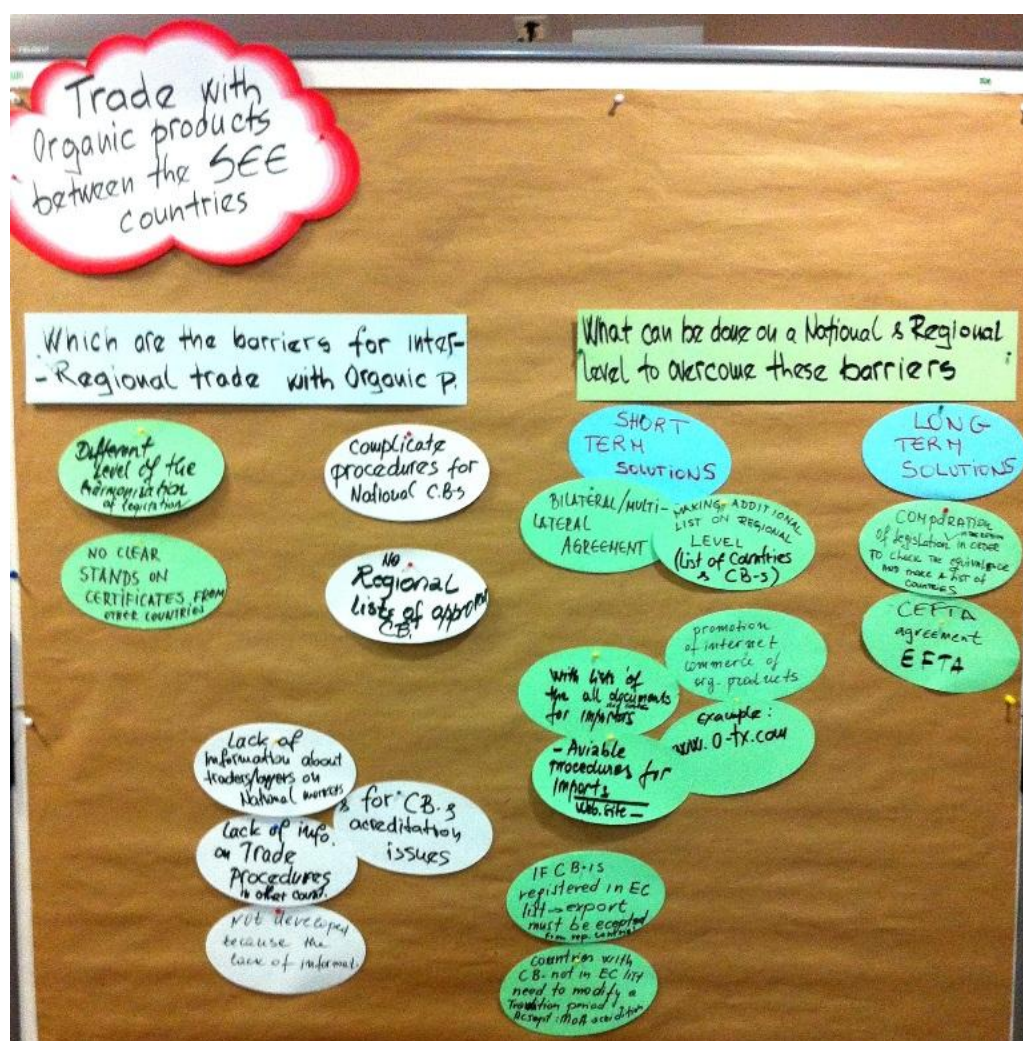
Session III - Trade of organic products between the SEE Countries

Mr. Goran Angelovski, the Macedonian representative of BON, took over the responsibility to work on the initial concept idea for the inter-regional trade. His concept was presented at the beginning of the third session which took place on the morning of the second day of the meeting. Emphasis of the presentation was put on the trade barriers and some suggestions to overcome them.

During the plenary, the participants identified the encountered barriers for inter-regional trade and proposed short and long-terms solutions. The main recognized barriers for the inter-regional trade of organic products within the Balkan region are:

- Different levels of harmonization of the national regulation for organic production and trade
- Lack of information on trade (exporters/importers) of organic products in general:

- Lack and unclear information on trade procedures in neighbouring countries for trade;
- Lack and unclear information on trade procedures in neighbouring countries for CBs accreditation issues
- No clear standards on certificates from all countries
- Complicated and unclear procedures for national CBs and no regional list of approved CBs



Possible solutions to overcome the multiple identified trade barriers of organic products within the Balkan countries were listed according to long term and short term interventions mostly dependent on political will and support.

