AnnualReport2013

SWG RRD

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List of Abbreviations

ABD	Area Based Development
ANRICA	Austrian Natural Resources Management and International Cooperation Agency
APF	Agriculture Policy Forum
AL	Albania
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CAP	Common Agriculture Policy of the European Union
CIHEAM	International Centre for Advanced Mediteranean Agronomic Studies
HR	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
GIZ	German International Cooperation
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
IPARD	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance for Rural Development
KOS	Kosovo*
NGO	Non Governmental Organizations
NRDN	National Rural Development Networks
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MK	Macedonia
MNE	Montenegro
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PMU	Project Management Unit
REAWG	Regional Expert Advisory Working Group
REU	Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia of FAO
SEE	South Eastern Europe
SHG	Stakeholder Group
SWG	Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South East Europe
SEE	South Eastern Europe
SRB	Serbia
WB	Western Balkans

* "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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Forward

In South Eastern Europe (SEE), the factors conducive to regional co-operation are various and many. Integration of the SEE countries to the European Union (EU) provides an opportunity for creating stable, integrated, and more prospective region established on solidarity, interdependency and protection of joint interests. The integration itself is a comprehensive action which primarily foresees political stability in the region followed by financial stability, economic growth and employment, along with stable regional market. This integration also means undertaking serious reforms in many sectors in the SEE countries.

In the agricultural sector, the gradual and successful reform process increases market orientation while providing income support to farmers, improves the integration of environmental requirements and reinforces support for rural development as an integrated policy for the development of rural areas across the SEE region.

We in the SEE, are very well aware that agriculture and rural areas in our countries are confronted with a set of challenges, some unique from a country to country, some of a common nature and some utterly unforeseen few years ago. This requires for the countries from South Eastern Europe to make a strategic choice for the long-term future on their agricultural and rural development policy.
It is our great aspiration, that the changing EU policy settings and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) 2014 - 2020 will assist the SEE countries to better respond to market signals, integrate our agriculture within expanding international & regional markets and radically improve the efficiency of the provided policy support.

A step forward for the outlined framework is in promoting and developing regional cooperation, exchanging best

practices and achieving high professional standards which should be continued in the future.
One of the key objectives of regional cooperation in South Eastern Europe is utilization of valuable agriculture and food resources, knowledge and experience. Thus, firm integrated approach provides mutual advantage and success to the region's common efforts.

The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South Eastern Europe has gradually attained the task to strengthen cooperation in the field of agriculture and rural development for the SEE countries. We have taken pragmatic steps on various ladders of cooperation in terms of a closer agricultural cooperation, economic cooperation, cultural exchange and networking, and made breakthroughs in some other aspects as well. Surely, economic incentives are also among the important motives which prompt and drive regional cooperation. Creating a common market attractive to foreign investment is essential for the development of the region. Therefore, instigating a network which facilitates cooperation, dialogues and discussions in the agro and food sector has been an important step in this direction.

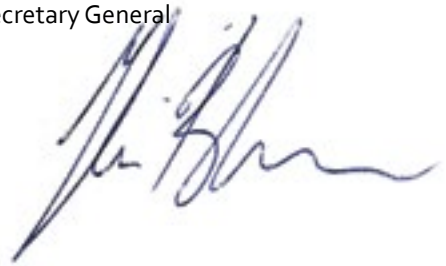
In particular, the Ministries of Agriculture from SEE have been working together in the region for the past few years, and successfully carried out the establishment of a regional network umbrella, the SWG. This has opened a new chapter for sustainable development for the SEE region. At first, the cooperation focused on technical and inter –departmental exchanges among the Ministries, then, over the time progressed into a cooperation engaging other stakeholders in the agriculture and rural development sector, including the food industry, rural development networks and academia.

Having this in mind, the SWG as a regional initiative and organization has grown massively in the past year, developing comprehensive regional function over the ongoing regional cooperation process.

In 2013 the SWG has successfully spread its management aptitude by opening five (5) additional offices, wherein the organization is currently covering almost all of the Western Balkan (WB) countries. In respect to the expanding structure, the SWG has expanded its managing project portfolio and increased the operating funds by 60 percent. Working in a such complex environment and engaging in a vast range of activities based on the needs of the region, has impacted the overall regional approach and spirit of the SEE countries, but also has set a positive trend in respect to the EU approximation process as candidate and potential candidate countries.
Perceiving the work of the SWG as a solid regional platform, the organization has made an important step forward in establishing rational and practical methods of cooperation, including increased regional ownership, which can become one of the effective long-lasting contributions to the overall development in the region.

In the upcoming period, the countries from South Eastern Europe will continue with the EU integration oriented efforts under the new legislative frame of CAP 2014 -2020.
The SWG, as a regional structure, will remain fully committed in supporting the SEE countries during the EU approximation aspirations as well as implementing and developing regional activities and programs to pursue common goals through regional cooperation.

Boban Ilic
SWG Secretary General



Summary

The Annual Report for the year of 2013 represents an overview of the actions taken and outcomes achieved by the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE in the field of agriculture and rural development for the region of South Eastern Europe.

The implementation and execution of set initiatives and thus realized goals in 2013 have been carried out in accordance to the SWG Strategic and Operational Plan (SOP) for the midterm period of 2011-2015.

In conformity with the SWG SOP, the SWG this year has once again successfully 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. With the intention of providing technical background for the policy making process and confront the current challenges and perspectives on sustainable agriculture and rural development.

Due to strong dedication for reaching the set strategic framework and core functions, the SWG together with its partners within different projects, programs and initiatives has effectively organized a vast number of international and regional forums, conferences, working discussions and meetings with ensured presence of all stakeholders from the SEE region. The SWG evoked the need for key development and reform of the agri-food sector in line with the EU policies, fetched the focus towards developing of rural areas, as well as supported the process of enhancing competitiveness and sustainable use of natural resources facing new challenges like climate change and food safety.

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 2013.

The Annual report 2013 of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South Eastern Europe presents a summary of the most important activities undertaken and accomplished by the SWG in the period January – December 2013.

Introduction

SWG Strategic Framework
and Core Functions

The "SWG" stands for Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South Eastern Europe (SEE). 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 the 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.

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
Members and Observers institutions

SWG Members

Ministry of Agriculture Rural Development and Water Administration - **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 – **Republic of Hungary**
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food – **Republic of Slovenia**

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Development by task areas

I. Agriculture and Rural Develompent Policy in South Eastern Europe

Agriculture in the South Eastern European countries is important and has a substantial potential; with its exceptional resources of plants and animals it is one of the richest parts of European terms of biodiversity. A large share of the workforce is still employed in agriculture and the share of the sector in the national GDP is disproportionately large compared to other developed economies. Land used for agriculture comprises approximately half of the entire territory of the SEE region, especially the Western Balkans.

The SEE countries have been adopting to the EU acquis communautaire, which is mostly associated to agriculture: preparing the agricultural and food sector, together with public institutions, to meet EU standards such as those in food safety, and utilizing comparative advantages in agriculture, particularly in respect to the unfolding food, trade and financial crises. The necessity to comply with the EU standards in agriculture while addressing current trends and challenges are powerful outer drives for improving agricultural policy in the region. Taking into account that agriculture and rural development for the SEE countries are yet the primary sources for socio-economic equilibrium, it is essential to continue the development of these sectors with a fast moving pace.

Such developments would provide a great opportunity for strengthening of agriculture and rural development and subsequently enhance the economic growth of these countries. In 2013, well defined midterm (2014-2020) policies regarding agriculture and rural development along with their implementation have been under development in all our countries.

Throughout the year, the SWG has been supporting and facilitating the process on providing a roadmap to assist its Member Institutions to create a strong and effective agriculture and food sector, which will be capable of taking a healthy grip on the reforms and respond to the set challenges as well as establish a sound ground for future independent operations.

In 2013, SWG has been involved and actively participating on gatherings in respect to the preparations for the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) II. Addressing important aspects such as priorities for the future assistance and the sector approach, partnership and ownership of the beneficiary countries, coordination and consultation with stakeholders.

SWG together with DG Agriculture and Rural Development and DG Enlargement - Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument (TAIEX) has organized two multi-beneficiary workshops for the candidate and potential candidate countries from the Western Balkan on the rural development measures for IPA II/IPARD 2014- 2020. Participating Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies followed the work done by DG Agriculture and Rural Development on designing the rural development measures to be used in rural development programmes under IPA II. The executed workshops build onto the work started by DG Agriculture and Rural Development on identifying the main bottlenecks in the implementation and onto the reflections on the potential role and structure of the rural development programs. The SEE countries had the opportunity to reflect on problems, concerns, experiences gained and areas of improvement in the implementation of the rural development pre-accession assistance post-2013.

