



Activities of the Secretariat of the 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) of SEE-countries during the period February – March 2009. The Secretariat, on behalf of the SWG-members, conducted a series of activities by supporting and coordinating the activities of the SWG.

1. SWG LEGAL STATUS

At an official ceremony which was held on March 28, 2009, in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of Macedonia (MAFWE), an agreement about the status and the activities of the SWG was signed between the President of the SWG-Assembly, Dr. Milan Markovic from Montenegro and the Minister of MAFWE, Mr. Aco Spasenoski.

At the ceremony were representatives from the Government of Macedonia, SWG-delegates from Albania, Montenegro, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), representatives from the diplomatic core in Macedonia, as well as representatives from international donors and organizations, such as USAID, GTZ and FAO.

By signing the agreement, the SWG became an international organization and the only regional initiative in the field of agriculture and rural development at Ministry level in SEE.

In the upcoming period, the SWG-secretariat in co-operation with MAFWE will have the obligation to complete the administrative procedures in order to finalize the registration of the SWG as an international organization.

2. PROJECTS

2.1. The SWG-project financed by the GTZ Open Regional Fund (ORF) for SEE on Foreign Trade Promotion is entitled: "Strengthening regional co-operation during the EU-integration process and increase economic competitiveness of rural areas"

2.1.1 The Regional Tree Day 2009

- As a result of the conclusions of the Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture of SEE countries held during the Agricultural Policy Forum 2008 in Germany, and the Planning Meeting of the SWG-activities for 2009, a first part of the regional common understanding, was "The Tree Day 2009", held the 14.03.2009 in Macedonia.

2.1.2 Training of Rural Women for the Production of Traditional Wool Handicrafts, Dimitrovgrad, Serbia 4th - 8th March 2009

- Training for rural women for the production of wool handicrafts was organized in Dimitrovgrad, Serbia during the period 4th - 8th of March 2009.
- The training was organized for rural women from sheep producing regions of West-Balkan countries: two from Albania, two from Montenegro, two from Macedonia, three from Serbia (Vojvodina, Central Serbia and South-East Serbia), two from Kosovo (UNSCR 1244) and four from Bosnia and Herzegovina (both from the Republic of Srpska and the Bosnian Federation).
- The activity was a great opportunity in order to increase employment for rural women, the development of co-operation among women in the region and the diversification of economic activities in rural areas in SEE.

2.2 FAO TCP Project for SWG

2.2.1 WS Prague Rural Development in EU-Accession Countries - Support Programmes and Capacity Building

- A Workshop on Rural Development in EU-Accession Countries – Support Programmes and Capacity Building, took place in Prague from the 23rd - 26th of February 2009.
- The purpose of the workshop was to provide inputs related to agriculture and rural development policy analysis and policy formulation in order to support representatives of the Ministries of Agriculture of SEE- countries in relation to EU-integration. The representatives from different institutions and organizations from the EU and SEE gave presentations regarding the obstacles and opportunities during the implementation of the EU-Rural Development Policy in SEE, as well as, over viewing the experiences of the implementation of this EU-policy. Additionally, topics such as potentials and challenges, expectations and proposals regarding the support to EU-integration were also discussed and presented.
- Through the presentations the participants from the SWG-member institutions had the opportunity to improve their knowledge regarding the circumstances and the processes of the Rural Development Policy of the EU. The purpose was to learn from past experiences with an attempt to improve the overall implementation and the use of the support programmes and those of capacity building.

2.2.2 Meeting of the project team of the FAO TCP Project for SWG, 27th - 28th March, 2009, Skopje, Macedonia

- The team of experts which will be engaged for the implementation of the training activities within the FAO TCP project for the SWG had the first coordinative meeting on March 27 and 28, 2009.
- During the meeting the team discussed the concept and the topics for the training workshops on Rural Development and Project Cycle Management.

3. EVENTS, MEETINGS, TRAININGS

3.1 Preparations for the Agricultural Policy Forum, February 17 - 18, 2009, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

- A coordinative meeting was organized in Sarajevo in relation to the Agricultural Policy Forum for SEE countries between representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina (MFTER) and the Secretariat of the SWG.
- The forum topics were discussed and agreed upon, and the forum was entitled "Influence of the world economic crisis on investments in agriculture and food production in SEE countries". A sub-topic will be: "Support systems/ schemes in SEE and their complementation with the EU CAP"
- A decision was also taken that the GTZ Open Regional Fund Project (ORF) for SEE will support the organization of the Forum, as per the request from MFTER and based on the Scope of the co-operation document.

4. COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

4.1. Cooperation between SWG and InWEnt

- The co-operation between the SWG and InWEnt - Capacity Building International, Germany, was formalized with signing a MOU. The document was signed during the 13th SWG-meeting on February 24 2009.

5. REGULAR MEETINGS OF THE SWG

5.1 Thirteenth Meeting of the SWG of SEE Countries

The 13th meeting of the SWG in SEE was held on February 25th, 2009 in Prague, Czech Republic.

The SWG-meeting was organized and held during the FAO- Workshop on "Rural Development in EU-Accession Countries - Support Programmes and Capacity Building". During the meeting the following conclusions were made (excluding the above mentioned issues and activities):

- a film about the SWG and best RD-practices in Western Europe is in the preparatory phase and should be ready latest by May 2009 ;
- remake of the SWG web-platform is in progress and the changes should be done by the end of April 2009;
- the WS: "Transnational Co-operation between LAGs in SEE and the EU" organized in January 2009 in Berlin, did not meet the expectations of the present SWG-delegates. Therefore in future it will be looked after a better selection of relevant topics, and an improved quality of the presenters on such kind of events;

- compilation of the TAIEX-training maps of the SWG-members will be prepared by the Secretariat and will be submitted to the EC - DG Enlargement.

ANNEX: Photos



Signing of an Agreement on the Status and Activities of the SWG on March 28th 2009



*Training of Rural Women for the Production of Traditional Wool Handicrafts, Dimitrovgrad, Serbia
4th - 8th March 2009*



WS Prague Rural Development in EU-Accession Countries - Support Programmes and Capacity Building, 23rd - 26th of February 2009, Prague, Czech Republic



Meeting of the project team of the FAO TCP Project for SWG, 27th - 28th March, 2009, Skopje, Macedonia



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