ANNUAL REPORT 2012
The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South-East Europe
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABD  Area Based Development
APF  Agriculture Policy Forum
ALB  Albania
BiH  Bosnia and Herzegovina
CAP  Common Agriculture Policy of the European Union
CEI  Central European Initiative
CEEER Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations
CRO  Croatia
DG AGRI 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
GDP  Gross Domestic Product
GIZ  German International Cooperation
GEF  Global Environmental Fund
GMO  Genetically Modified Organisms
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
KOS  Kosovo*
NGO  Non Governmental Organizations
NRDN  National Rural Development Networks
MA  Managing Authority
MoU  Memorandum of Understanding
MK  Macedonia
MNE  Montenegro
PUPS  Business Association of Serbian Markets
PIU  Project Implementation Unit
PMU  Project Management Unit
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
SRB  Serbia
SWOT  Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (Analytical tool)
TD  Technical Discussion
WB  Western Balkans
WG  Working Group
WFD  EU Water Framework Directive

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.*
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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.
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.

SWG CORE 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
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
Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry - Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ministry of Agriculture and Food – Republic of Bulgaria
Ministry of Agriculture - 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 Water Management – Republic of Serbia
Provincial Secretariat of Agriculture Water Management and Forestry - Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Republic of Serbia
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development – Kosovo*

SWG Observers
Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Republic of Austria
Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection, Federal Republic of Germany
Ministry of Rural Development of the Republic of Hungary
Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment, Republic of Slovenia

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BACKGROUND
BACKGROUND

South-Eastern European (SEE) Countries are moving constantly towards European integration and EU accession. The main pre-condition for full EU-membership is fulfillment 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.

Agriculture in the South-East European countries is important and has a substantial potential. This potential is however constrained by some deeply-rooted structural problems. A large share of the workforce is still employed in agriculture and the share of the sector in the GDP is disproportionately large compared to other developed economies.

Furthermore, the economic development in rural areas is lagging behind and even declining, in particular in the peripheral cross border areas. These areas do not possess the capacity to unleash the potential of the area and generate new employment as a complement to the restructuring of the agricultural sector, because the access to markets is limited and knowledge and technology transfer is difficult. This situation is also reflected in the negative demographic development where, in particular, young people leave the more deprived areas.

Development of rural areas in accordance with the EU-guidelines and policies is therefore, a major challenge for South-East European countries. Agriculture and rural development strategies, legislation and programming documents have been developed in many countries in the region in the recent years, while in some countries it is still an on-going process. The implementation of respective policy measures and instruments has started or is foreseen to start.

During the year 2012 the SWG promoted and stimulated debates and discussions 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, as well as academic institutions in order to provide technical background for the policy making process and confront the current challenges and perspectives on sustainable agriculture and rural development.

Within different projects, activities, Forums, Conferences, working discussions the SWG recalled the need for major reforms and restructuring of the agri-food sector and developing rural areas of SEE countries to enhance competitiveness and sustainable use of natural resources facing new challenges like climate change or food security.

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 2012.

The Annual report 2012 of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South-East Europe presents a summary of the most important activities undertaken and accomplished by the SWG in the period January – December 2012.

Partnerships and cooperation

The SWG highly appreciates the cooperation and support provided by the partner and support institutions and organizations: the European Commission (DG AGRI, DG ELARG, JRC/IPTS), Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), commissioned by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations (OA), Central European Initiative (CEI), World Ploughing Organization (WPO) and CIHEAM Institute for Mediterranean Agriculture – Bari (IAMB).
KEY FACTS
SWG in 2012
This section presents summary of the overall SWG activities and achievements in the year of 2012.

Summarized below are the main recorded achievements:

- Participation of more than 250 Ministry representatives and stakeholders on technical discussions for organic agriculture, International Pre-Accession Assistance in Agriculture and Rural Development (IPARD), integrated water and forestry management etc.

- More than 120 Ministry representatives and stakeholders participated on study trips for establishment of EU Regional Policy and Efficient Use of Structural Funds and Best Practices on Regional Rural Development.

- 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 educational material on organic agriculture production, implementation of Global Gap 4.0 food safety standard, Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) were prepared and printed by the SWG.

- Four Stakeholder Groups in the cross-border areas “Drina - Tara”, “Drina - Sava”, “Prespa” and “Sharra” were established with active participation of approximately 150 stakeholders.

- Preparation of Feasibility study on Joint Water and Forest Management in SEE.

- Over 40 companies were provided with consultancy services related to implementation of requirements for implementation of Global GAP 4.0, HACCP and organic standards.

- 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.
Throughout the year 2012 the SWG continued to maintain and endorse open, active, constructive and permanent cooperation among the SWG members, SWG partners and relevant agriculture and rural development 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).

During the year 2012 the SWG efforts for strengthening regional cooperation and networking in the agriculture and rural development sectors resulted in official confirmation of the willingness and readiness for cooperation.

As a consequence, the number of SWG member institutions increased on eleven with renewal of the membership status of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Provincial Secretariat of Agriculture Water Management and Forestry - Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Republic of Serbia.

Additionally, the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Ministry of Rural Development of the Republic of Hungary have taken the decision to join the SWG as observers and the SWG Assembly confirmed their participation in the SWG.

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

In March 2012, the SWG successfully completed the SWG GIZ project on: “Regional Cooperation and Networking in the Forestry and Water Management Sector and Sustainable Development in the River Basins of the South-Eastern Europe Countries.

The project was jointly implemented by SWG and the German International Cooperation (GIZ), commissioned by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

The closing outcome is Joint Statement which is addressing key issues for which action is needed and provides recommendations for future steps about the regional cooperation and networking in the forestry and water management sector and sustainable development in the river basins of the South-Eastern European countries. The document is approved by forty representatives of the Governments from South-Eastern European (SEE) countries, SEE regional experts on water and forestry, international development organizations and other stakeholders.

The final output of the overall project implementation is a feasibility study which assessed the current situation and future opportunities for development of functional network and/or commission and the panel discussion by the experts/participants.

The SWG GIZ ORF project: “Improving the competitiveness of companies and organizations from South - Eastern Europe in the agricultural and food sector through implementation of food quality standards and increased regional networking” was completed in June 2012.

The project aimed to increase the competitiveness of enterprises and associations of the agro and food producers from the Western Balkans by introduction of necessary food safety systems and quality standards.

The SWG and the project succeeded in establishing a platform for regional dialogue and strengthening regional networks and cooperation of different stakeholders operating in the agro and food sector. Ministry representatives, representatives of business support organizations, national and local producers’ associations and companies were assembled together to discuss, exchange experiences and information, plan future professional and business cooperation and perform joint actions.

According to the monitoring and evaluation, the project contributed to the increase of competitiveness of companies and associations operating in the agro and food sector through support in implementation of food safety and quality standards and through facilitation
the establishment and strengthening the regional networking and cooperation. The volume of trade of the project partner companies records increase of 50%.

The SWG EC Project Preparation Facility: “Preparation of a Proposal for Area-Based Development Project in the Western Balkans” which was completed in September 2012, lead towards the preparation of a Project Fiche for economic development of each of the selected cross-border regions “Drina - Sava”, “Prespa” and “Sharra”.

Following the intensive discussions during the meetings with the Stakeholders Groups (SHG) and the meetings of the Project Steering Group the following activities have been accomplished as project results:

- A baseline study, including a SWOT analysis, a strategy and action plan were prepared for each of the cross-border regions. These documents constitute the strategic support framework for the region and will be basis for future activities related to ABD implementation in the target regions.

- A structure for local participation in the process, including a Stakeholder Group representing all relevant stakeholders (Local Authorities, Regional Authorities, NGOs, business sector) from the participating countries is established in “Drina - Sava”, “Prespa” and “Sharra” cross-border regions and should be further consolidated.

- In the “Drina - Tara” region a small scale Secretariat currently operating with one person (pilot PMU) is established and funded by the participating Governments (BiH, MNE, SRB) through the funds of the SWG.

Following the strategic orientations, the SWG continued the activities providing the agriculture and rural development stakeholders with a dialogue platform. The Expert Advisory Groups of the Managing Authorities has their regular meetings. Additionally, Expert Advisory Groups of the SEE Paying Agencies and Organic agriculture were established in 2012.

