Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia
Research and Extension Unit, Natural Resources Management
and Environment Department (NR)

Ss Cyril and Methodius University
Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food
Skopje

Building Partnerships for Technology Generation, Assessment and Sharing in Agriculture among West Balkan Countries
Highlights of an FAO Stakeholder Consultation
Organized in Cooperation with the University of Skopje,
The Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia
27 to 29 June 2007
Acronyms and abbreviations

AKIS  Agricultural Knowledge and Information System
ALB  Albania
BiH  Bosnia and Herzegovina
BUL  Bulgaria
CAP  Common Agricultural Policy
CBD  Convention on Biological Diversity
CIMMYT  International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre
COST  European cooperation in the field of scientific and technical research
CWE  Collaborative Working Environments
DEFRA  United Kingdom Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
EU  European Union
FAO  Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FACE  Foundation Agri-Centre for Education
GCP  Government Cooperation Project
GDP  Gross Domestic Product
GIS  Geographical Information System
GTZ  Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
IAEA  International Atomic Energy Agency
ICARDA  International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas
ICGEB  International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology
ICT  Information and Communication Technologies
INVENT  International Weiterbildung und Entwicklung GmbH
IPGRI  International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (since 1 December 2006: operates with INIBAP under the name Bioversity International)
IPM  Integrated Pest Management
IT  Information Technology
KOS  Kosovo, meaning UNMIK-Kosovo
MAFRD  Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development
MCD  Macedonia, meaning The Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia
MNE  Montenegro
NAAS  (Bulgarian) National Agricultural Advisory Services
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NARS</td>
<td>National Agricultural Research System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NARES</td>
<td>National Agricultural Research and Extension System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RD</td>
<td>Rural Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;D</td>
<td>Research and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-E-I</td>
<td>Research-Extension-Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REU</td>
<td>FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROM</td>
<td>Romania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEEDNet</td>
<td>South East European Development Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIDA</td>
<td>Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRB</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCP</td>
<td>Technical Cooperation Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFYROM</td>
<td>The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ToT</td>
<td>Training of Trainers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNEP</td>
<td>United Nations Environmental Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMIK</td>
<td>United Nations Mission in Kosovo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERCON</td>
<td>Virtual Extension and Research Communication Network</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. INTRODUCTION

1. FAO organized, jointly with the University of Skopje, a stakeholder and expert consultation on building partnerships for technology generation, assessment and sharing in agriculture among West Balkan countries and held from 27 to 29 June 2007 in Skopje, The Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia. The consultation was attended by 35 selected representatives from research, extension and agricultural technology centres, Ministries and FAO consultants, including 28 representatives from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, The Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia and UNMIK-Kosovo. The agenda is attached as Annex 1 and the list of participants as Annex 2.

2. The consultation was assisted in its deliberations by a number of keynote speakers presenting issues in relation to the challenges and trends in agricultural research, education and extension. The titles of each presentation are shown as Annex 3. Each country prepared posters that detailed the organization of agricultural research, education and extension in their own countries. Following keynote presentations three participant working groups were organized to identify key issues and to present priorities for further programming and with particular emphasis on the potential for developing regional initiatives. A summary of each working group is given as Annex 5 and an overall summary as Annex 6.

3. This paper outlines the salient points arising from the consultation and presents recommendations and the potential for regional solutions.

II. OBJECTIVES AND ORGANIZATION OF THE CONSULTATION

4. In 2006, FAO published a framework for FAO field programmes in the countries of the Western Balkans. As a follow up to this publication, FAO organized a number of regional activities to support priority setting and planning of regional interventions. This particular consultation has dealt with the key challenges for agricultural research and extension services that can help in improving the competitiveness and market orientation of farmers. It has also explored how regional partnerships can assist in making research and extension more effective.

5. Mr Ordan Cukaliev, Dean of Skopje University in his opening statement emphasized the importance of regional cooperation in tackling challenges. Following the opening presentation Karin Nichterlein (FAO, Rome) outlined the key global challenges and trends facing agricultural research for development. Priorities were seen as being changes in technology demand, research tools and processes as well as clarifying the role of, and relationships between, the private and public sectors. She emphasized the continuing need for increasing the efficiency and relevance of institutional responses.
6. Ms Magdalena Blum (FAO, Rome) outlined the global trends and challenges in agricultural extension – policies and strategies for reform. She presented a variety of extension models and outlined the main approaches towards institutional and operational reforms and the role of the government and the private sector. She presented recommendations on linkages and frameworks for knowledge and information systems and presented specific examples from Eastern Europe.

7. Mr Ciaran Gannon (DEFRA, UK) presented the principles and various models of extension in a European context and outlined the evolution of the EU Common Agricultural Policy and the four axis of improving competitiveness, the environment, quality of life and rural communities. He emphasized the increasing focus on rural development issues and a need to integrate advice that will deliver multiple outcomes, foster collaborative activity and increasingly use GIS to target resources.

8. Two relevant FAO programmes in the region were presented. Mr Nedzad Karic (Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina) outlined how research and extension support was being provided to farmers to manage production constraints arising from the problem of the Western Corn Rootworm. He outlined the growth of the problem across the region and the assistance being provided at national and regional level to encourage the further uptake of Integrated Pest Management (IPM). Participatory research and training approaches are being adopted at policy maker, adviser, farmer and secondary school level as well as biodiversity, socio economic and policy studies and monitoring.

9. Mr Saso Martinov (FAO Serbia) and Ms Tatiana Dedic (FAO, Montenegro) presented how research and extension support was being provided to assist livestock farmers in mountainous areas of the Sandjak, Serbia. They outlined how participatory approaches were being adopted for the development of programmes and the selection of farmer leaders. Winter training and summer demonstration programmes are designed on the basis of detailed training needs analyses and with a project focus on the development of farmer groups, effective produce marketing, linkages between research/education/extension, the development of young farmers clubs and regional cooperation.

10. Mr Abubakar Maddur (FAO, Rome) presented opportunities and challenges for Information Communication Technology (ICT) approaches for bringing together research, extension, farmers and explained the Virtual Extension and Research Communication Network (VERCON) as a way of facilitating communication and information sharing between stakeholders of agricultural technology innovation systems. He outlined the planning process involved, structure, functionalities and comparative advantages of such a system as well as giving examples from other countries and the lessons that have been learned.
11. Ms Karin Nichterlein (FAO, Rome) outlined collaboration@rural a collaborative platform for working and living in rural areas and funded under European Union (EU) Sixth Framework Programme. The platform aims to boost the introduction of Collaborative Working Environments (CWE) as key enablers to catalyse rural development. According to this strategic goal a complete set of research activities and tasks are proposed and which will identify, develop and validate technological responses to actual barriers jeopardizing the sustainable development in rural areas.

12. Mr Walter Mayer (Progis GmbH, Austria) outlined integrated the Geographic Information System (GIS) based software applications for farmers and advisory services and including the use of GIS, time and expert models and the development of information and knowledge systems. He showed how software may be interfaced with other programmes and how it could be used for integrated rural area applications. Specific examples were presented on use for farm/forestry business management, as well as for land use planning at local, national and regional level.

