Assessment of the Application of the Agri-Environmental Policy (AEP) in ALBANIA

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INTRODUCTION
Introduction

- Brief chronology of EU integration process.
- General geographic, demographic and economic data
AGRICULTURE IN ALBANIA
Agriculture in Albania

• Although no longer the dominant sector, still contributes approximately 20% to the GDP.

• Crucial importance for Albania’s economic development

• Government hopes to boost agriculture production by providing financial support and facilitating private investment in the agro processing sector.

• Allotted over the last five years on average $10 million annually to develop fruit and olive orchards, vineyards, greenhouses, and storage capacities as a direct support for rural development.
Agriculture in Albania

• National Strategy for Development and Integration, 2007–2013 (NSDI I) & the NSDI II (2014–2020) emphasise the sustainability element related to:
  – management of natural resources,
  – promoting diversified economic activity
  – strengthening capacities to improve living conditions.
  – improvement of innovative techniques referring to agricultural products, by delivering different competencies to the responsible authorities.

• The strategic priority of NSDI II is to contribute to:
  – a fair development of all rural regions in Albania,
  – improve the quality of life in rural area in a sustainable way
  – reduce poverty among rural population.
Agriculture in Albania

- Inter–sector Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development (ISARD) 2014-2020 provides the legal basis for the national support schemes, which are set out in the Strategic National Action Plan for Agriculture and Rural Development (SNAPARD).

- The implementation of Strategic Plan of Agriculture and Rural Development contribute to the achievement of strategic national goals through:
  - support of economic growth in accordance with principles of sustainable development,
  - increasing the human resource potential,
  - raising of incomes through new job creation and
  - improved social inclusion to ensure a higher quality of life.
Agriculture in Albania

• The first phase of ISARD 2014-2020, which consists of starting the IPARD II Programme, is progressing.

• The IPARD II Programme was adopted by the Government of Albania, approved by the European Commission (EC) in July 2015 and ratified by the Albanian Parliament in March 2016.

• The implementation of the IPARD II Programme, will prevue to start at first part of year, 2018.
ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY
Environment and Environmental Policy – Intro’s

• Introduction with information on the
  – relief,
  – lakes,
  – river basins
  – soils - their erosion and degradation.
Climate Change

• Albania’s high vulnerability to climate change due to:
  
  – high exposure to extreme weather (drought, heat spell, flooding),

  – high sensitivity (great reliance on hydropower, irrigation and large share of population living in low elevation coastal zones).

  – low adaptive capacity due to the low GDP per capita

  – limited institutional capacity,

may exacerbate effect on water resources, energy production, tourism, ecosystems, agriculture and coastal zones.
Climate Change

Integration of the climate change issues in the sectorial policies remains a challenge and the following obstacles should be overcome:

– lack of legal framework to adapt to these challenges, preventing the implementation of long-term sustainable measures;

– lack of institutional capacities to evaluate the impacts of climate changes and subsequently to apply this information to find feasible solutions to sustainable development.
Climate Change

- Ratification of Vienna Convention and Montreal Protocol in October 1999;
- In 2015 Albania has approved the INDC documents with DCM no. 762, dated 16.09.2015 “On the approval of the national contribution aimed at UNFCCC: and has submitted it to the UNFCCC Secretariat in 24.09.2015. After the approval in 22.04.2016 of Paris Agreement in New York, the Albanian Parliament has ratified it with Law no. 75, dated 14.07.2016 “On the Ratification of Paris Agreement”.
- Commitments to reduce GHG emissions are included in INDC document and aim at a reduction by 11.5% of GHG until 2030 - objective included also in the National Strategy for Development and Integration.
- Interministerial Working Group on Climatic Changes has been established by the Prime minister Order no. 155, dated 25.04.2014.
Climate Change

- In July 2016, a National Plan for Adaptation to Climatic Changes was approved which has integrated climatic changes in respective sectorial policies and strategies.
- Strategy to fund the National Plan.
- Adaptation to climatic changes is being integrated into strategic documents like:
  (i) National Strategy for Development and Integration,
  (ii) National Strategy for the Management of Water Sources,
  (iii) Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development
  (iv) National General Territory Plan
  (v) Integrated Intersectorial Plan for the Coast.

The Strategy for Climatic Changes, in line with the political framework for Climate and Energy EU 2030, has been drafted and under approval.
Biodiversity

• Albania has a high diversity of ecosystems, species and habitats.

