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Press Release

Ministerial Videoconference: Impact of COVID-19 on the agricultural sector in the Western Balkans and possible joint actions

Ministers of agriculture of the countries/territories of the Western Balkans discussed main issues caused by COVID-19 pandemic in the agricultural sector and proposed actions for overcoming the consequences

SWG, within its mission for regional cooperation in the Western Balkans, together with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of North Macedonia, organized a videoconference in which Ministers responsible for agriculture in the countries/territories of the Western Balkans discussed: current situation in agriculture in each country/territory; food self-sufficiency; surpluses and deficits of specific types of agri-food products (primary, processed and animal feed); open agricultural trade issues and possible actions for trade facilitation.

They concluded that the main issues caused by COVID-19 pandemic in the agricultural sector are: restrictions in movement of goods, changes in consumption patterns and in the operation of agri-food production systems, lack of workforce due to border closures, social distance requirements, mandatory isolation or quarantine. Currently, food security in the Western Balkans is ensured and there is enough food in the region available for the population. All ministries' representatives confirmed their commitment for ensuring free movement of the agricultural products in the region, while respecting all recommendations and precautions by the relevant health authorities. In that context they expressed their determination to refrain from imposing additional administrative, financial or other agri-trade burdens. Continuous communication, coordination and solidarity among the ministries is necessary in order to counteract the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on agriculture and rural development in the region. Regional cooperation is a must under such extraordinary circumstances.

Note: News from Videoconference are communicated through the SWG social media accounts and digital channels. Official #hashtag of the communications regarding the Videoconference is #WBVideoconferenceCOVID-19.

Contact e-mail: swgsecretariat@swg-seerural.org

Website : <http://www.seerural.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/swg.secretariat>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/SwgRrd>

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCK90V687k0Qj1mwiGZ9TIKq>