

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

Terms of Reference

Regional Expert on the Role of Women in the Rural Areas

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

Women in agriculture fulfil social and economic roles, often overlooked in farm surveys. More generally, women's contributions in farming are often not recognised. However, they may not only manage or co-manage the farm business but also open up additional income sources by engaging in direct marketing, farm tourism or diversifying into niche products. In addition,

women carry out most of the unpaid family farm work (i.e., work in agriculture and livestock, including pre-harvest and post-harvest activities) while being primary caregivers for the children and elderly in the household. Factors such as limited access to technical knowledge on agriculture, barriers to extension services and training, overrepresentation in informal employment and little de facto exercise of land ownership rights, but also low social status and existing gender stereotypes limit women's access to household income, control over agricultural assets and decision-making (FAO, 2020). Overall, significant gender inequalities in agriculture are widespread in Europe (e.g. Shortall et al., 2017).

Agriculture in the Western Balkans is sparsely covered by official statistics, and the role of women is hardly in focus so far. Therefore, SWG, supported by the GIZ and BMEL is conducting this study designed to shed light on women's engagement in agriculture and their contribution to rural development in the region, as well as the opportunities to use their potential in the development of circular economy, green, social and environmental entrepreneurship. The study will build on the experience of previous similar studies in the Western European context, but it will be carefully adapted to the Western Balkans' specific cultural and agricultural context. The study's overarching aim is to provide detailed insights into women's roles and livelihood situations in agriculture in a cross-country mixed-method approach. Possible implications for supporting women to become more visible as agents of change in the sector will be a critical outcome of the study. Specifically, the study is interested in answering the following questions:

- What is women's daily life and situation on farms in the Western Balkans regarding economic and social aspects, including time management and life-cycle aspects?
- What are women's aspirations, and how is their general wellbeing?
- In which fields do women perceive a disadvantage compared to male farm managers (e.g. access to inputs, credits, informal networks, marketing, contract conditions)?
- How is farm succession done, and how are women included or excluded in inheritance? Are there other potentially exclusionary practices, such as when only one named manager or tenant is a male family member?
- How are women involved in business decisions, and under which conditions do they become innovators on the farm? Are there specific training needs? What are the opportunities for women for farm diversification and off-farm work, as well as development of circular economy, green, social and environmental entrepreneurship?
- How are women represented in (leadership in) farmers' associations?

As an outcome, the study is expected to provide insights into possible solutions for more informed decision-making at the policy level. A critical outcome of the study will be to identify ways and provide policy recommendations on a national level for each of the WB countries/territories as well as on a regional Western Balkan level for women empowerment in the midst of green recovery leading to the sustainable development of Western Balkan societies.

3. Scope of the assignment

The assignment should produce:

- Database of relevant data collected through interviews and surveys of a selected sample of respondents from all countries/territories of the Western Balkans;
- Six national reports (one for each country/territory of the WBs: Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Kosovo*, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina) assessing the situation and the needs of rural women based on a quantitative and qualitative research
- One regional cross-country report comparing the findings among the WB countries/territories and providing regional recommendations.

The work will be conducted by an experts' team, consisting of:

- Regional Expert/s
- National expert for each WB country/territory: Albania, North Macedonia, Kosovo*, Serbia, Montenegro, BiH
- International Experts
- National enumerators (SWG regional staff) covering each of the countries/territories of the Western Balkans: Albania, North Macedonia, Kosovo*, Serbia, Montenegro, BiH

The experts' team will be supported by inputs from representatives from relevant national authorities.

4. Methodological framework

The study will apply a mixed-methods approach based including the following tools:

1. Desk research
2. Interviews and focus group discussions
3. Survey

In the desk research, the study will seek to build on the experience of previous studies in the Western European context. At the same time, it will be carefully adapted to the Western Balkans' specific cultural and agricultural context. In addition, the desk research will include policy review, taking stock of all relevant policies and policy trends (e.g. IPARD policies), which could influence the situation of rural women and their engagement in the rural areas in the WBs. The desk research will be done by National Experts for each WB country/territory.

The qualitative component includes personal interviews and focus group discussions to gain a deeper understanding of relevant dynamics and current issues rural women face with. The interviews will be conducted by the SWG regional staff, while focus groups will be conducted by National Experts for each WB country/territory.

Regarding the quantitative component a rural women survey tool will be developed by the Regional Expert with the support of International Experts. SWG will organize the survey through its regional offices. After completing the survey, survey data will be analyzed by National Experts for each country/territory.

Every National Expert will produce a National Report based on the desk research, interviews, focus groups and surveys conducted in the respective country/territory. Based on the national report a cross-country synthesis report, as well as a policy brief will be produced by the Regional Expert with support from the International Experts.

The study should address to policymakers, international organizations and other stakeholders in agricultural and rural development.

5. Tasks of the expert

The Regional Expert will be responsible for the following tasks:

* 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

Task 1: Participate in the kick-off meeting to discuss the methodology, distribution of responsibilities and workplan

Task 2: Supported by the International Experts, provide outline for the national reports, which should be used by all National Experts in preparation of the national reports, as well as outline for the regional cross-country report.

Task 3: Supported by the International Experts, propose methodology for the selection of participants for the interviews, for the focus group discussions and for the surveys, considering representativeness.

Task 4: Supported by the International Experts, provide guiding questions for the focus group discussions and the qualitative interviews that should be used by the National Experts and SWG regional staff in conducting the focus groups and interviews.

Task 5: Participate in the interim meeting to report on progress, achievements and deviations from the plan and revise the workplan.

Task 6: Supported by the International Experts, propose a survey questionnaire to collect relevant information on the status, role and opportunities of the rural women in the WBs.

Task 7: Provide feedback on the first draft national reports submitted by the National Experts.

Task 8: Based on the received national reports prepare a first draft regional cross-country report.

Task 9: Based on the feedback received from the International Experts and SWG provide final regional cross-country report.

Task 10: Present the assessment and the respective policy recommendations in the annual Agricultural Policy Forum, which is planned to be held in October 2024, in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

6. Reporting and Deliverables

The following deliverables are foreseen for the Expert within this ToR:

Deliverable	Timeframe/Deadline
1. Participation in the kick-off meeting	29 – 31 March 2023, Ohrid, North Macedonia
2. Outline for the national and regional cross-country report	20 April 2023
3. Methodology for the selection of participants for the interviews, for the focus group discussions and for the surveys	20 April 2023
4. Guiding questions for the focus group discussions and the qualitative interviews	20 April 2023
5. Participation in interim meeting	6 – 8 June 2023
6. Survey questionnaire	15 June 2023
7. Feedback to the first draft national report	1 April 2024
8. First draft regional cross-country report	15 May 2024
9. Final regional cross-country report	30 June 2024
10. Present the results in the Agricultural Policy Forum	October 2024

7. Place of assignment

The place of assignment is the SEE region.

8. Timeframe

The Expert should accomplish the deliverables in the timeframe from the signature of the contract by both parties until 31 October 2024.

9. Working language

The working language for the assignment is English.

10. Expert's profile

- University degree in rural sociology, agriculture, economics, or closely related discipline relevant to the assignment. PhD will be considered as an advantage
- Fluency in English
- Substantial research experience, relevant to the assignment
- High level analytical and document drafting skills
- Proven professional experience in assessing rural development policies
- Understanding of the situation as well as the relevant legislative and policy framework in the Western Balkans region
- Proven ability for team coordination
- Excellent communication and reporting skills
- Computer literacy.