• The Biodiversity strategy for 2015-2020 in Albania focuses on the sustainable use of genetic diversity for food and agriculture in Albania.

• The proposed actions are:
  
  – primarily conservation of species of local varieties of animals and plants, and
  
  – improvement of the development of adequate gene banks useful for ex-situ conservation of genetic resources.
Environment protection and protected areas

- The protected areas in Albania cover almost 16% of the country’s territory (~460,000 ha).

- Protected areas have not been integrated properly into national and local development policies.

- Efforts have been made to strengthen the nature protection legislation and to build capacity for the management of protected areas.

- In the beginning of 2015, National Agency of Protected Areas (NAPA) was established, with a General Directorate in Tirana and 12 regional Directorates.
Environment protection and protected areas

• Law enforcement remains weak and management practices of protected areas are not in line with EU standards.

• The performance of administration is constrained by:
  – insufficient human resources and funding,
  – lack of basic equipment and infrastructure.

• The NAPA is implementing a strategy for improving the management of protected areas according to the:
  – requirements and international standards
  – experience of European countries,

providing for both nature conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.
AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL STATE IN ALBANIA
Biodiversity Strategy 2015 – 2020


• The Strategy defines the main priorities for preserving biodiversity and habitats, through:
  – identification and designation as protected areas,
  – protection of species in and outside the protected areas.

• The strategic document has six main objectives for biodiversity conservation.
AgroEnvironmental Policy in Albania

A-E in the national strategic and program documents

Inter–sectoral environmental strategy 2015 – 2020

• Sets the objectives for protection of the environment and natural resources till 2020 and the different ways and measures to achieve them.
  – Addressing root causes of biodiversity loss by integrating biodiversity issues in cross–sectoral and social context;
  – Reduction of the direct pressure on biodiversity and promotion of its sustainable use;
  – Improving the status of biodiversity through the conservation of ecosystems, habitats and species and genetic diversity;
  – Extending biodiversity ecosystems services;
  – Implementation of participatory planning and comprehensive capacity building and management.
A-E in the national strategic and program documents

Inter–sectoral strategy for agriculture and rural development 2014–2020 (ISARD)

• Provides the framework for the operational interventions needed to:
  – develop a viable and competitive agricultural and food processing sector, and
  – foster a balanced economic development in rural areas, paving the way for integration of the agricultural and agro-processing sector in the EU as a basis for the increasing standards of living in rural areas and thus reducing poverty
  – ISARD – a further development of the initiatives taken by MAFCP under the strategies for agriculture and rural development 2007–2013 with cross-linkages to other sectors touching on agriculture and rural development.
A-E in the national strategic and program documents

Inter–sectoral strategy for agriculture and rural development 2014–2020 (ISARD)

– restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems dependent on agriculture and forestry to achieve sustainable management of natural resources and climate action by forest and water resource management

– introduction of agricultural production methods protecting the environment and mitigating the impact on the climate.

• Gradually introduce EU policies and approaches for management of natural resources and climate action with a specific focus on:
  – sustainable use of land,
  – forest and water resources and waste management in the short term.
IPARD II programme 2014 – 2020

• Improvement of management of natural resources and resource efficiency – to ensure environmental sustainability and will benefit from emerging market opportunities.

• Reverse the trend for degradation of natural environment (soil erosion, water pollution and biodiversity loss) due to unsustainable land management and farming practices.

• One of the measures – Agri-environment-climate and organic farming (OF).
IPARD II programme 2014 – 2020

• The strategy plans to apply the measure for pilot operations in order to build capacity for management and control of agri-environmental interventions implemented under the Rural Development Programmes in the member states.

• Target land and soil quality protection and biodiversity preservation, bringing also benefits to water and air quality.

• The indicative budget allocation to this measure is EUR 1.7 million.

• Programmed to begin implementation in 2018.
Institutional and Legal Settings

- Modern Constitution stating in article 59 that
  
  “the State … aims d) a healthy environment and ecologically sustainable environment for the today and future generations, h) a rational use of the forests, waters, pastures, and of the other natural resources on the base of the sustainable development”

- Albania has adopted a good Legislative Corpus on Environment, Agriculture, Animal Production and Rural Sustainable Development.

