



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN TRADE AND
ECONOMIC RELATIONS



Outcome of the 3rd Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from South Eastern Europe

within the 9th Agriculture Policy Forum 2009

**held in Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina
October 8th, 2009**

The Ministers of Agriculture from SEE assembled at the 3rd Meeting within the 9th Agricultural Policy Forum and have concluded the following:

1. Influence of the world economic crisis on investments in the agriculture and food production in SEE countries

- The World financial crisis has had severe implications on the agriculture in the South Eastern European countries, with the volumes of trade having decreased since our last meeting. This situation, consequently, negatively affected agricultural sectors in all SEE countries, with negative consequences to rural areas and rural populations. In this respect, we are aware that a decisive action is urgently required and innovative policy measures are necessary in order to overcome the current situation. Having said above, we reiterate that intensive regional cooperation and trade with agriculture products should not be affected by protectionist measures, where a free trade remains the underlying principle accepted by all involved parties.

2. Strengthening the rural areas

- Being aware of the challenging situation in the rural areas, in particular in border rural regions, we strongly support the initiative of applying the area-based development approach. Cross-border rural regions identified by the countries as being in a challenging state however, still with a strong potential for economic growth, should be considered for the application of the rural development projects. The development of viable rural areas in cross-border regions based on pre-defined criteria should become a priority for the countries in the South- Eastern Europe. This should lead to the provision of the impetus for sustainable growth in these areas and serve as a good example of cross-border cooperation.

- In that respect, we strongly support the application of rural development policy, simulating the EU CAP "second pillar", which provides essential support for perpetuation of the environment, raising competitiveness and creating new jobs in rural areas.

3. EU integration and regional cooperation

- Integration of the Western Balkan countries to the EU is of the crucial importance for the SWG RRD members (both from non-EU and EU member states). Consequently, we, SWG RRD member countries, must gradually progress towards the approximation of legislation in the field of agriculture and rural development as well as establishment of the structures capable of effectively implementing EU-compliant agriculture and rural development policies. Therefore, in this respect we also ask the European Commission and the EU member states to play an active role and to provide an adequate support in order to facilitate the efforts of the Western Balkan countries within the framework of the SWG RRD.
- We hold a strong believe that it is necessary to intensify the activities related to development of support system/schemes in sector of agriculture and rural development in SEE countries, in line with EU support system. Additionally, it is essetnial to establish and strengthen the institutions for handling and checking support payments, i.e. direct payments schemes and payments associated to measures from rural development programs.
- The Ministers address to the European Commission, in particular the Commissioners for Agriculture and Rural Development and for Enlargement, with a request to find the appropriate modalities and means for deepening the cooperation with this regional initiative and further strengthening provision of guidance and support in development of rural areas of the Western Balkan countries.
- We call upon the international donor community and relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations to activate their potential in order to assist the institutions from the Western Balkan countries responsible for agriculture and rural development to respond to the challenges of the EU integration process; At the same time, we ask for a direct support to the capacity building process of the SWG RRD and its structures.
- We urge the international organizations to build partnerships with the SWG RRD, and to consider our initiatives and proposals channeled through this regional initiative as a priority.
- We, once again, address the Regional Cooperation Council with a request to consider the agriculture and rural development sector in their working agenda and to actively cooperate with this regional initiative.

4. SWG Institutionalization

- We congratulate the completion of the registration procedure and institutionalization of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG RRD) as an Intergovernmental Organization created with an International Agreement from March 28th, 2009.

- Considering the new developments in terms of institutionalization and a creation of a SWG RRD as a legal entity, we authorize the Head Office and Assembly, to strengthen the administrative and executive structures in accordance to the Statute.

5. General subjects

- We congratulate the Government of Montenegro and Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management for successfully holding the Presidency of the SWG Assembly during the year of 2009.
- The proposal that Bosnia and Herzegovina take over the role of Presidency for the year of 2010 is accepted. The handover of duties from the current Presidency – the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of Montenegro to the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina will be realized by December 1st, 2009 at the latest.
- We express our gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Macedonia for being the SWG RRD host country. We also appreciate all the efforts and responsibilities taken over from the International Agreement as of March 28th, 2009 and confirmed by the Law on Ratification of the Agreement from September 7th, 2009.
- We would like to express our deep appreciation to all governments, organizations and partners that support the functioning of our organization. A special thanks goes to the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and the implementing agencies German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and InWEnt-Capacity Building International. We express our gratitude for the support provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and look forward to the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, which will in more concrete terms define the proposed and discussed initiatives.
- As part of the conclusions from the 15th SWG Meeting held on July 19th, 2009, it was decided that the next Agricultural Policy Forum and the Ministers Meeting in the year 2010 will be organized in the Federal Republic of Germany and in the year 2011 it will be held in the Republic of Croatia.