13. Mr John Mills (HCL Consultants, Athens) presented a summary overview of the key issues and main challenges for agri-rural research, education and training in the Balkans. Key issues were outlined as being focus of government policy, commitment of beneficiaries. Structure of support institutions, the role of the private sector, sustainability and finance, farmer organization/participation, focus, delivery and quality of services, human resource development, innovation/entrepreneurship, gender, youth, information technology, linkages and networks

14. Three participant work groups were formed to analyse the main challenges and opportunities for regional cooperation in technology transfer, assessment and sharing in the region and prepared a framework for partnerships and recommendations for improvement. Specifically they were formed to help in developing agricultural research, education and extension capacity and sustainability, the types and quality of services and to improve farmer participation and the use of information technologies. The results of this work are shown as Annex 5.

15. Each work group presented project proposals for regional cooperation to assist in tackling these issues. Six project proposals were prepared (Annex 6) and Ms Aleksandra Zamberlin outlined the process for developing them further and the kind of support that may be provided through the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP). Participants also presented other finance possibilities through EU programmes, such as the 6th Framework Programme and Leonardo.
III. KEY ISSUES AND SALIENT POINTS

BACKGROUND

16. The Balkans is a historic and geographic name used to describe south-eastern Europe. Greece has been an EU member since 1981 but most other countries have been in a state of transition over the past decade while moving from a largely centrally planned economy to a market system led by private enterprise. Romania and Bulgaria joined the European Union as full members in January 2007. However in the Western Balkans the separated parts of the former Republic of Yugoslavia have had to emerge from a long period of conflict and instability and Albania still has a GDP well below the European average.

17. Across the Western Balkans the rural sector continues to lag behind in both recovery and employment generation and it is estimated that the standard of living in the countryside is generally lower than in towns, by an average of 30 percent GDP decline has been more dramatic in rural areas during the period of transition and it has been slower to recover.²

18. Almost 40 percent of people in the Western Balkans live in rural areas. Up to 90 percent of all families living in the countryside are linked to agriculture in some way. Today most farmers are managing relatively small land plots of less than 5 hectares in size and many are owned by individuals who have never in the past been involved in production. Many are primarily providing food for their own families. Commercial farming suffers from a lack of investment, inputs, information or consistently reliable production and yet in most transition countries domestic and export market opportunities exist as never before.

19. Today farmers and rural communities across the Western Balkans face unprecedented opportunities and risks. The challenge is to help them to make the necessary adjustments to livelihood strategies and management practices that are based on decentralized decision-making. To achieve this there are a number of key issues that are being addressed to a variety of degrees by policy makers, support agents, rural communities and farmers themselves.

20. This paper provides an overview of the similarities of key issues involved and potential for regional solutions. However a number of country papers have been prepared separately to this report and provide further information on individual country issues. Posters were also prepared by participants for presentation during the consultation and these provide an overview of the National Agricultural Research and Extension System (NARES) and their linkages, including national policies and strategies, organizational structure (a list of stakeholders – both public and private), management, information/communication strategies and research – extension linkages.

² Figures taken from FAO Report 1st January 2005 Participatory Farmer Group Development – Experiences from the Balkans
21. Participants were also asked during the workshop what they felt were the key issues and challenges for building Partnerships for Technology Generation, Assessment and Sharing in Agriculture Amongst West Balkan Countries. These are summarized as Annex 4 and outlined in more detail below.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

22. A national strategy for agriculture and rural development 2007 - 2013 is a requirement for EU member states and is prepared within a framework of Community Strategic Guidelines and Rural Development Axis, it is associated with jobs creation, economic growth and environmental sustainability. However, in the Western Balkans clear agriculture and rural development strategies with measurable and benchmarked performance indicators and specific targets normally do not exist or have been poorly formulated.

23. Much of agricultural research, education and extension across the Western Balkans is directed by government and is potentially subject to political influence. Strategies and programmes are often developed without widespread stakeholder consultation or have been developed as part of donor-funded technical assistance involving international specialists with a variety of interests, philosophies and competencies. As a result many strategies often lack a well-defined mission or local “ownership” for policy and field implementation.

BENEFICIARIES

24. Despite rarely paying for agricultural research, education or extension services, it is generally accepted that the primary beneficiaries should be farming and rural communities. Western Balkan agriculture is now firmly dominated by individual ownership of both farm assets and land. But as the numbers of corporate farms and collectives has declined, the numbers of small family owned farms has grown. Even so, very small farms provide only limited incomes and part time farming and non-agricultural activities have grown in importance. Although 60 percent of rural inhabitants in rural areas are connected to a farm, only 20 percent count farming as their main occupation and so are not as committed to the development of agriculture or of the required support services.

25. Realistically less than 10 percent of producers have sufficient production surpluses to enable them to compete effectively in national and regional markets and ultimately to re-invest into the development of innovative agri-business technologies. Rarely are services for commercial farmers vis-à-vis resource poor households differentiated in research, education or extension programmes.
SUPPORT INSTITUTIONS

26. Agricultural research, education and extension largely reflect historical structures that were primarily designed to support the needs of large scale technology intensive collective or commercial farms. Few institutes, research or curricula were, or subsequently have been, developed primarily for a predominately private, diverse, semi-subsistence agricultural sector. Most smallholders are used to obtaining information and advice from a variety of informal and predominately local sources and rarely view the government as a supportive institution for development. Even so buoyed by donor finance most governments have accepted western models of extension support based on field teams, regional offices and decentralized policy making.

27. Many local consultants have been employed primarily on an individual basis or for the duration of a donor project contract. Fewer direct donor contracts have been issued to national research or training institutes. There is a generally prevailing view amongst many donors that most are unsustainable and still not adapted to the needs of farmers in a market-led economy. With pressures on government budgets, overall research finance has reduced and this has led to declines in new investments for technology, a general lowering of morale and a loss of regional and traditional research contacts, linkages and programmes. Increasingly institutes have begun to recognize that traditional government funding is unlikely to increase significantly in the medium term and have begun to target and access EU research funding programmes, such as the 7th Framework programme.

28. Although it is generally accepted that the research and education system must continue to develop appropriate research programmes and curricula that integrate traditional studies with more market-oriented, applied and practical work, only a handful of universities or research institutions across the Western Balkans have significantly reformed their research and education and based it on the practical realities facing small scale farmers in a competitive market economy. Even fewer have established effective farmer consultation forums or any other mechanisms that will enable a two way flow of information between the farmer and the institute or between institutes across both the public and private sector.

FOCUS AND QUALITY OF SERVICES

29. For managers of research, education or extension services the current environment within which they work is a complicated one and most offer an odd hybrid of untargeted support services that are non specific to any particular client group and are mainly responsive to short-term opportunity and availability of finance.
30. In recent years most Western Balkan Governments have focused on developing and implementing legislation that will enable agricultural production and markets to conform to EU standards and legislation, including environmental, phyto-sanitary, veterinary, animal health, welfare, chemical residues and waste, as well as inspection and control arrangements at EU external borders, upgrading and restructuring of food processing establishments and testing and diagnostic facilities, as well as a whole range of other issues required as part of the EU Acquis.

