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

Terms of Reference

NATIONAL SHORT TERM EXPERT FOR SOIL LINKED TO PREPARATION OF STRATEGIC PAPERS WITH PROPOSED POLICY MEASURES FOR THE CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION IN AGRICULTURE TOGETHER WITH ACTION PLAN IN THE WB COUNTRIES/TERRITORIES

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 November 2024 the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development approved the realization of a 2-years regional project with the title “Green Agenda Western Balkan – Supporting the Western Balkan Countries in Adapting to Climate Change “. The main target group of the project are policy makers and technical staff responsible for implementation of EU-related policies and regulations in agriculture and rural development sector encompassing the climate change aspect. Project intermediaries are technical experts, administrative officials, Chambers of commerce, Agriculture associations, Civil society organizations etc. Key stakeholders include specialist and management staff of state administrations and institutions responsible for agriculture and rural development on the national (e.g. employees in ministries and governmental institutions/agencies), and sub-regional level and subsidiary institutions. They will benefit from the interactive approach implemented through regional dialogue forums and technical meetings.

The Project aims to establish a robust regional Policy framework for climate Change adaptation in agriculture in the Western Balkans, leveraging regional cooperation and expert input to create strategic papers with proposed policy measures and action plans that align with EU policies and support sustainable development in the region.

In the pursuit of this objective, the countries of the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Kosovo*) together with their neighboring countries in the SEE region, have created a regional body in the field of agriculture and rural development mandated by SEE governments (Ministries of agriculture). The Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in South Eastern Europe is a regional organization with an objective to facilitate close cooperation among the governing institutions and other stakeholders in the field of agriculture and rural development and support the countries of Western Balkan in their process of EU integration.

Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) in Southeast Europe is responsible for implementation and management of the project.

SWG already set basic ground for the work in this project. Through the cooperation and partnership with BMEL and BMZ, through GIZ project, the Regional Expert Advisory Working Group for Climate Change Adaptation in Agriculture is established and consist of almost 50 members (experts and policy makers) that provide basic input for the Status analysis of the Climate Change Adaptation in agriculture in the region. Some of the recommendations from the study includes:

- ⇒ Establish a Regional Task Force dedicated to coordinate regional adaptation efforts and implement the recommendations and priority actions, identify funding opportunities, facilitate collaboration and develop joint research projects, comprising of representatives from all Western Balkan countries/territories.
- ⇒ Develop National and Regional Strategic Roadmaps for climate change adaptation in agriculture, focusing both on specific national contexts, as well as shared regional goals, resource pooling, and joint initiatives in Western Balkan countries/territories.
- ⇒ Implement pilot applied research projects to test and demonstrate potential adaptation practices and technologies, and showcase their effectiveness, facilitating broader adoption.

- ⇒ Create and conduct capacity building programs for farmers, policymakers, extension service and other relevant stakeholders to enhance knowledge and skills for adaptation. Building capacity at all levels is essential for successful implementation of adaptation strategies.
- ⇒ Establish a digital platform for knowledge exchange and support the dissemination of innovative solutions and best practices across the region.
- ⇒ Encourage quadruple helix collaborations between governments, private sector, research institutions, and civil society organisations to mobilize resources and expertise.
- ⇒ Build research capacities by establishing a "Regional Innovation Hub for Agriculture and Climate Change" to boost currently not enough developed research and innovation activities and create an enabling environment for effective scientific-based adaptation of the agricultural sector to climate change in the region.

This would serve as an excellent starting point for developing the Strategic papers with proposed policy measures and consequent Action plans for Climate Change Adaptation in Agriculture.

3. Specific Situation / Scope of assignment

Climate change affects agriculture in a number of ways[1]. Changes in temperature and precipitation as well as weather and climate extremes are already influencing crop yields and livestock productivity in Europe. Weather and climate conditions also affect the availability of water needed for irrigation, livestock watering practices, processing of agricultural products, and transport and storage conditions. Climate change is projected to reduce crop productivity in parts of southern Europe and to improve the conditions for growing crops in northern Europe. Although northern regions may experience longer growing seasons and more suitable crop conditions in future, the number of extreme events negatively affecting agriculture in Europe is projected to increase.

Sofia Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans adopted in 2020 followed by the Action plan within the Pillar IV Sustainable Agriculture in Action 50 sets up activity - Support investments in renewable energy production and technologies as well as GHG emission reductions and adaptation to climate change measures in agriculture.

