



Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry
and Water Management
of the Republic of Serbia



Statement of the 14th Annual Meeting

of the Ministers/Heads of Delegations responsible for agriculture and rural development from Southeastern Europe

November 17th, 2020
Online videoconference

The Ministers of Agriculture from Southeastern Europe and the Heads of Delegations, gathered online on 17th of November 2020 at the 14th Annual Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture organized under the joint auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Serbia and the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South Eastern Europe, to discuss the regional cooperation and reforms in the sector of agriculture and rural development within the process of EU approximation of the SEE region.

Following the stated assurance of the participating countries/territories, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations expressed their readiness for thriving towards common interests in the Southeastern Europe region and issued the following Statement:

- We **remain** committed to implement the obligations derived from the adopted Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans within the authority of institutions we are leading. We continuously align our actions to the political agenda of our governments and to the objective of the EU Commission for accelerating the integration of the Western Balkan countries into EU in line with the EU most important mainstream strategies: “Green Deal”, “From Farm to Fork”, and “Biodiversity Strategy.
- We **express** our devotion to work with the European Commission in the implementation of the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans accompanied by the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, as tools for long-term economic recovery of the WB region building on Green and Digital transition.
- We **acknowledge** the need for strong political actions in the process of EU integration through extended and enhanced regional cooperation. We appreciate the SWG efforts to streamline the joint activities and promotion of the regional approach in resolving the issues related to agriculture and rural development in the South Eastern European region.
- We **emphasize** the necessity for regional cooperation, especially in times of crisis, such as COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, grant our countries/institutions with solemn work towards enabling free movement of agri-food products in the region, and coordinated policy measures while coping with the crisis. We acknowledge the need for data availability and information on evidence-based policy making in times of crisis and we dedicate to mutual sharing of information, knowledge and experience.
- We **continue** to be resolute in the process of reform and convergence by better absorption of IPARD and remain persistent for improvement of future IPARD III tool that would ultimately lead to a faster accession and significant progress.





- We **welcome** the importance of streamlining the strategic development and policy in the pursuit of the regional agenda on agriculture and rural development of the Southeast Europe expressed in the SWG Strategy 2021 – 2026.
- We **endorse** the Agricultural Policy Forum (APF) recommendations and the Forum Agenda 2020, held in the period 12th -16th October 2020 under the theme: “**Agriculture and rural development policy in the Western Balkans in times of pandemic**”.
- We continue to be **devoted** to the EU's enlargement policy which remains a key priority for our countries/territories. It remains to represent an investment in peace, security and stability in Europe. The EU's enlargement policy provides increased economic and trade opportunities for the mutual benefit of the EU and aspiring Member States.
- We **appreciate** the support provided by all participating Governments, members and observers of the SWG RRD. We value the positive contribution by partner organizations and institutions in their work to promote healthy, diverse and productive environment in SEE, in particularly: the line Ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development, the European Commission, the German Federal Government (BMZ and BMEL), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Central European Initiative (CEI) and Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)
- The SWG RRD Presidency and the duties for the year of 2021 have been handed to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Serbia. The 15th Annual Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from SEE will be held in November 2021 in Albania.