The Second Working Meeting of Expert Advisory Group of the Managing Authorities from SEE, held in February 2012, was hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Macedonia. The goal of the meeting was preparation of a common position and clarification of the needs of Managing Authorities from the region in terms of the new IPARD post-2013.

The outcome of the meeting were conclusions which refer to the availability of the IPARD to all countries in the region of South-East Europe (SEE) despite of their accession status and considering their level of preparedness, as well as the issues related to the accreditation procedures for Managing Authorities, conferral of management process and introduction of new measures considering the existing measures applied for the member states and in accordance to the national context situation.

The First Working Meeting of the Expert Advisory Group of the Agencies for Financial Support of Agriculture and Rural Development from SEE, organized in March 2012 was hosted by the Agency for Financial Support of Agriculture and Rural Development (Paying Agency) of the Republic of Macedonia. The meeting aim was to strengthen regional cooperation of the existing and future Paying Agencies, exchange of information and experiences in order to increase the chances of a successful implementation of the pre-accession assistance.

The meeting resulted with conclusions for the future of the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance for Rural Development (IPARD post -2013) and IPA Framework Regulation, which along with the Conclusions of the 2nd Working Meeting of Expert Advisory Group of Managing Authorities from the SEE countries were presented on the Multi-Country Workshop on IPARD post-2013 organized by TAIEX in cooperation with the Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Commission.

The results on the exchange of views among the participants are particularly important for drafting the new IPA Implementing Regulation, Strategies, as well as, the IPARD next Programmes.

The discussions of the SEE Managing Authorities and Agencies for Financial Support of the Agriculture and Rural Development from SEE continued during the International Workshop: “Challenges of the new common agricultural policy for the South East European countries” in September in Slovenia.
The workshop organized jointly by the SWG Head Office/Secretariat and the Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment of the Republic of Slovenia (MAE) focused on presentation and discussion of the challenges of the new CAP in the SEE region through the approach of IPA/IPARD II. The particular focus was given on introduction to:

- Agro-environmental national program and measures in the pre accession period;
- Investments in agricultural holdings and food processing industry to upgrade them to the EU standards
- Investments in improving and development of rural infrastructure

During the 1st International Congress on Organic Farming and Eco-tourism „Sarajevo Organic 2012“ organized by the Union of the Associations of Organic Producers from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the SWG Secretary General presented the possibility for future support to the organic movement in the SEE region by establishment and management of an Expert Advisory Group on organic agriculture within the SWG.

The idea was welcomed by the participants and an agreement was made that in future work of the Expert Advisory Group on organic agriculture in SEE, besides Ministry representatives, three delegates from BON (Balkan Organic Network) to also take active part in the foreseen activities.

The official establishment of the Expert Advisory Group on organic agriculture was during the International Conference: „Organic Agriculture – achievements and perspectives on the way to Green economy and sustainable development“ within the “8th International Festival of Organic Products-Biofest”, in November 2012 in Serbia.

During the meeting, the Expert Advisory Group (EAG) on Organic Agriculture was established and members were nominated on behalf of the Ministry representatives and BON (Balkan Organic Network) representatives. Plan of future activities and actions of the Expert Advisory Group (EAG) on Organic Agriculture was discussed and confirmed.

The SWG supported the organization of the Regional Conference “Role of the Civil Sector in Rural Development of the Western Balkans” in June in Montenegro.

The aim of the Conference organized by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Montenegro and the initiative for Montenegrin Rural Development Network was to discuss the possibilities and ways for further improvement and implementation of initiatives by the civil society in the rural development sector in the Western Balkans, with special focus on possibilities for realization of cross-border cooperation projects.

Participants exchanged experiences and information on the actual regulations for provision of funds for implementation of projects in the rural development sector in the Western Balkans (agriculture and rural tourism) and gave recommendations for preparation of new regulation in relation to financing of projects.

The Conference conclusions refer to provision of support to the relevant stakeholders in preparation of necessary documents related to preparation of local rural development strategies, formation of LAGs with consideration of EU criteria within the LEADER, provision of participation in financing of projects from the EU funds, etc.

The Conference was concluded with an official signing of a Declaration on foundation of the Rural Development Network of Montenegro.

Upon invitation from the Regional Secretariat for Parliamentary Cooperation in SEE and the European Parliament, Western Balkan Unit of the Directorate-General for External Policies, the SWG Secretary General participated on the Parliamentary Seminar “Modernization of Agriculture and Implementation of CAP” along with leading specialists from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food of the Republic of Bulgaria and representatives from the European Commission and Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE.

Two important aspects that were brought up in the Parliamentary Seminar - the progress of the Western Balkan states in their efforts to harmonize their legislation with the EU legislation, as well as the information from the European Commission about possibilities to have pre-accession assistance in carrying out reforms in the agriculture sector. The SWG Secretary General gave an overview of the current stage of the reforms undertaken in the agricultural sector in the Western Balkan countries, followed by presentation of the Bulgarian experience in the process of EU accession and the implementation of common European policy on agriculture.
With the support of the SWG the 40th Traditional Regional Manifestation “Mowing on Rajac” was an event which embodied traditional local folklore and is organized in honor of the mowers from the rural areas. Large number of competitors from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, Croatia and Slovenia participated in the competition which consisted of: cutting mountain grass, wearing traditional clothes, straw hats and colorful embroidered bags on the shoulders.

On the occasion of the 59th World Ploughing Contest in September 2012 in Croatia, the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Croatia and SWG hosted the Informal – “No tie” Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from South Eastern Europe. The Ministers of Agriculture from SEE and their officially appointed representatives on a decision making level had a pleasure to participate at the official signing of a Memorandum of Understanding for future cooperation between the SWG and the World Ploughing Organization (WPO) and it was also a great opportunity for organizing bilateral meetings among the Ministers of Agriculture from SEE countries.

During the CIHEAM International Seminar on “The Sustainability of Food Systems in the Mediterranean Area” held in Malta in September 2012 the SWG representatives discussed the opportunity for cooperation between CIHEAM and Institute for Mediterranean Agriculture from Bari, Italy (IAMB). The meeting discussions resulted with preparation of a Memorandum of Understanding between the SWG and IAMB which will serve as a platform for future cooperation between both parties.

Additionally, the aim of the seminar was to present and discuss the Food Systems and Sustainable Diets – “The Mediterranean Diet” as a Pilot Study and Organic and Quality Schemes – “Sustainability Challenges and Prospects in the Mediterranean Region.”
II. CAPACITY BUILDING

The SWG focused its activities on strengthening of 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 2012, the SWG applied different measures such as organization of seminars, workshops, trainings, study visits, consultancy, preparation and publication of educational/technical material and others.

The Study Tour on: “EU Regional Policy and Efficient Use of Structural Funds” organized by the European Commission in March in Belgium provided an opportunity to obtain a clear picture of EU best practice on redistribution and decentralization in the field of regional development and territorial cohesion. This event was of an important character to the regional and local authorities coming from the Western Balkans assisting them to identify a way of improving the existing system of distribution of public funds in accordance with financial allocations for regional development as practiced by the EU Member States.

The SWG Secretary General moderated the plenary sessions during the Study Tour on Rural Development organized by the European Commission – Technical Assistance Information Exchange Instrument (TAIEX) in cooperation with the Committee of the Regions in May 2012 in Belgium.

The aim of this Study Tour was to present the EU policy on rural development to representatives of local and regional authorities coming from the Western Balkan countries and to give them the opportunity to exchange their experience and establish closer cooperation. Besides the general information about the functioning and decision-making of the EU, participants on the Study Tour had the opportunity to get introduced to the EU policy on rural development, in particular the Community strategic guidelines for rural development, the support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), the financing of the Common Agricultural Policy and the establishing an Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA).

Approximately 35 participants on the Study Tour had the opportunity to meet with members of the Community of Regions working on issues related to rural development and external relations. The participants on the Study Tour were introduced to umbrella organizations working in the field of rural development in order to exchange views and best practices with their counter parts in EU Member States, as well.