Recognizing the need for imminent action, the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG) initiated the setting up of a Regional Expert Advisory Working Group on Climate Change Adaptation in Agriculture. It is composed of different profiles of experts and representatives of relevant authorities from the region of the Western Balkans, aiming to contribute to evidence-based policy in the area of climate change adaptation of the agricultural sector. The first joint effort of the group was preparing the "Study on climate change adaptation in agriculture - Status and prospects in the Western Balkan countries/territories" in the period 2023 to 2024. The study provides an overview of the status of adaptation to climate change in agriculture in the Western Balkan countries/territories (WBC): Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. The focus is on the main developments in the socio-economic context, natural resources (soil and water), crop and livestock sector on country and cross-country level. The study is presented into two parts: Cross-country Synthesis Report (Volume I) and National Reports (Volume II). This study set the grounds for further actions towards addressing the relevant issues for better and more successful climate change adaptation of agriculture in the region. The key actions proposed include: (a) Establishing a Regional Task Force dedicated to coordinate regional adaptation efforts and implement the recommendations and priority actions, identify funding opportunities, facilitate collaboration and develop joint research projects, comprising of representatives from all Western Balkan countries/territories; and b) Developing National and

[1] Climate change adaptation in the agriculture sector in Europe – EEA Report 04/2019

Regional Strategic Roadmaps for climate change adaptation in agriculture, focusing both on specific national contexts, as well as shared regional goals, resource pooling, and joint initiatives in Western Balkan countries/territories.

Most of the WBC have their current documents (national strategies on agriculture and rural development) with the programming period ending 2027/2028. As the strategic planning frameworks provide a roadmap for sustainable development of the countries/territories, integrating climate change adaptation into the future strategic documents will ensure that agriculture can be more resilient and better adapted to future climate challenges and that investments are made in climate-smart practices and overall climate change adaptation knowledge, innovation and physical infrastructure. Developing a methodology for integrating climate change adaptation into agricultural strategic planning frameworks is therefore essential for the Western Balkan countries to build resilience, ensure food security, and promote sustainable development in the face of a changing climate.

This project would contribute **to prepare the evidence-based policy documents (strategic papers with proposed policy measures for the climate change adaptation in agriculture together with Action plans**).

Documents will be prepared at the national level by the engagement of the experts from different areas (socio-economic, water, soil, livestock, crop) and by including the different ministries. SWG Assembly and its representatives will oversee leading the process (SWG Assembly Delegates are representatives of the ministries) and overall coordination will be done through the respective ministries. Already established Regional Expert Advisory Working Group on Climate Change Adaptation in Agriculture will be a CCAA Task Force for performing simultaneously regional approach for implementation of the strategic papers with proposed policy measures for CCAA and action plans according to the methodology prepared by the SWG and will be the platform for reviewing progress of the work. After the preparation interministerial consultations (especially between the ministries of agriculture and environment) will be made in order to receive comments and inputs. It is also necessary to involve stakeholders at the regional level.

4. Tasks of the Contractee

National expert:
Contribute to the preparation of the National document (part on soil aspects) guiding the effective integration of climate change adaptation in agriculture into future national strategic planning frameworks for agriculture and rural development (based on prepared guidance)
This document aims to:

- Establish context by providing a brief introduction, short review/mention of key relevant documents currently in place, and identifying the key stakeholders to be involved for an effective integration of climate change adaptation in agriculture into future national strategic planning frameworks
- Conduct a SWOT analysis assessing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to climate change adaptation in agriculture.
- Define objectives to be taken into account for national strategic planning related to climate change adaptation in agriculture.
- Propose a policy mix and an outline list of actions including possible instruments and measures to address adaptation climate change challenges in agriculture.
- Conclude and recommend by summarizing the key findings and offering recommendations for future action.

One national document will be prepared by the group of experts in each country/territory (experts for economic and socio-economic aspects, soils, water, crop and livestock production).

- **Participate at the National workshops**

Workshops

- Up to four workshops are planned at national level during the course of the project, to facilitate the strategic planning process for relevant inclusion of instruments and measures related to climate change adaptation in agriculture in future strategic and operational documents.
- The workshops organisation should be led by the line Ministries of agriculture and include key relevant stakeholder groups (identified during the stakeholder analysis), with support from SWG.

- **Participate at the SWG RRD Task Force Meetings and other meetings as necessary**

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
1. Prepare National document (part on soil) guiding the effective integration of climate change adaptation in agriculture into future national strategic planning frameworks for agriculture and rural development (based on prepared guidance) First Draft November 2025 Final Document including proposed Policy Mix and an outline Action Plan October 2026
2. Participate at the National workshops
3. Participate at the eventual other technical meetings on this topic

The working language for the assignment is English.

The expected period of engagement is **March 2025 – October 2026**. The expected number of days of engagement is **28**.

The payments for realization of this Contract shall be effective following the submission of all deliverables and confirmation of approval by SWG, in two installments.

The travel and accommodation costs for the expert for participation in event organized within the project will be covered by the SWG Head Office/Secretariat.

Expert's profile

- University degree in agriculture, or closely related discipline relevant to the assignment. PhD in soil science will be considered as an advantage.
- At least ten years of experience in soil related activities.
- At least 5 projects related to soil.

- Experience and active participation in the preparation of strategic documents, contributing to the development of national-level frameworks related to agriculture and rural development will be considered as an advantage. Excellent communication and reporting skills.
- Fluency in English.
- Computer literacy.
- Ability to work in a team.