While preparing for IPA II and adapting to the new CAP 2014-2020, SWG members countries have been intensifying their efforts in streamlining agricultural and rural development policies with the requirements of the aquis. SWG in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been assisting in establishing cooperation between policy makers and academics on streamlining of such policies. In 2013, through the aforementioned regional project, a strategy for a networking and cooperation has been implemented and designed. Under this strategy a web portal has been created under the name of Agricultural Policy Plus for South Eastern Europe (www.app.seerural.org), which serves as a communication tool for networking and information sharing.

Throughout the year, a rural development catalogue/database with information relating to EU agriculture and rural development policies was under creation. Furthermore, recommendations and action plans for each participating country on completion of necessary analysis, studies and strategic documents relating to the EU agriculture and rural development policies were under development.

Addressing the implementation of future EU agricultural and rural development policies and the reflection contributing to the countries of SEE was tackled at the Agricultural Policy Forum (APF) 2013. APF is a platform for international dialogue on policy settings and perspectives of common interest to agricultural policy makers and stakeholders. Recommendations were formulated in respect to the topics discussed and derived as the Pristina Agenda 2013. The Forum resumed main outputs on the reforms of CAP and IPA II, including the impending efforts for area based development in cross-border rural areas, integrated water and forest management and establishment of the Balkan Rural Development Network in the SEE region (Annex 5).

Pursuing this further, in November 2013 during the 7th Annual Meeting of the Ministers for Agriculture from South Eastern Europe the Ministers signed the 2013 Kopaonik Declaration, proclaiming that the main objectives set in the 2007 Dresden Declaration have been achieved and reaffirmed their determination to continue developing the regional cooperation in the field of agriculture and rural development (Annex 6).

II. Area Based Development

Evidently the economic development in rural areas in the SEE countries 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 and generate new employment as a complement to the restructuring of the agricultural sector as 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.

Area Based Development (ABD) is considered to be an innovative and effective approach to facilitate sustainable growth in rural areas in decline. It is suitable for targeting defined geographical areas in cross-border regions in the Western Balkans, characterized by specific complex development problems. The approach uses a methodology, which is inclusive, participatory and flexible and ensures integration and coherence.
It is suitable in particular areas where one or several of the following development situations are present; poverty gap, post-natural or human disasters, post-conflict environment and exclusion issues.

Throughout 2013, SWG has been working on the preparation for implementation of the Area Based Development (ABD) Approach in the Western Balkans, which focuses on building capacities and structures within the SWG and selected regions in order to be able to implement the forthcoming ABD programs.

The objective has been to contribute to sustainable economic growth of the target regions: "Drina- Tara" (cross-border region between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro),

"Prespa" (cross-border region between Albania and Macedonia), "Sharra" (cross-border region between Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo*), and "Drina– Sava" (cross-border region between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia), by means of strengthening the cooperation of public administrations and other public bodies, the private sector and NGOs in the fields of local development and regional cooperation by building-up local and regional cross-border capacities. The preparatory process creates framework conditions within the SWG as an organization and the SWG member countries for implementation of the area based development approach (ABDA) and in that way contributes to the sustainable growth of the rural cross-border areas of the SEE region.

Project Implementation Unit (PIU) has been established within the overall structure of the SWG HQ with contracted staff responsible for overall project and financial management as well as overall coordination of activities in the targeted regions.

The PIU is currently working on a self assessment of rules and procedures with a view to apply for four pillar assessment by the EC.

Protocols for the establishment and functioning of the ABD project offices have been prepared and a dialogue with the local partners is on-going. Offices have been established in Brcko, Bosnia and Herzegovina for the "Drina - Sava" region (hosted by Department for Agriculture of Brcko District and the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina), in Korcha, Albania for the "Prespa" region (hosted by the Centre for Technology Transfer in Agriculture within the Ministry of Agriculture), in Prizren, Kosovo* for the "Sharra" region (hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture) and in Vishegrad, Bosnia and Herzegovina for the "Drina - Tara" cross-border region (hosted by the Municipality of Vishegrad).

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A Regional SWG Office for the coordination of activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia is currently being established in Belgrade, Serbia.

As a key result from the taken initiative has been the establishment and consolidation of the Stakeholder Groups (SHGs) in each of the four targeted regions. The SHGs established for the ABD areas include representatives of public, private and civil sector which participate in the capacity building process, as well as the process of programming and project identification.

In February and March 2013, Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for sustainable economic development of the cross-border "SHARRA", "PRESPA", "DRINA-TARA", "DRINA-SAVA" regions were signed by the Mayors from participating municipalities in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo* and Serbia. The Mayors or their deputies/ signatories from participating Municipalities confirmed their willingness and readiness for participation in the process of mutual cooperation and joint actions for development of their region by signing the MoU.

As such, Permanent Secretariats/ Project Management Units (PMUs) were established in the cross-border areas in order to facilitate the entire process of assisting the stakeholders in preparation of a project pipeline and ensuring consistency and relevance in priority setting and coherence in implementation.

Throughout the year, the SWG in cooperation with the SHG members have identified and developed project proposals based on priority actions. The proposals are part of the planned project pipe-line for each of the targeted areas.

The strategic framework and the programming documents for economic development were prepared and have a multi-annual planning perspective for economic development of the Western Balkan rural cross-border areas.

III. Food Safety and Security

Food safety and food security are interrelated concepts with an insightful impact on quality of human life, and there are many external factors that affect both of these areas all through the food chain, from production to consumption. Providing food and nutritional security and safety to people has physical, economic, social and environmental dimensions. Assuring the safety and security of food supply is a vital part of public health mission. The SEE countries have recognized the risks and hazards of these global issues, which are being mostly introduced by trade liberalization and opening of borders, and therefore are striving to ensure food security, safety and quality.

In 2013, SWG joined the network "Feeding Knowledge", developed by International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM-IAMB) and Politecnico di Milano. "Feeding Knowledge" is the Expo 2015 Program for cooperation on research and innovation on Food Security. FK Program has been built on the idea that knowledge development and sharing are the main tools to identify concrete solutions for food security that really meet the needs of developing countries. The Program is thus based on the idea that to achieve sustainable development, everyone on the planet should have access to healthy, safe and sufficient food.

Within the program, the SWG in cooperation with other partner institutions have been working on establishing of a network of experts focused on research, innovation and transfer of knowledge for food security. The program also focuses on supporting policy makers in the elaboration of programs and policies along with transferring knowledge and information to operators and farmers.

Through various actions the SWG has been involved in the program by supporting the enlargement of the Euro-Mediterranean scientific network at the local level and National Extension Services. Assistance was also provided in identifying technical/scientific contents, data and information which is to be uploaded on the International Technology Platform.

Governments of the SEE countries are also becoming more aware of the growing importance of food safety for agriculture and food competitiveness as well as for public health and for compliance with the EU food safety standards.

In the first quarter of 2013 the SEE countries experienced a problem with the appearance of aflatoxins in diary produces. The increased levels of aflatoxin in dairy products in several Western Balkan countries were discovered in mid-February. Consequently, this issue has caused restrictions on trade for the companies dealing with dairy products from the region.

On April 4th 2013, prominent experts from the SEE countries working in the field of Veterinary Sciences, Phyto-sanitary and Animal Feeding held a meeting on Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina and discussed topics related to Risk Assessment, Risk Management and Control. Based on the measures and actions proposed by the SEE Regional Expert Advisory Working Group, Ministers of Agriculture and Food and Heads of Delegations from South Eastern Europe adopted conclusions with a regional approach to ensure better quality controls of milk.
The agreement was to focused on following the current EU legal limits related to aflatoxins in animal feed and milk as the basis for control; establishment of Regional Expert Group which will follow the process on food safety standards and regulations; enhancement of capacity building i.e. training and continuous education; considering the possibility of having a regional reference laboratory and establishment of protocols how to deal with contaminated feed in compliance with EU legislation (Annex 7).

IV. Organic Agriculture

With the CAP as a reference framework for implementation of agricultural and rural developmental policies, it is clear that post-2013 organic farming has an important role to play in the future of agriculture across the EU. Subsequently, taking into account that the significance of organic production is on the increase among the EU countries and its structure, important development in organic farming is to be anticipated in the Western Balkan countries in the near future. With regards to the varied biodiversity, rich and diverse agriculture that the region posses organic farming is of a great opportunity towards the development path.

