

Head Office / Secretariat of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South-Eastern Europe (SWG) – Skopje

Terms of Reference

National expert on Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems for the National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development for the period 2021-2027

1. Introduction

The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG), as a platform for networking and regional co-operation, has been established during the Agricultural Policy Forum 2005 (“Rural Development Opportunities for Co-operation in the SEE”) held in Macedonia and Serbia in June 2005.

With the International Agreement in March 2009, the SWG is registered as an International Intergovernmental Organization, with its managing and coordinative body – SWG Head Office/Secretariat based in Skopje, Macedonia. On September 7th 2009, the Law on Ratification of the SWG Agreement has been decisively completed by the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia.

The main SWG strategic framework is composed of the following elements:

SWG vision is to promote innovative and sustainable agriculture and rural development through regional cooperation, to improve rural livelihoods in the SEE countries.

Mission - to increase horizontal cooperation among respective countries and territories of South Eastern Europe, by coordinating regional initiatives related to agriculture and rural development and supporting the process of social and economic development of rural areas in SEE region.

General objective of SWG is to facilitate close cooperation between the Ministries of Agriculture and other stakeholders in the field of agriculture and rural development and to support EU integration in SEE. The SWG has four specific objectives on which the organization has focused its work:

- To improve the common understanding on agriculture and rural development policies;
- To assist the improvement of implementing structures and systems for agriculture and rural development, 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.

2. Background

In September 2018 the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development approved the realization of a 3-years regional programme with the title “**Support to economic diversification of rural areas in Southeast Europe (SEDRA)**”.

The project aims at strengthening the institutional capacities of selected stakeholders in Southeast Europe for supporting EU-compliant economic diversification in rural areas.

The renewed EU accession process is the main incentive for harmonisation and adaptation of the rural development policies and instruments of the six Southeast European countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) to the needs of their rural regions and the people living there. An explicit aim of the EU is to strengthen economic and social cohesion through its structural policy, its common agricultural policy (CAP) and their accompanying instruments.

The project contributes to improvement of the technical, methodological and implementation capacities for evidence-based rural development policies for economic diversification, facilitates community-led area-based development, as well as, value chain development.

The regional project includes the Southeast European countries/territories and the lead executing agencies are the ministries competent for agriculture and rural development, through their membership in the regional organisation Standing Working Group for Regional Rural Development (SWG RRD), which at the same time is the main implementing partner.

The three central project outputs are:

- 1) Regional cooperation and policy advice,
- 2) Sustainable business models, and
- 3) Community-led and area-based development strategies.

3. Specific Situation / Scope of assignment

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of the Republic of North Macedonia is in the process of drafting of new National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development which should cover the upcoming planning period from 2021-2027. The strategy shall be brought significantly in line with the upcoming policy priorities of the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy for the period 2021-2027. One of the major cross-cutting issue of interest is the establishment and maintenance of well-functional Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) that should have a key role to play in helping farmers and rural communities meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. The EU Commission’s CAP proposal for 2021-2027 introduces a cross-cutting objective on fostering knowledge, innovation and digitalisation to step up efforts to share new knowledge and develop innovative solutions.

However, the existing national AKIS components (research institutions, formal and informal education, advisory services and farmers) that are supposed to generate, share, and use

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

knowledge and innovation for agriculture and interrelated fields are generally underfinanced and understaffed, sometimes lacking the basic resources for their work. The available knowledge is fragmented and insufficiently applied in practice while the institutions are not interconnected to meet the challenges ahead. Moreover, the agricultural sector has considerable and under-used innovation capacity. The state policy of support to the AKIS components from the MAFWE are not persistent and systematic.

Regarding the above, the Ministry needs to assure that the policy objectives and actions for the forthcoming period appropriately treat the real deficiencies and needs of the sector in regard to the creation and transfer of knowledge. MAFWE capacity for conducts profound analysis on the AKIS issue remains limited, thus the technical assistance is required.

Based on the above mentioned, SWG will support the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy of the Republic of North Macedonia for conducting the National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development for the period 2021 – 2027.

General objective

Engagement of relevant technical assistance from the academic or research institutions to contribute in drafting the AKIS chapter of the National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development for the period 2021-2027 (NSARD 2021-2027).

For accomplishment of the above-mentioned outcomes a Works contract is foreseen.

