



**Summary of the Informal Gathering  
of the Ministers/Heads of Delegations responsible for agriculture and rural development  
from the Western Balkan countries**

**Assembled in Zagreb, Croatia  
April 25th 2018**

The Ministers of Agriculture from Western Balkan countries (WBs) and the Heads of Delegations, gathered on 25<sup>th</sup> of April 2018 in Zagreb at the Informal Gathering of the Ministers organized under the joint auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture of Croatia and the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South Eastern Europe, to discuss the process of approximation of the Western Balkan countries and the assistance which could be provided by Croatia from the perspective of agriculture and rural development context in the process of EU integration of the WBs.

Following stated assurance of the participating countries/territories, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations expressed the readiness in resolving the common interests of the countries/territories in the Western Balkan region on following issues:

- The need for strong political commitment as a precondition for establishment of a functional network and agrobiodiversity repository which will provide necessary information on plant and animal genetic resources. The WB region stress the importance on developing the policy compatible to EU and other international regulations related to agrobiodiversity.
- The importance to pursue harmonization of trade policies and marketing standards to facilitate regional business cooperation, product development and improvement of the value chains, due to the small size of the agri-food sectors in the SEE countries.
- The significance of strategic development of the legislation and policy in the pursuit of the regional agenda on organic agriculture and policy on quality of agricultural and food products.
- To continue the commitment on synchronizing national agriculture and rural development policies with regards to PDO (protected designation of origin) and PGI (protected geographic indication) on traditional products and direct farm sales.
- The need to reach political support for broader economic development of the WB countries. The mutual recognition of international agreements and implementation of provisions of CEFTA thus will further eliminate market access barriers and strengthen the trade within the Western Balkan is a significant element.

In closing:

- The 12th Annual Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture have been announced by Macedonian Minister, H.E. Ljupco Nikolovski scheduled for middle November 2018 in Macedonia. Minister Nikolovski invited all the participating Ministers/Heads of Delegations to attend the Annual Ministerial Meeting which will be another opportunity to exchange their views and elaborate different prospects in the field of agriculture and rural development hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of the Republic of Macedonia.
- The present Ministers and Heads of Delegations express the gratitude for the warm hospitality provided by the Ministry of Agriculture of Croatia with regards to the carefully chosen topics for



discussion and further assistance provided to all participating governments in the process of approximation of the WBs which remains essential for the better future of the whole region.

- Regional cooperation of the Ministries of Agriculture through implementation of regional activities within the SWG platform remains crucial component to enhance the regional stability and security of the region of Western Balkan.

## **Present representatives of institutions during the Informal Gathering**

H.E. Niko Peleshi, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Republic of Albania

Mr. Mato Franjicevic, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, Bosnia and Herzegovina

H.E. Tomislav Tolusic, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture of Croatia

Mr. Bekim Hoxha, Director of Department for Viticulture and Wine, Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Rural Development, Kosovo\*

H.E. Ljupco Nikolovski, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, Republic of Macedonia

Mr. Djuro Zugic, State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Montenegro

H.E. Zeljko Radosevic, State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Republic of Serbia

Mr. Boban Ilic, Secretary General, The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South Eastern Europe (SWG)

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\* *"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."*