The Study Tour on: “Best practices for regional rural development, regional cooperation and area based development” organized by the SWG for the representatives of the Stakeholders Groups from “Drina – Tara”, “Drina – Sava”, “Prespa” and “Sharra” cross-border regions provided the opportunity to 25 members of the Stakeholder Groups of the target regions to acquire information about the best practices for regional rural development, regional cooperation in the EU member states (Germany and Austria), as well as to establish closer cooperation and exchange their experiences and views related to implementation of Area Based Development Approach (ABDA) in the Western Balkan countries.
The study tour provided an opportunity for the representatives from the ABDA cross border regions of “Drina – Tara”, “Drina – Sava”, “Prespa” and “Sharra” from the Western Balkan countries to observe and become familiar with the best practices for implementation of policies for rural development and regional cooperation in EU member countries.

The SWG within the SWG GIZ ORF project on improvement of the competitiveness of the agriculture sector in the South-East Europe, prepared educative material related to food safety and quality systems and standards particularly the publications: “Quality Management System for Global G.A.P. 4.0” “Guidance for implementation of Global G.A.P. 4.0” and “Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP)”. Also, the publication on “Basic Principles of Organic Agriculture” was made available into Serbian language.

The educative material aims to provide agricultural and food producers and processors with simplified information and good knowledge on the necessary tools and steps towards proper implementation of food safety and quality systems and standards. The material contributed to boost the food quality and safety in agriculture production and processing and increased competitiveness of agriculture products from SEE.

Additionally, 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, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia. More than forty companies were provided with consultancy services related to implementation of requirements for implementation of Global G.A.P. 4.0, HACCP, organic agriculture standards, as well as Good Hygiene Practices (GHP).

With participation on the 3rd Regional Workshop on Rural Development “Best practices in Green Jobs creation for ensuring sustainability of rural households and resource use as a part of Rural Development” in May, 2012 in the Czech Republic, the SWG contributed to the preparation for the upcoming UN conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). The workshop provided opportunity also to bring the knowledge and common understanding on green economy policies and practices, with the particular focus on green job creation in the CEE region. With active participation in the discussions, the SWG participated in creation of linkages to a sustainable agriculture - a key tool for a sustainable resource use and rural livelihoods and to identify the recent problems and gaps within a regional economical perspective.

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), Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations (OA), the Central European Initiative (CEI) and CIHEAM Institute for Mediterranean Agriculture – Bari (IAMB).

Intensive discussions for future partnership and cooperation were carried out with the European Environmental Agency (EEA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Denmark (MFAKD), the Mediterranean Organic Agriculture Network (MOAN), and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Partnership between the SWG and the German International Cooperation (GIZ) is based on the Strategic Framework for Cooperation and joint project implementation. In 2012 the SWG and GIZ successfully completed two regional projects and started additional three regional projects.

The project “Support to the EU reform processes in the field of agriculture and rural development of SEE countries and strengthening of regional cooperation and networking in SEE” started in May 2012 and its implementation is foreseen for a period of 3 years. The project aim is to facilitate close cooperation between the Ministries of Agriculture and the stakeholders in the field of agriculture and rural development and to support EU integration of SEE countries. The objective is to provide the necessary assistance across the main core functions in support and enhancement of the SWG for policy analysis, capacity building and networking.
The project includes the co-financing from German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the SWG. The financing will include support to the SWG in the next three years (2012-2015) i.e. until SWG reaches its financial self sustainability.

The SWG GIZ Project: “Strengthening Capacity Building through Networking and regional Cooperation in the Western Balkans” started in September 2012 and is foreseen to be implemented in a period of 2012-2013.

Primary aim of the Project is to enable public institutions and stakeholders from the Western Balkan countries to increase their ability to face their responsibilities in policy creation, decision-making and in implementing agriculture and rural development programmes more efficiently through capacity building, policy dialogue and networking.

“Capacity development for the Standing Working Group Regional Rural Development” is the SWG GIZ project with duration of three months which should open up the potential of regional cooperation efficiently.

The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE and the GIZ supported project “Climate Change Adaptation in the River Drin Basin” (GIZ CCA) jointly organized the planning workshop on the “Follow up activities and initiation of a regional working group on joint water resource and forestry management in South Eastern Europe”.

The goal of workshop was to define 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. This was done through discussions and evaluation of the methods on making the proposed regional working group become visible, leading, and pro-active initiative on regional level for joint water resource and forestry management.

The Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia of FAO (REU) and SWG has worked together on implementation of the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) on: “Streamlining of agriculture and rural development policies of SEE countries for EU accession”. The project aims at addressing a closer coordination and, in the long run, a stable relationship between policy makers and academics, and between the SEE countries, which is essential for an effective administrative system and an accelerated accession process. As an outcome of the project, governments of the SEE accession countries are streamlining their agriculture and rural development policies with the current and future CAP.

The main stakeholders of the project are Ministries of Agriculture, academic and research institutions and universities in the SEE region, civil society associations and other organizations dealing with agriculture and rural development policy issues. Additionally, SWG and FAO jointly were organizing and implementing joint capacity building workshops, conferences and seminars.

The project based cooperation between SWG and European Commission (EC) in 2012 was mainly based on implementation of the project: “Preparation of a Proposal for Area-Based Development Project in the Western Balkans”. The project was completed in September 2012 and the output is delivered to the EC Directorate General for Enlargement (DG ENLARG) in a form of a project fiche together with technical annexes (in-depth analyses and development action plans for “Drina-Sava”, “Prespa Lake” and “Sharra Mountain” cross-border regions) related to the implementation of the Area Based Development in the selected cross-border regions. As a follow up of the Project Preparation Facility: “Preparation of a Proposal for Area-Based Development Project in the Western Balkans” the SWG submitted proposal to the EC for project on “Preparation for implementation of the Area Based Development (ABD) Approach in the Western Balkans”.

The overall objective of the proposal for funding of the project: “Preparation for implementation of the Area Based Development (ABD) Approach in the Western Balkans” is to further work on building capacities and structures within the SWG and the four target regions in order to be able to implement the forthcoming ABD programmes. The foreseen start-up of the project is January 2013. The Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS) of the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre (JRC) actively was supporting the activities related to preparations for implementation of Area Based Development in the Western Balkan countries and the cooperation is foreseen to continue in the future, as well.
The cooperation between Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations (OA) and the SWG resulted with Study on agriculture and food-industry in South Eastern Europe which gives detailed overview of the situation and investment possibilities in the SEE agriculture and food sectors.

The cooperation between CIHEAM Institute for Mediterranean Agriculture – Bari (IAMB) and the SWG started with signing of Memorandum of Understanding which will be basis for further cooperation between both organizations.

In January 2012, the SWG delegation consisted by SWG delegates from Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo* participated at the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture and the International Green Week. The SWG was a cooperation partner of the regional panel on SEE: „Modernization partnership SEE-Enhancing efficiency, protecting resources! Perspectives for cooperation between Germany and the countries of SEE“ organized by OA, where the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of the Republic of Macedonia and SWG Presidency for 2012, H.E. Ljupco Dimovski addressed. Also, SWG presented its activities and achievements on the Cooperation Market where contact with possible partner institutions/organizations were established.

The SWG Secretary General in 2012 actively promoted the SWG activities and achievements and inquire on the enlargement of SWG partnership with other relevant institutions and organizations from Europe and worldwide.

The meeting organized with representatives of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management of Austria focused on discussions for the involvement of the Austrian Ministry as SWG observer in the work and activities of the SWG particularly in thematic policy dialogue related to forestry sector in SEE. Also, possibilities for enhancement the economic cooperation between Austria and the SEE region were discussed.

The meetings with European Commission Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Developemnt and Directorate General for Enlargement were opportunities for discussion of the implementation of the current project as well as the possibilities for continuation of activities related to ABD implementation in the Western Balkan countries in the period 2012-2014.

Based on the meeting conclusions, conceptual outline on how the ABD approach could be applied under the future 2014 – 2020 Regional and Territorial Cooperation instrument and how the SWG could be involved in the implementation of such an approach was prepared and submitted to DG Enlargement.

Meetings with Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, European Environmental Agency, USAID Regional Competitiveness Initiative (RCI), Global Environmental Fund (GEF), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) etc. were performed throughout the year.

The results from the discussions and proposals for cooperation are still expected.

In 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.
IV. POLICY ANALYSIS

The SWG in 2012 actively continued with 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.

For that reason, the SWG organized different events which aimed at discussion and evaluation of the agriculture and rural development policies.

The Agricultural Policy Forum 2012 on “Policy perspectives on environmentally sustainable agriculture and rural development in South Eastern Europe” was held under the joint auspices of the Macedonian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy and SWG and support by EC, GIZ, FAO and CEI.

