The Regional Rural Development
Standing Working Group (SWG) in South-East Europe

Annual Report 2011

South Eastern Europe
SWG
RRD
Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group

December 2011

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List of Abbreviations

ABD	Area Based Development
APF	Agriculture Policy Forum
CAP	Common Agriculture Policy of the European Union
CBI	Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries
CBIB	Cross Border Institution Building
CEI	Central European Initiative
CEEER	Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations
DGAGRI	Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Commission
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GIZ	German International Cooperation
GEF	Global Environmental Fund
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
IPARD	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance for Rural Development
IPTS	Institute for Prospective Technological Studies
JRC	European Commission's Joint Research Centre
LAG	Local Action Group
LFA	Less Favored Areas
NGO	Non Governmental Organizations
NRDN	National Rural Development Networks
MA	Managing Authority
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
PUPS	Business Association of Serbian Markets
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
RCI	Regional Competitiveness Initiative
REU	Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia of FAO
SEE	South Eastern Europe
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SWG	Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South East Europe
SEE	South Eastern Europe
TD	Technical Discussion
WB	Western Balkans
WG	Working Group
WFD	EU Water Framework Directive
YPG	Informal Group of Young Professionals for Rural Development

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1. Introduction - SWG Strategic Framework and Core Functions

The “SWG” stands for Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South Eastern Europe. It is an International Intergovernmental Organization consisted of governmental institutions responsible for agriculture and rural development in respective countries and territories.

It is a platform for networking and regional co - operation among the SEE countries and territories in the field of agriculture and rural development.

It was founded on the basis of a common wish to establish an organization for sustainable rural development in SEE. As an organization the SWG is a international body, acting in a spirit of friendship and good neighborliness and enhances mutual respect and confidence, dialogue and cooperation among the Member Institutions.

The functioning of the SWG is divided between the SWG Assembly and the SWG Head Office/Secretariat. The SWG Head Office/Secretariat is entrusted to a Secretary General who oversees the SWG organizational, administrative, coordinative and managerial tasks.

The tasks of the SWG Assembly include planning of initiatives and projects of SEE regional relevance which are in compliance with SWG principles and guidelines. The Secretariat’s functions are to ensure that SWG’s Strategic Objective is achieved with maximum efficiency and effectiveness and implements plans, initiatives and projects which are approved by the Assembly.

Conference on ‘‘Facilitating an area-based development approach in rural cross-border areas of the Western Balkans’’

Vision

Innovative and sustainable agriculture and rural development through cohesive regional co-operation for improvement of rural livelihoods in the SEE countries.

Mission

To increase horizontal collaboration among respective countries and territories of SEE, coordinating regional initiatives related to agriculture and rural development and support the process of economic development in rural areas of Southeastern Europe.

General Objective

To facilitate close cooperation among the Ministries of Agriculture and other stakeholders in the field of agriculture and rural development and to support the EU integration

Specific Objectives

- To improve the common understanding of EU agriculture and rural development policies;
- To assist the improvement of implementation structures and systems for agriculture and rural development in rural areas, with specific emphasis on cross border cooperation;
- To improve the understanding and use of implementation tools for agriculture and rural development;
- To identify and share information and application of good practice in agriculture and rural development to broaden the rural agenda**.**

Functions

- F1. Networking and enhancing regional cooperation
- F2. Capacity Building
- F3. Advocacy and resource mobilization
- F4. Policy analysis
- F5. Information exchange and access to knowledge

SWG Member institutions

SWG Members

Republic of Albania
Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection

Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Srpska
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management

Republic of Bulgaria
Ministry of Agriculture and Food

Republic of Croatia
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development

Republic of Macedonia
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy

Montenegro
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

Republic of Serbia
Ministry of Agriculture, Trade, Forestry and Water Management

Kosovo (UNSCR 1244)
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development

SWG Observers

Republic of Austria
Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management

Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Republic of Serbia
Provincial Secretariat of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry

Republic of Slovenia
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food

Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry

2. Background

The Annual report 2011 of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South-East Europe presents summary of the most important activities undertaken and accomplished by the SWG in the period January – December 2011.

The SWG Head Office/Secretariat in close cooperation and coordination with the SWG members performed series of actions by managing, organizing and sustaining the measures of the SWG in compliance with the SWG Strategic and Operational Plan.

SWG is committed to excellence in everything that it does, and promoting excellence will feature prominently in its advocacy, partnership and capacity strengthening functions. Other SWG principles involve commitments to the principle of subsidiarity, delivery and accountability and participatory approaches. These principles are reflected in all SWG's functions and the related activities performed in the year of 2011.

3. Key Facts - SWG in 2011

This section presents summary of the overall SWG activities and achievements in the year of 2011.

The Strategic and Operational Plan for the midterm period 2011-2015 was prepared based on the outcomes of the European Commission Technical Assistance to the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE, Project Number 2010/245088.

The purpose of the strategic and operational plan is to review, update and clarify the strategic framework SWG operates through, and to set out the operational details through which SWG functions in providing valued services to its Member Institutions and wider stakeholders in the medium term period. The plan guides SWG in achieving its strategic priorities in the five-year period 2011-2015.

Summarized below are the main recorded achievements:

- Participation of more than 200 Ministry representatives and stakeholders on technical discussions for wine trade markets, EU Water Framework Directive, Forests & Water networking, food safety and quality etc.

- More than 90 Ministry representatives have been trained on Agriculture Information System and Statistics, Less Favoured Areas, LEADER and Agro-Environmental Measures trough TAIEX Workshops and Study Visits.

- More than 60 Ministry representatives and stakeholders participated on study trips for establishment of Rural Networks and Agro-Environmental Measures.

- More than 60 Ministry representatives and stakeholders have been trained on Managing Regional Rural Development and Regional Marketing: Branding of Products and Regions.

- More than 5 brochures on organic agriculture production, provisions for labelling and marketing of organic products on EU, guidance for Global Gap 4.0, Macedonian wines, and Facts and Figures of Macedonian agriculture prepared and printed by the SWG.

- More than 50 companies working in the agro and food sector were supported in the process of implementation of food safety and quality standards.

- More than 100 companies and producers promoted their products on fairs and regional events.

- More than 5 rural events and people to people actions for promotion and preservation of rural cultural heritage have been organized and/or supported.

- Promotion of SWG at more than 10 Conferences and events.

- Organization of Agricultural Policy Forum 2011 with participation of approximately 70 Ministry representatives and relevant agriculture and rural development stakeholder resulted with Split Agenda 2011.

- Organization of the 5th Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers` of Agriculture from South-East Europe 2011 with the Conclusions of the Ministers for the accomplishments to be made by the SWG for 2012 and onward as the meeting outcome.

Photo by :
Leticija Hrenkovic

4. Review by task areas

I. Networking and enhancing regional cooperation

Throughout the year of 2011, the SWG maintained and endorsed open, active, constructive and permanent cooperation among the SWG members, SWG partners and relevant stakeholders within the scope of their responsibilities contributing to the overall agriculture and rural development and the ongoing integration processes of the South-East European countries in the European Union (EU).

Set of initiatives and activities related to agriculture and rural development on national, regional and EU scale initiated by the SWG members and various stakeholders were supported by the SWG contributing to peace, stability and prospect to the ongoing integration processes with the EU.

During the year of 2011 the SWG efforts for strengthening regional cooperation and networking in the agriculture and rural development sectors resulted with official confirmation of the willingness and readiness for cooperation. As a result a number of networking agreements were signed among SWG and the respective stakeholders.

Declaration on Networking among the SWG, National Rural Development Networks (NRDN) and initiatives for National Rural Development Networks of the South-East European countries aims to establish a framework and give directions for future cooperation in the area of rural development between the signatories' organizations.

Considering the importance of the regional cooperation, the signatories of the Declaration on networking, expressed their readiness to work together on improvement and strengthening the cooperation of the rural development networks in the Balkans and establishment of a platform for regular exchange of information, experience and knowledge, as well as joint initiation and implementation of multi-lateral project "Balkan Rural Network".

Following the current situation within the National Rural Development Networks in SEE countries related to organization structure, capacity, scope of work and operations, further support is needed in terms of strengthening of the capacities of the NRDN in SEE.

Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Green and Wholesale Markets of the countries of South-East Europe and the SWG confirms the inclination of the involved parties to work together on strengthening of their mutual cooperation, exchange of information,

experiences and know-how related to food safety and quality, market prices and trade regulations, as well as joint implementation of regional projects.

Establishment of Balkan Network of green and wholesale markets and membership in World Association of Wholesale Markets are defined as one of the main aspirations of the informal network of markets for the forthcoming period.

Area Based Development (ABD) considered as an innovative approach enabling breakthrough in sustainable growth of rural cross-border regions in the Western Balkan (WB) countries has been identified as a priority for the work of SWG in 2011 and onwards.

The ABD approach in the region was initiated as part of the EU-financed (DG AGRI) study entitled "Facilitating an area-based development approach in rural cross-border areas of the Western Balkans" carried out by the Commission's Joint Research Centre – IPTS in close cooperation with the SWG. The study covered the Drina-Tara Region - a cross-border area between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia – and, as part of the study, IPTS developed a methodology for designing and applying the ABD approach to other cross-border regions, as well.

