



TOR for Short-term Consultancy

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

Terms of Reference

Regional expert on Sustainable Forest Management in the South East Europe

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 November 2021, the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in SEE (SWG) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of the Republic of Slovenia initiated a cooperation project. Following the idea, as per the Action 53 from the Green Agenda for the Western Balkan which covers Sustainable Forest Management, the Slovenian Ministry accepted the topic among other subjects within the Action Plan of the Green Agenda for the WBs. Based on this, in April 2022, the SWG in its role for coordination with the Western Balkan Ministries of Agriculture was invited to assist in the establishment of the Regional Advisory Working Group (REAWG) on Forest which was set up within the SWG with support of international expertise by the Slovenian side. The Slovenian Ministry of Agriculture dedicated certain portfolio for the period April 2022 – November 2023, but due to administrative and legal obstacles on the Slovenian side, this portfolio does not foreseen engagement of local experts from the respective countries, thus is insufficient to properly cover cooperation of such a format.

The renewed EU accession process is the main incentive for harmonisation and adaptation of the forestry policies and instruments of the six Western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) to the needs of their regions. 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 Federal Republic of Germany supports regional cooperation among the Western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Serbia) in order to promote the economic and political stability of the region. The contribution to regional integration supports the efforts towards EU accession but is independent of the accession progress of the individual countries. In this context, the agricultural sector offers special opportunities for cooperation, given the strong interests, capacities and potentials on both sides. By aligning their legal frameworks with each other and with EU standards, the Western Balkan countries can promote their regional economic integration, expand regional and cross-regional trade and strengthen the economic potential of the entire region.

Based on the prosperous collaboration, the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) as a carrier approved the realization of a 3-year regional project in the Western Balkans “Agricultural Policy Dialogue Germany - Western Balkans”, signed between GFA Consulting Group GmbH (GFA) as German implementation body and Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) as regional implementer for the implementation activities. As part of this project, the partner organisations discussed the possibilities for expanding the project work to include the Forest Management topic in this field. Concrete discussions between SWG and BMEL on the extending the cooperation within the Agricultural Policy Dialogue Germany – Western Balkans (APD) project started in the period April – June 2022 and concept was developed. Furthermore, additional budget was approved by BMEL for engagement of the national end regional experts on Sustainable Forest Management.

The main objective of the “Agricultural Policy Dialogue Germany – Western Balkans (APD)” is to provide support to the Western Balkan countries/territories in their efforts to strengthen the

implementation of the EU Green Agenda for the Western Balkans and alignment with the CAP 2021-2027.

3. Specific Situation / Scope of assignment

The project/initiative aims at strengthening the mutual benefit in the field of the forestry policies, to include cooperation and exchange of good practices of the overall management of the sustainable forest management in the WBs in respect to the EU integration but also regional cooperation.

The objective of this assignment is to develop a regional assessment on the State of art of the sustainable forest management in WB countries/territories as well as to provide recommendations for the sustainable forest management in line with the EU policies.

The Secretariat of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in Southeast Europe as an international intergovernmental organisation, consisting of governmental institutions responsible for agriculture and rural development in respective Western Balkan countries and territories is responsible for implementation and management of the APD project. It will be implemented in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo*.

The major outcomes of the assignment are:

- Evaluation of the relevant policy frameworks in place and provision of policy recommendations for sustainable forest management in the Western Balkans;
- Regional synthesis report/assessment summarizing the common issues, approaches and consequences of the sustainable forest management in the Western Balkans and provision of policy recommendations for alignment of national/regional priorities with EU policies

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

4. Tasks of the Consultant

The assignment includes the following tasks:

- Collecting the national assessments on state of sustainable forest management policies, institutional and legal framework, of the countries in the SEE region;
- Reviewed national assessments and provided recommendations for addressing the encountered gaps and challenges for all countries/territories and quality control
- Contribution to the provision of recommendations for improved policy, legal and institutional frameworks for sustainable forest management
- Development of regional synthesis report/assessment summarizing the common issues, approaches and gaps of the sustainable forest management in the Western Balkans

- Provision of recommendations for future steps needed for improved institutional, policy, legal setup and alignment with the EU Forestry Strategy 2030 and overview of current policy and level of alignment with the EU policies related to sustainable forest management.
- Participation at the 1st Interim Meeting and 2nd Interim Meeting.
- Continuous cooperation and consultation with the National and the International Experts engaged under the assignment.
- Assisting SWG in any other related issues.

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

All activities will be closely coordinated by SWG within the programme “Agricultural Policy Dialogue Germany – Western Balkans (APD)”. Access to political, regional and local stakeholders, thematic networks and target groups as well as strategies, policies and assessments will be assured by SWG.

The working language for the assignment is English.

5. Reporting and Deliverables

The expert reports to the SWG Secretary General – Mr. Boban Ilic and the SWG Senior Project Manager – Ms. Bogdanka Leveska Gjorshoska.

The following deliverables and commitments are foreseen for the expert within this ToR:

Deliverable	Timeframe/Deadline
1. First draft regional report/assessment in line with the agreed outline	30 September 2022
2. Participation at the First Interim Meeting	21-22 of August 2022
3. Second draft regional report	15 October 2022
4. Participation at the Second Interim Meeting	October 2022
5. Final regional report/assessment	30 November 2022

The total number of days foreseen for the engagement of expert is 12 days.

6. Place of assignment

The place of assignment of the expert is the SEE region.

7. Timeframe

The expert should accomplish the deliverables from the date on which the last party signs the contract until 30 November 2022.

8. Payments

The payments for realization of this Contract shall be completed in one installment, as follows:

- one installment after completion, submission to and approval by SWG of the deliverables: 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

The expert has to submit the deliverables in electronic version to SWG Secretary General – Mr. Boban Ilic (boban.ilic@swg-seerural.org) and the SWG Senior Project Manager – Ms. Bogdanka Leveska Gjorshoska (bogdanka.gjorshoska@swg-seerural.org). The payment of the agreed remuneration shall be done upon submission of original invoices to the SWG Head Office/Secretariat, accompanied by the above-mentioned deliverables.

9. Expert profile

Qualifications and skills:

- A university degree in forestry, agriculture, or closely related discipline relevant to the assignment. PhD will be considered as an advantage;
- Professional experience in implementation of activities related to sustainable forest management;
- Extensive knowledge of Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), EU enlargement policies, pre-accession assistance of EU;
- Experiences in management/ implementation of national/ regional/ international projects related to sustainable forest management;
- Understanding of the situation as well as the relevant legislative and policy framework in the respective country/territory.
- Fluency in English;
- Computer literacy;
- High quality analytical and document drafting skills;
- Excellent communication and reporting skills.
- Ability to work in a team;