



Activities of the Secretariat of SWG

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Cc:

- Ministries of Agriculture in SEE Countries (SWG member institutions)
- GTZ HQ Office, Eschborn, Germany
- InWEnt, Germany
- FAO Regional office, Budapest

Major activities carried out during the reporting period

Summary

The report covers the most important activities undertaken by the Secretariat of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE countries in the period May – September 2008. The Secretariat on behalf of the members, conducted a series of activities supporting and coordinating the activities of the SWG.

1. MEMEBERSHIP IN SWG, LEGAL STATUS

- In August 2008, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of Slovenia joined the SWG. Mrs Janja Kokolj-Proshek, Head of the Rural Development and Structural Policy Sector and Mr. Marko Verbic, Head of the International Relations and Developemnt Assistance Department are nominated as Ministry representtaives in the SWG.
- In September 2008, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Managemnt of Bosnia and Herzegovina become fullfledged SWG member and nominated Mr. Pejo Janjic, Assistant Minister for Agricultural Policy and International Cooperation and Mrs. Ljiljana Dunjic, Expert Associate to be SWG Ministry representtaives.

2. PROJECTS

2.1. The SWG Project financed by the GTZ Open Regional Fund (ORF) for South–Eastern Europe on Foreign Trade Promotion entitled:”Strengthening regional–co-operation during the EU integration process and increase economic competitiveness of rural areas”

2.1.1.The Round Table entitled: “State measures for development of sheep and goat breeding sector and implementation of the National Animal Breeding Programmes“ and the Regional Sheep Breeders Day 2008, July 2008

- The SWG organized the Round Table entitled: “State measures for development of sheep and goat breeding sector and implementation of the National Animal Breeding Programmes“ and the traditional event:” The Regional Sheep Breeders Day 2008”.
- The representatives of the Ministries of Agriculture from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Republic of Srpska), Bulgaria, Macedonia and Serbia exchanged their experiences related to the state measures for development of livestock sector and development and implementation of programmes for the sheep and goat breeding sector.

- The Regional Sheep and Goat Breeders Day was attended by more than 1000 visitors and contributed for the promotion of the sheep and goats sector and strengthening of professional and business relation between partners in the region.

2.1.2. The Sixth Regional Fair on Balkan Agro biodiversity and Rural Heritage, Dimitrovgrad Serbia, September 2008

- The fair organized by the SWG and the Nature Society “Natura Balkanika” from Dimitrovgrad gathered more than 1000 participants from Serbia, Macedonia and Bulgaria and was a place where rural heritage and indigenous knowledge of rural people were promoted.
- Panel for exchange of ideas how the tradition could be economically valorized with double benefit in preserving natural and cultural heritage of the region was opened.
- Participants from different countries in the region were given the opportunity to use bottom up-approach to present own ideas about regional cooperation and support needed to develop faster towards EU integrations.
- Small scale farmers presented ideas for creating internal niche market of products which are hardly economically justified if marketed on the open markets.

2.1.3. Preparations for participation on the Euregia – Local and Regional Development Trade Fair and Congress, Leipzig, Germany, 27-29 October, 2008

- The SWG will be presented on the Euregia Congress and Fair 2008 on a joint stand along with GTZ and InWEnt. Promotion material will be prepared by the SWG Secretariat;
- One of the officially appointed Ministry representatives in the SWG will participate on the Euregia and take part in the official programme.
- Eleventh SWG meeting is scheduled for October 29th.

3. EVENTS, MEETINGS, TRAININGS

3.1. Enhancing sustainable local and rural development in the SAP countries by introducing the LEADER experience, Conference and ToT, Budapest, May and September 2008

- Conference and a study tour on LEADER organized by International Center for Democratic Transition (ICDT) and the SWG took place in May 2008 in Budapest.
- Experiences and lessons learned on implementation of the bottom-up approach in sustainable rural development four years after the Hungarian EU-integration were presented to the participants from the Western Balkan countries.
- A follow up Training of Trainers (ToT) for LEADER was organized for fifteen selected participants from the SWG member countries.