More than 90 representatives from the Ministries of Agriculture of the SEE countries, European Commission, FAO, GIZ, JRC -IPTS, as well as, delegation of the EU in Macedonia participated at the Forum which main objective was to foster the implementation of EU-like agricultural and rural development policies in SEE with respect to a further integration of the SEE countries as well as their agricultural and rural sectors into the EU. The following three major topics were elaborated in details through working group sessions:

- 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.

As a final outcome, the Forum formulated the “Ohrid Agenda 2012” providing guidelines on environmentally sustainable agriculture and rural development, climate-related challenges and territorial and regional cooperation in SEE.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development of Kosovo* and the SWG jointly organized the 6th Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from South-East Europe. The aim of the meeting was to discuss future of the regional cooperation and reforms in the sector of agriculture and rural development in the process of EU approximation of the SEE region. In addition, the Ministers had an opportunity to discuss the reforms of the Common Agriculture Policy of the EU 2014-2020 and the consequences for the SEE countries, as well as the utilization of IPARD as a pre-accession instrument in the field of agriculture and rural development.

The meeting outcome is the document Conclusions of the 6th Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from South-East Europe.

The Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations (OA) through the Business Network Project SEE in the Framework of the Open Regional Fund of GIZ engaged the SWG for performance of survey on competiveness and investment possibilities in the agriculture branches/ sub-sectors of the SEE countries.

The aim of the engagement of the SWG is to develop methodology and conduct a survey/profiling about the identified agricultural branches for at least three countries in South Eastern Europe. After proceeding the profiling/survey the result is presented in a form of a detailed facts and figures about competitive agriculture branches per country which will be further spread among German companies which are interested in importing certain agricultural goods to Germany / Western Europe or which are operating in a country of the region and are looking for some new supply sources.
The SWG facilitated the exchange of information through mobilizing regional expertise and providing good practices among the SWG member institutions and other stakeholders in the field of agriculture and rural development.

The SWG Secretary General participated on the Informal Consultation Meeting for the preparation of the European Regional Conference (ERC)/ European Commission on Agriculture (ECA), organized by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia in cooperation with the Sub-regional Office for Central Asia. The Meeting focused on the support and policy assistance to European integration provided by FAO, as a priority for a number of countries in the region. The Balkan countries reiterated that EU accession and approximation of legislation and support policies remains their priority and that they appreciate FAO assistance in this area.

The SWG participated on the Twenty-eighth FAO European Regional Conference (ERC) and the thirty-seventh session of the European Commission on Agriculture (ECA). The objective was to address the policies for food security in the region, and particularly the coming challenges and perspectives, as well as to discuss specific short and long-term recommendations aimed at enhancing regional and global food security, policy actions and institutional set-up. The main purpose of the Regional Conference was the adoption of FAO programs in the region for 2012-2013, prioritizing the development of agriculture, forestry and fisheries in the region in 2014-2015. The objective was to prepare recommendations for the ERC in relation to the priorities of the region and its respective sub-regions and concentrate on the results and impacts that the countries expect to achieve in the region with the FAO assistance.

The Round Table: “Financing of LAGs and Implementation of Local Development Strategies” was organized within the final conference for completion of the project: “Building capacities for implementation of LEADER activities in the cross-border region between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina” implemented by the NGO “Association for development of Ibar river valley” and the municipalities of Arilje - Serbia, Istocni Stari Grad and Rogatica – Bosnia and Herzegovina. The round table was an opportunity for presentation of the SWG activities and discussion of future cooperation possibilities with stakeholders. The aim of the event was for donors and active projects to present their opinion about establishment of cooperation with Local Action groups, models of financing, as well as possible cooperation in implementation of projects on local level, which are in accordance with the local development strategies, contributing to improvement of rural areas.

The Regional Working Meeting on Solidarity Development and Strengthening the Social Dialogue in Agriculture in SEE, organized in April 2012, Bucharest, Romania provided an opportunity for a discussion on relevant issues related to more efficient development in the rural regions on the Balkans, such as the situation in agriculture– political and economic constrains and collective bargaining and opportunities for the conclusion of sectoral collective agreement, innovative instruments for funding the qualification and vocational training of the agricultural workers, as well as health and safety work conditions in the agriculture and framework agreement at European level.

During the meeting the SWG Secretary General presented the functions and the activities of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG), as well as the achievements in rural development of South Eastern Europe.

The SWG participated at a conference on “Export Possibilities of Organic products from Serbia” organized by GIZ/ACCESS Programme Serbia, Vojvodina Investment Promotion (VIP) and “Serbia Organica”. The purpose of the conference was to discuss about export potentials of organic agricultural products from Serbia, the marketing of organic crops from Serbia with special emphasis on the markets from organic protein plants especially soya beans, as well as to share experiences from the region and government support and legal frameworks.

During the Round Table on: “Specific Role of Civil Society in Lobbing and Implementation of National Action Plan for Organic Agriculture on the Western Balkan Region”, organized by the Balkan Organic Network, Green Network of Serbia and GIZ/ACCESS Programme Serbia the SWG shared its experiences related to preparation of strategies and action plans for development of organic agriculture sub-sector.
Based on an invitation from the OECD Secretariat, the SWG Secretary General participated on the OECD Workshop “Fruits and Vegetables Quality” where the participants discussed food safety issues and quality systems and standards, especially in the fruits and vegetables sector. Information on the fruits and vegetables quality inspection system in the European Union, international standardization for Codex Alimentarius, as well as the OECD Fruits and Vegetables Scheme as an overview of the Scheme and its role in international trade were presented to the participants.

This Workshop provided a ground for sharing knowledge and experience in relation to identification of the quality parameters (varieties, growing methods and technologies, handling/post harvest), food safety issues in fruits and vegetables products - food safety of fruits and vegetables, potatoes (legislation, contaminants), Import controls in the EU – performance, import system, documentation, as well as GMO – official control (authorized and non-authorized events).

The SWG website www.seerural.org serves as a platform for regular exchange of information among the SWG members, partners and stakeholders.

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

In the reporting period, certain improvements were made on the presentation side of the website through inclusion of new IT communication instruments. In the reporting period, Forum for SWG delegates established for internal communication.

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 significantly improved.

Improvements of the SWG communication and visibility will 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.

For that reason, the SWG engaged PR staff for communication with media in the SEE region for SWG visibility.

VI. SWG ASSEMBLY MEETINGS

During the year of 2012 the swg assembly meetings were organised as follows:

