



**Activities of the SWG Head Office/Secretariat  
for the period May - August 2011**

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**Delivered to:**

- Ministries of Agriculture in SEE Countries (SWG member institutions)
- German International Cooperation (GIZ) HQ Office, Eschborn, Germany
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)- Regional office, Budapest
- European Commission – Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development (EC DG AGRI)
- European Commission – Joint Research Centre - Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (JRC IPTS)

## **Major activities carried out during the reporting period**

### **Summary**

This report covers the most important activities undertaken by the SWG Head Office/ Secretariat during the period May-August 2011.

The SWG Head Office/Secretariat, on behalf of the SWG members, conducted series of activities by managing, coordinating and supporting the activities of the SWG.

### **I. Networking and enhancing regional cooperation**

#### **1. Conference on: “Facilitating an Area-Based Development (ABD) approach in rural regions in the Western Balkans”, May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011 Belgrade, Serbia**

- Results of the project the “Drina – Tara pilot area” as an example for an Area-Based Development Approach (ABDA) in rural cross-border areas were presented and discussed among 120 participants at the Donors’ Conference held in Belgrade upon the initiative and organization by the European Commission (Joint Research Centre - Institute for Prospective Technological Studies and Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development and the Standing Working Group for Regional Rural Development (SWG). The conference was hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Trade, Forestry and Water Management of Serbia with an assistance of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sector for Agriculture) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Montenegro.
- As concluded by the Ministries and their envoys and other stakeholders involved in the implementation of the pilot project - the activities which were promoted and practically implemented on the field led to not only easier and faster economic development of the region, but also greatly increased over the border cooperation of the local population and therefore a stronger cooperation between local institutions and greater opportunity for further joint work on development programs in the framework of IPA funds.
- The SWG Secretary General called upon bilateral donors and international financial institutions to study possible ways to support stakeholder’s project proposals of the Drina Tara area. The SWG will keep on examining whether the area based methodologies can further be used in other areas and in the Drina Tara area, and will take over the coordinating role for the implementation of the action plan, in order to take advantage of the high level of ownership achieved until now.

## **2. Cooperation with Cross Border Institution Building (CBIB) - Preparations for IPA Cross- Border Calls**

- Following the meeting between the SWG Secretary General and the CBIB Team Leader, the CBIB will attempt to provide support in developing the identified project ideas for the Drina- Tara pilot region for the next Call for Proposals for IPA Cross-Border.
- Specific targeted training is planned to be delivered for the potential applicants who already developed the project ideas during the pilot project on ABDA in Drina – Tara region.

## **3. Technical discussion on wine trade markets, May 11<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> , 2011, Kutjevo, Croatia**

- The SWG within the SWG - GIZ ORF Project organized a technical discussion (TD) on: "Wine trade markets – opportunities for the region of South-East Europe" intended 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.
- The TD provided opportunities for the participants 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 roads – cross-border networking of wine roads as well as, joint approach of the SEE wines to the markets of the third countries – such as USA, South Korea, China, Hong Kong were discussed and examined.
- Assessment on the buyers perception of Balkan / SEE wines in Germany and study on how wine buyers decide on SEE wines was proposed to be done possibly in cooperation with Geisenheim Grape Breeding Institute from Germany.
- Establishment of Working group on wine within the SWG was proposed for further strengthening of the regional cooperation between Ministry representatives, wine producers` associations, academics, experts and companies.

**4. 2<sup>nd</sup> Young Professionals Programme Conference: "Best practice lessons in managing the rural and agricultural transition following EU membership", June 7<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011, Nis and Belgrade, Serbia**

- The Conference 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.
- With participation of approximately eighty stakeholders and inputs provided by the YPP group members, the Conference in Nis contributed to deeper understanding of the transition processes, sharing the lessons learned for managing rural development and evaluation of the barriers for implementing these lessons in the EU candidate and potential candidate countries.
- The event was also an opportunity for presentation and sharing experiences related to the progress made in the Serbian agriculture sector in the EU integration process, focusing on the status quo and the challenges that lay ahead, as well as opportunities expected.
- 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.

**5. Working Meeting of representatives of the Managing Authorities from SEE, June 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011, Zagreb, Croatia**

- The SWG organized a Working Meeting of representatives of the Managing Authorities (MA) from SEE where representatives from seven out of nine SWG member institutions and representatives from the European Commission –Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI), as well as the Croatian Mission in Brussels, Belgium, participated on the meeting.
- The aim of the meeting was to discuss the role of the Managing Authorities in a perspective of managing Rural Development Programs of the EU with a focus on the pre-accession period, to exchange experiences between representatives of MA from candidate and potential candidate countries, as well as to decide on future cooperation.
- All the representatives of MA supported the establishment and future work of the MA Working Group organized within the SWG and it was proposed MA Working Group to have meetings two times in the year.

- The 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the MA Working Group, organized within the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE, should be organized by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of the Republic of Macedonia in November 2011.

