



# Agricultural Policy Forum 2020

## *Agriculture and rural development policy in the Western Balkans in times of pandemic*

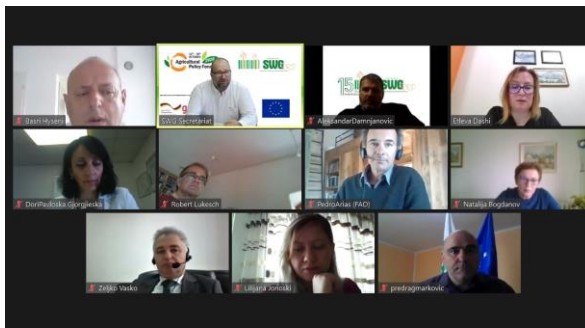
### *APF Agenda*

Main outcomes



# Impact of COVID-19 pandemic

- Need for **improved food self-sufficiency** of the region, **reduced import dependency** and **enhanced supply chain infrastructure**.
- Necessity of **evidence-based and transparent policy making** with special compensation schemes for farmers
- Further **formalization of the farming sector** - prerequisite for compensation schemes and for further broader national and **IPARD support** for sustainable development of the sector
- Raised awareness of **economic diversification opportunities** of the rural areas, emphasizing the importance of further development of rural tourism, short value-chain development and digitalization.



# Regional cooperation

- **Regional cooperation is a must**, especially in times of crisis, such as COVID-19 pandemic
- Focus on **trade facilitation, policy dialogue, coordination of anti-epidemic measures, sharing knowledge, experience, and best practices** among WB countries/territories
- Need arises also from the **joint challenges on the path to EU accession**
- EU and international organizations are being called upon for further **support of and cooperation with regional platforms**, such as SWG.



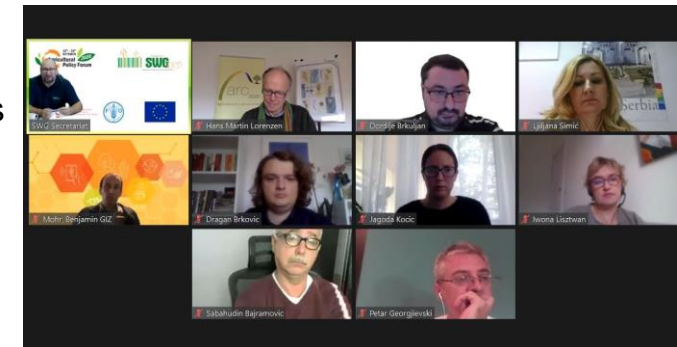
# EU Approximation

1. EU remains main priority on the Western Balkan political agenda.
2. Lack of strategic planning of agricultural policy and use of intervention logic in creating support measures, coupled measures being dominant instrument
3. Need for:
  - Better agricultural and rural statistics for proper monitoring, evaluation and decision making.
  - Continuously developed and utilized analytical capacities
  - Strengthened communication among institutions
  - Allocation of higher budgetary transfers towards structural and rural development measures.
4. IPARD II issues to be addressed while preparing for IPARD III: weak, unsteady and demotivated administrative and advisory capacities, lack of efficient cooperation among responsible authorities, poor quality of guidance for beneficiaries and complex procedures, limited access to finance for private co-financing, inadequate IT systems in the paying agencies
5. EU Economic and Investment Plan for the WB – recognized as a result of the efforts of the EU to assist the region in overcoming the current health and economic crisis as well as in accelerating the integration of the WB region into the EU



# Sustainability of small holders

1. Participation in **short supply chains** - attractive way of adding value and improving farm livelihoods; advisory, cooperation and investment policy measures needed.
2. **Rural tourism** - potential particularly evident in times of pandemic; recommended actions: promotion to improve the image of rural areas as tourism destinations, implementation of the **Area-Based Development (ABD)**, **Community-Led Local Development (CLLD)** and **Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)** approach, long-term financial and technical support for sustainable rural tourism development.
3. Making the **LEADER approach** operational in the Western Balkans:
  - **Road Maps** - guidance for future activities at various levels
  - Extensive use of **IPARD Technical Assistance** as an opportunity to strengthen LAG capacities
  - **Raising awareness** on LEADER and CLLD among the key stakeholders
  - **Partnerships** and more intensive exchange among stakeholders from WB
  - Creation of a **suitable legal framework** for LEADER implementation



# Agricultural research, innovation and technology transfer (RITT)

- Proper **implementation of strategic frameworks** for RITT
- Appropriate **allocation of financial resources**
- Strengthening **links between science, advisory services and business** sector
- Encouraging farmers' **association and cooperation**
- **Transfer of technologies** and knowledge through networking, trainings, practical demonstrations, study visits.
- **EU programs**
  - To provide **preferential treatment**, more funds and/or more flexible conditions to proposals containing institutions from WB
  - To support **networking** and introduce **mentor institutional programs** connecting institutions from EU countries with institutions in the Western Balkan countries/territories.





**Those were the words from the APF 2020**