SWG aspire to capitalise and build upon the results of the study carried out by the European Commission (EC) and in the upcoming years, anticipates on facilitating the sustainable growth in a number of selected regions in the Western Balkans by using the ABD methodology and main principles developed and tested during the EC study.

Therefore, starting from September 2011, the SWG is implementing a project preparation facility financed by the EC which aim is to prepare a project proposal for implementation of ABD in several cross-border regions of the Western Balkans. The output of the project preparation facility will be a project fiche and technical annexes related to the selected cross-border regions (in-depth analyses and development action plans for each of the regions), which would provide a basis for multi-annual project covering a number of Western Balkan countries.

In the context of the study on the Drina-Tara region in May 2011 a Conference "Facilitating an area-based development approach in rural cross-border areas of the Western Balkans" was organised by JRS IPTS in cooperation with SWG where the results of the study performed were presented. The discussions among the broad range of local and international stakeholders confirmed that application of the ABD in cross-border regions in the Western Balkans might be prospective in resolving many current problems and unleashing the potential of sustainable growth through networking.

Conference on "Facilitating an area-based development approach in rural cross-border areas of the Western Balkans'' Belgrade

Within the project "Strengthening of the regional cooperation/networking in the forestry and water management sector and sustainable development in the river basins of the South-Eastern Europe countries" the SWG in cooperation with the German International Cooperation (GIZ) is supporting a preparation of a **feasibility study**. The study will assess the current situation and responsibilities of different institutions in the water and forestry sector and evaluation of the feasible opportunities for the development of a functional network or Commission on water and forestry issues in the Western Balkan countries. Two technical discussion workshops, country baseline reports on water and forest issues respectively prepared by national experts, workshops hosted by the appropriate Ministry in each of the beneficiary country, as well as questionnaire for interviewing relevant Ministries, Agencies and stakeholders contributed to the process of exploring the opportunities for networking and regional cooperation for sustainable forestry and water management in the South-East European region. **Technical Discussion on Implementation of EU Water Framework Directive** aimed at addressing the needs and concerns in the context of the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) 2000/60/EC which practical implementation is a complex process containing many institutional, political and technical elements.

Through this workshop the participants identified common challenges in the international and national framework, including the cross-sectoral cooperation among the water, environment and forestry sectors for a proper implementation of the WFD in the SEE countries.

The **International Workshop on Integrated management of water and forests in river basin areas** across the South-East European countries aimed at discussion of draft findings of the feasibility study carried out to identify options for improved regional and cross border cooperation between the forest sector and water sector as a contribution to sustainable development in the South-East European countries.

Feedback and comments were given on the draft conclusions of the feasibility study as well as, opportunities for improved regional and cross border cooperation were discussed through identification and elaboration of regional project ideas on integrated water and forestry management.

As results from the technical discussions, the representatives from the water and forestry sectors became aware that the improvement of coordination policies on water and forestry should be done by joint planning, decision-making, implementation and improving the current level of enforcement of existing forestry and water legislations and policies.

Following the strategic orientations of the SWG, **Working Group of the Managing Authorities** from SEE was established within the SWG. The first working meeting of Managing Authorities (MA) Working Group was organized by the Croatian Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development and the SWG Secretariat. The aim of the meeting was to discuss the role of Managing Authorities in a perspective of managing Rural Development Programs of the EU with a focus on the pre-accession period, exchange experiences between representatives of MA from EU candidate and potential candidate countries, as well as to decide on future cooperation. The second working meeting will follow in the beginning of 2012.

The **Technical Discussion (TD) on: ”Wine trade markets – opportunities for the region of South-East Europe”** organized for representatives of the Ministries of Agriculture dealing with wine sector, representatives of national associations of wine producers, representatives of wine roads and representatives of wineries from South- East Europe gave the participants the opportunity to present and discuss the national legislation related to wine sector, wine trade and possibilities for the South-East Europe wine sector in the process of EU integration.

The TD was also an opportunity to discuss the best practice, recommended opportunities and chances for the small wineries to actively join or initiate activities towards development and sustainability of integrated rural tourism and indirect export to the EU and worldwide.

Opportunities for development of SEE / Balkan Wine routs – cross-border networking of wine roads as well as, joint approach of SEE wines to the

markets of third countries – such as South Korea, China, Hong Kong, USA etc. were discussed and examined.

Technical Discussion (TD) on: "Wine trade markets – opportunities for the region of South-East Europe"

Establishment of Working Group on wine consisted by Ministry representatives, experts and representatives of national associations of wine producers within the SWG framework was identified as one of the regional priorities.

During the **Technical discussion:"Development of Organic Agriculture in the SEE Countries - Trade Procedures and Recognition of National Organic Certificates between the SEE Countries"**, participants concluded that improved regional cooperation, aiming to protect the competitive values which are in favor to the organic agricultural production and to create sustainable market for organic products is an appropriate tool to stimulate the development of the organic agriculture in the region of South-East Europe.

Therefore, the SWG will further continue to support the regional cooperation in the organic sector within a frame of WG which should be established in the next year.

The First Regional **Fair of Home-made Food** provided space for more than twenty producers of traditional home-made food from SEE region to promote their products and to discuss the market opportunities. The SWG supported the event by providing experts to present on specific topics related to products with Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) and Traditional Specialties Guaranteed (TSG),

as well as by promoting the event towards massive participation of producers from SEE region.

Following the excellent successes of the SEE companies participating on the First "**Culinaria" - Trade Fair on Fine Food** in 2010, this year the SWG as co-organizing partner of the fair, informed and invited more than 400 companies from the SEE countries. The trade fair organized in the last week of September provided space and opportunities for approximately 120 food and drinks manufacturers to connect with professional buyers, import-export companies and agents, supermarket chains from the Balkans and the EU.

The **Second working meeting** between the representatives of the National Associations of Markets, Green and Wholesale markets from the Western Balkan countries was successfully organized in cooperation with the Business Association of Serbian Markets (PUPS) and Sarajevo Market. Representatives from green and whole sale markets discussed possible methods on continuing the regional networking between Green and Wholesale markets from the Western Balkan countries and to maintain the established platform for regular exchange of information, experiences and know-how mainly through establishment of Balkan association of green and wholesale markets and membership in the World Association of Wholesale Markets.

The results from the **First coordinative meeting on networking between the professional beekeepers from the Balkan countries** went far beyond the expectations - discussion was carried out on creation of functional networks and establishment of cooperation in the Western Balkan region. As a final result from this coordinative meeting, an Action Plan was elaborated to achieve the defined goals: establishment of regional association of professional beekeepers, capacity building, and improvement of competitiveness through improved quality and joint trade activities.

The SWG supported the organization of this year's **PREPARE gathering**, which included series of events/WS-s and provided the rural civil society with an opportunity to discuss and express views on the current challenges of rural development in Europe and beyond. This gathering also created a space for exchanging experience and ideas and stimulated an exchange of information between rural actors from those Central and Eastern European countries which are already EU members, and those which are preparing for accession, especially from the South-East European region. At the same time, the event promoted a dialogue between the public, private and NGO sectors.

1st International Conference: "Public events – way to develop and recognize the rural areas" and 39th Traditional Mowing on Rajac organized by the Regional Center for development of villages "MOBA" with

support of the SWG, gathered 50 participants who discussed the influence of traditional public events on development of rural tourism, importance of the local products for the future development of the rural tourism, links between the public events and side activities (hunting, fishing, sport…) and their influence on rural tourism development.

The traditional 39th Mowing on Rajac, besides the competition of the best mowers from different countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, Serbia, Norway, Switzerland etc.) presented additional program of various contents: fair of traditional handicrafts, rural tourism offer, cultural program to more than 15.000 visitors.

The SWG supported the organization of the **2nd Young Professionals Programme Conference: "Best practice lessons in managing the rural and agricultural transition following EU membership"** which was jointly organized by the German International Cooperation (GIZ) from Germany, the City of Nis and the Ministry of Agriculture, Trade, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Serbia.

The overall goal of the Conference was to strengthen professionals, decision makers and farmers on regional and local levels in their capacities and skills to manage and coordinate sustainable development activities through mobilizing local and regional potentials and resources.

In addition, the second meeting of the informal group of the Young Professionals for Rural Development (YPG) provided a platform for discussions of the future cooperation between the members of the YPG. As a result, an action plan for formalization of the already established cooperation was agreed.

The SWG within the scope of its activities and objectives related to networking activities for promotion and preservation of cultural heritage in the Balkan region, supported the organization of the Regional Manifestation **"Nusicijada 2011"**.

The manifestation was organized for a first time in 1969 and upon an initiative of the Non-governmental organization "Kudes" was renewed in 2010. The manifestation was organized in honor of the famous writer Branislav Nusic, who lived and worked in the Balkan region.

The aim of the manifestation was to strengthen regional cooperation in promotion of the regional cultural heritage of the Balkan region, as a segment of the development of Balkan rural areas, which is complimentary to the development of rural tourism.

II. Capacity Building

The SWG focused its activities on strengthening of the human and institutional capacity among the South-East Europe public and private stakeholders for contribution to sustainable agriculture and rural development.

