

## REPORT

### 34th Session of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) of SEE Countries



**Date:** 02<sup>nd</sup> - 04<sup>th</sup> December, 2015  
**Location:** Bary, Italy  
**Organizer:** SWG Head Office/Secretariat

**Report Prepared by:** SWG Head Office/Secretariat

**December 2015**

## **I. Purpose of the session:**

The 34<sup>th</sup> session of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE was held in the period 02<sup>nd</sup> - 04<sup>th</sup> of December 2015 in Bary, Italy.

The aim of the session was to discuss and decide about internal SWG procedures, the retrospective of the accomplishments in 2015, planning of the SWG major features related to the year 2016, as well as discussions and decisions on the SWG Strategic and Operational plan 2016-2020, projects and cooperation with SWG partner organizations and institutions.

All SWG delegates from the nine SWG member institutions, and the seven SWG observer institutions were officially invited to participate on the 34<sup>th</sup> SWG session.

Representatives of four out of nine SWG member institutions, participated on the session, discussed, gave recommendations and have taken the decisions listed below.

Representative of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Hungary participated on the session as observer.

Representatives from the SWG partner institutions and international organizations – German International Cooperation (GIZ) and International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) also participated on the session.

## **II. MINUTES OF THE SESSION:**

### **SWG Delegates/ Ministry representatives present from:**

- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and Water Administration – Republic of Albania (Mr. Grigor Gjeci, Ms. Teuta Topi, Ms. Brisilda Pullumbi, Ms. Ms. Etleva Husi)
- Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations - Bosnia and Herzegovina (Ms. Sedina Kahriman);
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development – Kosovo\* (Mr. Bekim Hoxha);
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy – Republic of Macedonia (Mr. Ljubo Peno);

### **Ministry representatives of the SWG observer institutions present from:**

- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development - Hungary (Ms. Gabriela Grüner).

### **Other representatives present at the session were:**

- German International Cooperation GIZ (Mr. Benjamin Mohr, Ms. Ljupka Polizovski, Mr. Robert Lukesch);
- International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies CIHEAM (Mr. Cosimo Lacirignola, Mr. Biagio Diterlizzi, Mr. Pandi Zdruli, Mr. Pandeli Pasko, Mr. Nikola Lamadalena)

*List of Participants from the meeting - Annex I.*

### **III. Topics discussed at the 34<sup>th</sup> SWG Session:**

The main topics of the session which were discussed are the following:

#### **I. Internal Session of the SWG Assembly**

#### **II. SWG Session with participation of SWG partner institutions and organizations**

- Discussions on the cooperation with CIHEAM Bari;
- Presentation of the APF Pravets Agenda 2015 and Conclusions of the 9th Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from SEE;
- Discussions on the cooperation with partner organizations (GIZ, EC, JRC, RCC).
- Discussion related to the project proposal “Areas With Natural Constrains in the Balkans”

*Meeting programme is presented in Annex II.*

### **DISCUSSIONS:**

On behalf of the Presidency of the SWG Assembly - Agriculture and Rural Development and Water Administration, Mr. Grigor Gjerci, President of the SWG Assembly opened and moderated the 34<sup>th</sup> SWG Assembly Session.

The Assembly Session provided a qualified quorum with participation of the majority member institutions with voting right. All the decisions on the 34<sup>th</sup> SWG Assembly Session were reached with a consensus and are qualified decisions of the SWG Assembly.

### **III.1 Closed SWG Assembly Session – for SWG Delegates only**

### **III.2 SWG Session (Open Meeting)**

#### **III.2.1 Retrospective of the Accomplishments in 2015**

The SWG Secretary General and the staff of the SWG Secretariat/Head Office presented the executed activities in the period January - December 2015 based on the set for the year of 2015 which contained activities related to the SWG core functions and projects implemented in cooperation with GIZ, EC, FAO and other partner organizations.

Based on the agreed and adopted operational plan for 2015 by the SWG Assembly all of the activities have been executed by the SWG Secretariat. Some of set activities have been postponed for execution in 2016.

Within the planned actions the SWG assembly has agreed that the working group on Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies as of last meeting has not good response and therefore the activities of this WG should not be planned for 2016.

