

Meeting Outcome 3rd Meeting of the Working Group on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (WG SARD), Stara Planina, Serbia, 20-21 April 2014

WG SARD initiated the possible development of a Protocol on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development and thanked the Secretariat for coordinating the preparation of a background analysis and documentation to substantiate a decision on the need to conclude a Protocol. WG SARD expressed its appreciation to the European Academy (EURAC) for preparing and presenting the background analysis.

The WG SARD emphasized that a possible Protocol:

- needs to be based on Article 7 of the Convention
- should be in line with the EU acquis and CAP but also support EU accession and association
- should be thematically and territorially flexible and focused on exchange of information and good practices.

The WG appreciated the inputs by Observers, in particular FAO and EUROMONTANA. The WG SARD also emphasized the possibility of linking the work under the Carpathian Convention with the regional cooperation of mountain areas in South East Europe (Balkans).

The WG SARD recommended the following draft structure for a SARD Protocol to the Carpathian Convention:

Preambula

- Importance of agriculture and rural development for the Carpathian region in terms of economy, social aspects, environment and cultural heritage;
- Promotion of measures and programs which reduce rural poverty and provide and diversify incomes to local population;
- Sustainable development should be based on local resources;
- Aspects of sustainable development include SDGs etc.;
- Recognition of many threats coming from impacts of global changes
- Major objective should be the viability of rural region and improvement of quality of life (to keep people in the area)
- Recognition of the big diversity among and within the Countries of agriculture practices;
- Recognition of the role of agriculture on prevention of erosion and land degradation and contribution to risk management.

Chapter I – General Obligations

- Integrated approach to land resource management- implementing appropriate tools such as rural development strategies;

- Management of land traditionally cultivated in a sustainable manner;
- Designation and implementation of inclusive agricultural and rural development policies taking into account specific conditions of mountains as less favored areas;
- Protection of mountain ecosystems and landscapes and importance of biodiversity.

Chapter II –Geographical Scope and Definitions

Defining the mountain areas and national extension (repeating Convention text).

Chapter III – Specific Measures

- Promotion of extensive and organic farming in particular through crucially important agri-environmental programs in the Carpathians;
- Enhancing integration of environmental concerns into agricultural policies and local development plans (land management plans);
- Consideration of the high ecological importance of Carpathian mountain ecosystems;
- Promotion of ecological networks, landscapes and traditional land-use;
- Preservation of natural and semi-natural habitats including grasslands e.g. through traditional pastoralism;
- Linking agriculture and tourism (local products, agro-tourism);
- Conservation of agro-biodiversity and genetic resources including local breeds of domestic animals and cultivated plant varieties;
- Promotion of traditional farming practices and traditional knowledge;
- Promotion and maintenance of traditional rural architecture, infrastructure and rural arts and crafts;
- Product processing and marketing, Carpathian label(s), e.g. marketing strategies for traditional quality food, promote denomination of geographic origin in the Carpathians
- Environmentally sound agricultural measures assuring appropriate retention of precipitation in the mountains with a view to better prevent flooding;
- Role of agriculture on flood prevention and pollution reduction;
- Promotion of sustainable rural innovation;
- Fostering entrepreneurship within rural societies;
- Local renewable energy resources;
- Adaptation to climate change;
- Promotion of formal and informal education including intergenerational learning;
- Access to local public services.

Chapter IV – Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

- Implementation and national coordination, institutional setting
- International cooperation

- Stakeholder participation
- Education, information and public awareness
- Monitoring

Chapter V – Final Provisions

Time plan

- Circulation of the EURAC study and the above draft protocol structure **after the Third WG SARD meeting**
- Deadline for inputs to the EURAC study by **21st May 2015**
- Deadline for inputs to the above draft protocol structure by **12th June 2015**
- Circulation of the first draft of protocol by **September 2015**
- Fourth WG SARD meeting in the **second half of the year**
- Fifth WG SARD meeting at the **beginning of 2016**
- Pre-final draft of the protocol for internal consultation by **May 2016**
- Final draft officially circulated for COP approval by **September 2016**