31. Provision of appropriate research, education and extension has been further complicated by a gradual movement across the EU to extend the influence of rural development issues and to impose a multi-sectoral perspective that reconciles improving the competitiveness of food production while supporting a growing move towards more coherent, integrated and sustainable rural development programmes.

32. Few farmers in the Western Balkan see themselves as a commercial business and therefore they see little need to maintain records, develop medium-term production, market or finance plans or to establish measurable objectives and targets. Field advisers have little time or resources to visit and to prepare detailed plans with all potential clients. Participatory approaches for the development of farm plans are still not widely adopted into mainstream technical support programmes.

33. To cope with the large numbers of potential participants, field advisers have tended to select key farmer “leaders” on the assumption that technologies and approaches will eventually disseminate to other farmers. However, selection procedures are often random and with the same farmers receiving support from a variety of sources. There are still few “farmer to farmer” initiatives that employ farmers to deliver subsequent training and extension follow-up activities. A number of demonstrations and trials that are managed on farmer fields have developed in recent years but most research institutes would still prefer to manage and direct their own farms. Institutes see their farms not only as a research and training tool but also a source of additional income from sold produce.

34. Many researchers and field advisers have designed their own training and advisory programmes that have been based on materials accessed through technical assistance programmes or based on their own personal experience of field visits, conferences and contacts. There are few specifically designed or accredited packages for field delivery that are regionally or nationally delivered and covering specific issues, technical approaches or products. There are also no recognized national standards or mechanisms for accrediting or licensing service provision, or any systematic vocational training or career progression that is available for general advisers as part of either public or private service delivery.
FINANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

35. Agricultural research and extension across the Western Balkans has been heavily influenced by donors and is often managed outside a national framework of centralized administration. Many have produced useful materials, piloted programmes, strengthened local capacities and introduced new technologies, but it has been a real challenge to develop strategies that allows them to continue effectively once the donor funding ends. Government budgets are normally too low and most farmers are not enthusiastic about directly paying for research, training or extension services.

36. Some genuine efforts have been made to develop co-financing but most donor-financed projects have provided advice, by contracting local and international specialists at fee rates unsustainable in a local market and have often selectively provided grant aid and non collected loans. Farmers and service providers have therefore received very mixed views as to what kind of ‘sustainable’ research, education and extension system might eventually evolve and extension is often perceived as primarily being to enable access to funding rather than to provide quality production and marketing information and advice.

THE PRIVATE SECTOR

37. Farmers see far more private traders than government officials, researchers or extension advisers. Farmers regularly complain about intermediaries but invariably both suppliers and buyers provide a range of advice that is additional to the sale of their own products. However in the Western Balkans there is relatively small investments by major regional or multi-national suppliers/buyers and a general reluctance to deal with small and often remote farmers in countries that have little brand protection or enforcement. Low cost buying and supplier monopolies develop and they rarely operate to recognized international standards. Few have sufficient financial margins to enable them to provide proper research, advisory or training support.

38. For most farmers an informal network of information and advisory provision exists and is largely dependent on personal relations and contacts with qualified agronomists, veterinary or other specialists living in rural communities. Donors have also helped to establish a number of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that struggle in accessing sustainable incomes from providing commercial services or as support to other technical assistance programmes.
FARMER ORGANIZATION

39. Most of the government across the Western Balkans is not, by tradition, accustomed to listening to farmers. Producers and the wider rural community are rarely consulted during the design, management or evaluation of research, training, information or advisory services. Primarily this is because most farmers’ associations remain at a developmental or transitional stage and governments remain reluctant to deal with them.

40. Increased independence and private land ownership has had a strong psychological impact on the farming population and most farmers are sceptical of cooperation and see it as an unnecessary variant of former socialist structures. Paradoxically informal cooperation is widespread and hundreds of embryonic farmer organizations and cooperatives have been established in recent years. Many have been developed to access grants or equipment and only a small proportion of registered groups are operating with any real commercial and probably account for less than two percent of all produce marketed from the region. Fewer re-invest incomes into the development of long term joint activity or provide sustainable research, advisory or training services to members.

HUMAN RESOURCES

41. Research and extension effectiveness and integrated linkages are inhibited not only by insufficient support institutions and information, but also by inappropriate management capacity and knowledge. Throughout the Western Balkans political and economic changes have necessitated conscientious individuals and institutes to update and acquire many new technical skills and to adopt different approaches to management. Others have struggled to adapt.

42. By and large Balkan specialists have been able to upgrade their technical skills through their own contacts as well as by attending training, conferences or accessing the Internet. However people management skills such for team building, delegation, setting and monitoring objectives are less developed or promoted. This has often led to increasing de-motivation amongst staff and problems with recruitment of young and ambitious new team members.

43. Much recruitment is still often based on patronage, political affiliation or personal relations. Salary increases are rarely based on structured performance assessments or reviewed against measurable and mutually agreed targets or job descriptions. Primarily this is due to a lack of experience of performance based management as well as lack of clarity of institute or department objectives.
GENDER AND YOUTH

44. Increasingly donors have tried to encourage the active involvement of both genders in their development programmes but with only limited success. Agriculture is largely viewed across the Western Balkans as a predominately male dominated activity and in most villages there is a largely traditional breakdown of responsibilities between men and women. Women carry out many of the manual farm tasks, such as milking or hay making as well as home processing into cheese or other processed goods. Men tend to carry out buying or sales activities or attend group activities. The extent of this division is largely dependent on cultural, social and economic factors, as well as on levels of education.

45. Many villages have a rapidly aging population as young people, particularly those from remote mountainous areas, have left in search of higher paid work in urban areas or outside the country. Remittances provide useful contributions to rural livelihoods but as a result many villages have lost a large degree of innovation, vibrancy, intellectual and physical capacity. State managed research and education institutes also have difficulties in recruiting and retaining young team members as their career perspectives often seem limited and salary levels are normally below those offered by the private sector and donor community.

INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

46. In the Western Balkans entrepreneurial ability and management skills often seem to play a bigger role than capital constraints in farm and non-farm commercialisation. Successful producers and entrepreneurs are able to utilize effective external research and advisory services and to integrate with buyers and suppliers to solve marketing or supply problems.

47. Generally farmers have been remarkably resilient, flexible and innovative in recent years as they have been forced to adapt to changing circumstances to maintain livelihoods. However innovation is often easiest for the more progressive, better off farmers than for more marginal ones, reflecting both access to the necessary resources as well as the human resources dimensions of skills, attitudes or motivation. Younger people also seem to be more likely to engage in riskier and entrepreneurial activities.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

48. New technologies are further facilitating research and extension as well as trade and enabling improved links to be developed between diverse producers and support agencies. Most serious support agencies across the Balkans now have their own web site that provides a useful global promotional and information tool. Impressive presentations are also being developed on CD and DVD with photographs, sound and video playback.
49. Computer literacy is high amongst Balkan researchers and service providers. Most regularly search the Internet for information, communicate by e-mail or Internet chat. Farmer data is normally recorded onto a computer database and significant reference materials have been accumulated in electronic libraries for research use and reference. Excel is a commonly used tool for spreadsheet planning and calculation of gross margin data and market and other information systems have begun to develop.