Further topic for discussion in respect to future activities was related to Areas with Natural Constraint i.e. Less Favoured Areas (LFA) mapping and analysis. First meeting of the involved institutions/organizations for preparation of a regional project proposal Areas with Natural Constraints (ANC) i.e. Less Favoured Areas (LFA) mapping and analysis was held as a side event during the Agricultural Policy Forum in October 2015. SWG and CIHEAM jointly pursue the process and develop an outline which is a first draft. The first meeting of the Regional Expert Advisory Working Group on development of Areas with Natural Constraints is foreseen to be held in February/March 2016 which will serve as a preparatory meeting for setting up the structure and technical framework of the Regional Expert Advisory Group on developing the ANC in the future ahead. Secretary General request the SWG Delegates to officially nominate a 3 (three) members/experts from the respective institution/agencies/institutes working on this issue which will be involved in the Regional Expert Advisory Group on ANC with following background (1. Agronomist/Agrometeorologist/Agroenvironmentalist; 2. Soil scientist – Pedologist; 3. GIS expert)

Following the general conclusions of the Expert Advisory Working Group on Wine the planning of the next meeting of the EAG on Wine was also discussed. It has been agreed the meeting to be organized second week of December 2015 in Macedonia.

SWG Secretary General highlighted the deepening of the cooperation among the SEE countries and the Irish Ministry of Agriculture, Food and the Marine by establishing the technical working groups with the key people from the Veterinary and Phytosanitary Sector and Rural Development Sector from Western Balkan Countries. Namely, representatives on behalf of SWG members from the both sectors had the opportunity through the Exposure visit on Rural Development and Food Safety to learn from the Irish experience and structures with a specific focus to enhance the development of competitive and economically sustainable agricultural sectors in the region in the course of November 2015. During the Exposure visit H.E Simon TD Coveney hosted the SWG delegation and emphasized the importance of the relation between the Western Balkans and Ireland. The meeting was of a great importance for discussions and determination of priorities in agriculture and rural development, exchanging information and experiences in respect to the potential mutually beneficial opportunities for cooperation in the SEE region between the SWG and the Ministry of Agriculture of Ireland.

Registration for the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture should be done by 10<sup>th</sup> of December 2015. Secretary General announced the possibility for organization of a roundtable on agriculture

and rural development in the Western Balkans and Turkey initiated by the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in SEE in cooperation with the European Commission, DG Agriculture and Rural Development and the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) of Germany within the GFFA 2016. The SWG Delegates were requested to ensure the participation of the Ministers in the foreseen roundtable.

*SWG Operational Plan 2015 could be find in Annex III.*

The retrospective of the accomplishment main SWG activities and achievements in the past year as well as crucial developments impacting and shaping the activities of the SWG and the region of South East Europe in the reporting period could be find in Annex IV.

### **III.2.2 Presentation on the outcomes of the Agricultural Policy Forum 2015 and 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from SEE**

The SWG Secretary General presented the outcomes from the Agricultural Policy Forum 2015 and 9th Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from SEE to the SWG Assembly.

The *Pravets Agenda 2015* of the Agricultural Policy Forum 2015 and the *Conclusions of the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers* of Agriculture from SEE can be found as Annex V and VI.

The SWG delegates had a short discussion regarding the participation of the Ministers at the Annual Working Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from SEE. SWG delegates need to ensure the participation of the Ministers at this important gathering in the future years in order to discuss the future steps on regional cooperation and EU integration in the SEE region.

### **III.2.3. Discussions on the cooperation with European Commission**

SWG Secretariat presented the process and the achievements and results in respect to the Area Based Development program through the project on "Fostering regional cooperation and balanced territorial development of Western Balkan countries in the process towards EU integration - *Support to the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South-East Europe*".

Details regarding cooperation with EC and the project on "Fostering regional cooperation and balanced territorial development of Western Balkan countries in the process towards EU integration - *Support to the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South-East Europe*" can be found in Annex VII.

In respect to the EU funded project: "National policy instruments and EU approximation process: Effects on farm holdings in the Western Balkan countries", the detailed working plan have been presented. Focus of the Project is on: monitoring and collection of information on agricultural policy developments in the WB countries, as well as exploring the application of appropriate analytical tools for different farm types according to their importance on national agriculture and data availability in particular WB countries. Kick of meeting is scheduled for January 2016.