In order to accomplish the capacity building operations in 2011 the SWG applied different measures such as organization of seminars, workshops, trainings, study visits, consultancy, preparation and publication of educational/technical material and others.

Taking into consideration the importance of the harmonization of national legislation related to agriculture and rural development of the South-East European countries with the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) of the European Union, the SWG established close cooperation with the TAIEX Unit of the European Commission.

Following the approved SWG TAIEX training maps four TAIEX events were organized in 2011 with participation of more than 90 Ministry representatives.

Multi-Country SWG-TAIEX Workshop on Less Favored Areas (LFA) -criteria, determination, current policy provided a platform for exchange of experiences and good practices in preparation of relevant legislation, definition of criteria, methodology and parameters for determination and classification of less favored areas.

Multi-country SWG and TAIEX Workshop on "Agriculture Information System and Statistics" was a workshop with a target group of relevant representatives of the SWG Member institutions and focused on related EU legislation on Agriculture Information System and Statistics. The main goal was to provide the participants with knowledge and understanding of EU acquis requirements and to increase awareness on the importance of establishment of the agriculture information system in the EU candidate countries and potential candidates. **Multi country SWG-TAIEX Workshop on LEADER -legal basis, policy implementation, LAGs, best practices** focused on relevant EU Legislation, institutional set-up, LEADER implementation mechanisms, LAG structure, technical fiche for LEADER, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Special attention was given to transfer of know-how, lessons learned and best practices from EU member countries related to LEADER approach.

Multi country-workshop on Agro-environmental measures was an opportunity for presentation of relevant EU Legislation, documents, instititional set-up, implementing structures and policy instruments directed to creating and implementing the agro-environmental measures.

The study visit in Slovenia was occasion for the participants to see the positive experiences on the field.

The SWG proposals for TAIEX events for the period June 2011-June 2012 was presented and discussed during the Fourth meeting of the TAIEX-Training Liaison Officers for agricultural, veterinary, phyto-sanitary and food safety policies.

Study trip: "Rural Networks in the European Union – Actors, Set-up and Tasks" was an opportunity for the representatives from the South-East European countries to observe and study the experiences of European Union member countries (Austria and Czech Republic) and learn the process of establishment of the rural development networks (set-up, major tasks and actors involved). In total 24 representatives from Ministries and National Rural Development Networks or existing initiatives from seven SWG member countries (except from Bulgaria) participated on this study trip.

Study trip: "Rural Networks in the European Union – Actors, Set-up and Tasks"

The SWG on behalf of FAO team implementing MDG-F UNJP Sustainable Tourism for Rural Development Program, organized a study tour for the members of the National Rural Development Council of Serbia for visiting the National Rural Development Council and rural development support structures, including the **Rural Development Network in Croatia**.

The study tour provided the participants with a possibility to observe and study the experiences of Croatia at the entrance to EU membership and learn the process of establishment, organizational structure and capacities of the rural development networks.

Seminar **Managing Regional Rural Development and Regional Marketing: Branding of Products and Regions** organized by GIZ in partnership with the SWG served to the 28 participants from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia as a learning hub for understanding how to identify and mobilize regional potentials and resources and jointly develop innovative approaches, which support rural territories in becoming strong partners.

On behalf of FAO team implementing MDG-F UNJP Sustainable Tourism for Rural Development Program, the SWG organized **training on negotiations** with the European Commission in the field of agriculture and rural development for the members of the National Rural Development Council of Serbia. The training provided capacity building of the staff of the institutions responsible for the support to rural development in the negotiation process of Serbia for integration into the EU. The training enabled the participants to understand the significance and burdens of the Accession negotiations chapter agriculture and rural development and gain knowledge for successful participation in the negotiation process of Serbia for integration into the EU.

Special emphasis was put on the role of diverse sectors and institutions of the Government and other stakeholders in supporting these negotiations.

With publication of more than five brochures on organic agriculture production, provisions for labelling and marketing of organic products on EU, guidance for Global Gap 4.0, Macedonian wines, Facts and Figures of Macedonian agriculture, the SWG enhanced the capacity building of stakeholders on food safety and quality, as well as trade.

Brochure: "Manual for organic agriculture production" aims to provide answers to the most frequently asked questions by the farmers who are interested to start up with organic production and the certification process; the brochure was prepared and published in Albanian and Macedonian language.

The Brochure: "Overview of the provisions for labeling and marketing organic products in EU and the Balkan countries" is targeted for producers, farmers and companies from the Balkan countries interested in regional trade of organic products, as well as companies from the EU, interested for cooperation in the field of Organic Agriculture with the Balkan countries.

"Manual for farmers – GLOBAL G.A.P. - version 4.0" aims to provide agricultural producers with simplified information and good knowledge on the necessary tools and steps towards proper implementation of the GLOBAL G.A.P. standard.

The SWG supported the implementation of food safety and food quality systems and standards (**Global G.A.P., HACCP, organic agriculture standards**) in the production units – companies and associations in Albania, Montenegro and Macedonia.

Companies from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia which will be involved in the process of implementation of food safety and quality standards have been identified, and the implementation procedure will start in the forthcoming period.

III. Advocacy and resource mobilization

Through the advocacy and resource mobilization the SWG aims for the agriculture and rural development to have an adequate political recognition in South-East Europe, including strengthening of the strategic partnership and alliances with European institutions.

The SWG sustained the already established partnerships with the German International Development (**GIZ**), United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (**FAO**), European Commission (**EC**) – DG Agriculture and DG Enlargement, IPTS of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre **(JRC)** and the Central European Initiative (**CEI**).

Bearing in mind that the EU accession is the main goal of the South-East European (SEE) countries, the SWG and the German International Cooperation (GIZ) determined to work together in supporting the countries until they are fully integrated into the EU. For achieving this, SWG and **German International Cooperation (GIZ)** have negotiated to set priorities for cooperation in support of SEE countries in the EU integration for the period 2011 -2015.

Partnership with the GIZ is based on the Strategic Framework for Cooperation and joint project implementation. Currently SWG and GIZ run two projects: "Improving the competitiveness of companies and organizations from South Eastern Europe in agriculture and food sector through implementation of food quality standards and increased regional networking" and "Strengthening the cooperation and networking of the forestry and water management sector and sustainable development in the river basins of the SEE countries". Significant range of SWG activities in 2011 was performed within the two GIZ projects.

The SWG is political partner to GIZ (former InWEnt) for the implementation of the Programme EU Integration of the Rural Economic Areas of South-East Europe and the Young Professional Programme. Under this programmes the SWG and GIZ organized a variety of above mentioned capacity building measures.

In addition, cooperation has been established among SWG and GIZ for the organization of the Agricultural Policy Forum 2011, Fifth Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture and the 22nd SWG Assembly Meeting. Certain financial resources were allocated by GIZ for support to the organization of the above mentioned events.

The Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia of FAO (REU) and SWG have worked together on organizing and implementing joint capacity building workshops, regular SWG meetings and cooperated in the implementation of the Agricultural Policy Forum (APF). Furthermore, SWG and FAO jointly are implementing the Technical Cooperation (TC) Facility on Establishment of Rural Development Networks in the Western Balkan countries.

The Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) on: "Streamlining of agriculture and rural development policies of SEE countries for EU accession" is in final approval stage within FAO and should start beginning of 2012.

The **EU-**funded Technical Assistance support project to SWG had the aim to facilitate and enhance cooperation of candidate countries and potential candidates in the Western Balkans in the area of agriculture and rural development. This was done by assessing capacities of the SWG and assisting it in kick-starting a new phase of operation as an international organization. As a result of the technical assistance the SWG Strategic and Operational Plan for the period 2011-2015 was prepared.

The **Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS) of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC)** in close cooperation with the SWG took the initiative to facilitate an area-based development approach in a rural cross-border area in the Western Balkans: the Drina-Tara area. The project was backed by the 14 participating municipalities and the governments of the three countries involved: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia.

The overall objective of the project was to assess the development situation and needs, and propose the most appropriate interventions, through a participatory approach involving local and national actors. The end product was a comprehensive development strategy and implementation plan with a list of detailed activities for the target area selected.

Based on the outcomes of the study preformed on behalf of IPTS and SWG on facilitation of an area-based development approach, the SWG in cooperation with the European Commission is continuing the cooperation through IPA Multi-beneficiary Annual Programme 2011 on Project Preparation Facility in the period September 2011 – May 2012. The aim of this PPF is to prepare a large scale project for application of ABD in the Western Balkan cross-border regions (Project Fiche) and technical annexes related to selected cross-border regions (in-depth analysis and data about the regions and action plans for each of the region) from 2012 an onward.

The cooperation between the SWG and the **Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)** is based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation on rural development in South-East Europe. Aspiring to strengthen the relations between both organizations for promoting agriculture and rural development and shared efforts to promote sustainable agriculture, rural and economic development, environment protection and food safety, the SWG and the RCC agreed to further strengthen the cooperation in the field of capacity building, promotion of regional cooperation, initiation and implementation of trans-national projects and etc.

Cooperation with **Cross Border Institution Building (CBIB)** on preparations for IPA Cross- Border Calls will focus on providing support in developing the identified project ideas for the Drina- Tara pilot region for the Calls for Proposals for IPA Cross-Border.