50. However the use of IT as a field delivery tool has still not been well established and the main delivery focus remains on direct personal contacts, workshops and the dissemination of publications and other written materials. Primarily this is because very few farmers and remote rural communities have daily or even occasional access to a computer and (with the exception of Macedonia) Internet connectivity in most rural areas across the region is poor. A larger percentage of producers have access to mobile telecommunications and possibilities are being explored as to how this might be developed.

51. A lack of awareness of and easy access to information on already proven technologies is a constraint to adoption in agriculture and for rural development. Very often established and appropriate technologies are not well documented and experience of their application inadequately described in a local language. The modification of particular technologies to suit local conditions is often a major constraint in the technology transfer process.

**LINKAGES AND NETWORKS**

52. Across the Western Balkans there is a general lack of functional and effective information networks that link research and education institutes together or with private or public sector extension advisers. This also includes a general lack of formal relationships, regular meetings of influential forum where key decision-makers, researchers and field teams would regularly meet. Many organizations and individuals function in isolation from each other and with little exchange of information.

53. With rapid changes in recent years across the Western Balkans, and in particular following the break up of the former Republic of Yugoslavia, traditional regional linkages and programmes were halted and contact lost. Most have still not been re-established, primarily due to funding issues but also from changes in individual government objectives and priorities. New linkages and networks have gradually begun to develop and in particular to access European programmes for research and educational funding, such as the EU Leonardo, Framework and COST programmes, as well as with international programmes such as through NATO, IAEA; FAO, UNEP and the UNDP of the UN, ICGEB, IPGRI, CIMMYT or ICARDA.
IV. RECOMMENDATIONS AND POTENTIAL FOR REGIONAL SOLUTIONS

54. Using the key issues and salient points as guide, three working groups were formed to develop recommendations for regional initiatives across the Balkans and to consider:

   Group 1: What key issues and solutions there are for capacity building, funding and sustainability of support services.
   Group 2: What should be the main focus, type and quality of services to be provided.
   Group 3: What key issues and solutions there are for encouraging greater farmer participation/empowerment and the use of IT.

   A number of recommendations were developed and these are detailed below and presented as Annex 5.

55. There is a particular need to strengthen the Agricultural Knowledge and Information System (AKIS) and particularly through the strengthening of linkages and partnerships between research, extension and education in both the public and private sector and with approaches that are adapted to the realities of Balkan agriculture. The roles of different Ministries within the AKIS also need to be better defined.

56. National research and extension institutions could develop more of a regional scope. Research information and results need to be better summarized, presented and exchanged nationally and regional research programmes identified and developed in areas such as for, pests and disease, forecasting and water management. Strategies also need to be developed for exchange of extension advisers, materials and information on best practices. Farmer innovations need to be identified, documented and disseminated regionally.

57. Further training of trainers and development of materials and curricula is required across the region in areas such on the agriculture and rural development policies, farm business management, adult learning and participatory learning techniques and research, advisory and extension management.

58. Greater consideration needs to be given towards long-term funding and sustainability of services. Specific services need to be defined for potential full funding or co-finance by users and public funding more focused on clearly defining public goods, such as for environmental management or rural poverty alleviation.

59. Farmer participation in the AKIS needs to be further encouraged and so enabling them to be more actively engaged in setting and developing the agenda. Particular support needs to be provided to building up farmer-to-farmer initiatives and priority needs to be given to working
with innovative, committed and motivated farmers, whether resource poor or commercially orientated.

60. Municipality involvement and their capacity for developing sustainable farmer associations remain weak. The private sector could better assist by strengthening and further encouraging value and integrated supply chains. Commodity supply groups would be formed primarily through trade and not through donations. Field advisers can assist this process by spending more time in the field and by encouraging improved linkages between buyers and farmers.

61. There is potential to build on the increasing interest in rural areas of the use of information technologies and particularly with younger IT literate producers. Market and other information need to be better exchanged across the region and systems linked. The quality of farm registry data needs to be improved. Mobile technologies and media contacts may be further developed for farmer communications. Although the initial establishment costs are high, tele “centres” are beginning to form in some countries across the region and through which information may be exchanged.

62. Further regional projects need to be developed as well as strengthening existing networks, such as the "Balkan Agri-Food Network” www.bafn.eu, the Working Group for Rural Development (INVENT, GTZ) and SEEDNet - South East European Development Network (SIDA).

63. Six potential regional projects were proposed as a result of the working groups (Annex 6), including to:

a) develop a virtual extension and communication network and potentially based on the FAO VERCON model;
b) develop a farmer-to-farmer resource exchange network based on a “bottom up” approach and building on existing field programmes and “success” stories;
c) develop a regional programme focused on rejuvenation of rural communities and looking particularly at the development of young people;
d) strengthen human resources for advisory support and particularly in relation to rural development and environmental impact programmes;
e) develop a regional accreditation system for advisory services, research and education and as a forum for information/experience exchange and networking;
f) develop face-to-face platforms for exchange within research, extension/advisory service providers, training institutions and between AKIS stakeholders.

64. The VERCON model uses Internet based ICTs to strengthen linkages among policy makers, research and extension workers, academics, NGOs and farmers organizations. As an electronic platform it provides an opportunity for a variety of networked services to be developed, such as information and materials exchange/downloads, chats, conferencing, on-line
databases, market and weather information etc. The intention of a Balkan project would be to establish a link point and network in each country and to link them together regionally.

65. In relation to developing farmer to farmer networks it was felt that a number of field programmes had now been established throughout the region and the potential exists for identifying leader farmers and “success” stories and on which further regional farmer-to-farmer contacts, information exchanges and programmes. Priority products were identified as being livestock (primarily in mountainous areas), fruits and vegetables. The approach would aim to assist the process of farmer empowerment and participation in local capacity building and upgrading of skills.

66. In relation to developing a regional programme focused on rejuvenation of rural communities. It was felt appropriate to identify needs and critical factors that will help to keep young people in rural areas and particularly in relation to developing employment opportunities and improving the quality of life through the development of young farmer and rural youth clubs and to build on the experiences of other projects in these areas.

67. In relation to strengthening human resources for advisory support it was proposed that focus should be on the development of curricula for short term training of field advisers and the development of innovative training delivery methodologies (e.g. on-line training tools) covering EU standards on environmental schemes for agriculture and on rural development issues.

68. For development of a regional accreditation system for advisory services, research and education it is recommended that a scoping study should be carried out on current standards and institutions and also on potential accreditation options and programmes from outside the region. The aim would be to establish a regional network for accreditation, quality control and sharing of experiences and with the ultimate aim of establishing a regional accreditation agency.

69. In relation to face to face platforms for exchange within research, extension/advisory providers, training institutions the intention would be to strengthen the AKIS both nationally and regionally through the organization of regional workshops, exchange visits and the development of networks and harmonized platforms/strategies for extension.