- Suggested short term solutions:
 - Bilateral/multi-lateral agreement for organic products exchanges
 - Making an additional list of “authorised/accredited” (choose the correct term that fit the context) CBs at regional level
 - Make a regional and/or national portal or website for all organic stakeholders regrouping all the documentation and procedures available and necessary for export/import within each of the countries of the Balkan region
 - Promote the e-commerce of organic products within the Balkan countries

- Suggested long term solutions:

- Mutual comparison of the national legislations/standards for organic production to check the equivalence and to establish of a third country list for the Balkan countries
- Create a regional agreement as the EFTA one for the free trade barriers for organic agriculture products within the Balkan region countries.

After the discussion, the third working group was designated to develop a project proposal on the trade topic and formed by the Serbian team, Bulgarian EAG member & Macedonian BON representative, Montenegrin BON representative.

Session IV - Outcomes from the 2nd Working meeting of the EAG on Organic Agriculture

The concluding session summed up all the obtained outputs of the previous working sessions and established the next steps to be undertaken.

The focal outputs **of the meeting**:

- The concept ideas on priority issues were shared and discussed with all members of EAG.
- The concept ideas were further developed and consolidated.
- Three working groups were defined for the development of the agreed project proposals..

The participants and the moderators agreed on the future coordination and **next steps** as follow:

- SWG Secretariat & IAMB will send a template for the proposal development by the **6th of March**.
- The proposals will be written by the WG-s and submitted to the SWG Secretariat & IAMB by the **29th of March**.
- SWG Secretariat & IAMB will review the submitted proposals by the **10th of April**.
- SWG Secretariat will present the proposals to the SWG Delegates during the 26th Assembly session to be held from the **16th to the 19th of April**.
- If the proposals are accepted by the SWG Assembly, the SWG will further facilitate the EAG in the process of finalization of the project proposals and will search for donors.

The **objectives for the 3rd Working meeting of the EAG** were set up as follow:

- i) Finalize the project proposals
- ii) Discuss the project's implementation
- iii) Propose donors

As for the **time and venue of the next meeting**, the Croatian team proposed to host the meeting in Metkovic, Croatia during the National Fair on Organic Agriculture in July or August. The Croatian team will check and communicate the exact dates of the National Fair on organic agriculture so SWG will check the feasibility of the meeting at the proposed place and dates.

To conclude, and upon request of the facilitators, the group expressed its opinion regarding what could be enhanced for the next meetings. The remarks were registered by the organizers and will be taken in consideration for the future events.

Annex I – Realized Programme

26th February 2013 (Tuesday)

Arrival of the participants in Sarajevo, Hotel “Astra-Garni”

(Optionally: visit to the “2nd International Fair for Organic Products and Eco-Tourism - ORGANC SARAJEVO 2013”)

19:00 Dinner in the hotel

27th February 2013 (Wednesday)

09:00 – 09:30 Registration of participants

09:30 – 10:30 **Introduction**

- Presentation of the program and agreement on the methodology
- Clarification on the Concept of the Expert Advisory Groups within the SWG

10:30 – 11:00 Coffee break

11:00 – 13:00 **Working Session I**

- Elaboration of a concept idea for the priority activity No. 1: „Harmonization of the legislation in the Region”
- Presentation of the concept proposal by the responsible EAG Members (Mr. Tomislav Petrovic and Ms. Matija Vukusic)
- Guided plenary discussion
- Summary

13:00 – 15:00 Lunch Break

15:00 – 16:00 **Working Session II**

- Elaboration of a concept idea for the priority activity No. 2: „Regional Campaign for raising awareness on OP among consumers and producers”
- Presentation of the concept proposal by the responsible EAG Members (Ms. Olivera Bicikliski and Mr. Goran Angelovski)

16:00 – 16:30 Coffee break

16:30 – 18:00 **Working Session II, continuation**

- Guided plenary discussion

19:00 Dinner in the hotel

28th February 2013 (Thursday)

09:30 – 10:30 **Summary from the previous day and clarification about the open questions related to Session II**

10:30 – 11:00 Coffee break

11:00 – 13:30 Working Session III

- Elaboration of a project concept for the priority activity No. 3: „Trade with organic products between the SEE Countries”
- Presentation of the concept proposal by the responsible EAG Member (Mr.Goran Angelovski)
- Guided plenary discussion
- Summary

13:30 – 15:00 Lunch Break

15:00 – 17:00 Closing session

- Agreement on follow up activities and future coordination/communication
- Setting objectives for the 3rd working meeting
- Evaluation

17:00 Good buy coffee

19:00 Traditional dinner in the hotel

01st March 2013 (Friday)

Departure of the participants (after the breakfast)

