



Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy  
Republic of Macedonia



## Agricultural Policy Forum 2012

Policy perspectives on environmentally sustainable agriculture and rural development in South Eastern Europe

16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> October 2012

Ohrid, Macedonia

### **BACKGROUND:**

South - Eastern European (SEE) countries are undergoing necessary reforms of agriculture and rural development sector required by the EU accession process. The candidate and potential candidate countries from the SEE have been required to harmonize their legislation and national systems with the EU *acquis communautaire*, most importantly to implement and reform the institutions and economic policies and develop market oriented economies. The main pre-condition for full EU-membership is fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria. The second important pre-condition is extensive regional co-operation on all possible levels such as constant political and policy dialogue, development of regional trade, free movement of people and sharing common ideas for future development.

In terms of agriculture and rural areas in South Eastern Europe, agricultural resources and rural development play significant role in the overall development of national economies. Due to the process of EU integration and harmonization of agriculture and rural development sector, in recent years the countries of SEE have been confronted with a dual challenge: providing the main source of income for the majority of rural population and getting closer to the EU standards. Agriculture and rural development strategies, legislation and programming documents have been developed in most of the countries in the region, while in several countries it is still an on-going process. The implementation of respective policy measures and instruments has started or is foreseen to start.

To foster these processes, the Agricultural Policy Forum has been institutionalized as a platform for dialogue and mutual learning.

The Agricultural Policy Forum (APF) was established in 2001 in order to facilitate policy decision making in South Eastern Europe. Subsequently the Agricultural Policy Forum has been annually held in the countries of South Eastern Europe (Romania, Albania, Macedonia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro and Croatia), together with three forums held in Leipzig and Dresden, Germany. The main theme of all agricultural policy forums was the agricultural and rural development of SEE countries in the process of EU integration. The main achievement based on the establishment of the APF as a platform for dialogue and regional cooperation was the formation of the regional initiative, the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE.

Based on the Split Agenda 2011 (the outcome of the Agricultural Policy Forum 2011), Macedonia holding the Presidency of the SWG for 2012 will be hosting the Twelfth Agricultural Policy Forum – APF 2012.



## **OBJECTIVES:**

The Agricultural Policy Forum 2012 once more will serve as a platform for international dialogue on policy settings and perspectives of common interest to agricultural policy makers and stakeholders.

The APF 2012 will address the implementation of future EU agricultural and rural development policies and the reflection towards the countries of SEE. The Forum will focus on environmentally sustainable agriculture and rural development, climate-related challenges and territorial and regional cooperation.

The Forum will promote and stimulate debate and discussion on policy issues among policy makers, governmental and non-governmental organizations from the agriculture and rural development, water and forestry sectors in SEE, relevant international policy and development institutions, national and international experts and academics in order to provide technical background for the policy making process and obtain new ideas for policy advice activities.

As an outcome, the Forum will formulate an Agenda providing guidelines for suitable agricultural and rural development policies in SEE.

## **TOPICS:**

The Forum will cover main policy topics of relevance to EU integration of the SEE countries in respect to the current and future EU rural development policy.

The topics for discussion are the following:

- Strengthening of water resource and forest management cooperation in South Eastern Europe;
- Area Based Development in the cross-border rural areas of the Western Balkans within the framework of territorial and regional cooperation;
- Gap analysis between EC and SEE countries with special attention to agriculture and rural development policy.

## **WORKING GROUPS:**

The Forum participants will be divided into three (3) working groups derived from the topics presented. The Working Groups will focus on facilitating more collaborative and informed approach to communicating the policy challenges in the agriculture and rural development sector.

The results from the Working Groups will contribute to the formulation of the APF Agenda providing guidelines for suitable agricultural and rural development policies in SEE.

## **DESCRIPTION OF TOPICS:**

### ***Strengthening of water resource and forest management cooperation in South Eastern Europe***

Based on the feasibility study assessment conducted through the SWG GIZ Study Expert Fund project on „*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*“ lack of communication between the water and forestry sectors is affecting the common process of joint development and policy implementation in the countries of SEE.

The cooperation between the water and forest sector at national and regional level is insufficient for tackling the challenges of integrated water and forest management. Enhancing the cooperation between the two sectors at regional level is essential especially in view of the approximation process towards the EU. Increasing knowledge and capacities about relevant EU Directives, exchange of information on best practices, data and knowledge exchange, harmonization of methodologies and stimulating cross border projects are needed between the two sectors. Lack of interrelation and cooperation is also strongly present among other associated sectors, such as agriculture and environment, whose interactions have significant impact and role on water and forest policy implementation and activities.

The working group will discuss 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. The participants will also discuss and evaluate the methods on making the proposed initiative for regional cooperation in becoming visible, leading and pro-active platform on regional level for joint water resource and forestry management.

### ***Area Based Development in the cross-border rural areas of the Western Balkans within the framework of territorial and regional cooperation***

The Area Based Development (ABD) approach is innovative tool to facilitate social and economic development in a specific geographical area or territory characterized by a range of common, complex development problems through an integrated, inclusive, participatory and flexible approach.

The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in cooperation and financially supported by the European Commission is working on preparations for implementation of the Area Based Development approach in the Western Balkans through transparent, participatory processes of needs assessment, priority setting and action planning, as well as building-up local and regional cross-border capacities and structures for ABD implementation.

The objectives are to contribute to sustainable economic growth of target cross-border regions (“Drina-Tara”, “Drina- Sava”, “Prespa” and “Sharra”) by facilitating implementation of identified actions and in particular by providing investment support in the sector with the possible highest added-value and catalytic effects to the rural economies.

The aim of the working group discussions is to present the current results and achievements, to discuss the experiences acquired up to now, as well as to elaborate and examine the future approaches related to ABD implementation in the Western Balkans.



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## ***Gap analysis between EC and SEE countries with special attention to agriculture and RD policy***

Key-note presentation and working group discussion organized by FAO's and SWG's joint project implementation team for the project "Streamlining of agriculture and rural development policies of SEE countries for EU accession".

Based on the collected materials and the information provided by the national research teams during the First Regional Networking Workshop "Streamlining of agriculture and rural development policies of SEE countries for EU accession" (September 15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> 2012; Vodice, Croatia) a preliminary gap analysis between EU and SEE countries with special emphasis to agriculture and rural development policies will be presented by an international expert in the matter.

Following the presentation, up-to three working groups will discuss and assess the preliminary gap analysis and give recommendations, country by country, to the national working teams (Advisory Boards and Local Research Teams) on the necessary completion of analyses, studies and strategic documents relating to EU agriculture and rural development policies (CAP) that would allow the Ministries of Agriculture to set priorities for the streamlining of agriculture and rural development policies of SEE countries for EU accession.