70. A number of countries expressed interest in five of the project proposals (63a-e) and specific countries were selected to lead each proposal and to further develop an individual regional initiative. The aim would be to prepare a more detailed proposal outlining objectives, proposed organisation and structure, main stakeholders and proposed activities as well as the potential budget and numbers of countries involved.

71. Details were provided of the possibilities of providing support to the formulation of the project proposal through the FAO Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) and with a minimum of three countries required in order to be developed as a regional project.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The excellent organizational support provided by the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food, Ss Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, has been greatly appreciated. The contribution of FAO staff members, as well as speakers and participants from all countries is also sincerely acknowledged. Further information and detail of the workshop may be obtained from:

Ms Karin Nichterlein
National Agricultural Research Officer
FAO Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
00153 Rome, Italy
Tel: +39 06570 55529
Fax: +39 06570 55634
Email: Karin.Nichterlein@fao.org

Ms Sonja Ivanovska
Vice Dean for International Cooperation
Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food
Ss Cyril and Methodius University
1000 Skopje
Former Yugoslav Rep. of Macedonia
Phone +389 2 3115277 ext. 112
Mobile: +389 70 355566
Email: s.ivanovska@zf.ukim.edu.mk
ANNEXES

Annex 1

Agenda for the Regional Workshop on "Building Partnerships for Technology Generation, Assessment and Sharing in Agriculture among West Balkan Countries " held in Skopje, TFYRM,

27 to 29th June 2007

Tuesday 26 June 2007

10:00 Meeting of the Organization Committee (finalization of the agenda and set-up facilities, selection of facilitators for various sessions)
19:00 Welcome cocktail with dinner at the hotel restaurant
21:00 Meeting of the Organization Committee (agreement on working in groups)

Wednesday 27 June 2007

08:45 Registration of participants, distribution of materials, submission of posters and country papers, placing posters on boards and promotion materials on tables
09:30 Official opening of the Workshop (Chairperson: Sonja Ivanovska)
Welcome addresses by Ordan Cukaliev and Abubaker Maddur
Explanation of workshop objectives and programme (Presentation by Karin Nichterlein)
Introduction of participants
Selection of rapporteurs (selected: Gordana Popsimonova, Ljupcho Toshev)

10:00 Session was facilitated by John Millns. Three presentations were given:
• Challenges and trends in agricultural research for development (Karin Nichterlein)
• Challenges and trends in agricultural extension/advisory services for development (Magdalena Blum)
• Changes in EU Agricultural Policy and the role of extension (Ciaran Gannon)

11:50 Session was facilitated by Jeremy Groome. Two success stories from the region were presented as special cases for research – extension – farmers linkages (FAO projects):
• IPM for Western corn rootworm in Central and Eastern Europe: How research and extension support farmers to manage production constraints (Nedzad Karic)
• How research and extension support market-orientation of mountain farmers (Saso Martinov and Tatiana Dedic)

13:30 Market place (Introduction by Magdalena Blum)
Exhibition and short presentations of country posters. Each country was given an opportunity to explain their national systems and linkages between research and extension.
Information materials were disseminated and exchanged

15:30 Session was facilitated by Gordana Popsimonova. Tools and a framework for regional
partnerships were explained and examples presented in three presentations:

- VERCON -ICTs for bringing together research, extension, farmers: Opportunities and challenges (Abubakar Maddur)
- Collaboration@Rural (Karin Nichterlein)
- Integrated GIS based software applications for farmers and advisory services (Walter Mayer)

17:00 Continuation of viewing country posters and discussion on the presentations
Each participant writing on cards their own opinions on two subjects: Challenges and Regional solutions

17:30 Meeting of the organizing committee (distribution of the received opinions by specific themes)

20:00 Welcome dinner at a restaurant Stara Kuka (Old House) in Skopje

Thursday 28 June 2007

8:30 Summary of the previous day was given by Mr. Ljupcho Toshev
9:00 Presentation on Partnerships for technology generation, assessment and sharing among West Balkan countries, as an introduction to the work in groups (John Millns)
9:30 Introduction to group work and group composition (Karin Nichterlein)
Working Group 1 (facilitated by Karin Nichterlein)
Working Group 2 (facilitated by John Millns)
Working Group 3 (facilitated by Magdalena Blum)
11:30 Plenary presentation of group work and discussion
14:00 Group Work
16:00 Plenary presentation of group work and discussion
18:00 Touristic tour in Skopje

Friday 29 June 2007

9:00 Funding FAO instruments -TCP, TCP facility, GCP (Aleksandra Zamberlin)
9:30 Group Work
10:30 Plenary presentation with elaboration of draft matrix: Recommendations for regional initiatives in partnerships for technology generation, assessment and sharing in Western Balkan Countries
11:30 Final discussion – next steps
12:30 Evaluation of workshop with presentation of the evaluation results by Karin Nichterlein
12:45 Official closing of workshop
## List of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and Country</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Contact address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ALBANIA</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1. Ms Tatjana Dishnica | Director, Research and Extension Service, Science and Agricultural Information | Email: tana@icc-al.org tatjana.dishnica@mbumk.gov.al  
Tel: +355 4 223269  
Fax: +3554223217 |
| | Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer's Protection Blvd: Deshmoret e Kombit Tirana, Albania | Tel: +355 68 20 55321 |
| 2. Mr Adrian Doko | Director, Regional Centre of Agricultural Technology, Fushe Kruje, Albania | Email: adriandoko@hotmail.com  
Mob: +355 68 20 36399 |
| 3. Mr Genti Kromidha | Institute for Nature Conservation in Albania | Email: gkromidha@yahoo.it  
Tel: +355 682071979 |
| **BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA** | | |
| 4. Mr Nedzad Karic | Entomologist FAO Project GTFS/RER/017/ITA Department of Plant Protection-Entomology, Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences, University of Sarajevo Zmaja od Bosne 8, 71 000 Sarajevo Bosnia and Herzegovina | Email: nkcaric@bih.net.ba  
Tel: +387 33 653 033  
Fax: +387 33 667 429 |
| **BULGARIA** | | |
| 5. Mr Hrabrin Bachev | Senior Researcher, Institute of Agricultural Economics, 125 Tzarigradsko shosse Blvd. Block 1, 1113 Sofia, Bulgaria | Email: hrabrin.bachev@gmail.com  
Tel: +359 887279152  
Fax:+ 359 2 971 3913 |
| 6. Mr Mladen Mladenov | Director, National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAAS) | Email: mmmladenov@naas.govt.bg  
office@naas.govt.bg  
Tel: +359 2 917 60 68 |
| **KOSOVO, UNMIK** | | |
| 7. Mr Ismet Fejzullahu | Senior Agriculture Policy Officer for MAFRD, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, Str. Mother Theresa 35, Pristine, Kosovo Head of the Livestock Department | Email: Ismet.Fejzullahu@ks-gov.net  
Tel: +381 44162753  
Fax: +381 211885 |
| 8. Mr Bajram Imeri | Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, Str. Mother Theresa 35, Pristine, Kosovo | Email: bajram.imeri@ks-gov.net  
Tel Office: +381 38 211 117,  
Mob: +377 44 222 553 |
| 9. Mr Fadil Musa | Director, Kosovo Agriculture Institute Street. Adem Jashari Peja, Kosovo | Email: fadilmusa@yahoo.com  
Tel: 039/431-635 |
10. Mr Afrim Sharku
National Team Leader,
FAO Project, GCP/GER/019/LUX
Kosovo Office, FAO, Rr. Brodit p.n.
Dragash, Kosovo
Email: afrim_sharku@yahoo.com
Tel: +381 29 281 940
Fax: +381 38 245 409