- 23rd SWG Assembly Meeting, 7th – 9th May, 2012, Milocer, Montenegro
- 24th SWG Assembly Meeting, 14th – 17th September 2012, Vodice, Croatia
- 25th SWG Assembly meeting, 2nd – 7th December, Munich, Germany
SWG Annual budget
October 1st 2011 - September 30th 2012
### SWG ANNUAL BUDGET
October 1st 2011 - September 30th 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of Funds</th>
<th>For the period from 01 October 2011 through 03 September 2012</th>
<th>For the period from 01 October 2010 through 30 September 2012</th>
<th>Cumulative up to 30 September 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European commission</td>
<td>114,573</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>114,573</td>
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<tr>
<td>GIZ</td>
<td>254,176</td>
<td>267,402</td>
<td>763,977</td>
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<tr>
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<td>39,424</td>
<td>66,272</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
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<td>52,752</td>
<td>100,558</td>
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<td>OA</td>
<td>24,959</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>24,959</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEI</td>
<td>2,027</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEMPUS</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33,924</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sources of funds - projects</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>413,454</td>
<td>1,106,290</td>
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<td>SWG Own and Liquidity account from finished projects</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>29,740</td>
<td>29,740</td>
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<td>SWG General account</td>
<td>114,947</td>
<td>199,947</td>
<td>449,870</td>
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<td>Other Contribution</td>
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<td>25,480</td>
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<td><strong>Bank Interest</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>107</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIZ</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>342</td>
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<tr>
<td>InWent (GIZ)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>89</td>
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<tr>
<td>OA</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEI</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEMPUS</td>
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<td>91</td>
<td>193</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Bank interest - projects</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>766</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWG Own and Liquidity account</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWG General account</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>901</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Bank interest</strong></td>
<td>527</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>1,703</td>
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<td>Foreign exchange translation gains</td>
<td>1,554</td>
<td>1,780</td>
<td>3,465</td>
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<tr>
<td>VAT refunds and advances</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3,836</td>
<td>3,836</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total funds received</strong></td>
<td>551,761</td>
<td>599,828</td>
<td>1,620,384</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### USES OF FUNDS BY ACTIVITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uses of funds - projects</th>
<th>For the period from 01 October 2011 through 03 September 2012</th>
<th>For the period from 01 October 2010 through 30 September 2012</th>
<th>Cumulative up to 30 September 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European commission</td>
<td>140,355</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>140,354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIZ</td>
<td>275,622</td>
<td>253,780</td>
<td>678,932</td>
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<tr>
<td>InWent (GIZ)</td>
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<td>24,916</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>40,627</td>
<td>41,110</td>
<td>91,739</td>
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<td>15,155</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15,155</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEI</td>
<td>2,038</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,038</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEMPUS</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,586</td>
<td>1,642</td>
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<td><strong>Uses of funds - projects</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>473,800</td>
<td>976,304</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>01 October 2011</td>
<td>01 October 2010</td>
<td>Cumulative up to 30 September 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Own and Liquidity Account transfers</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>29,433</td>
<td>29,433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- SWG Own and Liquidity account use</td>
<td>6,477</td>
<td>20,341</td>
<td>26,887</td>
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<tr>
<td>- SWG General account</td>
<td>107,211</td>
<td>100,269</td>
<td>241,054</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Other uses/transfers</td>
<td>2,267</td>
<td>3,614</td>
<td>5,881</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total financed operating funds</strong></td>
<td><strong>589,755</strong></td>
<td><strong>475,049</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,279,560</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Foreign exchange translation losses</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>2,660</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total financed through fund providers</strong></td>
<td><strong>590,253</strong></td>
<td><strong>475,510</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,282,220</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Funds at the beginning of the period</td>
<td>386,556</td>
<td>262,238</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funds at the end of the period</td>
<td>348,064</td>
<td>386,556</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Funds at the end of period consist of:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>30 September 2012</th>
<th>30 September 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign currency bank account – EUR</td>
<td>311,707</td>
<td>329,427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign currency bank account – USD</td>
<td>6,646</td>
<td>32,114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denar bank account</td>
<td>13,652</td>
<td>4,431</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denar cash at hand</td>
<td>1,577</td>
<td>426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign currency cash at hand - EUR</td>
<td>6,524</td>
<td>10,264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign currency cash at hand - USD</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>VAT receivables</td>
<td>1,623</td>
<td>6,891</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advances given</td>
<td>5,436</td>
<td>3,003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>348,064</strong></td>
<td><strong>386,556</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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 2012
ACCOMPLISHED PROJECTS

*Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)*
- **SWG - GIZ Open Regional Fund for SEE**: “Improving the competitiveness of companies and organizations from South-Eastern Europe in the agricultural 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;"

*European Commission*
- **SWG – EC IPA Multi-beneficiary Annual Programme 2012 - Project Preparation Facility**: “Area Based Development of Cross-border Areas in the Western Balkans”

RUNNING PROJECTS

- **SWG – FAO TCP**: “Streamlining of agriculture and rural development policies of SEE countries in the process of EU accession”;
- **SWG – GIZ**:
  - “EU reform processes in the field of agriculture and rural development of SEE countries and strengthening of regional cooperation and networking in SEE”
  - “Capacity development for the Standing Working Group Regional Rural Development”
  - “Strengthening capacity building through networking and regional cooperation in the Western Balkan countries”
ANNEX 2
SWG Head Office/ Secretariat Personnel
Status December 2012
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/Surname</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SWG Head Office employees</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boban Ilic</td>
<td>SWG Secretary General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irena Dzimrevska</td>
<td>SWG Head of Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katerina Spasovska</td>
<td>SWG Senior Project Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bogdanka Leveska – Gjorsoska</td>
<td>SWG Project Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julija Brzovska</td>
<td>SWG Human Resources, Contract and Cash Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrej Josifov</td>
<td>SWG Finance Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blagica Slezenkovska</td>
<td>SWG Office Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SWG Head Office contracted staff</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver Pop-Arsov</td>
<td>Project Assistant and Logistic Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivan Toromanoski</td>
<td>Project Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irena Andreevska</td>
<td>SWG PR Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vladimir Nikolovski</td>
<td>IT Assistant and Manager of the SWG web-site</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ANNEX 3
SWG Member institutions and appointed delegates
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/ Surname</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Skype ID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grigor Gjeci</td>
<td>Republic of Albania</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection</td>
<td>Rural Development Policy Director</td>
<td>Sheshi Skenderbej 2 1001 Tirana, Albania</td>
<td>Tel: +355 4 223 806; Fax: +355 4 223 806</td>
<td><a href="mailto:grigorgj@yahoo.com">grigorgj@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teuta Topi</td>
<td>Republic of Albania</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection</td>
<td>Chief of Sector in Rural Development Policies Directorate</td>
<td>Sheshi Skenderbej 2 1001 Tirana, Albania</td>
<td>Tel: +355 4 223 806; Fax: +355 4 223 806</td>
<td><a href="mailto:teutatopi@yahoo.com">teutatopi@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dusan Neskovic</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations</td>
<td>Assistant to the Minister</td>
<td>Musala 9, 71000 Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Tel: +387 33 953 514; Fax: +387 33 953 501</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dusan.neskovic@mvteo.gov.ba">dusan.neskovic@mvteo.gov.ba</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ljubisa Lalovic</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations</td>
<td>Head of Department for Agriculture and Rural development Policy Coordination</td>
<td>Musala 9, 71000 Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Tel: +387 33 953 514; Fax: +387 33 953 501</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ljubisa.lalovic@mvteo.gov.ba">ljubisa.lalovic@mvteo.gov.ba</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoran Kovacevic</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Srpska</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management</td>
<td>Assistant to the Minister</td>
<td>Trg Republike Srpske 1, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Tel: +387 51 338 430; Fax: +387 51 338 866</td>
<td><a href="mailto:z.kovacevic@mps.vladars.net">z.kovacevic@mps.vladars.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marko Srdic</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Srpska</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management</td>
<td>Consultant for Rural Infrastructure</td>
<td>Trg Republike Srpske 1, Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Tel: +387 51 338 599; Fax: +387 51 338 866</td>
<td><a href="mailto:m.srdic@mps.vladars.net">m.srdic@mps.vladars.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pejo Janjic</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry</td>
<td>Assistant to the Minister for Agricultural Policy and International Cooperation</td>
<td>Marka Marulica 2, 71000 Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Tel: +387 33 569475; Fax: +387 33 203428</td>
<td><a href="mailto:pejo.janjic@fmpvs.gov.ba">pejo.janjic@fmpvs.gov.ba</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emir Rascic</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry</td>
<td>Head of Department for International Cooperation</td>
<td>Marka Marulica 2, 71000 Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Tel: +387 33 569469; Fax: +387 33 203428</td>
<td><a href="mailto:emir.rascic@fmpvs.gov.ba">emir.rascic@fmpvs.gov.ba</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Svetlana Boyanova</td>
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## STANDING WORKING GROUP FOR REGIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN SEE (SWG)