4. Tasks of the Consultant

The expert should provide adequate contribution to the NSARD 2021-2027 in the area of AKIS by performing the following specific activities:

- Analysis of the implementation of the NSARD 2014-2020 Operational Plan with assessment of the degree of realization of the measures and justification for continuation/amendment/termination in the next strategic period;
- Analysis of the current situation in the national AKIS components for agriculture, forestry and veterinary, i.e. in the research, formal and informal education, advisory services and final users (farmers, forest owners, resident in the rural areas);
- Identifying the key deficiencies, problems, and challenges ahead of the AKIS and assessing the priority needs for change and improvement of the situation, explaining the reason for the choices made;
- Selection of appropriate policy interventions to address the identified needs. Interventions in form of policy measures should be designed to address a specific situation identified by the previous activities. The successful AKIS strategy should include the following four main groups of actions:
 - (1) Enhancing knowledge flows and strengthening links between research and practice;
 - (2) Strengthening all farm advisory services and fostering their interconnection within the AKIS;
 - (3) Enhancing cross-thematic and cross-border interactive innovation;
 - (4) Supporting the digital transition in agriculture.

The proposed policy measures should be linked to the fulfilment of one or more of Specific Objectives of the NSARD 2021-2027 given in the Annex 1 to this ToR.

The interactive model shall be designed to provide how impartial advisors, researchers and networks will improve cooperation to provide high quality advice, knowledge flows and innovation support services. The model shall describe also the functioning of dedicated policy interventions to support advice, innovation support, training and field demo events where the AKIS actors can meet and exchange knowledge and innovations.

The recommendations for the future policy interventions shall be described by: the expected change and effects of the intervention; indicator and quantified target; possible needs for institutional, legal and ICT systemic changes; the time frame and funds for implementation per years. They should be harmonized with the new EU policy in this area envisaged for the period 2021-2027 as stipulated in the new draft EU regulations, and other policy documents.

During his/her work, the expert should consult the current and past studies carried out by relevant international and domestic institutions on the vegetable sub-sector and/or undertake own research.

The contributions to the strategy should include the respective measures and activities from the Work Program of the Government of RS Macedonia for the period 2020-2024 and be aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Contractor might be required to perform additional tasks that are deemed necessary for the completion of the defined assignment.

5. Reporting and Deliverables

The expert should deliver the final report in Macedonian language within specified deadline and comprised of sections as requested above. The quality acceptance of the report will be assured by the MAFWE. During drafting, the expert will sustain continuous contacts with MAFWE relevant staff and request for necessary data and documents for the analysis. He/she should duly take into consideration the received comments and suggestions from MAFWE side.

6. Place of assignment

The place of assignment of the expert is the North Macedonia.

7. Timeframe

The expert should accomplish the deliverables from the date on which the last party signs the contract until 30 November 2020. The assignment shall be carried out in a period of 15 – 20 working days.

8. Working language

The working language for the assignment is Macedonian.

9. Expert profile

- Formal education of PhD in the area of agriculture and food sciences, preferably in agricultural economics or closely related discipline relevant to the assignment;
- Extensive knowledge and practical experience in agriculture and rural development economic policy analysis of minimum 10 years professional engagement in high-educational and/or research institution;
- Previous specific experience in drafting of National Strategy of Agriculture and Rural Development in the country and other national programmes will be taken as an asset.
- Excellent communication and reporting skills;
- Computer literacy;
- Ability to work in a team.

Annex 1: Specific Objectives of the NARDS 2021-2027 (in Macedonian)

Прилог 1. Преглед на специфични цели на НСЗРР 2021-2027

СЦ1. Поддршка на одржливиот приход на земјоделските стопанства и нивната отпорност во насока на подобрување на сигурноста во обезбедување на храна во државата;

СЦ2. Зајакнување на пазарната ориентацијата и зголемување на конкурентноста, со особен фокус на истражување, технологија и дигитализација;

СЦ3. Подобрување на положбата на земјоделците во синџирот на додена вредност на земјоделските производи;

СЦ4. Придонесување кон ублажување на климатските промени и прилагодување кон истите, како и поголема примена на одржливата енергија;

СЦ5. Поттикнување на одржлив развој и ефикасно управување со природните ресурси како што се вода, почва и воздух;

СЦ6. Придонесување кон заштита на биодиверзитетот, подобрување на услугите на екосистемот и зачувување на природните живеалишта и пределите;

СЦ7. Привлекување на млади земјоделци и олеснување на развојот на бизнисите во руралните средини;

СЦ8. Промовирање на вработување, раст, социјална вклученост и локален развој во руралните средини, вклучително и био-економија и одржливо шумарство; и

СЦ9. Подобрување на одговорот на земјоделството кон барањата на општеството за здравствените аспекти на храната, вклучувајќи ги безбедноста, нутритивниот состав и одржливоста нахраната, хранакоја завршува како отпад, како и благосостојбата на животните.