11. Mr Nehat Veliu
High Officer for Training and Capacity Building, Department of Rural Development and Advisory Service, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, Str. Mother Theresa 35, Room A13, Pristina, Kosovo
Email: Nehat.Veliu@ks-gov.net
Tel: +377/44/192 177, +381/38212986
Fax: +38138212987

12. Mr Blagoj Gjorgjievski
Director, Agency for Promotion of Development of Agriculture, Bitola, The Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia
Email: agency.dir@agencija.gov.mk
Tel: +389 47 228340 ext. 13

13. Mr Jeremy Groome
Team leader, MAASP/MAFWE Bul Kliment, Ohridski 23-1/1
1000 Skopje, The Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia
Vice Dean for International Cooperation
Email: jeremyg@optointernational.com.mk
Tel: +38923233641
Fax: +38923233640

14. Ms Sonja Ivanovska
Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food bul. Aleksandar Makedonski bb Skopje
Email: s.ivanovska@zf.ukim.edu.mk
ivanovskas@yahoo.com
Mob: +389 70 355566
Fax: +389 2 3114828

15. Ms Gabriela Micevska
Minister Counsellor for International Cooperation and Eurointegration Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Water Economy, 1000 Skopje, The Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia
Email: gabriela.micevska@mzsv.gov.mk
gabriela.m@mt.net.mk
Tel/Fax:+389 2 3112586

16. Mr Aleksandar Nikolovski
FAO Office Skopje Kosta Sahov 12, 1000 Skopje, The Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia
Phone: + 389 2 3179 065
Fax: + 389 2 3179 066
E-mail: aleksandar.nikolovski@fao.org.mk

17. Ms. Gordana Popsimonova
Head, Department for Economical Analyses and Project Planning, Institute of Agriculture, blvd. Aleksandar Makedonski bb, 1000 Skopje, The Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia
Email: g.popsimonova@zeminst.edu.mk
gpopsimonova@yahoo.com
Tel/Fax: +389 2 3222015

18. Ms Vesela Lambevska
Manager, Blv. Kliment Ohridski 23/1-1 1000 Skopje, The Former Yugoslav Republic Of
Email: veselald@optointernational.com.mk
Tel : +389 2 3233641
Fax: +389 2 3233640

19. Mr Ljupco Tosev
Executive Director Foundation Agri-Centre for Education (FACE), Aleksandar Makedonski bvd. Bb P.O. Box 68, 1000 Skopje, Macedonia
Email: lj.tosev@zeminst.edu.mk
Tel: +389 2 3222015,
Fax: +389 2 3114283
| Annex 2 |

### MONTENEGRO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>20. Mr Gojko Babovic</th>
<th>Coordinator, Livestock Selection Service Biotechnical Institute Podgorica Kralja Nikole bb, 81000, Podgorica Montenegro Email: <a href="mailto:goleb@cg.yu">goleb@cg.yu</a> Tel/Fax: +381 81 265 337</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>21. Ms Tatjana Dedic</th>
<th>Team leader, FAO Project GCP/RER/019/LUX UN FAO Berane, Montenegro Office Dusana Vujosevica bb, 84300 Berane Email: <a href="mailto:tanjadedic@gmail.com">tanjadedic@gmail.com</a> Tel: +381-87-237-068 +381-87-237-069 Mob: +381-69-583-584 +381-63-7165-340</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>22. Mr Milan Markovic</th>
<th>Director and Manager, Livestock Selection Service, Biotechnical Institute Podgorica, Kralja Nikole bb, 81000, Podgorica, Montenegro Email: <a href="mailto:mmarkovic@cg.yu">mmarkovic@cg.yu</a> <a href="mailto:mmarkoni@cg.yu">mmarkoni@cg.yu</a> Tel Office: +381 81 206 086 Mob: +381 67 215 191 Fax: +381 81 265 337</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### ROMANIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>23. Ms Mara Monica Staicu</th>
<th>Main Inspector, National Agency for Agricultural Consulting, Str. Doamnej, nr. 17-19, Sector 3, Etaj 3, Bucharest Romania Email: <a href="mailto:monicastaicu@anca-maap.ro">monicastaicu@anca-maap.ro</a> <a href="mailto:maramonica2003@yahoo.com">maramonica2003@yahoo.com</a> Tel/Fax: +4021 312 47 46</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### SERBIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>24. Mr James Airey</th>
<th>FAO Project manager Kosovo &amp; Montenegro; CTA – Pristina FAO Project GCP/FRY/001/NET(II) Ul. Save Kovacevica bb. 36310 Sjenica Email: <a href="mailto:James.Airey@fao.org">James.Airey@fao.org</a> Tel: +381 20741625 Fax: +381 20 741625</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>25. Ms Tatjana Knezevic</th>
<th>Adviser for Phytosanitary Issues, Plant Protection Directorate, Omladinskih brigade 1, 11070 Novi Beograd Republic of Serbia Email: <a href="mailto:tatjanak33@yahoo.com">tatjanak33@yahoo.com</a> Tel Office: + 381 11 3117729 Mob: +381 64 3013442 Fax: + 381 11 3117729</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>26. Mr Saso Martinov</th>
<th>Team leader FAO Project GCP/FRY/001/NET(II) Sjenica Office, FAO Email.: <a href="mailto:saso.martinov@gmail.com">saso.martinov@gmail.com</a> Tel: +381 3820741574</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>27. Mr Dragan Sretenovic</th>
<th>Plant Protection Directorate Omladinskih brigade 1 11070 Novi Beograd Republic of Serbia Email: <a href="mailto:dragan.s@minpolj.sr.gov.yu">dragan.s@minpolj.sr.gov.yu</a> Tel Office: + 381 11 2120464 Mob: +381 63 491816 Fax: + 381 11 2120464</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>28. Ms Mileva Tucakovic</th>
<th>Advisor for the Agriculture Extension Service, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management Email: <a href="mailto:mileva.tucakovic@minpolj.sr.gov.yu">mileva.tucakovic@minpolj.sr.gov.yu</a> Tel: 063/81-38-620</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### FAO/OTHERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>29. Ms Magdalena Blum</th>
<th>Agricultural Extension and Training Officer FAO, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 00153 Rome, Italy Email: <a href="mailto:Magdalena.Blum@fao.org">Magdalena.Blum@fao.org</a> Tel: +39 06750 56098 Fax: +39 06750 55246</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>30. Mr Ciaran Gannon</th>
<th>Policy Adviser Farm Advice Unit, DEFRA Email: <a href="mailto:ciaran.gannon2@btinternet.com">ciaran.gannon2@btinternet.com</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Annex 2
31. Mr Abubaker Maddur
   Agricultural Research Officer
   FAO
   Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
   00153 Rome, Italy
   Email: Abubaker Maddur@fao.org
   Tel: +39 06570 53804
   Fax: +39 06570 53801