The SWG in 2011 begin to discuss the possibilities for cooperation with the **Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI)**, which is an agency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and part of the Development Co-operation effort of the Netherlands. Based on the SWG project proposal on export promotion of Balkan agro and food products, the CBI became interested in collaborating with SWG. The subject of interest was export promotion of the Balkan countries in the regional and EU market and transfer of EU know-how on agricultural machinery and processing technology through consultancy, discussion forums, and support measures for participation on international trade fairs in EU member states and the Western Balkan region, as well as business -to-business meetings (EXPLORE programme). In the upcoming period the SWG and CBI will continue negotiating the programme proposal EXPLORE.

The SWG Secretary General in 2011 actively inquired on the enlargement of SWG partnership with other relevant institutions and organizations from Europe and worldwide.

Meetings with Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations (CEEER), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, USAID Bureau for Europe and EURAsia, USAID Regional Competitiveness Initiative (RCI), Global Environmental Fund (GEF) etc. The results from the discussions and proposals for cooperation are still expected.

In the future the SWG and the SWG Secretary General will continue to contact various organizations/institutions for establishing future cooperation in the field of agriculture and rural development.

As per the SWG membership, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management of **Republic of Austria** joined the SWG as an observer.

The **Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry of Moldova** on the 5th Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from SEE expressed interest to join the SWG as full fletched member. Official request by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry of Moldova addressed to the SWG Assembly is expected to be submitted in the forthcoming period.

Based on the discussions at 5th Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from SEE, an invitation for joining the SWG as observer was addressed by the SWG Secretary General to the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Donor conference - Area based development–ABD Drina–Tara river (SRB-MNE-BiH)

IV. Policy analysis

The SWG focused its activities on assessments and evaluation of agriculture and rural development policies in SEE in order to improve strategic planning and programming for agriculture and rural development.

The Agricultural Policy Forum 2011 on "Policy Challenges in Agriculture and Rural Development in SEE – Global, European and Regional Dimensions" was held under the joint auspices of the Croatian Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development and the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG).

More than 70 representatives from the Ministries of Agriculture of the SEE countries, European Commission, FAO, GIZ, JRC -IPTS, RCC as well as delegations of the EU in Croatia participated at this year's Forum which main objective was to address policy challenges in agriculture and rural development in South-East Europe taking into consideration global, European and regional dimensions.

The following three major topics were elaborated in details through working group sessions:

- The future of the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance for Rural Development (IPARD);
- Integrating Food and Nutrition Security into Country Programming and Links to Agriculture Policies in South-Eastern European Countries;
- Area Based Development (ABD) Approach and the Development of Cross border Areas: Opportunities and Challenges in South-Eastern Europe;

Agricultural Policy Forum 2011
Policy Challenges in Agriculture and Rural Development in SEE – Global, European and Regional Dimensions

As the final outcome of the Forum, the participants from nine countries from SEE approved a unique document: "Split Agenda 2011 for Agriculture and Rural Development in South-Eastern Europe" in which basic direction for the future focused activities of the SWG in cooperation with EC and other relevant international institutions working in the region has been given.

"Defining the future direction of reforms in agriculture and rural development in South-East Europe, continuation of the reform process for EU accession, intensification of regional cooperation started up in the field of agriculture and rural development and full support to the Standing Working Group for Regional Rural Development – SWG, as a regional initiative in the implementation of strategic and operational plans related to regional cooperation for the next 5 years" – These are, among others, the main conclusions brought by the participants of the **Fifth Annual Working Meeting of Ministers of Agriculture from Southeast Europe**, held in Macedonia.

Fifth Annual Working Meeting of Ministers of Agriculture from Southeast Europe

Participants at this year's meeting agreed to intensify the exchange of experiences and assistance in the process of EU accession in agriculture and rural development sector both, for the candidate and potential candidate countries for EU membership. At the same time, the present Ministers and the Heads of Ministerial delegations agreed that intensification of the cooperation in South-East Europe is common interest of the region in order to implement the necessary reforms in the agro-food sector and rural development in accordance with the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the European Union, whose guidelines for the next five years will be changeable upon the proposal of the states.

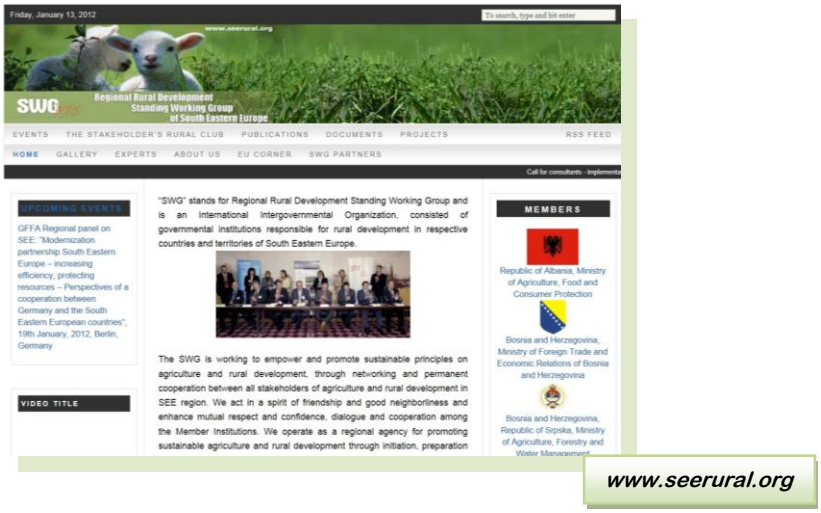
Support is given to the progress in strengthening regional cooperation through the effective use of existing initiatives and instruments of the Standing Working Group for Regional Rural Development – SWG, based on cooperation, transparency and complementarities, through the use of a comprehensive approach for development of cross-border areas in South-East Europe.

The importance of commitment and support for improved and productive cooperation in all areas of agriculture and rural development, was stressed during the meeting, including the existing cooperation between universities, academic institutions and faculties of agriculture in South-East Europe in order to strengthen the capacity to analyze the challenges in agriculture and rural development, as well as the implementation of agricultural policies.

V. Information exchange and access to knowledge

Exchange of information in terms of mobilizing regional expertise and providing good practices among the SWG member institutions and other stakeholders in the field of agriculture and rural development is facilitated.

The SWG website **www.seerural.org** serves as a platform for regular exchange of information among the SWG members, partners and stakeholders. In the reporting period, certain improvements were made on the presentation side of the website through inclusion of new IT communication instruments. Complete check of the sited information and up-date of relevant information for all SWG related activities and events from content side were performed.



www.seerural.org

The SWG web-site chronologically records increase of site visits in terms of number of visits and diversity of visitors.

The SWG regularly prepares promotional material and publishing of new (updated) SWG promotional materials: flyers, brochures, posters, banners were performed in 2011.

In addition, promotional material of the Ministries – SWG members regarding technical issues was supported by SWG (reports, strategies, technical announcements and sector oriented promotion materials).

In terms of communication transparency among the SWG Member Institutions, SWG Head Office/Secretariat and Partner Organizations is set as a priority of the SWG.

The SWG public relations and communication with media in the SEE region, as well as SWG visibility is considered as significally improved.

Improvements of the SWG communication and visibility should be further considered as priority and focus should be given on establishment of the day-to-day communication and cooperation of the SWG and the relevant media from SWG member countries.

In the reporting period, the SWG withdrew the role as a non university project partner in the TEMPUS IV Project: Western Balkan Rural Extension Network through Curriculum Reform. The decision was taken mainly due to very weak coordination and management by the University of Reading of overall project management for the foreseen timeframe of the project measures, which consequently affected the project implementation and performance of the SWG.

In terms of information exchange and access to knowledge the SWG activities were presented and SWG participated on the following events:

- Global Forum for Food and Agriculture and the International Green Week, January 20 – 23, 2011, Berlin, Germany
- USAID Agribusiness Working Group Meeting, January 2011, Podgorica, Montenegro
- Network Building for European Integration – Interdisciplinary Alumni Conference in South East Europe, 23 - 25 February 2011, Belgrade, Serbia
- Regional Coordination Conference "Western Balkans and *Europe 2020* – Towards Convergence and Growth", March 31st 2011, Brussels, Belgium
- Workshop on IPARD: Lessons learned and prospects for IPA/IPARD post 2013, 13th April 2011, Brussels, Belgium
- 1st WBREN Conference on Western Balkan Rural Expansion Network, April 2011, Macedonia
- 2nd International Conference on Overcoming regional disparities: "How to achieve a better EU – coherent implementation of regional policies", May 10th -12th 2011, Arandjelovac, Serbia
- 6th Annual Regional Event – Competitiveness, Finance and Economic Growth, organized by USAID Bureau for Europe and EURAsia, May 17th-18th, 2011 – Budapest, Hungary
- Study Tour on Rural Development, 28-30 September 2011, Brussels, Belgium
- Sixth GEF Biennial International Waters Conference (IWC6), 17-20 October 2011, Dubrovnik, Croatia
- Regional Conference "New Skills for New Jobs", 27-28 October, 2011, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- USAID Agribusiness Working Group Meeting, December 6th 2011 in Montenegro;

5. SWG Assembly Meetings

During the SWG Assembly Meetings organized as follows:

- 20th Meeting of the SWG Assembly, 6th - 7th April, 2011, Prevall, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244)

- 21st Meeting of SWG Assembly, 6th - 7th September, 2011, Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina

- 22nd Meeting of the SWG Assembly, 13th -14th December, Tuheljske Toplice, Croatia

the SWG Assembly discussed and decided about internal SWG procedures, realization of SWG activities in 2011, planed the activities for 2012 and future initiatives, projects and cooperation.

