



Report

Twenty-sixth Session of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) of
SEE Countries

Date: 17th - 18th April, 2013
Location: Siofók, Hungary
Organizer: SWG Head Office/Secretariat

Report Prepared by: SWG Head Office/Secretariat

April 2013

Purpose of the session:

The 26th session of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE was held in the period 17th - 18th of April 2013 in Siofók, Hungary.

The aim of the session was to discuss and decide about internal SWG procedures, the realization of upcoming SWG activities for the year 2013, exchange of experiences about the EU accession process and the benefits of it, as well as to decide on future initiatives, projects and cooperation.

All SWG delegates from the eleven SWG member institutions, and the four SWG observer institutions were officially invited to participate on the 26th SWG session.

Representatives of nine out of eleven SWG member institutions, participated on the session, discussed, gave recommendations and have taken the decisions listed below.

Representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Republic of Hungary, and on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management of Austria, the representatives from the Embassy of Austria in Hungary participated on the session as observers.

Representatives from the SWG partner institutions and international organizations (German International Cooperation (GIZ), Food and Agriculture Organization REU (FAO), European Environmental Agency (EEA) also participated on the session.

Topics discussed at the 26th SWG Session:

The main topics of the session which were discussed are the following:

I. SWG Session with participation of SWG partner institutions and organizations

- Outline on realized activities within the SWG in the period January – April 2013
- Discussion and updates on the SWG activities via SWG Operation Plan
 - Agricultural Policy Forum 2013
 - Annual Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from SEE 2013
 - World Plowing Contest 2013
- Cooperation with Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- Cooperation with the German International Cooperation (GIZ)
- Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations (OA)

II. Internal Session of the SWG Assembly

for SWG Member and Observer institutions only

MINUTES OF THE SESSION:

SWG Delegates/ Ministry representatives present from:

- Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection – Republic of Albania (Grigor Gjerci, Teuta Topi);
- Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations - Bosnia and Herzegovina (Ljubisha Lalovic);
- Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Pejo Janjic; Emir Rasic)
- Ministry of Agriculture - Republic of Croatia (Davorka Hajdukovic; Nada Trgovcevic Letica);
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development – Kosovo* (Bekim Hoxha; Halit Hoxhaj);
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy – Republic of Macedonia (Valentina Stojanovic – Tufa; Ljubo Peno);
- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development – Montenegro (Blagota Radulovic; Irina Vukcevic);
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management – Republic of Serbia (Aleksandar Bogunovic)
- Provincial Secretariat of Agriculture, Water Economy and Forestry- Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Serbia (Borislav Brunet; Sanja Segrt)

Ministry representatives of the SWG observer institutions present from:

- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development - Republic of Hungary (Katalin Toth; Zoltan Kalman; Adam Zoltan Kovacs; Bailant Ilies; Laszlo Percze)
- Embassy of Republic of Austria in Hungary (Ernst Zimmerl)

Other representatives present at the session were:

- German International Cooperation - GIZ (Angela Marx)
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations -FAO (Richard Eberlin)
- European Environmental Agency (Geertrui Louwagie)
- KFM Consult (Kaj Mortensen)

DISCUSSIONS:

On behalf of the Presidency of the SWG Assembly - Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development of Kosovo*, Mr. Bekim Hoxha opened and moderated the 26th SWG Assembly Session.

Conclusion: The SWG Assembly, assembled on the 26th SWG Session had qualified quorum.

**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.*

1. SWG Assembly Session (Open Meeting)

The 26th SWG Assembly Session begun as an open meeting. SWG observers and partner organizations/institutions participated at the meeting. The operational plan for 2013 can be found in Annex IV.

1.1 Outline on realized activities within the SWG in the period January – April 2013

i. Networking

ICC Berlin in January 2013: Regional panel on SEE during GFFA 2013 co-organized by the SWG; SWG promoted at the Cooperation Market, 17-19 January 2013, Berlin, Germany

As a part of the program of the 5th Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA) organized within the International Green Week Fair in Berlin from 17-19 January 2013, a Regional Panel on South Eastern Europe entitled: "Modernization Partnership South Eastern Europe – Responsible Investment and Cooperation along the Value Chain of the Agriculture and Food Industries in South-Eastern Europe" took part. The event was organized by the SWG in cooperation with Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations and GIZ.