SWG has recognized the potential of organic production for the SEE region due to the historical structure of farming in this part of Europe. Most of the countries in SEE have been structured with small family farms, in spite of the existing modern, export-oriented, high-value agricultural sector of large capital-intensive farms. Therefore in these countries, given the size of most farms and the market value of organic export, organic agriculture has a striving potential. In this context it becomes a multipurpose approach, which aims at upholding geographic indication, environmental protection and tradition, while providing economic growth to the rural and remote areas. Certainly, the SEE region has diversified natural resources and is in a need of boosting the economic and social well-being of the population in the rural and border areas.

In 2013, the Regional Expert Advisory Working Group (REA-WG) on Organic Agriculture comprised of representatives from the relevant Ministries, associations and civil society has worked on the conceptualization and development of regional project concepts on defined common interests and challenges. The REAWG has meet couple of time during the year in order to discuss the future coordination and to elaborate in details the project concepts for the priorities for regional cooperation which were set up during the 1st Coordinative meeting held in 2012. The regional project concepts focus on: harmonization of the legislation in the region; regional campaign for raising awareness on OP among consumers and producers; and trade with organic products between the SEE Countries and Introduction of stakeholders from SEE with the Organic industry outside the region.

The same year, SWG had begun to cooperate with International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) in Bari, Italy. CIHEAM among the interest on food security, was also interested to cooperate with SWG and its member institutions on the topic of organic agriculture. In the last quarter of 2013, the SWG in cooperation with CIHEAM organized a workshop for the REAWG on organic agriculture in Bari. The goal of the meeting was a laboratory of group work with international and Italian experts to support the development and widen the horizons and knowledge of the working group members in the three themes which they previously identified and for which they drafted concept notes. Additionally, the SEE countries had the opportunity to exchange information and get familiar with the EU (Italian) experience in

relation to organic production.

The shifting towards the organic agriculture as a method of agricultural production but also as a policy notion, lugs together the recently defined economic paradigm of 'green economy". Organic agriculture offers an environmentally friendly and sustainable production system, which offers a broad range of economic, social, environmental, and cultural benefits to the rural areas. The focus of organic production falls in line with the definition of green economy which strives for environmentally sustainable development and poverty reduction.

In 2013, SWG has been once again actively involved in the sequence workshops organized on behalf of FAO on rural development and green economy. The overall objective of this regional activity, is to build capacity of the participants to facilitate the "greener" development of small-scale farming sector in European transition countries.

The job potential of low carbon agriculture and environmentally sound production systems, in particular for young people in rural areas, will create: employment through renewable energy production, while considering its environmental implications in rural areas; attractive rural life for youth - community development, diversification of economic activities, improving rural services - through carbon low agriculture production systems.

V. Joint Water and Forest Management

The availability and quality of water in many regions of South Eastern Europe are more threatened by overuse, misuse and pollution, and it is increasingly recognized that both are strongly influenced by forests. Then again, forests contribute to flood alleviation, combating desertification and soil protection, including reduction of landslides, erosion and effects of avalanches. Moreover, climate change is altering forest's role in regulating water flows and influencing the availability of water resources. Therefore, the relationship between forests and water is a critical issue that must be accorded as ahigh priority.

Forest and water are integral part of rural development. Forests are necessary for protection of facilities, agricultural land and environment and for enabling and protection of water quality and quantity. Conversely, water is necessary for development of agriculture (water for irrigation, water supply etc.).Proper use of forest and water resources will improve farm productivity in a sustainable manner, as well as increase diversification, efficiency, food security and rural incomes, while ensuring that risks to the ecosystem are minimized.

Forest areas and river-basins are not confined to national borders; they rather form cross-border areas under regulation of separate national policies. In SEE region, particularly these cross-border rural areas are of remote character, with the lowest household income and most vulnerable to out-migration. In order to sustain drinking water quality, flood risk protection, soil erosion protection, generation of power out of small hydropower plants and forest production it is necessary to maintain these cross-border rural areas by managing the enclosed and surrounding natural resources. 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 SEE region through an improved regional cooperation and coordination between sectors, policy makers and related stakeholders.

In 2013, the SWG together with its well established Regional Expert Advisory Working Group (REA-WG) on Integrated Water and Forest Management has been actively working on regional activities and initiatives in relation to water resource and forestry in the SEE region, tackling issues and challenges of a common character. The working group has developed and finalized four regional project concepts, focusing on rural development by sustainable management of forests and water, considering the ecological and socio-economic balance of the rural areas, particularly the positive impact of social collaboration at local areas which contributes to the rural income by means of water and forest management.

In order to get hands on experience of the multidimensional concept of integrating agriculture, water resources, forestry and environment together, the SWG in cooperation with GIZ and ANIRCA organized a study visit for the representatives of the working group in June 2013. The purpose of the study tour was also to assist the group on implying such integrated model into their regional project ideas. More specifically, the study tour focused on forests and water as main contributors to

rural welfare (living and working in rural areas, climate change and recreation in rural areas), by implication of forest and water resource management in EU member countries (Austria and Germany).

Based on the study tour and along with various meetings, consultations and fact finding missions across the SEE countries, the SWG in cooperation with the working group and its partners has analyzed and reviewed the potentials and challenges of the region. With special focus given to cross-border areas, it has been addressed whether the management of these two resources (water and forest) can be better integrated for enhanced livelihood opportunities and for reduced vulnerability of the rural poor.

With the introduction of the integrated paradigm for rural development through water and forest management in SEE, the SWG together with the regional working group presented and discussed the concept during the Agricultural Policy Forum 2013 and recommendations were granted in the Pristina Agenda 2013.

Taking into account the correlation of the above mentioned sectors, in the Pristina Agenda 2013 it was recommended by the Forum for the SEE countries in the framework of the Rural Development programs, to include additional forest and water related measures, addressing the interdependencies among agriculture, forest and water activities in RD policies and programs. On a policy level, the SWG together with its regional working group also has been addressing the need for development of policy and instruments for prevention of natural hazards related to management of natural resources in the SEE region. It has been recognized that mainstreaming of ecosystem services in national policies is a must, as well as developing policies and programs for use of renewable energy in rural areas.

Natural resources development and management, and development efforts, which are typically compartmentalized along administrative lines and implementation remains at the sectoral level,

should go beyond these frontiers. It is a fact that today agriculture alone cannot be the income provider for a family in rural areas. As such, SWG in 2013 through the development of regional project proposals is in suspense of supporting the initiative for activating income generation from management of natural resources (water and forests), greatly contributing in enhancing the livelihood of households in rural areas across the SEE region.

VI. People to People Actions

The SWG has been strongly supportive in ensuring wide participation of public and private members of the civil society in order to strengthen civil society organizations/institutions to fulfill their role through joint actions. In 2013, the SWG has been once again actively involved in regional people-to-people events, encouraging effective intercultural exchanges and ensuring regional cooperation in the rural areas of the SEE countries.

One of the goals for supporting such regional people-to-people actions is to turn back to the tradition, and once again emphasizes the importance and value of cultural heritage, rural tradition and traditional products. Such movement creates new employment opportunities for the rural population, younger population and the "returnees to rural areas" of the SEE countries in economic activities not only connected to agriculture.

The aspirations of the SWG is to identify ways, events and activities to help create and encourage social action - making it easier for people to work together to benefit their community and the lives of those within it.

Mobilization the rural population in becoming stronger players of local national and regional development was initiated in May 2013 when the National Rural Development Networks of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia signed the Statue on the establishment of the Balkan Rural Development Network (BRDN). The BRDN servers as a platform for regular exchange of information, experience and knowledge, as well as joint initiation and implementation of multi-lateral projects. It has been agreed among the SEE countries for the regional network to be facilitated on behalf of the SWG.

As a contribution to the regional rural tourism and economic promotion of the cross-border regions, the SWG provided support to the organization of the:"Drina-Sava regatta -14th Memorial Vitomir Dizdarevic - Admiral Cook" organized by Kayak club "Serbian Paddlers" from Serbia in June 2013.

Supporting the region by strengthening cultural life and cross-cultural cooperation is an important element of a participatory, open, and dynamic civil society and new way of celebrating

rural life. In the period 30.08-01.09.2013, SWG provided support to the regional manifestation "Nusicijada 2013".The regional manifestation "Nusicijada 2013" is an event of a traditional character organized in honor of the famous writer Branislav Nusic, who lived and worked in the Balkan region and is organized as a three-day event, whose program is comprised of various cultural happenings.

SWG cooperation has been also highly supportive of concrete technical activities and gathering promoting specific agriculture and food products in the region. In October 2013, SWG supported the regional event "9th International Organic Food Festival – BIOFEST 2013" which gathered participants and more than 100 exhibitors from around 30 cities from Serbia and abroad (Croatia, Hungary, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany, Austria, Italy, Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania). During the festival a panel discussion was organized covering various topics and participation of domestic and foreign experts and farmers. Conclusions were made and forwarded to decision makers with the aim to provide better conditions for organic agriculture development and organic products placement.