Annex II - List of participating members of the EAG

No	First name	Surname	Position	Country	Institution	Contact details
REPRESENTATIVES FROM the MINISTRIES						
1	Merita	Petushi	Chief of the production policies	Albania	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer, Protection	Office:00 355 42 226 551 Mob: 00355 67 206 2148 Merita.petushi@mbumk.gov.al
2	Sabaheta	Ćutuk	Professional Advisor	Bosnia and Herzegovina/Federation	Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry of BiH	Phone: 00387 33 726 607 sabaheta.cutuk@fmpvs.gov.ba
3	Dragana	Zec	Higher Assistant	Bosnia and Herzegovina/Rep. of Srpska	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of Rep. Srpska	Office:00387 51 338 596 Mob: 00387 65 711 463 d.zec@mps.vladars.net
4	Tomislav	Petrovic	Head of department	Croatia	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development	Office:00385 1 6106 373 Mob: 00385 98 733 349 tomislav.petrovic@mps.hr
5	Olivera	Bicikliski	Advisor	Macedonia	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy	Mob: 00389 70 409 847 olivera.bicikliski@mzsv.gov.mk
6	Jelena	Milic	Advisor for development of Organic Agriculture	Serbia	Ministry of Agriculture, Trade, Forestry and Water Management	Office:00381 11 363 1544 Mob: 00381 64 805 5781 jelena.milic@minpolj.gov.rs
7	Maja	Manojlovic	Professor	Serbia	Fac. of Agriculture University of Novi Sad (on behalf of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina)	Office:00381 21 4853 371 Mob: 00381 64 37 104 73 majacuv@polj.uns.ac.rs
8	Neli	Valeva	Junior expert	Bulgaria	Ministry of Agriculture and Food	Office: 00359 2 985 11 363 Mob.:00359 899 918 468 nvaleva@mzh.government.bg

REPRESENTATIVES FROM BON						
1	Enver	Isufi	Director	Albania	Institute for Organic Agriculture, Shkozet, Durres	Mob: 00 355 69 2087 205 en.isufi@gmail.com
2	Sejad	Herceg	Manager	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Union of Associations of organic producers of Federation of BiH	Office: 00387 30 526 291 Mob: 00387 61 781 130 info@organskofbih.ba
3	Goran	Angelovski	Executive Director	Macedonia	Federation of producers of organic products of Macedonia FPOPM	Mob: 00 389 78 212 388 dvm.angelovski@gmail.com info@fpopm.com
4	Jelena	Ivovic	Project Manager	Serbia	Association TERRA'S, Trg cara Jovana Nenada 15, Subotica	Office: 00381 24 554 600 Mob:00381 60 045 1985 jelena.ivovic@gmail.com
5	Matija	Vukusic	President	Croatia	Association DOBRA	Office: 00385 20 684 755 Mob:00385 99 354 1120 matija.vukusic@gmail.com
6	Ratko	Batakovic	President	Montenegro	NGO Agro group	Office: 00382 40 251 298 Mob:00382 67 255 101 agro.grupa@gmail.com
SWG Head Office/Secretariat representatives						
1	Boban	Ilic	Secretary General	Macedonia	SWG Head Office	Office: 00 389 23 217 708 mob: 00 389 70 248 636 boban.ilic@swg-seerural.org
2	Bogdanka	Gjorshoska	Project Manager	Macedonia	SWG Head Office	Office: 00 389 23 217 708 mob: 00 389 70 692 069 bogdanka.gjorshoska@swg-seerural.org
3	Irena	Andreevska	Moderator	Macedonia	SWG Head Office	Office: 00 389 2 2044 132 mob 00 389 71 334 799 public.relations@swg-seeruraal.org

Other participants						
1	Branko	Secic	Deputy Sector Fund Manager	Bosnia and Herzegovina	GIZ ORF Foreign Trade	Office: 00 387 33 957-523 mob 00 387 61 791-380 branko.secic@giz.de
2	Amos	Ramsauer	Managing Director	Germany	Bioland Markt GmbH&Co.KG	Office: 0049 30 5392 3732 mob.: 0049 172 863 43 62 amos.ramsauer@bioland-markt.de
3	Marie Reine	Bteich	Junior Researcher	Italy	IAMB	Office: 0039 080 4606 356 Mob: 0039 329 138 7004 bteich@iamb.it
4	Lejla	Caluk	Country Coordinator	Bosnia and Herzegovina	GIZ ORF Foreign Trade	Office: 00 387 33 957-525 lejla.caluk@giz.de
5	Andreas	Arnold	Manager	Germany	CIM/GIZ	GSM: 00387 63 142 942
6	Martin	Mautner-Markhof	Consultant	Austria	Agroservice	GSM: 0043 676 347 6007