#### **6. First Regional Fair of Home-made Food, June 17<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup>, 2011, Subotica, Serbia**

- The event provided 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 who presented specific topics related to products with (PDO), (PGI) and (TSG), as well as by promoting the event towards massive participation of producers from SEE region.

#### **7. PREPARE Annual Conference/Gathering 2011 entitled: “Access EU with Integrated Rural Development” successfully organized in Serbia, June 29<sup>th</sup> – July 1<sup>st</sup>, Zlatibor, Serbia**

- The SWG supported the organization of this year’s PREPARE gathering, with an opportunity to discuss and express views on the current challenges of rural development in Europe and beyond it.
- The event created a space for exchanging experience and ideas and stimulated an exchange 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 Eastern European region.

#### **8. Traditional Mowing on Rajac and 1st International Conference: “Public events – way to develop and recognize the rural areas”, 15 – 17 July, 2011, Ljig, Serbia**

- SWG supported the Regional Center for development of villages “MOBA” from Serbia to organize the Traditional 39<sup>th</sup> event “Mowing on Rajac” within which the First International Conference entitled: “Public events – way to develop and recognize the rural areas”.
- The Conference was followed by more than 50 participants who carefully followed the presentations from more than 12 experts from 5 countries (Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Switzerland). During the three sessions, the following topics were presented and discussed:
  - Traditional Agricultural Public events – their influence on development of rural tourism;
  - Local products, active contents of small family farms as important factor for the future development of the rural tourism;
  - Link between the Public events and side activities (hunting, fishing, sport...) and their influence on rural tourism development;
  - Old handicrafts and souvenirs as enlargement to the rural tourism offer

- During the traditional 39<sup>th</sup> Mowing on Rajac which is recognized as one of Serbian brands, besides the competition of the best mowers from different countries, a colorful presentation of various contents was offered to the participants (fair of traditional handicrafts, rural tourism offer, cultural program, etc.).

#### **9. Preparations for the organization of the international workshop on networking-cooperation among the water and forestry managements sectors in the SEE countries, November 2011**

- The SWG Head Office/ Secretariat is in a preparation process for the organization of the International Workshop on networking among the water and forestry sectors in SEE countries which will be held in the period 20<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> of November 2011 in Skopje, Macedonia.
- The workshop will focus on creation of a platform for deeper collaboration between the two sectors across the countries around the South Eastern Europe. Representatives from both water and forestry sectors will participate, including representatives from the environment sector and other relevant stakeholders (NGOs, national water and forest associations and etc.)
- The workshop will provide the opportunity for the international and national experts engaged with the project to obtain supplementary information for the final draft of the feasibility study which needs to be completed in February 2012.

#### **10. Preparations for “Culinaria” - Trade Fair on Fine Food, September 28<sup>th</sup> -30<sup>th</sup>, 2011, Belgrade, Serbia**

- 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 partner for co-organization of the fair, informed and invited for participation more than 400 companies from the SEE countries.
- The trade fair which will be organized in the last week of September will provide space and opportunities for food and drinks manufacturers to connect with professional buyers, import-export companies and agents, supermarket chains from the Balkans and the EU.

#### **11. Cooperation with the EC - Project Preparation Facility on an Area Based Development in the Western Balkans**

- The SWG in collaboration with the European Commission is continuing the cooperation through IPA Multi-beneficiary Annual Programme 2011 on project preparation facility for the period September 2011 – May 2012 (9 months).
- Project Preparation Facility (PPF) - Preparation of a Proposal for an Area Based Development in the Western Balkans was submitted to the EC in June 2011 and it is expected to begin in September 2011.

- 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.

## **II. Capacity Building**

### **1. Publication of brochure: “Manual for organic agriculture production”**

- Aiming 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, brochure was prepared and published in Macedonian and Albanian language in 500 copies each.
- It is expected that the brochures will improve the producers` knowledge about the Organic Agriculture, as well as increased production and trade with organic products in the SEE countries.

### **2. Publication of brochure: “Overview of the provisions for labeling and marketing organic products in EU and the Balkan countries”**

- The aim of this brochure printed in 500 copies is to provide information to the organic movement in the Balkan countries regarding the specific national requirements for import, placing on the market and export of organic products.
- The brochure is targeted to farmers and companies from the Balkan countries interested for 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.

## **III. Advocacy and resource mobilization**

### **1. Meeting with representatives of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011, Budapest, Hungary**

- The SWG Secretary General had a meeting with representatives of the FAO in order to discuss the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the SWG and FAO and the status of the ongoing joint FAO-SWG project on “Support for establishment of rural development networks in SEE countries” TCP/RER/3302-C1.

### **2. Discussions with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, May 2011**

- The SWG Secretary General during the meeting introduced Mr. Fin Poulsen, Legal Advisor with the activities of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group

(SWG) in SEE and discussed possibilities for establishment of cooperation and implementation of joint activities and projects.