*More details in Annex VIII.*

In respect to the Cooperation with DG NEAR – TAIEX Unit, the status of the approved applications, as well as applications to be submitted and proposed topics for further organization of TAIEX multi-country events have been also discussed. Applications for TAIEX multi-country workshops: Producer Groups – legal framework, structure, roles, Registration of plan varieties are approved and its realization will be in 2016. The application for multi-country study tour on Wine particularly related to PDO, PGI was refused by TAIEX with explanation that the WB countries are on different stages

related to this issue. Applications for proposed multi-country workshops related to organic agriculture and definition of areas with natural constraint should be further developed.

### **III.2.4 Discussions on the cooperation with GIZ**

SWG Secretariat presented the current projects being implemented in cooperation with SWG and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) and the follow up for the 2016.

- *Project on: "Support to the core functions of the SWG - Networking and Dialogue"*

The implementation of the currently running project on "Support to the core functions of the SWG - Networking and Dialogue" are in line with the foreseen operational framework and indicators. The implementation of the activities within this project have to be executed by the end of Year 2015 when the project officially complete.

- *Project on Solid Waste Management in cross-border rural areas of South Eastern European region*

In the framework of the project "Solid Waste Management in cross-border rural and coastal areas of SEE region" Dialogue Platform among the impacting and impacted stakeholders was established in order to assess and develop effective schemes for integrated management of solid waste that is environmentally effective and economically affordable in order to eliminate adverse impacts on the environment and support the ecological and socio-economic development of the cross-border rural and coastal areas in the SEE countries. In parallel to the 34<sup>th</sup> SWG Assembly Session the First Dialogue Platform session were organized for the identification of challenges and needs for establishment of cross-border integrated solid waste management model. The event for Sharra region took place in Prevall, Kosovo\*, while for Drina-Tara-Sava Region took place in Zlatibor, Serbia.

- *Rural Development through Management of Water and Forest Resource Management in South East Europe*

SWG is currently in negotiation with GIZ for development and implementation of project on: "Rural Development through Management of Water and Forest Resource Management in South East Europe". The project focuses on improvement of the regional capacities for sustainable management of forest and water resources within the framework of developing rural areas. The orientation phase for the project implementation is ongoing and will last until January 2016. It is expected the implementation of the project activities to start as of February 2016.

Discussions and details regarding the proposal made on the program for water and forest management in SEE region were held during the next day of the SWG Assembly Session.

Mr. Benjamin Mohr from GIZ has presented the Strategic Framework for the initiated Program on Rural Development via Integrated Water and Forest Management in SEE. The presentation focused on the main objectives and outputs foreseen within the project. Mr. Mohr presented the implementation models and main results and outputs taken in the given inception phase. Short overview was done on the proposed steering structure and the activities planned to be taken during the programme implementation.

*More details can be found in Annex IX.*

### **III.2.5 Discussions on the cooperation with CIHEAM**

On behalf of CIHEAM, Mr. Cosimo Lacirignola gave a short overview of the CIHEAM activities and actions and presented the future potential area of cooperation with the SWG in order to better understand and implement the EU policies. Details regarding the cooperation with CIHEAM can be found in Annex X.

In respect to the future activities related to Areas with Natural Constraint i.e. Less Favored Areas (LFA) and project proposal on “Developing a Web-based Information System for mapping Areas with Natural Constraints in the Balkan countries”, Mr. Pandi Zdruli from CIHEAM institute gave a retrospective of the so far taken activities and the objective on behalf of the involved institutions/organizations for preparation of a regional project proposal. More details could be find in Annex XI.

## Conclusions/Decisions Made:

- The SWG Delegates to officially nominate a 3 (three) members/ experts from the respective institution/agencies/institutes working on Areas with Natural Constraints (ANC) i.e. Less Favoured Areas (LFA) which will be involved in the Regional Expert Advisory Group on ANC with following background (1. Agronomist/Agrometeorologist/Agroenvironmentalist; 2. Soil scientist – Pedologist; 3. GIS expert);
- The SWG Assembly agreed the 2nd meeting of the Expert Advisory Working Group on Wine to be organized second week of December 2015 in Macedonia;
- Registration for the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture should be done by 10<sup>th</sup> of December 2015;
- The Operational Plan for 2016 has been discussed and approved on behalf of the SWG Assembly with a consensus;
- Details regarding the cooperation among SWG with EC, JRC, RCC, CIHEAM and GIZ were presented and discussed.