Furthermore, SWG in cooperation with the Association "MacBee" - Macedonian Association for Conservation of Macedonian Native Honey Bee Apis mellifera macedonica, supported the organization of the Scientific-Expert Conference for Beekeeping in the Republic of Macedonia, which was held on December 14th, 2013, at the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food – Skopje.

VII. Information exchange and access to knowledge

Information exchange and access to knowledge has been also a priority to the SWG. Information exchange facilitates collusion by enabling successful learning and implementation of various actions. SWG is serving as a regional network and communication channel that focuses on cross-border information exchange for agriculture and rural development in the SEE region. For achieving better coherence and consolidation in the area of information exchange, SWG has been actively endowing into its networking/communication instruments for enabling smooth flow of information and knowledge among its stakeholders.

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 of 2013, the SWG has re-designed the website. The new SWG web site has the latest social media features and is easily accessible for information, documentation, reports and activities of a regional character which are happening across the South Eastern European countries.

As a sub-platform the SWG established the Agricultural Policy Plus www.app.seerural.org which serves as an online portal for database collection, communication and exchange of information among public institutions, academic and civil society, in respect to streamlining of agriculture and rural development policies.

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).

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 significally 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.

Encouraging an intensive exchange of information is also done through international and regional trade participation. Fair participation represents the best opportunity for a successful presentation.

As such, in 2013 SWG has been represented and participated at two international fairs. In January 2013 during the 5th Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA) organized within the International Green Week Fair in Berlin, SWG with a stand participated at the Cooperation Market. In July during the World Plowing Championship in Alberta, Canada, SWG was presented at the WPC event with a stand during the two day plowing championship with competitors from countries all across the world.

Participation on international fairs

has not only enabled good presentation and visibility of SWG but also has ensured positive contacts with various international organizations and institutions. During the World Plowing Championship SWG meet with few organizations/institutions from Canada working in the field of agriculture. Good cooperation grounds were found with Olds College- Alberta and Alberta Bio-solutions where exchange of expertise, knowledge and implementation of joint programs are some of the topics of discussion for future international cooperation among the concerned parties.

5. SWG Assembly Sessions

During the SWG Assembly Sessions organized as follows:

- 26th SWG Assembly Session, 16th -19th April 2013, Siófok, Hungary
- 27th SWG Assembly Session", 10th - 13th September 2013, Duress, Albania
- 28th SWG Assembly Session", 4th – 8th December 2013, Gmunden, Austria

The aim of the SWG Assembly Sessions was to discuss and decide about internal SWG procedures, realization of SWG activities for the year 2013, exchange of experiences about the EU accession process and the benefits of it, as well as to decide on future initiatives, projects and cooperation.

Finance

SWG Budget in 2013

(Amounts in EUR)

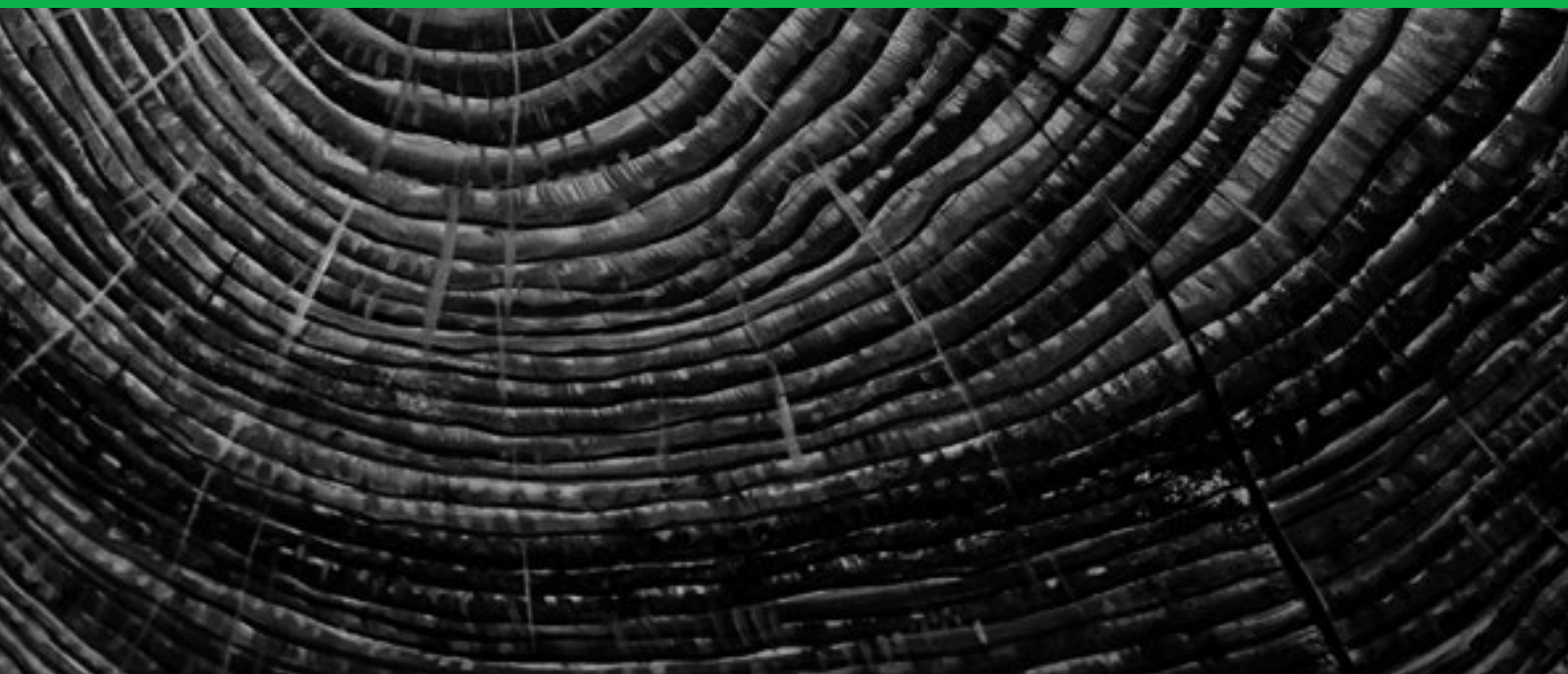
		For the period from 01 October 2012 through 30 September 2013	For the period from 01 October 2011 through 30 September 2012	Cumulative up to 30 September 2013
SOURCES OF FUNDS				
- EC		386,793	114,573	501,366
- GIZ		562,767	254,176	1,326,744
- FAO		105,754	17,719	206,312
- OA		7,500	24,959	32,459
- CEI		1,303	2,027	3,330
- TEMPUS		-	-	33,924
Sources of funds - projects	**4**	**1,064,117**	**413,454**	**2,104,135**
- SWG Own and Liquidity account		1,275	-	31,015
- SWG General account	5	259,960	114,947	709,830
- Other Contribution		9,434	21,279	34, 914
Total sources of funds		**1,334,786**	**549,680**	**2,879,894**
BANK INTEREST				
- EC		106	107	213
- GIZ		76	51	418
- InWent (GIZ)		-	1	28
- FAO		4	16	93
- OA		1	7	8
- CEI		1	-	1
- TEMPUS		21	43	214
Bank interest - projects	**4**	**209**	**225**	**975**
- SWG Own and Liquidity account		55	27	91
- SWG General account		171	275	1,072
Total Bank interest		**435**	**527**	**2,138**
Foreign exchange translation gains		362	1,554	3,827
Total funds received		**1,335,583**	**551,761**	**2,885,859**
USES OF FUNDS BY ACTIVITIES				
- EC		229,899	140,355	370,254
- GIZ		381,888	275,622	1,060,820
- InWent (GIZ)		-	3	44,294
- FAO		62,824	40,627	156,713
- OA		12,193	15,155	27,348
- CEI		1,326	2,038	3,364
- TEMPUS		-	-	1,642
Uses of funds – projects	**4**	**688,130**	**473,800**	**1,664,435**
- SWG Own and Liquidity account use		**5,783**	**6,477**	**32,670**
- SWG General account		**133,983**	**107,211**	**375,037**
- Other uses/transfers		**6,585**	**2,267**	**12,466**
Total financed operating funds		**834,481**	**589,755**	**2,084,608**
Foreign exchange translation losses		**2,090**	**498**	**4,817**
Total financed through fund providers		**836,571**	**590,253**	**2,089,425**
Funds at the beginning of the period		**348,064**	**386,556**	
Funds at the end of the period		**847,076**	**348,064**	