- The SWG Secretariat is waiting for the respond from the Danish Ministry on the results of the discussions.

### **3. Discussions with Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), May 2011**

- The SWG Secretary General during the meeting introduced Mr. Elofsson, Head of Unit for reform cooperation with Western Balkan and Turkey with the activities of SWG and discussed possibilities for establishment of cooperation and implementation of joint activities and projects in the agriculture and rural development sector.
- The SWG Secretariat is still waiting for the reply on the results of the discussions.

### **4. Meeting with representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Netherlands – Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI), August 2011**

- The future cooperation among the SWG and the CBI was discussed at the meeting among the representatives of CBI and SWG.
- The issue of economic cooperation through export promotion of the Balkan countries in the regional and EU market, transfer of EU know-how on agricultural machinery and processing technology and support measures for participation on international trade fairs was evaluated.
- The SWG and CBI will continue negotiating the means for future cooperation in the upcoming period. The CBI in a period of four months will perform a feasibility study in order to determine the possibilities for cooperation with SWG on export promotion in the SEE countries.

## **IV. Policy analysis**

### **1. 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Overcoming regional disparities: “How to achieve a better EU – coherent implementation of regional policies”, May 10<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> 2011, Arandjelovac, Serbia**

- The SWG participated on the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference organized by the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development of the Republic of Serbia, in cooperation with the Serbian European Integration Office and (GIZ) GmbH.
- The Conference on Overcoming Regional Disparities has a special focus on achieving a better, EU coherent implementation of regional policies.



- The overall objective of this Conference was to foster the process of bringing national policies in line with EU regional development policies, with the overall aim to reduce regional disparities and achieve stronger cohesion in all Europe.

## **2. Preparations for the organization of the Agricultural Policy Forum 2011, 12<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> October 2011 in Split, Croatia**

- The Agricultural Policy Forum (APF) 2011 will be jointly organized by the SWG and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development of Croatia.
- The Steering Committee for organization of the APF 2011 in May 2011 in Skopje, Macedonia had a meeting on which the concept and the organizational structure of the Forum were agreed. The program and list of invitees was made and the invitations for the event were sent by the end of July 2011. Invitations for the forum were sent to representatives from different institutions, including policy makers, governmental and non-governmental organizations from the agri-food sector, as well as rural development 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.

## **3. Preparations for the organization of the Fifth Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from SEE, 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> November 2011 in Skopje, Macedonia**

- The organizers of the meeting are the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of the Republic of Macedonia (organizer and host of the meeting) and the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South-Eastern Europe.
- The aim of the meeting is for the participating Ministers to discuss the importance of the regional cooperation in the agriculture and rural development sector within the SWG framework as well as the reforms undertaken in the sector of agriculture and rural development in the process of EU approximation of the SEE region.
- In addition, the meeting will be an opportunity to hear about the reforms of the Common Agriculture Policy of the EU 2014-2020 and the utilization of IPARD as a pre-accession instrument in the field of agriculture and rural development.

## **4. Project proposal on New policy mechanism for cluster development in the food value chain in SEE**

- The SWG along with sixteen institutions is partner of the University of Debrecen, Hungary for the INTERREG IVB SEE call for proposals. The project proposal aims to increase innovation capacities and competitiveness through knowledge and technology transfer in SEE in today's global business environment.
- The project overall objective is to improve regional public administrative ability and capacity to enhance, develop and implement effective regional cluster policy.
- Decisions related to the project proposal are expected after the meeting of the Monitoring Committee of the SEE Programme, scheduled for mid of September 2011.

## **V. Information exchange and access to knowledge**

### **1. 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Regional Event – Competitiveness, Finance and Economic Growth, organized by USAID Bureau for Europe and EURAsia, May 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>, 2011 – Budapest, Hungary**

- The SWG Secretary General participated on 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Event on Competitiveness, Finance and Economic Growth, event with an aim to bring together USAID Economic Growth Officers, implementing partners, and key counterparts from Europe and EURAsia region.
- The event was used as an opportunity for establishment of contacts with relevant partners and discussion about possible cooperation.

### **2. Implementation of food safety and quality system sand standards**

- Direct implementation of food safety and food quality systems (Global G.A.P., HACCP, organic agriculture standards) in the production units – companies and associations in Montenegro and Macedonia is on-going.
- Companies from Albania, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina which will be involved in the process of implementation of food safety and quality standards are identified and the implementation procedure will start in the following months.

### **3. Study trip: “Rural Networks in the European Union – Actors, Set-up and Tasks”, July 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011, Austria and Czech Republic**

- The study visit provide the opportunity for the representatives from the South Eastern European countries to observe and study the experiences of European Union member countries and learn the process of establishment and organization structure and capacities of the rural development networks (set-up, major tasks and actors involved).
- In total 24 representatives from Ministries and representatives from National Rural Development Networks or existing initiatives from seven SWG member countries (except from Bulgaria) participated in this study trip.