



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

Terms of Reference

Soil GIS Expertise

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.

Regional Expert Advisory Working Groups (REAWGs) are permanent part of the SWG structure. They are comprised of relevant national, regional and international experts, as well as representatives of relevant authorities to analyze specific agricultural and rural development policy issues and provide national and regional policy recommendations. Through the work of the REAWGs SWG contributes to enabling evidence-based policy making in the agricultural sector in Western Balkans.

2. Background

In August 2021 the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development approved the realization of a 3-years regional project with the title “Support to Economic Diversification of Rural Areas in Southeast Europe (SEDRA II). The project's target group is the rural population in WB-6, especially in seven less favoured cross-border rural areas: Sharra (Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia), Prespa (Albania and North Macedonia), Drina-Tara (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia), Drina-Sava (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia), Krsh (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Montenegro), Prokletije-Bjeshket e Nemuna (Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro), Pchinja-Krajshte (Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Serbia). The project strives to strengthen the regional and national capacities through facilitating theme-specific policy dialogues providing technical expertise on issues related to rural economic diversification in SEE countries in their EU approximation process. The project activities are focused to the further support of the regional platforms for political and policy dialogue and mechanisms for more intensive and broader cooperation, strengthening the regional stakeholders' competencies and expertise related to the EU CAP and Green Agenda for Western Balkans as per adopted Action plan, as well as further alignment of the agriculture and rural development policies of the SEE countries to the EU CAP.

The project overall goal is to encourage competitiveness and employment in the Western Balkan region through strengthening networking capacity for rural development and promotion of the economic diversification and competitiveness of rural areas. Participation of the local actors in less favored rural areas in promotion of the cross-sectoral innovation and inter-regional knowledge exchange through the implementation of local projects, will ultimately contribute to inclusive, environmentally and climate friendly economic diversification, increase the attraction of the areas, improve the market access, encouraging young people and women to get more involved and contribute to reduced out-migration. The impact logic is that increased regional value creation and local resilience building, especially in less favored rural border areas, will change the socio-economic decisions of poor and vulnerable population groups in particular so that they see improved prospects for themselves and their families. The project is focused on strengthening the economic inclusion of the rural and marginalized population, supporting the rural formal/informal sector, fostering sustainable natural resource management practices, as well as, promoting women & youth entrepreneurship in rural areas.

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 project. It will be implemented in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo* .

The work of the REAWG for Soil is conducted by an experts' team, part of the REAWG, consisting of:

- Regional/International Expert
- National Experts in soil from each of the countries/territories of the Western Balkans: Albania, North Macedonia, Kosovo*, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska)

The work of the REAWG for Soil will be supported by a Soil GIS Experts.

* 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

3. Specific Situation / Scope of assignment

Soil is the thin layer of material (organic and inorganic) on the Earth's surface that has been subjected to and influenced by environmental factors (parent material, climate, organisms, topography, and time) providing the basis for plant establishment and growth and the provisioning of ecosystem services. Soil is a finite natural resource. On a human timescale it is non-renewable. Soil is the foundation of agricultural development and sustainable development and provides the basis for food, feed, fuel, fiber, water availability, nutrient cycling, organic carbon stocks, biodiversity, and a platform for construction. The area of fertile soil is limited and is increasingly under pressure due to climate change and competing, unsuitable land uses, resulting in increasing degradation. Currently, 46% of the world's land is considered to be degraded. Urgent action is needed to reverse this trend. Healthy soils are required to feed the growing world population and meet their further needs. It is considered that this can only be ensured through a strong partnership which considers the existing initiatives and institutions.

The assessment conducted during the first phase of the Project revealed that soil management in the region is still not on a satisfactory level to ensure its sustainable use, which is additionally overburdened with the lack of appropriate institutional set up, legal framework and technical and human capacities in all levels among all key stakeholders. To enforce the regional cooperation, the Project in its second phase is striving towards setting up of the basic preconditions for more intensive regional cooperation.

Through enhanced and applied knowledge and information about the soil resources the REAWG will

- (i) assess in the harmonization of the National Classifications of the WB Countries in a line with the WRB FAO classification,
- (ii) contribute to the description and evaluation of the pedogenetic factors for the main soil groups,
- (iii) work on compilation and harmonization of the regional soil data into mutual digital soil dataset.

The major outcomes of the foreseen activities of the REAWG:

- Soil classification for the region aligned with the National Soil Classifications of the WB Countries,
- Regional Soil Database containing digital data for the soil mapping units, administrative boundaries, and additional environmental covariables.

4. Tasks of the Contractee

Activity 1. Compilation and harmonization of the regional soil data in digital format

- Task 1. To participate in the description, identification, and looking at possibilities for the collection of all existing and available graphical and numerical soil datasets and other environmental co-variables for their integration into the mutual database,
- Task 2. With the support of the national soil experts to harmonize the attributive soil data, by aligning the national soil nomenclature with the WRB FAO soil classification for all soil mapping units,
- Task 3. With the support of the national soil experts to perform graphical harmonization of the digital soil maps, to overcome the discrepancies of the soil mapping units on the boundaries,
- Task 4. With the support of the national experts to develop the outer border of the whole WB region, based on the collected state administrative borders of the 6 WB Countries/Territories,



- Task 5. To support the process of compiling and harmonizing global data sets for the region (land use, DTM etc.)

The Contractor might be required to perform additional tasks that are deemed necessary for the completion and the submission of the proposal/application package.

5. Reporting and Deliverables

Having delivered the outcomes as described in this section, the Contractee will work together with the Regional Expert to ensure the acceptance of the final report by the contracting authority.

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

Deliverable	Timeframe/Deadline
1. Collected and harmonized attributive soil dataset in line with WRB soil classification	June 2024
2. Collected and harmonized soil maps of the WB countries	June 2024
3. Collected and harmonized administrative boundaries and the outer border of the WB Region	September 2024
4. Collected and harmonized global datasets	November 2024

The working language for the assignment is English.

Expert's profile

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- University degree in agriculture, soil sciences, or closely related discipline relevant to the assignment. PhD in soil sciences will be considered as an advantage.
 - At least ten years of experience in soil science and natural resource management.
 - Substantial research experience in soil science and soil mapping.
 - At least 5 projects in implementing GIS and RS techniques in soil science and natural resources management.
 - Extensive experience in soil classification systems like: FAO, WRB
 - Excellent communication and reporting skills.
 - Fluency in English.
 - Computer literacy.
 - Ability to work in a team.
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