3.2. Meeting of Agricultural Committee Chairpersons of the National Parliaments of the EU Member States, the European Parliament, and the Parliaments of the Candidate Countries, Ljubljana, Slovenia, June 2008

- The Slovenian Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Food organized a Conference for the related parliamentary committees of the national parliaments of the EU Member States, the European Parliament, and the parliaments of the candidate countries.
- The SWG participated on the meeting where the focal point of discussions were the following issues:
 - o future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in relation to the environment;
 - o food security as a concern for sufficient food supplies;
 - o climate change having a significant impact on agriculture and on the conditions of food production.
- The EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, H.E. Marrian Fischer Boel was introduced with the initiative of the SWG and invited to participate on the Agricultural Policy Forum 2008.

3.3. TAIEX WS for the SWG member institutions from candidate and potential candidate countries entitled: "Preparation of Western Balkan Countries on relevant EU Legislation and institutional set-up as a pre condition for utilization of the fifth component of IPA instrument - IPA-RD", Bar, Montenegro, September 2008

- The WS for representatives of the Ministries of Agriculture from South - Eastern Europe responsible for rural development from the candidate and potential candidate countries was organized by the Institution Building Unit (TAIEX) in co-operation with SWG.
- Thirty participants were introduced and experiences exchanged on relevant aquis documents, implementation structures, roles and functions, as well as procedures for fulfillment of all criteria for utilization of funds from the fifth component of IPA instrument (IPA-RD).
- The WS provided the participants with adequate knowledge and information on the importance of relevant and on-time preparation for implementation of the Aquis Communautaire relevant for IPARD.

3.4. EastAgri Annual Meeting 2008, Paris, France, September 2008

The SWG participated on the Annual EastAgri Meeting where the discussions were focused on:

- Instruments for agricultural financing and risk management in the EastAgri region
- Soaring food prices: a window of opportunities for Russia and Ukraine
- Adding value to the EastAgri region's agricultural products: Good Agricultural Practices, Quality Labels and Geographical Indications
- Participatory approaches to rural development in the Western Balkans

On one of the working tables the SWG presented the Positions of the Western Balkans on the Common Agricultural Policy.

4. COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

4.1. International Center for Democratic Transition (ICDT)

A “Memorandum of Understanding” between the SWG and the ICDT was signed during the LEADER Conference in Budapest.

The MoU provides framework conditions for further strengthening of the regional cooperation and joint activities related to promotion of rural development, capacity building, joint project design and implementation.

5. REGULAR MEETINGS OF THE SWG

5.1 The Tenth Meeting of the SWG, Septemeber 2008, Montenegro

The Tenth Meeting of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE was held on September 5th 2008 in Bar, Montenegro.

The meeting was organized as a parallel event to the TAIEX WS: “Preparations of the Western Balkan Countries on relevant EU Legislation and institutional set-up as a pre condition for utilization of the fifth component of IPA instrument - IPA-RD”.

The main focus was given on:

- Preparation of the Agricultural Policy Forum 2008 and the Ministers` meeting;
- SWG - legal status, registration, and the New Statute of the SWG;
- Presidency of the SWG in the year 2008/2009 and the organization of the Agricultural Policy Forum 2009;
- Preparations for participation on the Euregia – Local and Regional Development Trade Fair and Congress;
- Preparations for the Sixth Regional Fair of Balkan Agro-biodiversity and Rural Heritage;
- List of trainings related to the CAP, rural development and IPA for TAIEX;
- Translation and print of five publications of European Commission related to CAP and rural development.

6. PREPARATION OF THE SWG STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS

Following the mandate given with the Ministers` Declaration, a working version of the new SWG Statute was prepared and distributed to the SWG member institutions for revision and opinion.

The new Statute will be subject of a discussion and approval during the Ministers` Meeting in Montenegro.

ANNEX I: Pictures

Round Table on State Measures for sheep and goat sector development



The Sheep breeding Day- Anonymous tasting of cheese



The Sheep breeding Day- Official Oppening by

Minister Spasenoski



EU Ambassadoru Fouere



The Sheep breeding Day- part of the programme



TAIEX WS on IPARD



The Tenth SWG Meeting



The Sixth Regional Fair on agro biodiversity and

rural heritage