(Amounts in EUR)

	At 30 September 2013	At 30 September 2012
Funds at the end of period consist of:		
Foreign currency bank account – EUR	768,464	311,707
Foreign currency bank account – USD	41,344	6,646
Denar bank account	9,640	13,652
Denar cash at hand	1,883	1,577
Foreign currency cash at hand - EUR	16,621	6,524
Foreign currency cash at hand - USD	-	899
VAT receivables	5,501	1,623
Advances given	3,623	5,436
	847,076	**348,064**

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 2013

Annex 2:
SWG Head Office/Secretariat Personel

Annex 3:
Staff SWG Members & observers institutions and appointed delegates

Annex 4:
Operational Plan, January - December 2013

Annex 5:
Pristina Agenda 2013 for Agriculture and
Rural Development in South-Eastern Europe

Annex 6:
Declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture
from South Eastern Europe

Annex 7:
Conclusions of the Meeting of the Ministers for
Agriculture and Food from South Eastern Europe

Annex 1: List of SWG projects in 2013

Accomplished Projects:
Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
SWG - GIZ:

- "Capacity development for the Standing Working Group Regional Rural Development ";
  (September 2012 - June 2013)

- "Strengthening capacity building through networking and regional cooperation in the Western Balkan countries" (Phase I).
  (September 2012 - December 2013)

European Commission
SWG – EC:

- Preparation for implementation of the Area Based Development (ABD) Approach in the Western Balkans.
  (January - December 2013)

Running Projects:
SWG – FAO TCP:

- "Streamlining of agriculture and rural development policies of SEE countries in the process of EU accession".
  (September 2012 - October 2015)

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";
  (June 2012 - May 2015)

- "Strengthening capacity building through networking and regional cooperation in the Western Balkan countries" (Phase II).
  (January - October 2014)

Annex 2: SWG Head Office/ Secretariat Personnel

Status December 2013

SWG Head Office employees	Position
Boban Ilic	Secretary General
Irena Dzimrevska	Head of Operations
Katerina Spasovska	Senior Project Manager
Bogdanka Leveska – Gjorsoska	Project Manager
Julija Brzovska	HR, Contract and Cash Officer
Andrej Josifov	Finance Manager
Blagica Slezenkovska	Office Manager
SWG Head Office contracted staff	
Oliver Pop-Arsov	Project Assistant and Logistic Officer
Aleksandar Stojmanovski	Logistics Officer
SWG staff in the Regional Offices	
Zvonko Naumoski	Regional Coordinator "Sharra" cross-border region
Ivan Toromanoski	Regional Coordinator "Prespa" cross-border region
Aleksandar Damnjanovic	Regional Coordinator "Drina-Sava" cross-border region
Predrag Markovic	Regional Coordinator "Drina-Tara" cross-border region
Paskal Vogli	Technical Assistant "Prespa" cross-border region
Emrullah Spahiu	Technical Assistant "Sharra" cross-border region
Danica Radojicic	Technical Assistant "Drina-Tara" cross-border region
Mirela Causevic	Technical Assistant "Drina-Sava" cross-border region

Annex 3:

Staff SWG Members and Observers institutions and appointed delegates

Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group of South Eastern Europe (SWG)

List of the SWG Delegates / SWG Contact Persons
31.12.2013

SWG MEMBER INSTITUTIONS					
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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

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Annex 4:

Operational Plan, January - December 2013

Standing Working Group for Regional Rural Development in SEE (SWG)
Operational Plan January 2013 - December 2013

26.03.2013

	Description of the activity	Beneficiary/Target group	Location of implementation	Date of execution	Time Frame: Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
1	**General SWG Head Office Activities**															
1.1	Steering and facilitation of political/policy discussions regarding SWG	Ministries of Agriculture in SEE	N/A	throughout the year												
1.2	Fund raising and contacts with donors/partners	Donor community, implementing agencies, governments and EC	N/A	throughout the year												
1.3	Preparation of new SWG regional project proposals	SWG Member Institutions/countries	SWG Head Office	throughout the year												
2	**CORE ACTIVITIES Assembly meetings, Policy and Political Forums, Working Groups**															
2.1	26th SWG Assembly session - replanning of activities, organizational issues, statutory issues and operational manual	SWG assembly and partner institutions	Hungary	16-19 April												
2.2	27th SWG Assembly session (assessments of achievements, replanning of activities)	SWG assembly and partner institutions	Albania	10-13 September												
2.3	28th SWG Assembly session (annual reporting, financial reporting and SWG Assembly decisions)	SWG assembly and partner institutions	**Austria**	03-06 December												
2.4	Agricultural Policy Forum 2013	SEE ministry representatives, academics and various stake holders	Kosovo*	15-18 October												
2.5	Annual meeting of Ministers of Agriculture from SEE	Ministers of Agriculture from SEE, EC and supporting governments	Serbia	14-16 November												
2.5.1	Ad- hoc Ministers Meeting related to Food Safety	Ministers of Agriculture from SEE, EC and supporting governments	Bari	4-5 April												
2.6	Global Forum for food and agriculture 2013 - trade and global food security	**SWG Member Institutions/countries**	**Germany**	16-20 January												
2.7	SEE Water and Forestry - SWG expert advisory group	SWG EAG Members	Austria/ Kosovo*	12-15 March / 15-18 October (AFF)												
2.7.1	Study tour - Rural development through sustainable water and forest management	SWG EAG Members	Austria, Germany	09-15 June												
2.8	SEE Working Group on Wine - SWG expert advisory group (first meeting)	SWG EAG Members	Serbia / Bulgaria	**April, TBC**												
2.9	SEE Organic Agriculture - SWG expert advisory group	SWG EAG Members	Italy	26-31 February / September												
2.10	SEE Fresh Fruits and Vegetables - SWG expert advisory group	SWG EAG Members	**Macedonia**	**September-Macedonia**												
3	**Activities related to cooperation with FAO**															
	East Agri Investment Center meeting - round table on Area Based Development	TBC	Serbia	December (exact dates to be confirmed)												

3.1	Regional TCP "Streamlining of Agriculture and Rural Development Policies of SEE countries in the process of EU accession				
3.1.1	First National networking workshops	SEE Ministries, SEE countries	Bosnia and Herzegovina / Montenegro/ Albania	07-08 Feb/Albo / 11-12 Feb / Macedonia Montenegro 14-15 Feb BiH Serbia and Croatia	
3.1.2	Second regional networking workshop	SEE Ministries, SEE countries	Montenegro	22-24 May	
3.1.3	Second National Networking workshops	SEE Ministries, SEE countries	Serbia/Macedonia/Kosovo*	02 Sep/ 04 Sep ,/06 Sep	
3.2	FAO TCP-Facility - "Support for establishment of rural development networks (RDN) in SEE countries				
4	**Activities related to cooperation with GIZ - Capacity Building**				
4.1	SEE Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies - training	SWG Members	Brussels, Belgium	19-20 February/ October	
4.2	Conference for underdeveloped areas in SEE	Line Ministries, Agencies/Funds for underdeveloped regions in SEE	Serbia	TBC	
4.3	Training (presentation skills, moderation, facilitation, organization of events)	ABD Stakeholders	Albania/ Bosnia	**Prespa/Shkoza** April 9-11 (presentation skills, moderation, facilitation, organization of events) April 12 - introduction to Programming Documents by Key Mentenen **Drina Sava/Tara** April 22-24 (presentation skills, moderation, facilitation, organization of events) April 25 - introduction to Programming Documents by Key Mentenen	
4.4	Training on Financial Management of EU funds	SWG Structures	SEE/EU	two sessions- June, August	
4.5	People to people actions	ABD Stakeholders	SEE Countries	throughout the region	
4.6	EAG on programs related to Aflatoxins in fodder in dairy products	SWG Members	Sarajevo, BiH	03-05 April	
4.7	Preparatory meetings for the establishment of Balkan Rural Development Networks	RDN of SEE	Novi Sad/ Serbia	27-28 March/ 17-19 May	
5	**ABD European Commission**				
5.1	Establishment of the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) within the SWG HQ				
5.1.1	Preparation of the Project Implementation Unit (SWG HQ) for four pillar assessment.	SWG	SWG HQ		
5.1.2	Capacity building - Training on Financial Management of EU funds	SWG	SWG HQ, WB	two sessions- June, August	