Thus, the presentation of the study "Agriculture and Food-Industry in South Eastern Europe – Chances and Challenges of Investments and Co-Operations along the Value Chain" by Mr. Boban Ilic, Secretary General of the SWG was the basis for the further discussion. The study identifies those agricultural branches in Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia and Albania which are of particular importance in the regional, national and local value-added chain and thus offer excellent conditions to strengthen cooperation with German agribusiness.

1st National Networking Workshop for the FAO-SWG Project: "Streamlining of agriculture and rural development policies of SEE countries for EU accession", 7-15 February 2013, in Albania, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina

The workshops' discussions focused on:

- a) assessment of available data and information relating to EU agriculture and rural development policies (CAP) from the researchers' (universities, research institutes and civil societies) side (by LRTs);
- b) identifying the preliminary core technical fields to address during project implementation, and
- c) Preliminary Gap analysis between EU and SEE countries with special attention to agricultural and RD policy documents.

-Launching of networking and cooperation campaign at national level to initiate discussion on available information related to EU agriculture and rural development policies (CAP);
-Presentation the portal on the SWG website;
-Presentation on models of cooperation between academia and policy makers (AgriPolicy network or case studies from EU-member states).

Memorandum of Understandings for sustainable economic development of the cross-border PRESPA, DRINA-TARA, DRINA-SAVA regions were signed by the Mayors or Deputy Mayors from participating municipalities”, 1st March 2013, Korca, Albania, 5th March 2013 Brcko, Bosnia and Herzegovina and 7th March 2013 Zlatibor, Serbia

The Mayors or their deputies from participating Municipalities of the selected cross-border regions confirmed their willingness and readiness for participation in the process of mutual cooperation and joint actions for development of these cross-border regions by signing the MoUs.

The aim of the MoUs is to promote the mutual understanding and cooperation among the stakeholders as well as the regional ownership of the actions to be implemented in function to sustainable economic growth of the concerned cross-border regions and they express the willingness and readiness for participation in the process of mutual cooperation and joint actions for development of the cross-border regions.

These documents are result of the previous activities realized within the scope of preparations for implementation of the Area Based Development Approach (ABDA) in the Western Balkan countries; Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) between participating municipalities and cities from the four (4) selected cross-border regions were prepared.

ii. Capacity Building

SWG delegation on IPA Conference 2013, January 25th, 2013, Brussels, Belgium

The SWG delegation participated on IPA 2013 Conference organized by the European Commission – DG Enlargement. The IPA 2013 Conference aimed at presentation of the preparations for IPA II so far and the way forward, addressing important aspects such as priorities for the future assistance and the sector approach, partnership and ownership of the beneficiary countries, coordination and consultation with stakeholders.

Over four hundred participants had the opportunity to discuss and understand the key issues and the arrangements on assistance for the period 2014-2020.

As underlined during the conference, ownership will be the key success factor for IPA II programming, therefore the IPA Conference 2013 provided the participants an opportunity to take active role in discussing and addressing the key issues to be addresses during the implementation of IPA II.

TAIEX workshop on rural development measures for IPA 2014-2020, 19-20 February 2013, Brussels, Belgium

A multi-beneficiary workshop for IPA beneficiaries on “The rural development measures for IPA II/IPARD 2014- 2020” was organized by TAIEX in cooperation with DG Agriculture and Rural Development and the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South-Eastern Europe from the 19th to the 20th of February in Brussels, Belgium.

The WS was attended by more than 70 participants representing the Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies of the countries concerned (SEE countries, European Commission staff with an expertise on various subjects, working in Directorate Generals for Agriculture and for Enlargement, staff from EU Delegations, rural development experts from the Member States.

The main objective of the meeting was to feed into the work done by DG Agriculture and Rural Development on designing the rural development measures to be used in rural development

programmes under IPA II. This event built onto the reflections on implementation of IP ARD and potential role and structure of the rural development programmes, having taken place in the previous gatherings (APF 2011, meetings of Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies from 2012 and TAIEX WS-s on implementation of IPA/IPARD in 2011 and 2012).

Expert Advisory Group on Organic Agriculture in SEE within the SWG”, 26 February – 01 March 2013, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

The 2nd working meeting of the Expert Advisory Group on Organic Agriculture in SEE was organized by the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South-Eastern Europe (SWG) as an internal event which took part during the “2nd International Fair for Organic Products and Eco-Tourism – ORGANC SARAJEVO 2013”.