- All the new laws approved in Albania, especially the last years, are the result of the direct transposition of the respective EU Directives.
According to the legal framework – the agriculture production should be developed in respect of following principles:

- Conservation, management and development of natural soil fertility, soil stability and biological diversity in the soil, prevent and combat erosion, compaction of soil and plant nutrition primarily through the soil ecosystem;
- Reduction the use of non-renewable resources and off-farm inputs;
- Recycling of waste and by-products of plant and animal origin as input in plant production;
- Taking account of local or regional ecological balance in making decisions on production.
Agri-environmental policy

- According to the Albanian current legislative frameworks the basic principles for environmental protection are:
  - principle of sustainable development
  - principle of care
  - principle of prevention
  - principle "polluter pays"
  - principle of legal responsibility
  - principle of high-level protection
  - the principle of integrating environmental protection into sectorial policies
  - principle of awareness and participation of the public in environmental decision-making
  - principle of transparency
Agri-environmental policy

- Agri–environmental policy is emphasised in several strategic documents listed below:
  - Cross-cutting Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development, 2014–2020
  - The National Strategy for Development and Integration 2014–2020, the Medium Term Budget Program and the sectorial, sub-sectorial and crosscutting strategies
  - National Strategy and Action Plan for Conservation and use of Farm Animal Genetic Resources
  - The Environmental Cross-Cutting Strategy
  - Integrated Waste Management Strategy (draft), 2018–2033
Agri-environmental measures in place

• Not yet agri-environmental measures in place, but main related draft measures are formulated.

• Understanding and interest to develop and implement pilot AE-climate and OF measure in IPARD II – first steps were taken for the elaboration.

• Addressing integration of biodiversity conservation goals in agricultural policy in strategic documents:
  – threats for biodiversity, landscape and sustainable use of natural resources,
  – conservation of the genetic resources
  – opportunities for the development of the organic farming.
Agri-environmental measures in place

- Two national “agri-environment” – like schemes are currently implemented with national support schemes:
  - Production of organic products and certification of organic (bio) products - supports the certification of the organic farms. However, the support is fixed at approximately 500 EUR per farm without taking into account the farm size. The support should correspond to the size of the farm and the activities undertaken.
  - Additional support is provided for planting local (autochthonous) cultivars in the case of vineyards – details on the implementation of the scheme are not obtained yet.
Agri-environmental measures in place

• Draft scheme of the AEC and OF was prepared and the main schemes proposed for support are:
  – Organic farming;
  – Conservation of small ruminants: sheep and goats;
  – Soil and nutrient management plans;
  – Summer grazing;
  – Maintenance of traditional olive groves.

• According to EU guidelines some of these can be supported only if the necessary administrative and legislative requirements are in place.
CONCLUSIONS
Lack of agri–environmental indicators

- Incomplete knowledge and data to establish trends and develop policies.
- Reduction of agricultural statistical indices
- No dedicated agri-environment units
- Limited surveys as part of environmental monitoring (e.g. degree of groundwater pollution or rate of depletion resulting from agricultural activities, and the human health and environmental risks associated with the use of pesticides).
Rural poverty and lack of ecological awareness

- Difficult economic situation of the rural population - main obstacle to sustainable development.

- Main concern for farmers is to keep their job and try to achieve higher revenues – development of environmentally sound production methods, does not constitute a priority for them.

- Attempting to increase their profits, overuse fertilizers, bioregulators or pesticides; overexploit the soil.
Rural poverty and lack of ecological awareness

• No popular support for AE measures that could divert to other goals the resources devoted to alleviate the economic situation of the farmers.

• Providing Albania with an agri-environmental policy - a hard task for the policy-makers, as they are faced with the challenge of:
  – reaching a difficult balance between going ahead with the progress on market reforms,
  – improving farmers’ welfare
  – promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

• BUT – farmers’ attitude and behaviours are clearly a fundamental factor influencing SD in agriculture.
Rural poverty and lack of ecological awareness

- Other aspects related to farmers’ behaviours with significant impact on the environmental protection of the rural areas:
  - limited willingness of Albanian farmers to undertake joint activities;
  - level of education, which is usually low in the rural communities – little awareness of the farmers concerning the contribution of their activities to the preservation of the environment as well as the potential environmental risks of such activities.
Institutional constrains

• Limited resources that these institutions devote to agro-environmental goals.