5.2	**Establishment of Project Management Units (PMU) and consolidation of the Stakeholders Groups in the target regions**				
5.2.1	Establishment of regional SWG offices in the four regions ("Drina- Tara", "Sharra", "Prespa" and "Drina – Sava")	"Drina- Tara", "Sharra", "Prespa" and "Drina – Sava" SHGs	"Drina- Tara", "Sharra", "Prespa" and "Drina – Sava"	May/June 2013	
5.2.2	I Working Meeting of the Stakeholders' Groups in the four regions ("Drina- Tara", "Sharra", "Prespa" and "Drina – Sava") - Signing of Memorandums	ABD Stakeholders - "Drina- Tara", "Sharra", "Prespa" and "Drina – Sava" SHGs	"Drina- Tara", "Sharra", "Prespa" and "Drina – Sava"	27 February - Kukes or Prizren 1 March - Korcha 5 March - Bjelina or Brcko 7 March - Zlatibor or Uzice	
5.2.3	II Working Meeting of the Stakeholders' Groups Project cycle Management and Project Proposal Writing	ABD Stakeholders- "Drina- Tara", "Sharra", "Prespa" and "Drina – Sava" SHGs	"Drina- Tara", "Sharra", "Prespa" and "Drina – Sava"	**Prespa/Sharra** March 12 - PCM; March 13-14 - IPPW and Srtategic planning **Drina Tara/Sava** March 19 - PCM; March 20-21 - IPPW and Strategic Planning	
5.2.4	III Working Meetings of the Stakeholders' Groups and Capacity Building 4.3 and 4.4	ABD Stakeholders- "Drina- Tara", "Sharra", "Prespa" and "Drina – Sava" SHGs	"Drina- Tara", "Sharra", "Prespa" and "Drina – Sava"	**Prespa/Sharra** April 9-11 (presentation skills, moderation, facilitation, organization of events) April 12 - Introduction to Programming Documents by Kay Mortensen **Drina Sava/Tara** April 22-24 (presentation skills, moderation, facilitation, organization of events) April 25 - Introduction to Programming Documents by Kay Mortensen	
5.2.5	IV Working Meetings of the Stakeholders' Groups	ABD Stakeholders - "Drina- Tara", "Sharra", "Prespa" and "Drina – Sava" SHGs	Albania/ Serbia	May 28 – Prespa May 30 – Sharra June 4 – Drina / Tara June 6 – Drina / Sava	
5.2.6	V Working Meetings of the Stakeholders' Groups	ABD Stakeholders- "Drina- Tara", "Sharra", "Prespa" and "Drina – Sava" SHGs	Albania/ Serbia	September 17 – Prespa September 19 – Sharra October 8 – Drina/Tara October 10 – Drina/Sara	
5.2.7	Preparation of draft Project Proposals	ABD Stakeholders- "Drina- Tara", "Sharra", "Prespa" and "Drina – Sava" SHGs	SEE	April- October	
5.2.8	Preparation of draft Programming Documents for territorial and regional cooperation in the 4 selected regions	ABD Stakeholders- "Drina- Tara", "Sharra", "Prespa" and "Drina – Sava" SHGs	SEE	April- October	
5.3	**Work in the Steering Group and SWG Assembly**				
5.3.1	Meetings of the Project Steering Group (SG); two- three meetings in the course of project duration	SWG and "Drina- Tara", "Sharra", "Prespa" and "Drina – Sava" SHGs	Budapest Albania	April 15 - 18 September 10 -13	
5.3.2	Discussion of the ABDA issue at the two meetings of the SWG Assembly	SWG and "Drina- Tara", "Sharra", "Prespa" and "Drina – Sava" SHGs	Budapest Albania	April 15 - 18 September 10 -13/ September 26th	
5.3.3	Discuss the issue at the Agricultural Policy Forum 2013 in the form of a Working Group on Area Based Development	SWG and "Drina- Tara", "Sharra", "Prespa" and "Drina – Sava" SHGs	Kosovo*	October 15-18	
6	**TAIEX Workshops**				
6.1	Producers Groups - legal framework, organization structure, roles, good practices	Representatives of the SWG member institutions	SEE Countries	TBC end of June	
6.2	FADN	Representatives of the SWG member institutions	SEE Countries	TBC end of June	
6.3	Advisory Services	Representatives of the SWG member institutions	SEE Countries	TBC	
6.4	Publicity - IPARD and national RD programme	Representatives of the SWG member institutions	SEE Countries	TBC	

7	**Activities related to cooperation with OA**			
7.1	Preparation of Project Fiche	SWG Member Institutions/countries	SEE Countries	
8	**Other Activities**			
8.1	World plowing competition	SWG Member Institutions/countries	Canada	19-20 July
8.2	USAID Conference	Ministries / Deputy Ministers State Secretary	BiH/Serbia	May-June

Explanation of the different colors

Preparation period

Execution period

Time for follow up activities after the execution

Ongoing Activities

Finished Activities

Cancelled activities

Long Term activities

Postponed activities

New activities

Annex 5:

Pristina Agenda 2013 for Agriculture and
Rural Development in South-Eastern Europe

New Prospects for Agriculture and Rural Development
in South Eastern Europe towards Sustainable Future

15th – 18th October 2013
Pristina, Kosovo*

2013 Pristina Agenda

The 13th Agricultural Policy Forum (APF) held in Pristina, Kosovo* on 15 – 18 October 2013, provided an opportunity to review the 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 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.

This 2013 Pristina Agenda resumes the main outputs from these discussions in the different plenary and working group sessions.

Presentation on the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform outlined the process and focused on the main changes in the policy. Regarding the first pillar of the CAP, covering direct aid to farmers and market measures, the new architecture of direct payments will be made up of a Basic Payment Scheme complemented by a "Green Payment" and a top-up for the young farmers. CAP leaves the option of maintaining some limited payments coupled with production and providing special assistance for areas under natural constraints in order to maintain agricultural activity in vulnerable regions.

As for rural development (Pillar II), a menu of 17 measures and the cross-cutting LEADER approach will be available in the coming period. Overall, a large share of the CAP budget will have to be devoted to the agri-environment-climate measures (30% in each pillar) to make the CAP greener.

Focusing on the Agriculture and rural development assistance under IPA 2014-2020 (IPARD), the Forum was informed about the main forthcoming changes compared to the current IPA, including the legal architecture of IPA II and the main principles of IPARD. Continuity will be ensured during the new period by keeping the existing menu of measures (while two new ones are being added - forestry and advisory services) and maintaining very similar management and control structures. To assure the timely start of IPARD implementation, countries are urged to concentrate on developing agriculture and rural development strategies, sector analyses and start preparing the programmes. Management and control structures should not wait for finalisation and conclusion of the Framework and Sector Agreements. The countries should also be active in ensuring that agriculture and rural development are properly addressed in the IPA country strategy papers and national development strategies and programmes.

While preparing for IPA II and adapting to the new CAP 2014-2020, SWG members should intensify their efforts in streamlining agricultural and rural development policies with the requirements of the aquis. The establishment of national and regional platforms for cooperation

between the academic institutions and the Ministries competent for agriculture, forestry, water and rural development serves to increase the capacity for proper policy analysis. The work so far has identified a number of issues to be addressed: targets- and results-based programming, rules and responsibilities for institutions in implementation of rural development policies, providing sufficient means for a proper policy formulation and implementation. Continuity should be ensured by retention of a critical mass of senior and key civil servants, harmonizing agriculture support measures to CAP requirements and giving more attention to structural and rural development support measures.

Given the strategic priorities regarding the "Greening" of EU Policies and Programmes, the Forum directed its discussions towards the Green Economy in the context of sustainable development as the main outcome from the Rio + 20 process. Ensuring ecosystem resilience, improving resource efficiency and enhancing social equity as well as fair burden-sharing, countries will have to develop new approaches to eradicate poverty through a sustained economic growth, creating new opportunities and improving human welfare.

The Forum recognized the need to improve transparency of market information on prices and foster the exchange of goods and services. Therefore, farmers should be supported through training and education in utilizing innovative information technologies.

The Forum debated in detail on the following three policy topics relevant to the SEE countries:

FOCUS TOPIC 1

Area Based Development in the cross-border rural areas of the Western Balkans within the framework of territorial and regional cooperation

One of the critical problems of the cross-border areas of the Western Balkan countries is that with emergence of the borders, some of the previously strong economic centers have become administratively divided and marginalized becoming a periphery of the newly founded states. This is leading to decline in remote border rural areas, dominated by poverty and lack of sufficient economic activities and subsequently resulting in outmigration.

During the last 3-4 years activities have been intensified to address these common problems by initiating planning for implementation of rural economic development actions using the Area Based Development approach (ABD) with the objective of providing incentives for sustainable economic development in cross-border areas in order to try to turn the wave.

In particular, the Forum concluded:

- Although the mandate of the SWG does not cover all sectors of importance to solve common problems in the selected cross-border areas, the SWG should continue facilitating actions to resolve such issues. This relates, in particular, to addressing environmental and physical infrastructure.