The aim of the working meeting facilitated by SWG and CIHEAM-IAMB, was to discuss the three identified priorities for the Regional cooperation which were set up during the 1st Coordinative meeting previously held in Subotica:

- 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

The concept ideas on which the Croatian team (harmonization), Macedonian team (promotion) and Bon representative from Macedonia (trade) worked between the 1st and the 2nd working meeting of the EAG were presented. During the working sessions in Sarajevo, these ideas were discussed and further developed by all members of the EAG.

Second Meeting of the Stakeholders` Groups from the cross-border regions “PRESPA” and “SHARRA”: Training on Project Cycle Management, Project Proposal Writing and Strategic Planning, 11-15 March 2013, Mavrovo, Macedonia

The Objective of the 2nd Meeting of the Stakeholders` Groups of cross-border regions “PRESPA” and “SHARRA” was to build capacities of the members of the SHGs on Project Cycle Management, Project Proposal Writing and Strategic Planning.

The participants at the training session for these two cross-border regions, took place in Mavrovo, Macedonia, from the 11th to the 15th of March, was divided in two working groups based on their preferences:

- Working Group on Project Proposal Writing;
- Working Group on Strategic Planning.

Regional Expert Advisory Working Group Meeting on water and forest management in South Eastern Europe, 16th - 19th March 2013, Gmunden, Austria

The regional expert advisory working group meeting was organized on behalf of the Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) and the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management of Austria.

The regional expert advisory working group meeting is a follow-up on the future steps out to be taken for the regional coordination of joint water resource and forestry management in the region of South Eastern Europe. During the meeting the participants had the opportunity to

see successful examples of sustainable forest management in European Union (case of Austria) through the Forest Act.

At the meeting the working group also presented the updates on the developed regional project concepts which have been in the process of development since 2012.

Regional Expert Advisory Working Group Meeting on the appearance of the Aflatoxins in the Region, April 4th 2013, Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina

On April 4th, prominent experts from the SEE countries working in the field of Veterinary Sciences, Phyto-sanitary and Animal Feeding held a meeting on Jahorina and discussed topics related to Risk Assessment, Risk Management and Control.

Based on the joint and reconciled proposals for measures and actions related to the problem of the appearance of the Aflatoxins in the Region prepared by the above mentioned technical Expert Advisory Working Group, the Ministers discussed and came up with Conclusions related to the following issues:

- Establishment of permanent communication channels of the Institutions in the SEE countries which are dealing with Risk Assessment, Risk Management, Control and Quality testing, Fodder and Food products for human consumption;
- Exchange of information about the Control mechanisms and Food Safety Chain;
- Agreement about the measures and provisional action plan for improved communication and coordination between the Ministries.

Third Stakeholders' Groups meetings for "Sharra", "Prespa", "Drina-Sava" and "Drina-Tara" cross border areas, 8-13 April 2013 in Durres, Albania and 21-26 April 2013 in the ethno village Stanisici, Bosnia and Herzegovina

The objective of the 3rd meeting was to build the capacities of the members of the Stakeholders' Groups of "Sharra", "Prespa", "Drina-Sava" and "Drina-Tara" cross-border regions on communication, presentation, organization of meetings, documentation, as well as information about the preparation of IPA programming documents.

iii. Advocacy and resource mobilization

Meeting with the representatives from IFC, 23rd April 2013, Vienna, Austria

SWG Secretary General had a meeting with the representatives International Finance Cooperation (IFC) working in the Western Balkan in order to discuss the possibilities for future cooperation in the SEE region.

At the meeting both parties discussed the common field of cooperation in the region and joint topics on which future projects can be possibly implemented.

iv. Policy analysis

Development of Strategy 2020 for South Eastern Europe, 18th - 19th February 2013, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

The South East Europe 2020 Strategy (SEE 2020) is being developed by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and its partners as the main regional framework for growth, following the adoption of the SEE 2020 at the Ministerial meeting on 24 November 2011 and the adoption of high-level regional headline targets for growth by the SEE region's Ministers of Economy.

As a regional organization the SWG was invited at the meeting in order to promote agriculture and rural development as a important pillar for the Strategy 2020 of South Eastern Europe.

Conclusions from the Ad Hoc meeting of the Ministers responsible for Agriculture and Food from South-Eastern Europe, 04-05 April, Jahorina and Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

An Ad Hoc Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from SEE took part in Jahorina and Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina from the 4th to the 5th of April. In the light of the emerging problem in the SEE region related to the appearance of the Aflatoxins in the fodders and consequently in the dairy products for human consumption, the meeting was initiated and hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina in cooperation with the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group.