In addition, the SWG Assembly Meetings were used as opportunity for exchange of experiences among SWG members and observers about the EU accession process and the benefits of it.

21st Meeting of SWG Assembly

6. SWG Budget in 2011

		For the period from 01 October 2010 through 30 September 2011
SOURCES OF FUNDS		
- GIZ ORF		141,256
- GIZ SEF		126,146
- InWent 1		6,894
- InWent 2 (19th SWG Meeting)		10,206
- InWent 3 (Ministers Meeting)		18,616
- FAO I		-
- FAO II		6,377
- FAO III		29,035
- FAO IV		17,340
- GIZ		3,708
- TEMPUS		-
Sources of funds - projects		**359,578**
- SWG Own account		29,740
- SWG General account	4	204,148
Total sources of funds		**593,466**
BANK INTEREST		
- GIZ ORF		90
- GIZ SEF		82
- InWent 1		14
- InWent 2 (19th SWG Meeting)		1
- InWent 3 (Ministers Meeting)		2
- FAO I		-
- FAO II		34
- FAO III		11
- FAO IV		10
- GIZ		-
- TEMPUS		91
Bank interest - projects		**335**
- SWG Own account		9
- SWG General account		402
Total Bank interest		**746**
Foreign exchange translation gains		1,780
VAT refunds and advances		3,836
Total funds received		**599,828**

Statement of sources and uses of funds (continued)	For the period from 01 October 2010 through 30 September 2011
USES OF FUNDS BY ACTIVITIES	
- GIZ ORF	140,624
- GIZ SEF	113,156
- InWent 1	2,436
- InWent 2 (19th SWG Meeting)	7,180
- InWent 3 (Ministers Meeting)	13,330
- FAO I	3
- FAO II	22,469
- FAO III	17,466
- FAO IV	1,172
- GIZ	1,970
- TEMPUS	1,586
Uses of funds – projects	**321,392**
- Transfer SWG Own Account	29,433
- SWG Own account use	20,341
- Other uses/transfers	3,614
- SWG General account	100,269
Total financed operating funds	**475,049**
Foreign exchange translation losses	461
Total financed through fund providers	**475,510**
Funds at the beginning of the period	**262,238**
Funds at the end of the period	**386,556**

The Independent Audit's Report Statement:

"Reviews the financial statements as fairly in all material respects in accordance with the donors' requirements and accounting policies and principles"

Annex 1: List of SWG projects in 2011

Accomplished Projects:

German International Cooperation (GIZ) - former InWEnt Capacity Building International

• Young Professionals Program – Managing and Leading Regional Rural Governance;

• EU-Integration of Rural Economic areas

Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations (FAO)

• Support of conducting studies on Strategic guidelines for inclusion of rural tourism, facilitating Serbia's access to EC IPARD Axis 2 & 3 funds and training on quality standards and certification;

• TC Facility:"Establishment of rural development networks in SEE countries"

European Commission

• Technical Assistance to the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South Eastern Europe;

• Area based development–ABD Drina–Tara river(SRB-MNE-BiH).

Running Projects:

• *SWG - GIZ Open Regional Fund for SEE :* "Improving the competitiveness of companies and organizations from South Eastern Europe in agriculture and food sector through implementation of food quality standards and increased regional networking";

• *SWG - GIZ SEF* : "Strengthening of the regional cooperation/networking in the forestry and water management sector and sustainable development in the river basins of the South-Eastern Europe countries;

• *SWG – EC*: "IPA Multi-beneficiary Annual Programme 2011 - Project Preparation Facility".

Projects under preparation and negotiation:

• *SWG – CBI Program: "*Export Development of High Value Agricultural Products from Balkan (SEE) countries - EXPLORE Programme";

• *SWG – FAO TCP*: "Streamlining of agriculture and rural development policies of SEE countries in the process of EU accession";

• *SWG- FAO TCP: "*Support for establishment of rural development networks in SEE countries";

• *SWG – EC*: "Area Based Development of Cross-border Areas in the Western Balkans";

SWG GIZ:" Actions to the EU reform processes in the field of agriculture and rural development of SEE countries and strengthening of regional cooperation and networking in South Eastern Europe"

Annex 2: Operational Plan January 2011 - December 2011

	Standing Working Group for Regional Rural Development in SEE (SWG)																							
	Operational Plan January 2011 - December 2011																							
					Time Frame																			
	Description of the activity	**Beneficiary/Target group**	**Location of implementation**	**Notes/Remarks**	**Jan-11**	**Feb-11**	**Mar-11**	**Apr-11**	**May-11**	**Jun-11**	**Jul-11**	**Aug-11**	**Sep-11**	**Oct-11**	**Nov-11**	**Dec-11**									
1	**General SWG /Head Office Activities**																							
1,1	Steering and Facilitation of Political Discussions regarding SWG membership	Ministries of Agriculture In SEE	SEE	Continuous activity in SEE																				
1,2	Fund raising and contacts with donors	Donor Community, Implementing Agencies, Governments and EC	N/A	Continuous activity in SEE																				
1,3	Preparation of new SWG regional project proposals	SWG Assembly	N/A																					
1,4	Participation on Global Forum for Food and Agriculture - Trade and Global Food Security	SWG Assembly	Germany	One Assembly representative per country																				
1,5	20th SWG Assembly meeting (assessments of achievements, replanning of activities)	SWG Assembly and partner institutions	Kosovo UNSCR 1244																					
1,6	21st SWG Assembly meeting (assessments of achievements, replanning of activities)	SWG Assembly and partner institutions	Bosnia and Herzegovina																					
1,7	The Agricultural Policy Forum 2011 on "Policy Challenges in Agriculture and Rural Development in SEE – Global, European and Regional Dimensions	SEE Ministry representatives, academics and various stake holders	Croatia	In cooperation with GIZ, CEI, FAO																				
1,8	Fifth Annual Working Meeting of Ministers of Agriculture from Southeast Europe	Ministers of Ag. From SEE, EC and supporting governments	Macedonia	In cooperation with GIZ																				
1,9	22nd SWG Assembly meeting (annual reporting, financial reporting and SWG Assembly decisions)	SWG Assembly and partner institutions	Croatia	In cooperation with GIZ																				
1,10	Working Meeting of representatives of the Managing Authorities from SEE	Representatives of the SWG member institutions	Zagreb, Croatia																					
2	**TAIEX**																							
2,1	Fourth meeting of the TAIEX-Training Liaison Officers (TLOs) for agricultural, veterinary, phyto-sanitary and food safety policies	Representatives of the SWG member institutions	Brussels, Belgium																					
2,2	Multi-Country SWG-TAIEX Workshop on Less Favored Areas (LFA) -criteria, determination, current policy	Representatives of the SWG member institutions	Tirana, Albania																					
2,3	Multi-country SWG and TAIEX Workshop on "Agriculture Information System and Statistics"	Representatives of the SWG member institutions	Daniovgrad, Montenegro																					
2,4	Multi country SWG-TAIEX Workshop on LEADER - legal basis, policy implementation, LAGs, best practices	Representatives of the SWG member institutions	Daniovgrad, Montenegro																					

2,5	Workshop on IPARD: Lessons learned and prospects for IPA/IPARD post 2013	Representatives of the SWG member institutions	Brussels, Belgium		
2,6	Multi country SWG TAIEX Workshop and Study Visit on Agro-environmental measures	Representatives of the SWG member institutions	Slovenia		
2,7	Study Tour on Rural Development	Representatives of the SWG member institutions	Brussels, Belgium		
3	**FAO**				
3,1	**FAO TCP Facility - "Support for establishment of rural development networks (RDN) in SEE countries**				
3.1.1	Regional Participatory Planning Workshop on the topic: “Establishment of rural development networks in SEE countries”	SEE RDN Initiatives, local rural development stakeholders	Macedonia		
3.1.2	Assessment and determination of gaps related to rural development networks in SEE countries and preparation of regional project	SEE RDN Initiatives, local rural development stakeholders	SEE		
3,2	**Regional TCP "Streamlining of Agriculture and Rural Development Policies of SEE countries in the process of EU accession**	Universities of Agriculture in SEE, Agro economic Institutes and Min. of Ag.	N/A		
4	**GIZ**				
4,1	**(GTZ) ORF - Open Regional Fund Project - Improving the competitiveness of companies and organizations from SEE in the agro and food sector through implementation of food quality standards and increased regional networking**				
4,1,1	**Project Component 1- Strengthening of business links and networks between different market players**				
4,1,1,1	First Coordinative meeting on networking of professional beekeepers from SEE	Professional beekeepers, traders with bee products from SEE	Serbia	in cooperation with Agricultural Facility of Belgrade and Beekeepers Association of Kragujevac	
4,1,1,2	SEE Wholesale Markets - 2nd coordination meeting	SEE wholesale markets and Green Markets Associations	Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina	in cooperation with PUPS	
4,1,1,3	International Fair on Traditional Food and beverages "Taste of Tradition"	producers of traditional food and specialties from SEE	Serbia	in cooperation with PUPS and PIAR	
4,1,1,4	Organization of business meetings (e.g. during Agricultural Fairs, Culinaria etc.)	Companies from SEE	SEE	in cooperation with GIZ projects in SEE	
4,1,1,5	Second Fair on fine food "Culinaria 2011"	Companies from SEE	Belgrade, Serbia		