**Operational Plan January 2012 - December 2012**

### Description of the activity | Beneficiary/Target group | Location of implementation | Time Frame
---|---|---|---
1 | General SWG/Head Office Activities | | |
1.1 | Steering and facilitation of political/policy discussions regarding SWG | Ministries of Agriculture in SEE | N/A | |
1.2 | Fund raising and contacts with donors/partners | Donor community, implementing agencies, governments and EC | N/A | |
1.3 | Preparation of new SWG regional project proposals | SWG Member Institutions/countries | SWG Head Office | |
2 | Annual SWG Assembly meetings, Policy and Political Forums | | |
2.1 | 23rd SWG Assembly meeting - replanning of activities, organizational issues, statutory issues and operational manual | SWG assembly and partner institutions | Montenegro | |
2.2 | 24th SWG Assembly meeting (assessments of achievements, replanning of activities) | SWG assembly and partner institutions | Slovenia/Croatia - TBC | |
2.3 | 25th SWG Assembly meeting (annual reporting, financial reporting and SWG Assembly decisions) | SWG assembly and partner institutions | Germany | |
2.4 | Agricultural Policy Forum 2012 | SEE ministry representatives, academics and various stakeholders | Macedonia | |
2.5 | Annual meeting of Ministers of Agriculture from SEE | Ministers of Agriculture from SEE, EC and supporting governments | Kosovo | |
2.5.1 | Informal meeting of Ministers of Agriculture | Ministers of Agriculture from SEE, EC and supporting governments | Croatia | |
2.6 | Study Tour of members of European Parliament | SWG and PREPARE | SEE countries | |
2.7 | Global Forum for food and agriculture 2012 - trade and global food security | SWG Member Institutions/countries | Germany | |
3 | SWG Expert Advisory Group meetings | | |
3.1 | SEE Managing Authorities - SWG expert advisory group (second meeting) | SWG Members | Macedonia | |
3.2 | SEE Water and Forestry - SWG expert advisory group (first meeting) | SWG Members | Croatia | |
3.3 | SEE Paying Agencies - SWG expert advisory group (first meeting) | SWG Members | Macedonia | |
3.4 | SEE Managing Authorities - SWG expert advisory group (Third meeting) | SWG Members | Slovenia | |
3.5 | SEE Paying Agencies - SWG expert advisory group (Second meeting) | SWG Members | Slovenia | |
3.6 | SEE Working Group on Wine - SWG expert advisory group (first meeting) | SWG Members | |
3.7 | SEE Organic Agriculture - SWG expert advisory group (First meeting) | SWG Members | BiH | |
3.8 | SEE Organic Agriculture - SWG expert advisory group (Second meeting) | SWG Members | Serbia | |
4 | Activities related to cooperation with FAO | | |
4.1 | Regional TCP "Streamlining of Agriculture and Rural Development Policies of SEE countries in the process of EU accession | | |
4.1.1 | First regional networking workshop (part 1) | SEE Ministries, SEE countries | Croatia | |
4.1.2 | National networking workshop - Part I | SEE Ministries, SEE countries | |
4.1.3 | First regional networking workshop (part 2) | SEE Ministries, SEE countries | Macedonia | |
4.2 | FAO TCP Facility "Support for establishment of rural development networks (RDN) in SEE countries | | |
4.2.1 | Preparation of project proposal | SWG Member Countries | SEE Countries | |
4.2.2 | 28th Regional Conference for Europe | FAO Member Countries | Azerbaijan | |
### Activities related to cooperation with GIZ

#### 5.1 (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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1.1 Implementation of Global GAP standards in association operating in the fresh fruit and vegetable sector and HACCP in winery in Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.2 Implementation of Global GAP standards in associations and companies operating in the fresh fruit and vegetable sector, HACCP and Organic Standards in food operators in Albania</td>
<td>Albania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.3 Implementation of HACCP and GHP in the green and wholesale markets in the Serbka</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.4 Training of advisors of the extension service of Bosnia and Herzegovina on Global GAP</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.5 Preparation and print of publications related to food safety and quality</td>
<td>SEE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.6 Global GAP 4.0 in Serbian and Montenegrin language</td>
<td>SEE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.7 Quality Management System document for implementation of GLOBAL G.A.P. 4.0 in glass houses</td>
<td>SEE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.8 GLOBAL G.A.P. modules on: Soil and Water, Environment, Hygiene and Plant Protection</td>
<td>SEE</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.1.9 HACCP - electronic compilation of educative material for food producers</td>
<td>SEE</td>
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</table>

#### 5.2 (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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1 Preparation of feasibility study on forest and water management sector in the river basins of SEE (expert meetings and country assessments in the SEE)</td>
<td>All involving countries in the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2 International conference for presentation of the feasibility study</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### European Commission - DG Agri and DG Enlargement

#### 6.1 Project - Facilitating an Area Based Development Approach in rural regions in the Western Balkan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1.1 Assessment of the situation in the cross border areas</td>
<td>SEE countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.2 Baseline analysis, preparation of strategic overview and action plan for area-based development in the selected cross-border areas</td>
<td>SEE countries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 6.2 Meetings of the Stakeholders Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.2.1 Introductory Meeting - Discussion on the process - Presentation of base line</td>
<td>Regional expert and Regional Consultants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.2 Discussion of strategy and priority, actions</td>
<td>SEE countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.3 Presentation of action plan and final conclusions/ directions (first outline)</td>
<td>SEE countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.4 Presentation of final documents strategy, action plan</td>
<td>SEE countries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 6.3 Drafting Project Fiche

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.3.1 First draft of the project - prepared</td>
<td>SEE countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.2 Second meeting of the steering group</td>
<td>Brussels, Belgium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.3 Third meeting of the steering group</td>
<td>Montenegro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.4 Finalization of the project fiche and related technical annexes</td>
<td>SEE countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.5 Preparation of Proposal for extension of the ABD related activities</td>
<td>SEE countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.6 Field trips Drina - Tara region</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.7 Fourth meeting of the steering group</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 Study Tour for ABD Stakeholders - Best Practices in RRD</td>
<td>Stakeholders from ABD regions, Germany</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 7.1 IPAIRD: Lessons learned and prospects for IPA/IPARD post 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1.1 TAEX Workshops</td>
<td>Brussels, Belgium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Producers Groups - legal framework, organization structure, roles, good practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>FAO/UN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>Publicity - IPARD and national RD programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Activities related to cooperation with OA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Survey on Agricultural and Food Industry in SEE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>SEE Rural Events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>World plowing competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>Moving on Rapec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>Agro-biodiversity fair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Ongoing Activities
- Finished Activities
- Cancelled activities
- Long Term activities
- Postponed activities
- New activities
ANNEX 5
Ohrid Agenda 2012
for Agriculture and Rural Development in South-Eastern Europe
AGRICULTURAL POLICY FORUM 2012
Policy perspectives on environmentally sustainable agriculture and rural development in South Eastern Europe
16th - 19th October 2012, Ohrid, Macedonia

The 12th Agricultural Policy Forum (APF) held in Ohrid, Macedonia in the period 16th – 19th October 2012, provided an opportunity to review the outstanding accomplishments achieved by the APF process over the past period, while considering the challenges and opportunities for the development of agriculture and rural areas in South Eastern Europe (SEE) over the next decade up to 2020.

The APF 2012 addressed the implementation of future EU common agricultural and rural development policy and the reflection towards the countries of SEE, focusing on environmentally sustainable agriculture and rural development, climate-related challenges and territorial and regional cooperation.

The Forum promoted and stimulated 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 confront the current challenges and perspectives on environmentally sustainable agriculture and rural development.

In this respect, sharing national and international experiences was stressed as a precondition for the continuous improvement of policy settings towards the EU integration process.

Information was provided about the new orientation of EU Common Agricultural and Rural Development policy and the Forum strongly encourages the Governments to use the opportunity of the EU policy reform process to review their national agricultural and rural development policies and develop national strategies which include the perspective of European integration over the 2014-20 planning period.

In this context the countries of SEE invite the European Commission to continue and intensify the dialogues with the region in the period leading up to the adoption of the 2014-20 CAP reforms and pre-accession policies in order for the SEE countries to update and/or prepare their national strategies for EU integration.

The Forum recalled the need for major reforms and restructuring of the agri-food sector and developing rural areas to enhance competitiveness and sustainable use of natural resources facing new challenges like climate change or food security.

The Forum directed the discussions towards the problems regarding climate change and rising prices of agricultural products, in particular the effects of drought in SEE. These issues become a matter of concern all across the globe, as well as the SEE region in respect to the increase of consumer price index for food.
Therefore, the SEE countries should strongly consider the impacts and possible solutions which ought to be taken in the near future for the purpose of economic stability and growth.
The Forum debated in detail on the following three policy topics relevant to the SEE countries:

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

The following specific findings and recommendations are output of the intensive plenary and working group discussions during the Forum.

FOCUS TOPIC 1
Joint Water and Forest Management

Cooperation between responsible sectors and/or institutions at national and regional levels is insufficient for tackling the challenges of an integrated water and forest management in SEE countries. Based on the prepared documents (Feasibility Study on Strengthening regional cooperation and networking in the forestry and water management sector and sustainable development in the river basins of the South-Eastern Europe countries 2012), a proposition has been made on establishment of a SEE regional platform for strengthening the cooperation between the water and the forest sectors.