32. Mr Walter Mayer
    President
    PROGIS Software AG
    Postgasse 6, A-9500 Villach
    Tel: +43 4242 26332
    Email: mayer@progis.com
    Fax: +43 4242 26332 7

33. Mr John Millns
    HCL Consultants,
    Postgasse 6, A-9500 Villach
    36 Philopappou St.
    11741, Athens, Greece
    Tel : 00 30 210 924 0885
    Email: jmillns@compuserve.com
    Skype : john.millns

34. Ms Karin Nichterlein
    Research and Technology Officer
    FAO Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
    00153 Rome, Italy
    Email: Karin.Nichterlein@fao.org
    Tel : +39 06750 55529
    Fax : +39 06570 55634

35. Ms Aleksandra Zamberlin
    FAO
    Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
    00153 Rome, Italy
    Email: Aleksandra.Zamberlin@fao.org
    Tel : +39 06750 56404
    Fax : +39 0657055634
Summary of Power-Point Presentations/Papers

Global and European Challenges and Trends for Agricultural Research for Development

Challenges and Trends in Agricultural Research for Development
- Karin Nichterlein, Regional Office for Europe, FAO, Rome

Trends and Challenges in agricultural extension – policies and strategies for reform
- Magdalena Blum, Research and Extension Division, FAO, Rome

Changes in EU Agricultural Policy and the role of extension
- Ciaran Gannon, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), London, UK

Key FAO Project in the Balkans Research/Extension/Farmers Linkages

Integrated Pest Management for Western Corn Rootworm in Central and Eastern Europe: How research and extension support farmers to manage production constraints FAO Project GTFS/RER/017/ITA
- Nedzad Karic Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Development Assistance for Livestock Farmers in the Mountainous Area in the Region of Sandjak, How research and extension support market-orientation of mountain farmers Serbia FAO Project GCP/FRY/001/NET
- Saso Martinov (FAO Serbia) and Tatiana Dedic (FAO Montenegro)

Framework for Regional Partnerships

VERCON - ICTs for bringing together research, extension, farmers: Opportunities and challenges
- Abubakar Maddur, Research and Extension Division, FAO, Rome

Collaboration@Rural a collaborative platform for working and living in rural areas
- Karin Nichterlein, Research and Technology Officer, REU, FAO Rome

Integrated GIS based software applications for farmers and advisory services
- Walter Mayer, Progis GmbH, Austria

Partnerships for technology generation, assessment and sharing among West Balkan countries, as an introduction to the work in groups
- John Millns, HCL Consultants, Athens, Greece
Assessment of regional challenges and proposed solutions given as feedback by participants at the end of day 1

CHALLENGES

- Politization
- Addressing environment and biodiversity issues
- Human resources well trained in modern technologies, international standards etc.
- Qualification of the advisor of the future!!
- Non-formal education for advisors
- Permanent education
- How to use domestic expertise in best possible way?
- Organization structures: private, public
- Integration of public and private advisory deliverers
- Involvement of farmers to participate actively in providing services and extension
- Regional connection (project)
- Regional plan for advisory services
- Regional network of advisory services
- Institutional links with other NARS in the region (the ways)
- Coordination of research at international (Balkans) scale
- Improving coordination between ministry, institutes and extension services and creation of link with farmers
- Governance of links R-E-I
- Communication (vertical and horizontal)

REGIONAL SOLUTIONS

- Networking (vertical and horizontal)
- Strengthen capacities of extension services
- Establishment of permanent link- network of this region among extension services and research institutions providing advices
- Benefit from existing international and regional frameworks (CBD, EU Ministerial Conference, directly)
- FAO sponsored study to identify specific challenges and solutions in Balkans
- Decentralized management (not politically appointed)
- EU project with FAO + National Advisory Services
- Best regional practices
- FAO provide regional umbrella for multi-donor activity in R&D
- Identification of strengths/comparative advantages to exchange in each country
- Walls of defence vs. windmills
- Base technology selection on assessment of farmer’s needs, emphasizing market-oriented production technologies
- Strengthen regional cooperation
- System for cooperation between ministry, extension services and research institutions and farmers put on place

Annex 4
Summary of Feedback and Conclusions from Working Groups

Working Group 1: Strengthening agricultural research, education and extension capacity and developing sustainability

The reflection process on ‘Capacity Development and Sustainability’ went along the following steps:

1) Clarification of the Framework for the topic.
2) Reflection on the elements involved in capacity development and sustainability.
3) Problem analysis - Analysis by country/various institutions, later identification of those problems common to most countries in the West Balkan.
4) Identification of initiatives, solutions/responses needed for each of the AKIS institutions. (research, extension, education) and the AKIS as a whole as well as for regional initiatives and ministries.
5) Identification of main issues and activities to be undertaken.

The steps in detail:

1) The Agricultural Knowledge and Information System (AKIS) as framework for the topic:

Partnerships at national and regional level:

National level
- public – private in each domain (Research, Extension, Education);
- AKIS partnerships.

Regional level
- between extension providers (public, private, civil societies, projects);
- between research institutes;
- between framing institutions;
- between AKIS stakeholders.

2) Reflection on the elements involved in capacity development and sustainability:

This reflection was done in order to have the different elements/components gathered when reflecting on the topic and to arrive at a common understanding of the topic.
Capacity Development comprises:
- policy & legal framework;
- institutional development;
- human resources.

Sustainability comprises:
- funding aspects
- institutional aspects
- time aspect
  - Long – term perspective

3) Problem analysis - analysis by country/various institutions, later identification of those problems common to most countries in the West Balkan:

List of problems identified by country representatives

Macedonia
- education system: poorly funded; no special department for research, extension and education;
- non-formal education only funded through donors → unsustainable;
- employment of staff difficult, since appointment by ministry.

Montenegro
- lack of harmonization of policy objectives between ministries (Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture);
- research does not respond to development needs;
- lack of human capacities (number and expertise);
- researchers are not involved in EU-accession process;
- researchers tend to be conservative;
- funding of extension services;
- conceptual problems with external projects by int. donors.

Bulgaria
- NAAS is not independent within the Ministry of Agriculture but supervised by it;
- no law for regulating extension services;
- lack of staff;
- information system is missing and needed;
- long term learning process required for farmers.

Kosovo
- lack of human resources and skills;
- conflicting interests between ministries;
- weak linkages between research and advisory institutions;
- no system for linking the AKIS stakeholders;
- outside sources of information difficult to access;
- bad status of Kosovo, donors/experts reluctant to go there;
- low public funding.
Albania
- law for science and technology, policy for extension
- very diversified and small farm structure
- few farmers organisations
- limited credits for farmers
- insufficient irrigation system
- over-aged staff in extension services
- very weak linkage between public and private sector

Serbia
- no funding for monitoring of extension services

Romania
- no proper linkages between AKIS stakeholders, especially farmers
- only 25% of villages can be covered by extension
- codex of professions needs to include the category advisor”
- lack of specialization on e.g. economics, food industry, sociology, ...