4,1,2	**Project Component 2- Introduction of food safety and quality systems**				
4,1,2,1	Technical discussion on PDO PGI TSG for small producers and green markets	SEE wholesale markets and Green Markets Associations	Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina	in cooperation with PUPS	
4,1,2,2	Technical discussion on wine trade markets combined with business mission- B2B (glass production, traders)	SEE wine producers	Croatia	in cooperation with association of wine producers from Kutjevo	
4,1,2,3	Technical discussion on Organic Agriculture and support in Organic standards implementation	SEE Organic Associations, representatives of Ministries and traders of organic products	Macedonia or Serbia	in cooperation with GIZ Serbia and associations of Organic producers from SEE	
4,1,2,4	Implementation of Global GAP standards in the companies operating in the fresh fruit and vegetable sector	Companies from SEE	SEE	Consultants are and to be engaged	
4,1,2,5	Implementation of organic standards in the companies operating in the fresh fruit and vegetable sector	Companies from SEE	SEE	Consultants are and to be engaged	
4,1,2,6	Implementation on HACCP and GHP in the green and wholesale markets in the SEE	Companies from SEE	SEE	Consultants to be engaged; in cooperation with PUPS	
4,1,2,7	Preparation of educative material related to trade and food safety	Companies from SEE	SEE	Consultants to be engaged	
4,1,2,8	Preparation of guidelines on basic principles of organic production	Organic producers from SEE	SEE	Albanian and Macedonian version prepared	
4,1,2,9	Preparation of technical guidelines on marketing and labeling of organic products	Organic producers from SEE	SEE	English version	
4,1,2,10	Technical guidelines on GLOBAL GAP	Fresh fruits and vegetable producers	SEE	Albanian, Macedonia, Serbian, Montenegrin version	
4,1,2,11	Preparation of promotion materials related to agro and food sector of SEE countries	SEE Agro and Food sector	SEE		
4,2	**(GTZ) SEF - Strengthening of the regional networks in the forest and water management sector and protection of environment in the river basins of SEE countries**				
4,2,1	Preparation of feasibility study on forest and water management sector in the river basins of SEE (expert meetings and country assessments in the SEE)	Ministries of Ag. In SEE and other stakeholders	All involving countries in the project	International Experts contracted by GTZ, local experts to be contracted by SWG	
4,2,2	Technical Discussion on Implementation of EU Water Framework Directive	Ministries of Ag. Water Management Directorates / Departments	Montenegro		
4,2,3	International Technical Workshop on: "Integrated management of water and forests in river basin areas across the South Eastern European countries"		Ohrid, Macedonia		
4,2,4	Sixth GEF Biennial International Waters Conference (IWC6)		Croatia		
4,2,5	Preparation of Final Conference on feasibility study for forestry and water management sectors (formalization of the networking and upcoming steps)	SEE Forestry and Water Management Stakeholders	Croatia		

4,3	**GIZ - (former InWEnt Capacity Building International) - Capacity building activities and support**				
4,3,1	Network Building for European Integration – Interdisciplinary Alumni Conference in South East Europe		Belgrade, Serbia		
4,3,2	2nd Young Professionals Programme Conference: "Best practice lessons in managing the rural and agricultural transition following EU membership"		Nis and Belgrade, Serbia		
4,3,3	Study trip: "Rural Networks in the European Union – Actors, Set-up and Tasks"		Austria/ Czech Republic		
4,3,4	Seminar Managing Regional Rural Development and Regional Marketing: "Branding of Products and Regions"		Croatia		
5	**European Commission - DG Agri and DG Enlargement**				
5,1	**Project - Facilitating an Area Based Development Approach in rural regions in the Western Balkan**				
5,1,1	Baseline assessment of the development situation in the target area and identification of needs in Drina-Tara region SRB, BIH, MNE	Drina-Tara region stakeholders	N/A	Performed by EC JRS IPTS	
5,1,2	Donors Conference for ABD approach in the rural regions of Western Balkan countries	Donor Community, EC, development implementing agencies, SEE Min. Ag.	Serbia	In cooperation with EC JRS IPTS	
5,1,3	Advisory Board Meetings		Brussels, Belgium		
5,2	**Technical Assistance to the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South East Europe (SWG)**	SWG	N/A		
5,2,1	Assessment of SWG capacities, needs and expectations				
5,2,2	Assistance in preparation of SWG Strategic and Operational Plan 2011-2015				
5,3	**Project Preparation Facility on an Area Based Development in the Western Balkans**				
5,3,1	Kick off Meeting of the project steering group		Croatia		
6	**TEMPUS**				
	TEMPUS 1st Western Balkan Rural Extension Network Conference and Project meetings		Skopje, Macedonia		
7	**Other Activities**				
7,1	Regional Coordination Conference "Western Balkans and Europe 2020 – Towards Convergence and Growth"	SEE Countries	Brussels, Belgium	31st March	

7,2	USAID Agribusiness Working Group Meeting		Podgorica, Montenegro		
7,3	PREPARE Annual Conference/Gathering 2011 entitled: “Access EU with Integrated Rural Development”		Zlatibor, Serbia		
7,4	Traditional Mowing on Rajac and 1st International Conference: “Public events – way to develop and recognize the rural areas”,		Ljig, Serbia		
7,5	2nd International Conference on Overcoming regional disparities: “How to achieve a better EU – coherent implementation of regional policies”		Arandjelovac, Serbia		
7,6	6th Annual Regional Event – Competitiveness, Finance and Economic Growth, organized by USAID Bureau for Europe and Eurasia		Budapest, Hungary		
7,7	Cultural festival “Nusicijada”		Ivanica, Serbia		
7,8	Training on negotiations with the European Commission in the field of agriculture and rural development for the members of the National Rural Development Council of Serbia		Belgrade, Serbia	For FAO MDGF Program Serbia	
7,9	Regional Conference “New Skills for New Jobs”		Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina		
7,1	Study Tour for visiting the National Rural Development Council and rural development support structures in Croatia for the members of the National Rural Development Council of Serbia	Members of the National Rural Development Council	Croatia	For FAO MDGF Program Serbia	
7,11	USAID Regional Agribusiness Working Group Meeting		Podgorica, Montenegro		

Explanation of the different colors
Preparation period
Execution period
Time for follow up activities after the execution

Annex 3: Split Agenda 2011 for Agriculture and Rural Development in South-Eastern Europe

Agricultural Policy Forum 2011

"Policy Challenges in Agriculture and Rural Development in South-Eastern Europe - Global, European and Regional Dimensions"

October 12th to 15th, 2011 Split/Croatia

Split Agenda 2011 for Agriculture and Rural Development in South-Eastern Europe

South-Eastern European Countries in the recent years have experienced remarkable economic and social improvement. The transition period in the region in most of the countries is coming to its end. The period of peace and dialogue in the past decade had reestablished the political ties within the region, once broken, and created advanced and functional economic and social relations.

Some of the countries from the region are already members of the European Union – Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania and some will become EU members soon – Croatia. The rest of the countries of South-Eastern Europe are advancing their process of integration to the EU and are on their way to fulfill their main political agenda to become part of the unified Europe of equal partners.

In the course of the adopted Declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture of South-Eastern European countries formulated in Dresden in October 2007,

representatives of nine countries of South-Eastern Europe have gathered in Split in October 2011 and discussed the following topics:

- Development of policies and programmes to facilitate sustainable development for the implementation of EU agriculture and rural development policy including issues of global and regional food and nutrition security;

- Analysis of the existing policies related to the agrarian reform and comparison with the preferred results within an enlarged EU;

- Cross-border cooperation through application of area based development approach in the rural areas of South-Eastern Europe;

- Necessary steps to meet the challenges related to the employment in the rural areas – overall economic and social wellbeing and related institutional and administrative preconditions.

In particularly, the following three major topics were elaborated in details through working group sessions:

– The future of the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance for Rural Development (IPARD);

– Integrating Food and Nutrition Security into Country Programming and Links to Agriculture Policies in South-Eastern European Countries;

– Area Based Development (ABD) Approach and the Development of Cross-border Areas: Opportunities and Challenges in South-Eastern Europe

The main objective of the Agricultural Policy Forum 2011 was to address policy challenges in agriculture and rural development in South-Eastern Europe taking into consideration global, European and regional dimensions.