In this regard, the Forum recommends that the SWG member institutions through Ministers of Agriculture ensure close cooperation with the respective line Ministries to facilitate economic growth and quality of life as well as the attractiveness of the areas.

The Forum recommends to the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) to address the issue of agriculture, rural development and use of natural resources within the SEE Strategy 2020. The Forum also calls to the attention of the RCC, that SWG as a well established regional organization and a network of Ministries of Agriculture from South Eastern Europe needs to be considered in the implementation of the SEE Strategy 2020 in the fields of agriculture, rural development and natural resources management, including agricultural land use, water, forestry and agro-environment.

- The Forum welcomes the very active support from the European Commission (EC) in the preparation for implementation of an ABD programme and urges the EC to enhance the dialogue with the SWG and member governments on the legal requirements for strategic planning, programming and implementation in the Regional and Territorial Cooperation policy area.

  In this regard, the Forum recommends to the SWG Member Institutions to coordinate with the NIPAC offices in order to ensure that the respective country strategies reflect the possibilities to foster rural economic development in the cross-border regions concerned through the ABD.

- The Forum welcomes the approach of implementing integrated projects involving all relevant economic partners in the process and recommends taking account of the real situation at micro regional level to ensure concrete results.

- It was noted that the CBC and ABD programming activities are on-going but in parallel fora. Therefore the Forum recommends ensuring close coordination between the two programming activities to achieve the highest degree of synergies.
  The Forum also recommends that the SWG intensifies coordination with other donors to address all issues and problems identified in the ABD cross-border regions.

- Permanent and active involvement of all key stakeholders, local government, civil society and private business is essential for developing and implementing integrated cooperation

actions based on the ABD approach. This includes commitments to enter into three partite partnerships.

- The Forum recommends involvement of business support organizations and associations active in the cross-border region to take active role in the work of the Stakeholder Groups.

FOCUS TOPIC 2

The Balkan Rural Development Network (BRDN) in South Eastern Europe and its way ahead.

Declaration on Networking among the SWG, National Rural Development Networks (NRDN) and initiatives for National Rural Development Networks of the South Eastern European countries has been signed on March 4th, 2011 in Skopje. The Declaration outlines the framework and provides directions for future cooperation in the area of rural development between the signatories' organizations. In May 2013 the Balkan Rural Development Network has been established on behalf of NRDNs from Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro.

The Forum discussed the importance and the role of the rural development networks in the overall concept of rural development and concluded:

- The detailed Operational Plan for 2014 has been developed in order to pursue the way ahead about the BRDN.

- The need for a comprehensive Action Plan for the period 2015-2017 as well as BRDN programming documents has been identified and in the upcoming period they will be developed and used to accelerate the activities of the BRDN.

- Inclusiveness and openness to all National Rural Networks from the SEE countries has been acknowledged as a core principle of BRDN.

- The Forum sees the need for intensification of the process for close cooperation and dialogue among the civil society sector and the Government institutions regarding rural development issues.

FOCUS TOPIC 3

Rural development by sustainable water resource and forest management in South Eastern Europe

The Regional Expert Advisory Working Group (REAWG) on water and forest management established in 2010 under the SWG umbrella has been focusing its work on rural development by sustainable management of forests and water. Furthermore, issues related to forests and water have been included as main contributors to rural welfare considering the ecological and socio-economic balance of the rural areas, particularly the positive impact of social collaboration at local areas which contribute to the rural income by means of water and forest management.

The Forum discussed the future steps to be taken for the regional coordination of joint water resource and forest management in the region of South Eastern Europe and concluded the following:

- The Forum addressed the need for increased horizontal cooperation on national and regional level in the field of water and forest management for sustainable rural development in the region of South Eastern Europe.

- Promotion of Green Economy as a model for sustainable development based on three pillars for sustainability (socio, economic and environmental) with the benefits from forests, water and agriculture will create visible impacts (eradication of poverty and out migration, employment, increase of income and employment opportunities).

- In the framework of Rural Development programmes, the Forum expressed the need of including additional forest and water related measures, addressing interdependencies among agricultural and forest and water activities in RD policies and programmes.

- Support to enhancing institutional capacities on national level dedicated to environment, rural development, forests and water will improve the efficiency of governance systems and provide effective policy administration.

- Furthermore, policy and instruments should be developed for prevention of natural hazards related to management of natural resources.

- Mainstreaming of ecosystem services in national policies. Develop policies and programmes for use of renewable energy in rural areas.

- The Forum recommended that regional cooperation in this area should be integrated under the IPA regional and territorial cooperation policy area.

Participants of the Forum agreed on the following steps.

- The Agenda will be presented and discussed at the 7th Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from South-Eastern Europe on November, 16th in Kopaonik, Serbia.

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

- The 14th Agricultural Policy Forum will take place in autumn 2014 in the Republic of Serbia holding the SWG Presidency for 2014.

The Agricultural Policy Forum 2013 in Pristina was held 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.

The participants of the Agricultural Policy Forum 2013 highly appreciate the support provided by the convening institutions and organizations: the European Commission (DG AGRI, DG ELARG, JRC/IPTS), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), commissioned by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

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:

Declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture
from South Eastern Europe

Declaration
Of the Ministers/ Heads of Delegations responsible
for agriculture and rural development in South Eastern Europe
Convened in Kopaonik, Republic of Serbia

November 15th 2013

The Ministers of Agriculture from South Eastern Europe (SEE) and the Heads of Delegations, members of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South Eastern Europe which have gathered on 15th of November 2013 in Kopaonik, proclaim that the main objectives set in the 2007 Dresden Declaration have been achieved and reaffirm their determination to continue developing the regional cooperation in the field of agriculture and rural development.

The Ministers of Agriculture from SEE and the Heads of Delegations regard the integration process to the European Union (EU) as an important goal in the process of reforms of the agricultural sector and the economic transformation of the rural areas throughout SEE. The past years of intensive integration efforts and mutual cooperation within the SWG RRD opens up new opportunities and poses new challenges for our future cooperation on the issues of common interest.

The cooperation of the Ministries of Agriculture from SEE will continue to focus on regional activities and initiatives within the SWG, as a platform for networking and regional cooperation, striving at strengthening the regional partnership. In this context, the SWG will continue to act as a regional implementing agency for developing and implementing regional programs and projects.

The Declaration in Kopaonik on 15th of November 2013 of the Ministers of Agriculture and Heads of Delegations sets, in the common interest of SEE, the framework for the future cooperation in the field of agriculture and rural development.

In particular:

- We reconfirm our commitment and support to the EU integration process and to continue our efforts in streamlining our national agriculture and rural development policies with the Common Agriculture Policy of the EU during the period 2014-2020. We welcome the establishment of the regional platform for cooperation among the academic institutions and the Ministries of Agriculture in order to increase the capacity to objectively analyze agricultural and rural development challenges and policy performance.

- We confirm our political support to the initiatives and activities taken to facilitate a sustainable socio-economic development in the cross-border rural areas of the SEE region. In this regard we welcome the actions undertaken by the SWG together with the European Commission (EC) to foster rural development in the SEE region through the application of the Area Based Development approach and we confirm our commitment to provide political, financial and technical support to the development and implementation of a multi-annual area based development program during the 2014-2020 period. In addition, we are ready to enlarge our cooperation in all other horizontal issues under the authority of our institutions.

- We express our appreciation of the support from the EU to rural development through the IPARD instrument in the pre-accession period. This instrument provide valuable assistance to gain experience in designing EU compatible rural development programmes and in managing EU fund as well as in introducing compliance with EU standards in the field of agriculture and food production.

In this regard, we, the Ministers from candidate and potential candidate countries for EU membership, confirm our commitment to cooperate and exchange our experiences in preparing for, and implementing the IPARD programs with a view to optimize the benefit of this instrument.

- We remain devoted to the principles of development of regional trade and free movement of goods and people for the benefit of all parties concerned, and in sharing common ideas for future development with the objective of reaching this goal.

- We confirm our willingness to further expand our cooperation with other institutions on other issues of relevance to agriculture and rural areas amongst others forestry and environmental issues to facilitate joint actions for the common good of SEE.

- We welcome and are committed to support strong and productive cooperation in all fields of agriculture and rural development including the cooperation with national and regional rural networks, academic institutions and civil society in order to increase the exchange of knowledge and best practices among rural communities in dealing with agricultural and rural development challenges.

We, the signatories stay closely committed to cooperate with the partners from the EU member states and EU institutions, other regional initiatives in South Eastern Europe and Europe as well as third countries and international organizations.

Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Water Administration, Albania

H.E. Edmond Panariti
Minister

Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina

H.E. Jerko Ivankovic - Lijanovic
Minister

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina

On behalf of
H.E. Stevo Mirjanic
MInister

Mr. Zoran Kovacevic
Assistent Minister

Ministry of Agriculture, Croatia

H.E. Tihomir Jakovina
Minister

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, Macedonia

On behalf of
H.E. Ljupco Dimovski
Minister

Mr. Besir Jasari
State Secretary

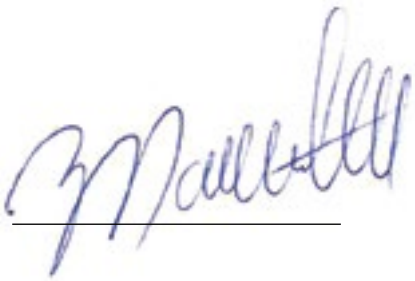
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Serbia

On behalf of
H.E. Dragan Glamocic
Minister

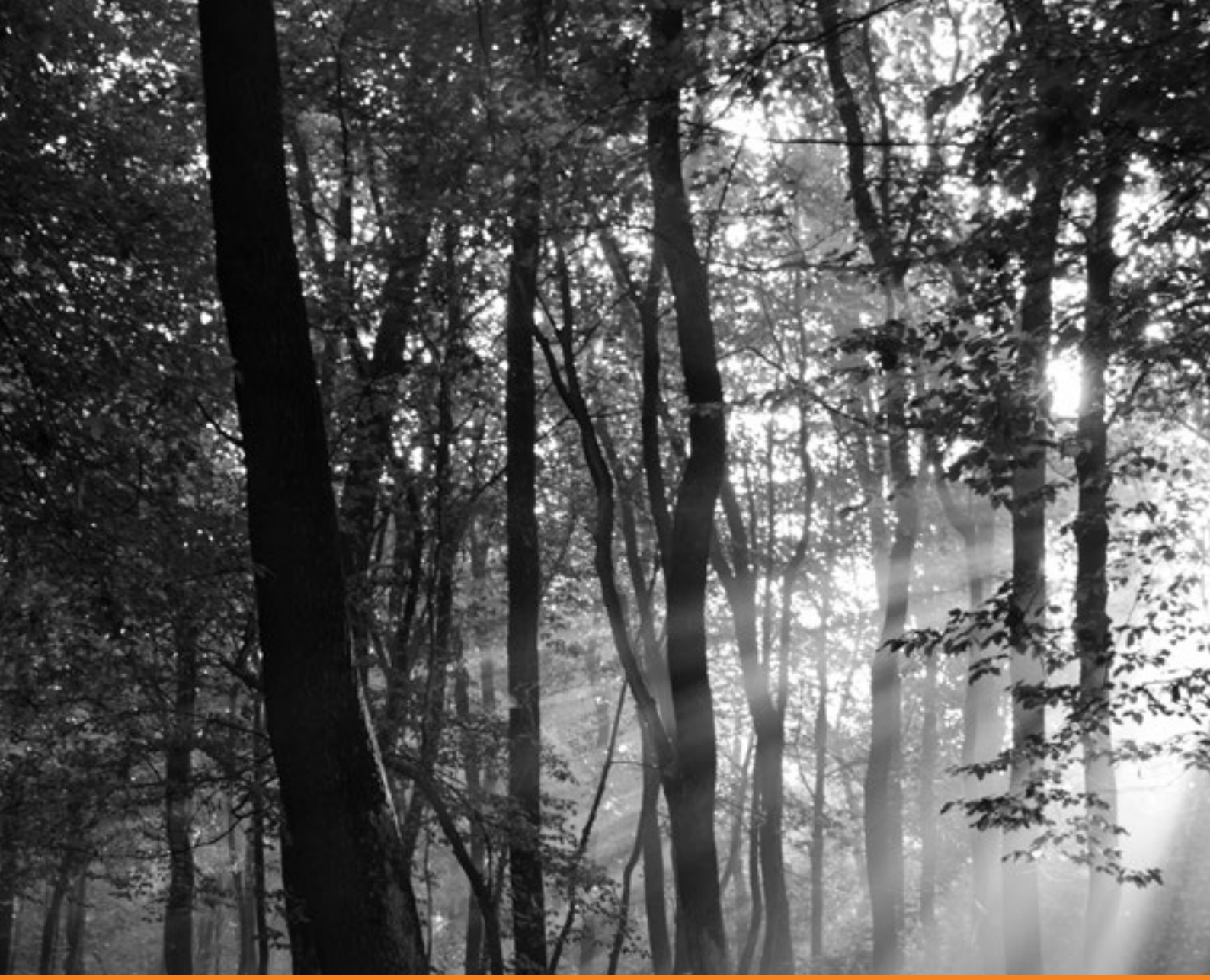
Mr. Danilo Golubovic
State Secretary

Ministry of Agriculture,
Forestry and Rural
Development, Kosovo*

H.E. Blerand Stavileci
Minister



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 7:

Conclusions of the Meeting of the Ministers for
Agriculture and Food from South Eastern Europe

The Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture and Food from South Eastern Europe
held in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
April 5th, 2013

Ministers of Agriculture and Food and Head of Delegations from South Eastern European countries gathered in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina on 5th of April 2013 under the joint auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South Eastern Europe.

Due to high levels of aflatoxins in maize used for animal feed and subsequent high level of aflatoxin in milk and milk products, the Ministers of Agriculture and Food and Head of Delegations from South Eastern Europe discussed the necessary measures to control aflatoxin levels in animal feed and dairy products, including:

- Establishment of permanent communication channels of the Institutions in SEE countries which are dealing with Risk Assessment; Risk Management, Control and Quality testing of feed and food;
- Exchange of information about the Control mechanisms in the Feed and Food Safety Chain;
- Agreement about the measures and provisional action plan for improved coordination and communication among the Ministries of SEE.

CONCLUSIONS

We, the Ministers of Agriculture and Food and Heads of Delegations from South Eastern European countries welcome the recommendations for measures and actions related to the problem of the appearance of the aflatoxins, as proposed by the ad hoc SEE Regional Expert Advisory Working Group meeting held on 4th of April 2013 in Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina.
After the elaboration of the measures and actions proposed by the SEE Regional Expert Advisory Working Group, Ministers of Agriculture and Food and Heads of Delegations from South Eastern Europe adopt the following conclusions:

1. The countries from SEE have the intention to follow the current EU legal limits related to aflatoxins in animal feed and milk as the basis for control.
2. To establish the Regional Expert Group consisting of nominated contact persons with mandate to discuss the mycotoxin issues, in order
   a. to improve communication between institutions and authorities at a regional level-SEE and with the European authorities;
   b. to harmonize activities on risk assessment and risk management in SEE countries;
   c. to establish the action plan about the future activities including programs to monitor aflatoxins in feed and milk.
3. To create a system which specifies details about the communication channels and exchange of

information between the relevant institutions of the SEE countries.
4. To stress the importance to the feed and food operators of preventive measures and application of GAP, GHP, GVP and GMP including the HACCP principles.
5. To enhance capacity building i.e. training and continuous education at various levels (governmental officials/inspectors/laboratory staff, food and feed business operators including farmers) especially on prevention and sampling procedures.
6. To consider the possibility of having a regional reference laboratory for the analyses of mycotoxins in feed and food.
7. To align the sampling procedures of food and feed with those laid down in the EU legislation.
8. To make an effort to provide additional means of support for the milk producers in order to enable them to feed their dairy cattle with safe feed to maintain the level of production and quality of milk.
9. To establish protocols how to deal with contaminated feed in compliance with EU legislation.

We highly appreciate the support provided by the convening organizations and institutions: the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE, Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), commissioned by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

We, express our appreciation for the kind hospitality provided on behalf of institutions responsible for agriculture and food of Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the meeting in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina we have discussed and defined the possible measures and actions for resolving the aflatoxin contamination in feed and food in the region of South Eastern Europe. With reference to this gathering we continue to stress the importance of regional cooperation and policy dialogue in the region of South Eastern Europe when emerging issues of common concerns especially in the process of EU integration.

MEETING DELEGATIONS:

1. Ministry of Agriculture Rural Development and Water Administration, Republic of Albania
2. Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, Bosnia and Herzegovina
3. Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina
4. Ministry of Agriculture, Water Management and Forestry, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina
5. Ministry of Agriculture, Republic of Croatia
6. Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Montenegro
7. Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Republic of Serbia
8. Emmbasy of the Republic of Macedonia in Bosnia and Herzegovina
9. The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South Eastern Europe (SWG)

SWG RRD

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