Prior to this meeting, on April 4th, prominent experts from the SEE countries working in the field of Veterinary Sciences, Phyto-sanitary and Animal Feeding held a meeting on Jahorina and discussed topics related to Risk Assessment, Risk Management and Control.

v. Information exchange and access to knowledge

Updates on the SWG web portal

The SWG Head Office/Secretariat is in the process of developing a new portal for the SWG web site.

1.2 Upcoming activities via SWG Operational Plan

The SWG Assembly discussed major activities foreseen for 2013. The following activities are to be executed by the end of the year (Annex IV):

- *Study tour on water and forest management of the Regional Expert Advisory Working Group in SEE*
 - Invitations to be send by the end of April 2013;
 - Study tour to be held in upper Austria and Bavaria-Germany;
 - Venue and logistics have been defined and are in process.
- *Regional meeting of the Balkan Rural Networks*
 - A meeting to be organized among the Rural Networks of the Western Balkans during the Novi Sad Fair in Serbia in May 2013;
 - Preparations on organizational details and logistics will begin after the meeting.
- *World Plowing Contest, 19th - 20th July 2013, Alberta, Canada*
 - Invitations to be send to the Ministers of Agriculture from SEE by the organizers of the WPC in Canada;
 - Costs related to the participation at the WPC, local transport and accommodation to be covered by the organizers;
 - Ministries from SEE to state if they are interested to participate at the WPC by end of April.

- *27th SWG Assembly Session*
 - Invitations to be send in August 2013;
 - The Assembly Session to be organized in Albania.
- *Agricultural Policy Forum 2012, 16th – 19th October 2013, Kosovo**
 - Topics for the APF 2012 were discussed;
 - Key-note speeches will focus on IPARD 2020, Food safety, Conclusions of Rio +20,;
 - Themes for the working groups were defined based on the key-note speeches;
 - The venue of the Forum to be agreed with the Ministry of Agriculture of Kosovo*;
 - Invitations to be send by end of June 2013.
- *7th Annual Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from South Eastern Europe, 15th – 17th November 2013, Serbia*
 - Preparations are in process with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development;
 - Venue has to be defined with the Ministry of Agriculture of Serbia;
 - Invitations to be send by end of June 2013.
- *28th SWG Assembly Session (Annual Meeting) first half of December 2013*
 - The Annual Assembly Session is foreseen to be organized in Bulgaria, details regarding the venue still to be defined.



Meeting of the SWG Assembly in Slofok, Hungary (18th of April 2013)

1.3 Cooperation with SWG partner institutions and organizations

Cooperation with Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations (FAO UN)

Mr. Richard Eberlin presented the updates on the project on *Streamlining of agriculture and rural development policies of SEE countries for EU accession* to the SWG Assembly.

Second Regional Networking Workshop for the FAO SWG Project: "Streamlining of agriculture and rural development policies of SEE countries for EU accession" will be held in the period 22 – 24 May 2013 in Bar, Montenegro. At the workshop the project team and stakeholders will presented the updates and process of the project implementation.

Cooperation with the German International Cooperation (GIZ)

Ms. Angela Marx presented the regional training activities 2013 on Regional Rural Development within the Human Capacity Development (HCD) programme "EU Integration of South Eastern Europe". Details on the activities which will be implemented in the following period of 2013 can be found in Annex V.

Cooperation with the Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations (OA)

Mr. Boban Ilic shortly presented the developments on the cooperation with the Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations (OA). The survey developed jointly by SWG and OA on "Chances and Challenges of Investments and Co-operation along the Value Chain" has been completed. The SWG and OA are in discussion on continuing the future cooperation with possible joint programs and projects.



Field visit to the national park directory

2. Conclusions/Decisions Made:

- National Chamber of Agriculture of Hungary interested for establishing cooperation with SWG;
- SWG Assembly did not differ to the development of the area based development activities undertaken in the selected cross-border areas;
- Organizational details and program for the organization of Agricultural Policy Forum 2013 have been defined. Invitations to be send by end of June 2013;
- Organizational details and program for the organization the 7th Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture in SEE have been defined. Invitations to be send by end of June 2013;
- The upcoming activities via the SWG Operational Plan for 2013 have been discussed and agreed upon;
- Details regarding the cooperation among SWG with FAO, OA and GIZ were presented and discussed.