Against this background, the participants of the Agricultural Policy Forum 2011 from the South-Eastern European countries, hereafter referred to as the "Forum", are stating the following:

The Agricultural Policy Forum is a successful example of policy dialogue since its beginning and confirmed the need to continue to strengthen the cooperation within the regional initiative - the Regional Rural Development

Standing Working Group (SWG) directed by a strategic overview and appreciation of the opportunities offered by the European integration.

The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South-Eastern Europe is recognized as a major institution for promotion of the future development of sustainable agriculture and rural development in the region.

The Forum congratulated the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development of the Republic of Croatia for concluding the negotiation process with the European Union. The participants hold a strong believe that the Croatian experience gained through the accession process to the European Union will be available and useful for the potential EU candidate and candidate countries from the region.

The Republic of Croatia, in addition, within its own capacity will continue to support the process of EU integration of the countries from the region and will represent a strong voice of the region within the European Union and European Institutions.

The Forum strongly encouraged the governments of South-Eastern Europe to continue with the reform processes in the field of agriculture and rural development. In that respect, the Forum called upon the EU to accelerate the process of EU integration and to assure an adequate attention to the agriculture and rural development issues in South-Eastern Europe.

The participants of the Forum reiterated their statement towards the European Commission considering the existing Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance to support the development and implementation of targeted measures for specific cross-border rural areas in order to further promote regional cooperation.

The Forum took a note of the proposal of the future CAP 2014-2020 presented by the European Commission and advised the South-Eastern European countries to closely follow the reform and further assess the impact of this proposal on their economies.

The Forum expresses appreciation for the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on rural development and employment.

Following the results of the working groups, the Forum concluded on:

Future of IPARD

The pre-accession EU assistance (IPA) is useful tool in the process of preparation for EU membership. The support needs to be continued in the next programming period in order to prepare administrative capacities of the institutions as well as other stakeholders in agriculture and rural development.

Specific assistance to agriculture and rural development (IPARD) should be available to all countries in the region despite of their EU accession status.

Besides the measures offered in existing framework the emphasis should be on rural services, land consolidation, renewable resources of energy, afforestation and training of potential beneficiaries.

Overall simplification and transparency is needed: the volume of legislation should be reduced, accreditation process should be better guided - Technical Assistance and LEADER measures should be further elaborated.

A “Working Group on IPARD post 2013” under the framework of SWG should be established and supported by the EC in order to facilitate the exchange of experience and ideas for enhancement of the implementing systems.

Food and Nutrition Security

Further investment in the agriculture sector needs to be promoted to increase its competitiveness as a contribution to the reduction of the negative trade balances and the related import dependence on food products in the majority of the countries of the region.

Promote integration of food and nutrition security into agriculture and rural development strategies to formulate policies facilitating increase of income and thus contributing to reduce rural and urban poverty.

Promote sustainable land use with particular emphasis on reduction of land fragmentation to increase utilization of land resources and to increase agriculture production in the countries.

Develop food security monitoring systems including the promotion of dietary diversity and development of action plans at country level.

Develop measures to support vulnerable groups through social safety net measures.

Give specific support to the small farmers in the region and recognize their importance to regional food and nutrition security including increased access to financing instruments and markets.

Rural Cross Border Areas

Area based / territorial approaches are suitable for cross border areas in the South-Eastern European countries and need to be supported by the European Union and governments of South-Eastern European countries. These approaches allow the expression and valorization of endogenous capacities in these areas and favor ownership by local stakeholders of common and shared development objectives in these cross border areas.

Appropriate legal and institutional frameworks are needed, as well as sufficient time to build mutual trust and let the partnerships express themselves in order to implement successfully such approaches.

Local dynamic needs financial and practical support (national or external), even modest amounts in initial phases.

The positive experience in the Drina-Tara cross border area (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia) should be replicated in other suitable cross border areas in the region, and the established network of stakeholders in this pilot area should be supported in effective implementation of their plans.

Coordination among various ministries and rural sectors should be established in order to promote and support cross border cooperation and area based development.

Based on the stated conclusions, the Forum identifies and outlines the following next steps to be undertaken in the forthcoming period:

- On November, 11th in Skopje, Republic of Macedonia, the Split Agenda 2011 for Agriculture and Rural Development in South-Eastern Europe is to be presented and discussed at the 5th Annual working meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from South-Eastern Europe.

- The Split Agenda 2011 for Agriculture and Rural Development in South-Eastern Europe will be brought forward to the EU, UN and other international institutions.

- The twelfth Agricultural Policy Forum will be held in the Republic of Macedonia, as SWG presiding country, in autumn 2012.

The 2011 Agricultural Policy Forum was held under the joint auspices of the Croatian Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development and the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG).

The participants highly appreciated the support provided by the convening organizations: German International Cooperation (GIZ), commissioned by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Central European Initiative (CEI) and the European Commission - DG AGRI and JRC/IPTS.

Annex 4: Conclusions of the 5th Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from South Eastern Europe

The 5th Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from South Eastern Europe held in Republic of Macedonia
November 11th, 2011

Ministers of Agriculture and Ministry representatives from South Eastern European countries gathered in Republic of Macedonia on 11th of November 2011 at the 5th Annual Working Meeting organized under the joint auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of the Republic of Macedonia and the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South Eastern Europe.

As an expressed commitment of the participating countries and based on the established institute of having an Annual Ministerial Meetings of the Ministers of Agriculture of the South Eastern Europe Countries, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations had an open discussion about the common interests of the countries in the SEE region and to reconcile differing issues and views.

CONCLUSIONS OF 5th ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE OF SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

1. We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations of the Ministries of Agriculture of the member and observer countries of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South Eastern Europe, have gathered in the Republic of Macedonia to discuss the future course of reforms for agriculture and rural development sector in SEE region and to map the future of regional cooperation. We reaffirm our commitment to the common vision and shared regional cooperation values embodied in the Declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture of South Eastern Europe convened in Dresden, 2007.

The candidate and potential candidate countries for EU membership reiterate their commitment to continue the reform processes in view of their main national political agendas to become members of the European Union.

The EU member countries from the SEE region express their steadfast to regional cooperation and put forward their willingness for support in exchange of experience and assistance in the process of EU approximation of the agriculture and rural development sector to the candidate and potential candidate EU member countries.

2. We highly appreciate the shared legislative proposal from the European Commission on the CAP 2014-2020 and future of Pre-accession assistance (IPARD). We accept the advice to closely follow the changes in the CAP and further assess the impact of this proposal to our economies. In that respect, we remain determined to further implement the necessary reforms of our agriculture and rural development sector in compliance with the Common Agriculture Policy of the European Union.

3. We welcome the results of the Agricultural Policy Forum 2011 held in Split, Republic of Croatia. The Forum addressed policy challenges in agriculture and rural development in South-Eastern Europe taking into consideration global, European and regional dimensions and stays abreast on the latest developments and proposed policies for the future EU integration. We recognize the adopted Split Agenda 2011 and the topics discussed, (Future of IPARD, CAP 2014-2020, Area Based Development and Food Security) during the Forum, as a valuable mean and guidance tool which is to be address into our national policy discussions.

4. We support the progress in merging regional cooperation and ownership, through effective use of existing SWG RRD initiatives and instruments, founded on inclusiveness, transparency and complementarity via application of area based development approach in the cross-border rural areas in SEE. We encourage these efforts and stand ready to support them, by means of emphasizing regional dialogue and cooperation among the SEE countries within the SWG network. We task the SWG Assembly to prepare relevant proposals and action plans in order to apply the area based development approach. We encourage the SWG structures to continue the dialogue with the European Commission (DG AGRI and DG ENLARG) and to develop and propose comprehensive program for the SEE region.

We welcome and are committed to support, strong and productive cooperation in all fields of agriculture and rural development including the cooperation among the Universities, academic institutions and Faculties of Agriculture from South Eastern Europe in order to increase the capacity to objectively analyze agricultural and rural development challenges and policy performance.

5. We adopt the report of the Secretary General on the achievements and results of the SWG work in year of 2011. We express our gratitude for the professionalism and dedication to the Staff of the SWG Secretariat and members of the SWG Assembly for their exceptional performance and expect that the result based performance altitude remains in the future.

6. We endorse the new Strategic and Operational Plan for the period 2011-2015 that lays out our vision for regional cooperation for the next five years within the regional initiative Standing Working Group.

The mid-tem strategic plan aims to provide good scope for development of regional cooperation in the next 5 years. At the same time it is focused on the priority needs for regional agriculture and rural development, identified by the SWG Member countries.

In accordance with the detailed provisions of this Strategic and Operational Plan, we have also:

- decided to enhance our contribution to a comprehensive approach to the strategic outline of the SWG in order to effectively manage and improve the regional cooperation in the field of agriculture and rural development;

- reiterated our statement from the Declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture of South Eastern Europe in 2007 and affirm our overall political, financial and technical support to the activities in order to assure sustainability of the SWG;

- task the Secretary General and SWG Assembly to prepare and adopt joint plan for our enhanced contribution and support the functions and operations of the SWG. The SWG should continue functioning in a more nimble, more capable and more cost-effective manner, and it should continue to serve as an essential instrument for regional cooperation in the scope of the SWG Member institutions in the SEE region;

- task the Secretary General and the SWG Assembly to move forward the reform processes in the regional cooperation within the SWG as an International Intergovernmental Organization in all necessary areas without delay;

- encourage the Secretary General and the acting SWG Presidency to continue to work with the European Union on the development

and application of the Area Based Development in the rural cross-border areas of South Eastern Europe.