As a result, a continuous communication of the technical expert working group at local and regional level to stimulate cooperation between institutions responsible for national monitoring systems should be further supported. The focus of the working group should be on the harmonization with and implementation of relevant EU legislation, including the design, financing and implementation of concrete cross-border projects and initiatives on best management practices on river basins.

• As concrete road-map, the following action priorities were defined by the Forum
• Assessment and improvement of Ecosystem Services in South Eastern Europe Region
• Harmonization of risk assessment methodologies concerning erosion and torrents
• Installation of a pro-active flood management system and
• Assessment and promotion of the social, economic and ecological benefits from protective forests

For these action priorities, the development and improvement of regional project schemes on joint water resource and forest management in SEE should be provided to the SWG for communication with the relevant Ministries, stakeholders and Donor community.
FOCUS TOPIC 2
Area Based Development Approach

The Forum agreed that the ABD approach has been confirmed to be relevant for rural cross-border areas in the South Eastern European countries. The progress on activities related to the implementation of the Area Based Development (ABD) approach in the selected areas (Drina-Tara, Drina-Sava, Shara Mountain and Prespa Lake) has been reviewed. The Forum participants confirm that substantial progress has been made in establishing the local stakeholder structures and developing the strategic support framework for the respective areas.

The continuous support from the EC is acknowledged as essential for the lasting effort to establish the capacity for implementation and application of ABD approach within the framework of the regional and territorial cooperation policy in the period 2014-20.

In this regard the Forum concludes:

• The stakeholders from the public sector, private sector and civil society should be owners of their development strategy and benefit from a supportive environment (political support, favorable legal framework).

• The stakeholders of the particular cross-border region in SEE are encouraged to periodically re-plan and discuss about all components of the regional strategies (baseline development assessment, identified priorities, overall vision, action plans, etc).

• SWG should facilitate the stakeholder groups in order to apply vertical circulation of information (bottom-up and top-down) of appropriate policies and development practices, at the advantage of local communities and national governments.

• Concrete implementation of development actions and measures considered as priorities by the established stakeholder groups in the cross-border regions is immediately required in order to maintain the momentum.

The Forum therefore encourages the Governments to intensify their political and financial support to the process of cooperation in the cross-border rural areas in order to sustain the efforts made by the local stakeholders.

FOCUS TOPIC 3
CAP - Gap analysis

The need to address modernization and harmonization of agriculture and rural development policy with the current and future EU CAP policy has been stressed by the Forum as a high priority.

The overall capacity of the Ministries of Agriculture and other related institutions as key policy makers has to be strengthened. In that respect, the importance of human resources management within the institutions as well as the coordination and communication within other Government institutions has been strongly emphasized. The organizational structures should reflect the fact that all segments are affected by the EU harmonization.

The Forum agrees that long term strategies and programming for agricultural policy reforms in SEE countries and harmonization of the legislation with the EU need to be coordinated with the development of appropriate structures in the Ministries of Agriculture for implementing policies that support agriculture and rural development.
In this regard the Forum recommends:

- A stable funding and long term programming system, precise definition of needs and problems, better preparation of beneficiaries for fund absorption, neutral criteria regarding farm types, and improvement of the rural credit system.

- Recognition of the role of research, education and agricultural extension services (Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems - AKIS) in the creation of agricultural policy in the countries as well as continuous reforms of these institutions.

- Increase of awareness within institutions and stakeholders for application of agro-environmental policy and introduction of the cross-compliance concept in the agricultural policy of SEE countries.

The Forum strongly recommends to the Governments to avoid introduction of new support measures in their agricultural policy which are not in line with WTO and EU policies and to phase out distorting and non EU-harmonized agricultural policies. Instead, the focus of the agricultural policy of the SEE countries should be on development, growth and strengthening of agriculture and rural areas.

As a general conclusion, participants on the Agricultural Policy Forum 2012 identified and agreed on the steps to be undertaken in the forthcoming period:

- On November, 16th in Pristina, the Ohrid Agenda 2012 will be presented and discussed at the 6th Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from South-Eastern Europe.

- Ohrid Agenda 2012 will be conveyed to the EU institutions, UN agencies and other international institutions.

- The 13th Agricultural Policy Forum will be held in autumn 2013 in Kosovo* holding the SWG Presidency for 2013.

The Agricultural Policy Forum 2012 in Ohrid was held 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.

The participants of the Agricultural Policy Forum 2012 highly appreciate the support provided by the convening institutions and organizations: the European Commission (DG AGRI, DG ELARG, JRC/IPTS), Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), commissioned by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Central European Initiative (CEI).

Kosovo* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.
ANNEX 6
Conclusions of the 6th Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from South Eastern Europe
CONCLUSION

The 6th Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from South Eastern Europe held in Prishtina, Kosovo*

November 16th, 2012

Ministers of Agriculture and Head of Delegations from South Eastern European countries gathered in Prishtina, Kosovo* on 16th of November 2012 at the 6th Annual Working Meeting organized under the joint auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development of Kosovo* 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 (SEE) 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.

CONCLUSION

of 6th 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 SWG in SEE, have gathered in Prishtina, Kosovo* to discuss the future course of reforms for agriculture and rural development sector in SEE region and review the progress of the regional cooperation in this field. We reconfirm our commitment to the shared vision and mutual regional cooperation ethics endorsed on the previous Meetings of the Ministers of Agriculture in SEE.

2. We remain committed to the European Union (EU) integration process for further preparing our national political agendas towards becoming members of the EU. In this regard, the EU member countries from the SEE region reconfirm their commitment to strengthening regional cooperation and stand ready to continue to further support efforts for the process of EU approximation of the agriculture and rural development sector to the candidate and potential candidate EU member countries.

3. We reiterate the importance of the legislative proposal from the European Commission (EC) on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reforms 2014-2020 and the update and/or preparations of Pre-accession assistance (IPARD). We will continue to closely follow the changes in the CAP and further assess the impact of this proposal to our economies. Therefore, we remain determined to review our national agricultural and rural development policies further and develop strategies in compliance with the CAP over the 2014-20 planning period.

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4. At the Agricultural Policy Forum (APF) 2012 held in Ohrid, Republic of Macedonia the Forum reviewed the outstanding accomplishments of the APF process over the past decade. The Forum addressed the implementation of future EU common agriculture and rural development policy and the reflection towards the countries of SEE, focusing on environmentally sustainable agriculture and rural development, climate-related challenges and territorial and regional cooperation.

We welcome the recommendations outlined in the Ohrid Agenda 2012. We especially underscore the importance of the topics discussed (CAP-Gap analysis, Area Based Development Approach and Joint Water and Forest Management):

- Along with the process of EU integration of our countries, we will strive to avoid introduction of support measures into our agricultural policy which are not in line with World Trade Organization (WTO) and EU policies. In addition, we will phase out distorting and non EU-harmonized agricultural policies. Our agricultural policy focus in the pre-accession period will be on development, growth and strengthening of agriculture and rural areas.
- We reiterate our commitment to political and financial support to the process of cooperation in the cross-border rural areas in order to sustain the efforts made by the local stakeholders so far. We welcome the continuation of the dialogue and the actions taken by the SWG structures together with the EC (DG Enlargement and DG Agriculture) to uphold the development of a comprehensive program in the SEE region through an application of Area Based Development approach.
- We endorse the process of strengthening of the regional cooperation and networking in SEE countries on all levels (political, technical, etc.) for water and forest management. We welcome the application of an integrated and cross-sectoral approach for water and forest management at national and regional levels. Such cross-sectoral approach will contribute to the streamlining of water and forest management policies and actions in the SEE region. We endorse the SWG action priorities for the development and improvement of regional project schemes on joint water resource and forest management in SEE.

5. We highly value the process of incorporating regional cooperation and regional ownership, through the enduring work of the SWG. As founding structures, we recognize the SWG as our regional initiative and its active role on facilitating policy dialogue and practical regional cooperation in the field of agriculture and rural development.

We persist at encouraging these pursuits and are prepared to maintain the support, via emphasizing regional collaboration and interoperability among the SEE countries within the existing SWG network.

6. We adopt the report of the Secretary General on the achievements and results of the SWG work for the year of 2012. 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 attitude remains in the future. We highly value the applied principles of transparency, flexibility, accountability and cost effectiveness of the work of SWG, which resulted in the increased credibility of the organization.

