



Regional Expert Advisory Working Group (REAWG) on Impact of COVID-19 on Agriculture, Food and Rural areas in the Western Balkans

Kick-off Meeting

Report



6 July 2020

Online meeting



1. Introduction

The kick-off meeting of the Regional Expert Advisory Working Group (REAWG) on Impact of COVID-19 on Agriculture, Food and Rural areas in the Western Balkans gathered 11 participants including experts, ministry representative, FAO and SWG representatives. Due to the mobility restrictions and security measures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic the meeting was held online.

The purpose of the kick-off meeting was to develop detailed activity plan and elaborate on the methodology that will be used in the work during the assignment. The list of participants is provided in **Annex 1**, while the program of the meeting is in **Annex 2**.

2. Background and rationale for the assignment

REAWGs are permanent part of the SWG structure, comprised of relevant national, regional and international experts and representatives of relevant authorities to analyze specific agricultural and rural development policy issues, provide national and regional policy recommendations and thus contribute to enabling evidence-based policy making in the agricultural sector in Western Balkans.

COVID-19 pandemic is a global health crisis with potential to create devastating social, economic and political disturbances. Thus, the objective of this REAWG is:

- to assess the multiple impacts of COVID-19 on agriculture, food and rural areas, on respective policies in the Western Balkans, national actions and measures taken for coping with the crisis
- to propose respective strategic approaches and policies, joint actions for overcoming the consequences providing stimuli to accelerate the recovery and to build resilience.

The respective presentation is provided in **Annex 3**.

3. Draft methodology for collecting information and draft outline for the national reports

The Regional Experts presented a draft outline for the national reports including the type of data to be collected and proposed data sources. The national reports should include the following elements:

- Introduction
- Methodology
- COVID-19 Country context
- Policy Responses
- Impact on agriculture and food sector
- Rural communities and COVID-19
- Conclusions and recommendations for regional cooperation on building resilience in the post COVID 19 period



The Regional Experts will finalize the methodology by 15 July and for that purpose they will need input from the National Experts on availability of self-sufficiency data, how and how often it is monitored and at what level in each of the WB countries/territories.

The respective presentation is provided in **Annex 5**.

4. Concept and methodology for the regional cross-country report

The regional cross-country synthesis report will summarize the common issues, approaches and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for agriculture and rural development in the Western Balkans and will provide policy recommendations for mitigating the effects of the pandemic and for regional cooperation for that purpose. The outline for the regional report is not yet developed, it is expected that it will follow the structure of the national reports, but depending on the information

5. Next steps

The participants agreed upon the following workplan for successful completion of the assignment:

Activity	Who	Timeframe/Deadline
Provide Info on availability of data on self-sufficiency	NEs	13-Jul-20
Finalized methodology for national reports and regional cross-country report (add as many more months as possible)	REs	15-Jul-20
Data collection on national level and first draft national reports	NEs	15-Sep-20
Presentation of preliminary findings at APF 2020	REs	14-Oct-20
Interim meeting (as part of APF 2020)	All	14 - 15 October 2020
Feedback on the first draft national reports	REs	15-Oct-20
Second draft national reports	NEs	15-Nov-20
Policy recommendations and proposed declaration/ protocol presented at Ministerial Meeting 2020	REs	15-Nov-20



First draft regional cross-country report	REs	25-Dec-20
Final report	REs	5-Feb-21
Final meeting	All	5-Feb-21
Editing and proofreading	SWG Secretariat	30-Apr-21

NEs - National Experts

REs - Regional Experts