7. We agree to further enhance existing partnership and develop new ones with interested countries and organizations. In accordance with the detailed provisions of these meeting conclusions we also:

- Welcome the observer status of Republic of Austria and its Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management;

- Encourage other Governments from South Eastern Europe to join the regional initiative of SWG;

- Appreciate the presence on the 5th Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from South Eastern Europe the Ministry representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany, Republic of Hungary, Republic of Poland and Republic of Moldova;

- Invite the present Ministries and respective Ministries of Agriculture of other EU member countries to intensify the dialogue with our regional initiative – SWG RRD and to commence contacts and develop joint cooperation programs relevant for the SEE region and Europe in general.

8. We congratulate Republic of Croatia and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development for successfully holding the Presidency of the SWG Assembly during the year 2011.

In addition, we congratulate Republic of Croatia and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development for successful completion of the negotiation process with the European Union. We hold a strong belief that Republic of Croatia in respect to regional cooperation will continue and enhance its active participation in our regional structures and as other EU member states from the region will support the aspirations of the candidate and potential candidate EU member countries in fulfilling their goal in becoming EU Members.

The SWG Presidency and the duties for the year of 2012 have been handed over from the current Presidency – the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development of Republic of Croatia to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of Republic of Macedonia.

Based on the rotation principles in handling the Presidency of the SWG, we agree that the Kosovo* Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development will take over the role of the SWG Presidency for the year 2013.

As proposed on the Agricultural Policy Forum 2011, the Twelfth Agricultural Policy Forum in South Eastern Europe will be held in Macedonia in autumn 2012.

9. We highly appreciate the support provided by the convening organizations and institutions: German International Cooperation (GIZ), commissioned by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the European Commission - DG AGRI.

10. We express our appreciation for the kind hospitality provided by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. At this meeting in Macedonia, we have set a clear course for regional cooperation in the next five years. The SWG will remain a crucial instrument for promoting policy dialogue and regional cooperation and development in the area of agriculture and rural development in SEE. With its new Strategic and Operational Plan, the SWG will be more effective, more diligent, and proficient to address the development challenges of the rural areas in the region. We will meet again in 2012 to review the progress.

*Under UN Security Council Resolution 1244(1999).

Present representatives of institutions during the meeting

SWG Members

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection - Republic of Albania

Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations - Bosnia and Herzegovina

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management - Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development - Republic of Croatia

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy - Republic of Macedonia

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development - Montenegro

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development – Kosovo (UNSCR 1244)

SWG Observers

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food - Republic of Slovenia

Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry - Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Other Ministries non SWG Members

Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry – Republic of Moldova

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development - Republic of Poland

Ministry of Rural Development of Hungary - Republic of Hungary

Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection - Germany

Other institutions

European Commission, Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development

Delegation of the European Union in the Republic of Macedonia

German International Cooperation (GIZ)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO UN)

Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)

Universities of South Eastern European Countries

Annex 5: SWG Member institutions and appointed delegates

Status December 2011

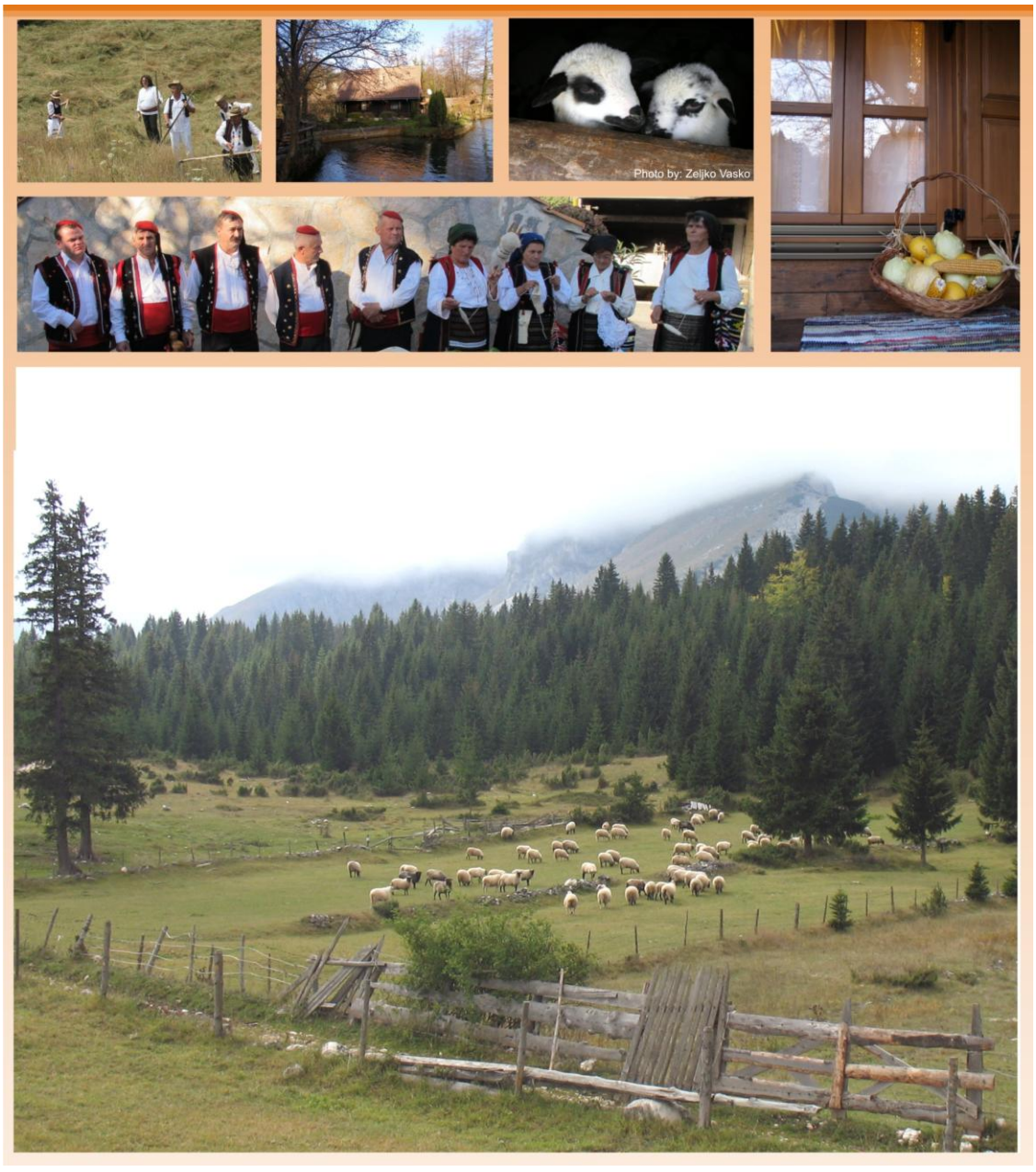
Name/Surname	Country	Institution	Position
Grigor Gjeci	Albania	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection	Rural Development Policy Director
Teuta Topi	Albania	Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection	Chief of Sector in Rural Development Policies Directorate
Dusan Neskovic	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations	Assistant to the Minister
Melisa Ljusa	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations	Head of Department for Policy Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation and Information
Zoran Kovacevic	Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management	Assistant to the Minister
Marko Srdic	Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management	Higher assistant
Svetlana Boyanova	Bulgaria	Ministry of Agriculture and Food	Deputy Minister
Bozhura Fidanska	Bulgaria	Ministry of Agriculture and Food	Senior Expert

Tugomir Majdak	Croatia	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development	Head of Sector for RD Programmes Management – EU, SAPARD/ IPARD Program Managing Authority
Andrea Laklija	Croatia	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development	Head of Department
Valentina Stojanovic-Tufa	Macedonia	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy	Chief of Minister's Cabinet
Ljubo Peno	Macedonia	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy	Junior Assistant in Department for EU Affairs
Ljiljana Simovic	Montenegro	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	Advisor for international cooperation
Igor Golubovic	Montenegro	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	Assistant Minister
Aleksandar Bogunovic	Serbia	Ministry of Agriculture, Trade, Forestry and Water Management	Head of Department for Rural Development
Bekim Hoxha	Kosovo UNSCR (1244)	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development	Chief of the Permanent Secretary Office
Halit Hoxhaj	Kosovo UNSCR (1244)	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development	Advisor of Minister

Annex 6: SWG Head Office/ Secretariat Staff

Status December 2011

Name/Surname	Position
SWG Head Office employees	
Boban Ilic	SWG Secretary General
Irena Dzimrevska	SWG Head of Operations
Katerina Dzartovska	SWG Project Manager
Julija Brzovska	SWG HR, Contract and Cash Officer
Andrej Josifov	SWG Finance Officer
Bogdanka Leveska – Gjorsoska	SWG Project Assistant
SWG Head Office contracted staff	
Elena Katlanovska	SWG Financial Assistant
Irena Andrevska	SWG PR Officer
Blagica Slezenkovska	SWG Intern



South Eastern Europe

SWG RRD

Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group