7. We express our deep concern over the issues in our region and worldwide regarding negative effects of climate change-drought and flooding in SEE. As a result of that, we will enhance our discussions i.e. take necessary decisions and implement adequate measures in order to overcome the concerns related to increase of price of agricultural commodities and consequently increase of consumer price index for food. We also agree to jointly undertake measures to encourage increase of trade with agricultural products in our region.
8. We recognize the Strategic and Operational Plan 2011-2015 of the SWG which sets out our vision for regional cooperation for the foreseen period as an effective and affirmative based on the results achieved in the period 2011-2012.

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

- Decided to further support the strategic outline of the SWG with a comprehensive approach as to allow efficient management and development of the regional cooperation in the field of agriculture and rural development;
- Reaffirm our statement on providing political, financial and technical support to the initiatives and activities taken on behalf of the SWG in order to reassure its sustainability in the SEE region;
- Task the Secretary General and SWG Assembly into further building the SWG for fulfilling its essential core tasks – facilitating policy dialogue, developing tools for agriculture and rural development, supporting networking and regional cooperation - which all contribute to the wellbeing of its Member Institutions and the SEE region in general;
- Task the Secretary General and the SWG Assembly through the SWG as an International Intergovernmental Organization to further impel the processes of EU reforms pro regional cooperation in the field of its framework;
- Support the Secretary General and the acting SWG Presidency - the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development of Kosovo* on the continues work with the European Union on the further development and application of the Area Based Development in the rural cross-border areas of South Eastern Europe.

9. We agree to further enhance existing partnerships 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 the Ministry of Rural Development of Hungary and the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection of Germany;
- Welcome the willingness of the Provincial Secretariat of Agriculture, Water Economy and Forestry, Province of Vojvodina, Republic of Serbia for the renewal of their full fledged membership within SWG;
- Encourage other Governments from South Eastern Europe to join the regional initiative of SWG;
- Invite other Governments from EU member countries to intensify the dialogue with our regional initiative – SWG and to commence contacts and develop joint cooperation programs relevant for the SEE region and Europe in general.

10. We congratulate the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of the Republic of Macedonia for successfully holding the Presidency of the SWG Assembly during the year 2012.

The SWG Presidency and the duties for the year of 2013 have been handed over from the current Presidency – the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of the Republic of Macedonia to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development of Kosovo*.

The 13th Agricultural Policy Forum in South Eastern Europe will be held in Kosovo* in autumn 2013.

11. We highly appreciate the support provided by the convening organizations and institutions: the European
We express our appreciation for the kind hospitality provided to us by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development of Kosovo*. At this meeting in Pristina, we have once again reviewed and defined the course for regional cooperation for the years ahead. In this context, the SWG will remain an essential tool for advocating policy dialogue and regional cooperation, with continues support to the agriculture and rural development sector of SEE countries during the EU integration process.

We look forward to a further report on the process of the actions set above by the time of our next Meeting. We will meet again in 2013 to review the developments made.

Kosovo* “This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

PRESENT REPRESENTATIVES OF INSTITUTIONS DURING THE MEETING

SWG member institutions
Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection - Republic of Albania
Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry - Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ministry of Agriculture and Food – Republic of Bulgaria
Ministry of Agriculture - 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*

SWG Observers
Ministry of Rural Development - Republic of Hungary
Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection – Federal Republic of Germany

Other Ministries non SWG Members
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs – Republic of Turkey

Other institutions
Government of Kosovo*
European Commission, Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development
European Union Office in Kosovo*
German International Cooperation (GIZ)
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO UN)
United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
Embassy of Republic of Albania in Kosovo*
Embassy of Republic of Bulgaria in Kosovo*
Embassy of Republic of Croatia in Kosovo*
Embassy of Republic of Hungary in Kosovo*
Embassy of Republic of Macedonia in Kosovo*
Embassy of Republic of Turkey in Kosovo*
Embassy of Kosovo* in the Republic of Hungary
ANNEX 7
Joint Statement on Water and Forest Management in SEE
Regional cooperation and networking in the forestry and water management sector and sustainable development in the river basins of the South-Eastern Europe countries

Dubrovnik, Croatia 15 March 2012
The participants of the regional conference held in Dubrovnik, Croatia on 15th of March 2012 representing the Governments from SEE countries, SEE regional experts on water and forestry, international development organizations and initiatives and other stakeholders agreed on a Joint Statement during the Conference on “Regional cooperation and networking in the forestry and water management sector and sustainable development in the river basins of the South-Eastern European countries” jointly organized by Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE, German International Cooperation (GIZ), commissioned by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

BACKGROUND

The Balkan region is characterized by its mountain ranges, prominent diversity of landscapes, fauna and flora, significant biodiversity and waters. The Balkan Peninsula is covered with mixed forests, holding some of the most substantial woodlands and streams of rivers which feed into the mountainous areas and the arable land across the corridor. The forests are known for their outstanding natural ecological values, most striking panorama and lush vegetation. While the rivers, apart from being recognized as a spot of natural beauty, have far-reaching hydrological and water quality. During the past years, this region has suffered extensive environmental and ecological changes. The issues had become more complex as differences in socio-economic conditions, geography, and laws of the countries in the region have emerged. The unfavorable structural adjustments and those paradigms of transitional period have also caused the greatest difficulties and show the deficient performance in the management of natural resources. As a result, lack of interest and care for ensuring ecosystem and biodiversity preservation emerged.

Since all rivers are confluent, approximately, ninety percent of the area of the Southeastern European (SEE) countries falls within cross-border river basins. More than half of the river areas are shared by three or more bordering countries. They form cross-border areas under regulation of separate national policies. Each country in the SEE region is faced with the challenge of harmonizing with EU regulations.

The elaborated problems related to forestry and water in SEE create a solid background for action in order to improve sustainable water and forestry management in the South-Eastern European Region through an improved regional cooperation and coordination between sectors, policy makers and related stakeholders.

Against this background the participants of the Conference recognize the need to take an action at all levels with regards to sustainable water and forest management in the SEE, addressing the key issues for which action is needed and providing recommendations for future steps.
Future steps to be undertaken by Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE to address the key issues as outlined in the study are:

Establish and strengthen regional cooperation by establishment of regional expert advisory group – regional working group on forestry and water management for:

1. Support the adjustment and implementation of new legislation in the context of EU approximation in the SEE countries in accordance with EU regarding water and forest related issues.
2. Development of new activities and networking with existing bilateral and multilateral initiatives dealing with water and forestry issues of regional relevance in and for SEE.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Governments and other stakeholders are encouraged to implement EU policies and develop national and regional programmes that promote regional, multi-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder approaches that links integrated forests and water management with related socio-economic and environmental issues.

A regional approach in SEE region is a necessity to address the needs of integrated water and forest management. Therefore the participants of the Conference endorse the following recommendations for the Governments of the SEE countries and donor community, which are:

1. Strengthen the regional cooperation and networking in South Eastern European countries on all levels (political, technical, etc.) of forestry and water management;
2. Extend the awareness raising on sustainable development concerning the integrated forest and water management;
3. Apply an integrated and cross-sectoral approach for water and forest management at national and regional levels. Such cross-sectoral approach would contribute to the streamlining of forest and water management policies and actions in the SEE region. This approach will lead to better understanding of water and forest interactions concerning common issues;
4. Ensure within SWG as a regional platform efficient and impartial collaborative partnerships among governments, academic institutions, civil society, the private sector, international organizations, and other stakeholders. Such partnership should facilitate knowledge sharing and capacity building, sound science-based policy development and actions aiming towards tangible improvements in forest and water management;
5. Ensure stakeholder participation in development of a joint action and coordinative efforts for effective implementation and enforcement of relevant polices and corresponding legislations;
6. Provide sufficient resources to address the above mentioned recommendations.
APPRECIATION

The participants of the conference highly appreciated the support provided for organizing the conference for this regional gathering and for conducting the feasibility study on: "Strengthening regional cooperation/networking in the forestry and water management sector and sustainable development in the river basins of the South-Eastern European Countries" to: Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE, German International Cooperation (GIZ), commissioned by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and experts engaged in the feasibility study.

To further stimulate regional cooperation, knowledge transfer, exchange of experience and joint actions in the SEE, the participants' kindly request the SWG and donor community to continue their assistance and to follow up on the recommendations for integrated water and forest management.
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