• Relatively limited inter-institutional co-operation…
  
  – Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Ministry of Tourism and Environment
  
  – essential precondition for the formulation of effective policy measures and to avoid the inconsistency of the programmes and strategies prepared by the two ministries.
Nature conservation

• Farming systems adopted and ways land is managed – of particular concern for nature conservation.

• Rich natural heritage of Albania can be preserved if the present traditional, or low-input, farming systems are maintained or adapted in a sustainable way.

• Measures to minimise the potential impact of agriculture policies on wildlife are to be put in place to ensure the valuable Albanian natural capital is conserved.
Agricultural systems with fewer impacts on agro-environmental resources

• Improve future agricultural outputs while making the sector economically efficient, socially acceptable and environmentally friendly.

• Adapting the agricultural production to the development of agro-tourism, to exploit the opportunities offered by the nature of the region to this kind of business;

• Increasing the number of associations of rural areas production and services in order to strengthen cooperation among producers and encourage better marketing.
Agricultural systems with fewer impacts on agro-environmental resources

- Major opportunities for growth in the agriculture sector are in the:
  - production of higher value crops,
  - livestock,
  - processing, and
  - some agricultural niche markets.

- Complemented with well-target measures to:
  - preserve rural environment,
  - conserve biodiversity and landscape values,
  - ensure sustainable and multifunctional development of rural areas.
Agricultural systems with fewer impacts on agro-environmental resources

• To safeguard the sustainability of agriculture production, the Government should:
  
  – continue to develop and implement policies aimed at improving watershed management, particularly by facilitating the commune/village level management of mountain pastures and forests;

  – ensure the sustainable long-term availability of water resources to competing users; and

  – develop and implement policies on marine resource monitoring and surveillance.
Agricultural systems with fewer impacts on agro-environmental resources

• Promote Albanian consumers’ education which have the tendency to consume “natural products”.

• Organic farming can – an important source of money for Albanian farmers.

• Financial support should be continued and increased for stimulating organic farming initiation.
Animal husbandry

- Indicators that could be used for compiling the agri-environment policies, focused to animal husbandry, are not elaborated. Therefore it is necessary to:
  - develop a conceptual and analytical understanding of the various animal production and environmental processes; identify appropriate indicators and methods of measurement;
  - collect data and calculate the indices;
  - integrate indicators into policy analysis.

- Should be taken into account issues related to:
  - farm management, soil quality, water use for animal, processing animal products, forage products, animal genetic resources for agriculture and food, farm financial resources and socio-cultural issues.
Animal husbandry

- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development should adopt the National Waste Monitoring Plan for livestock products.

- Strengthen the capacities of public statistical service for collecting and elaborating the data to calculate and periodically evaluate the livestock patterns indicator (stocks, density and share).
RECOMMENDATIONS
Recommendations

• Collect existing scattered data and information on agri-environment indicators to establish trends and develop policies.

• Specific agricultural statistical indices to be collected.

• Establish dedicated agri-environment units.

• Improve technical and organisation level of agri-environment authorities to monitor and evaluate all the measures.

• Extend surveys as part of environmental monitoring.
Recommendations

• Combination of restrictions and incentives - particularly important in the case of Albania, where rights and obligations have not always been clear and even not being defined yet.

• Diversified activities need to be encouraged by balancing development and conservation (e.g. rural tourism).

• Continued and expanded support to organic farming.

• Anticipate farmer expectations and aspirations.
Recommendations

- Broad and shallow measures rather than deep and narrow – avoid complex requirements and management prescriptions.

- Measures must be sufficiently simple to understand and be able to be realistically incorporated into the farming system.

- Particular regions may be targeted or specific problems be addressed.

- Greater emphasis on preservation rather than restoration.
**Recommendations**

- Greater emphasis on the preservation of existing habitats and areas of high environmental value.

- Investment in reinforcement of the farm advisory services, perhaps recruitment and training of specialist advisors to publicise the schemes, and to help farmers to prepare applications.

- NGOs well-known and well-regarded by the farming community may be appropriate organisations who have both the knowledge and the credibility to support the implementation of agri-environment measures.
**Recommendations**

- **Model farms** – another valuable way of demonstrating the opportunities available through participation in agri-environment programmes.

- **Pilot agro-environmental indicators in environmentally sensitive areas** (i.e. around Skadar or Ohrid lakes).
Thank you