



RESOLUTION:

Neighborhood cooperation in Agricultural sector as mechanism for boosting EU processes in the Western Balkan region

Adopted at the YEPP Council Meeting in Roeselare, 05.05.2018

Recognizing that:

- SEE countries are putting a lot of effort towards EU integration processes. All countries are receiving positive messages from EU member states that they are welcomed to the EU family once conditions are met. All countries show strong agricultural potential, while food production is one of the most urgent global challenges and needs thus to be addressed.
- In spite of the need to work together, there exists no formal cooperation between institutes of agriculture in the region of the western Balkans with an aim to network and enhance agriculture in the region.
- FYROM has huge agricultural potential from within whole continent could benefit: for example, production of top quality tomatoes and rice.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina is behind its neighbour countries in EU integration processes. The agricultural sector is also behind with EU harmonisation, while regional and neighbourhood cooperation is a positive way to support each other in EU processes.
- The country has no agency for monitoring and evaluation of production making it impossible to get confident data about milk production.
- Autochthonous breeds of cattle Busha and Gatačko govodo that are able to adapt to climate changes because of their genetics, are almost extinct. Because they have not been selected to have great milk yield. Currently, there are no subsidies for autochthonous cattle breeds, while they are unpopular among farmers. Nevertheless, their role as baseline for improvement of adaptability of highly productive cattle breeds to the climate changes is crucial.
- BiH has yet not been authorized to export poultry meat and products derived therefrom to the EU, while it has fulfilled the necessary requirements as agreed.
- The agricultural sector is an underutilized sector to boost youth employment, one of the major challenges of the South East European Region. Also, together with many other sectors, there is a need to re-establish regional economic cooperation.

- BiH and neighbouring countries respectively lack equal technological and other capacities to cope with developed EU countries, which yields potential to cause large inequalities between producers from developing and developed European countries. There is a need to ensure long-term and sustainable agricultural production and boosting South-East European countries to follow EU standards at all levels.

Acknowledging that:

- Regarding the fact that dairy production is a branch of agriculture that is ensuring her sustainable development, BiH authorities and the private sector have invested efforts in the improvement of this sector. On its way to the EU, BiH has been the subject of a visit from the European Union audit team (former FVO inspection: Food and veterinary inspection) - today it is called the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety. The first visit was in 2012.
- With the FVO inspection in 2016., export of BiH milk to the EU was approved.
- The main objective of the audit was to evaluate the official control systems over the production of poultry meat and products derived therefrom intended for export to the EU, as well as certification procedures, in order to assess whether the systems in place provide guarantees that the production of those commodities are in line with the requirements of the EU legislation.
- Inspectors have found that there is a comprehensive and documented official control system in place governing the production of poultry meat and products derived therefrom, which includes regular controls in establishments. Moreover, inspectors have noted a significant improvement in the official control system including the accreditation of official laboratories and in the conditions of the establishments visited since the first audit in 2012.
- The system of official controls of establishment level in BiH is comprehensive and capable of ensuring that food business operators meet the relevant EU standards. A few recommendations in regard to post-mortem inspection are given.
- Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia have put effort in providing support to the harmonisation and certification process, with a particularly positive contribution to the abovementioned milestones.

YEPP calls on:

- All SEE countries should continue efforts of cooperation and mutual support for the purpose of successful EU integration processes in general, taking positive examples from the recent FVO milestones.
- SEE countries should make a common decisive effort to export to the EU market, following the example of Serbia.

- The EU to clearly convey that BiH has satisfied EU inspections and criteria with regard to the export of milk into the Single Market.
- We propose that the Agriculture Institute of Slovenia would establish formal network of partner institutes around the region. This will reflect cooperation between EU member states and candidates/aspirants. Such cooperation would upgrade the quality and quantity food produced in the region, offer new employment possibilities for young people and bring the region closer to the EU on areas that are close to broader population.
- We call upon the EPP community to support the cooperation on the field of agriculture between member states/ their governments and the region of the Western Balkans.