Problems common in most West Balkan countries
- training of trainers a general Balkan problem
- certification/accreditation to be built up
- What will be the main issues of extension in the future?
- cross-compliance, general info for farmers, special advice
- change of management level if government changes
4) Identification of initiatives, solutions/responses needed for each of the AKIS institutions (research, extension, education) and the AKIS as a whole as well as for regional initiatives and ministries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional initiatives</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Extension</th>
<th>Education (non-formal)</th>
<th>Research Extension Education</th>
<th>Ministries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linking already existing regional networks/initiatives</td>
<td>Exchange of policies of research institutions</td>
<td>Exchange of extension policies</td>
<td>Exchange of policies of education institutions</td>
<td>Exchange of best models of inst. settings for linkages and AKIS</td>
<td>Exchange on Policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present regional initiatives:</td>
<td>Identification of regional research topics required:</td>
<td>Developing reform measures for extension</td>
<td>Training of Trainers</td>
<td>Training institutions:</td>
<td>Firm commitment of Government to continue financing extension (private/public)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- <a href="http://WWW.BAFN.EU">WWW.BAFN.EU</a> &quot;Balkan Agri-Food Network&quot; (=database) in all Western Balkan countries</td>
<td>pest information system</td>
<td>Strategies and methodologies to be developed</td>
<td>ToT in all topics requires:</td>
<td>- Macedonia: FACE (Foundation Agro Centre for Education)</td>
<td>Clarifying the roles of respective ministries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Standing working group for rural development (INVENT, GTZ) in Albania, Bulgaria, BiH, Romania, UNMI Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro</td>
<td>forecasting systems</td>
<td>Exchange, discussion and testing on new funding of extension (including co-financing by farmers)</td>
<td>- Exchange of trainers</td>
<td>- Slovenia: Faculty of agriculture, Ljubljana, for CAP EU</td>
<td>Increased funding for agricultural research, extension and education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- SEEDNet - South East European Development Network/ SIDA</td>
<td>water management system</td>
<td>Continued public funding of advisory services on issues like environment, poverty etc.</td>
<td>- Development of curricula</td>
<td>- Albania: Agriculture University and Centre of Agriculture/Techno-logy Transfer</td>
<td>Giving more space for regional initiatives and more support for progressive initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects to address the region, not just one country</td>
<td>national research institutes with regional scope</td>
<td>Extension to include:</td>
<td>Training Topics needed:</td>
<td>- Serbia: Ministry of AFW (through different technical assistance programmes), Faculty of Agriculture (individually/need for reform, Rural Development and advisory service (MAFRD))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic production protocols/ Italian Government</td>
<td>applied research with farmers participation</td>
<td>- information provision - advice - training</td>
<td>- Agricultural Policies (Curricula development and training)</td>
<td>- Kosovo: Rural Development and Advisory Service (MAFRD), Faculty of Agriculture (MAFRD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to get information and how to access funds for regional programmes</td>
<td>providing information on research results</td>
<td>Access of extensionists/advisers to research results</td>
<td>- adult education methodologies</td>
<td>- Romania: University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing sustainable agriculture</td>
<td>Farmer’s innovations to be identified and disseminated</td>
<td>Farmer’s innovations to be identified and disseminated</td>
<td>- participatory methodologies (extension)</td>
<td>- Montenegro: Biotechnical Institute, Podgorica</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- farm business management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- management of advisory system</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Annex 5
5) Identification of main issues and activities to be undertaken

Regional Level / West Balkan

- outside sources of information, exchange of expertise, funding possibilities, etc.
- training of trainers,
- exchange of best models of institutional settings,
- exchange of good practices,
- link regional initiatives (those already existing)
- exchange on policies
  - between research institutions of the region,
  - between extension institutions of the region,
  - between education institutions of the region.
- projects to address the region and not just one country
- how to get information on how to access funds for regional programmes

The following main activities were then retained in Working Group 1:

I. Establishment of an information system for extension providers (Based on preliminary baseline study)

II. Training of trainers
- Topics focused on research extension according to demand
- Long-term: regional training centers

III. Face to face platforms for exchange within research, extension/advisory providers, training institutions and between AKIS stakeholders
Creating face to face platforms at regional level for exchange and common activities:
  • Between extension providers (public, private, civil societies, projects)
  • Between research institutes
  • Between training institutions
  • Between AKIS stakeholders
through:
- Regional workshops
- Exchange visits
- Networks
- Harmonized platform/strategies for extension
**Working Group 2: Focus and Quality of Support Services**

In **session 1** of the working group, the group discussion focused on the following three questions:

- a) Who are/should be the **beneficiaries** of the agriculture and rural extension support services?
- b) Which **programmes** exist or are planned and address specific target groups of beneficiaries?
- c) Which schemes/programmes are in place or planned to ensure high **quality support services**?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beneficiaries</th>
<th>Current services</th>
<th>Desired</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmers:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial farms</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-subsistence farms</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsistence farms</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers associations, cooperatives</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Kombinats</td>
<td>SRBa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial companies</td>
<td>SRB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researchers</td>
<td>SRB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non agriculture rural population</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programmes</th>
<th>On going</th>
<th>Coming</th>
<th>Quality of services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public advisory services</td>
<td>Private advisory services</td>
<td>Enlarged content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures for semi-subsistence farmers (BUL)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures for rural households (BUL)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Certified trainer for farmers schemes only in BUL; under preparation in MCD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures for commercial, registered farms, cooperatives (MCD)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Land management</td>
<td>Formal registration of advisors only in BUL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures on investment in food processing for commercial farms, cooperatives and companies (MCD)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Organic agriculture</td>
<td>Formal registration of advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support measures for young farmers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rural development</td>
<td>Evaluation of staff performance – incl. beneficiaries in the evaluation process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation, entrepreneurship programmes (donor and government support)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Food Safety</td>
<td>Lack of some content issues (e.g. environment, RD, market and information system)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation of business plans</td>
<td></td>
<td>Market (access and information)</td>
<td>Regional marketing information system</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Annex 5**
In session 2 of the working group, participants discussed and agreed on the following project ideas to improve the quality of support services:

1) To develop a regional accreditation system for advisory services, research and education
2) Human resource development to strengthen advisory services
3) A regional study for rejuvenation of rural communities

1. Develop a regional accreditation system for advisory services, research and education - Forum for information/experience exchange and networking and through:

   a. Completing a scoping study on existing services and institutions and their current standards (plus farmer’s needs assessment) across the region
   b. Studying existing accreditation concepts (outside the region – e.g. national proficiency training in the UK)
   c. Establishing a regional network on accreditation for development of criteria for quality control and for sharing of experience (e.g. communication, facilitation, organization skills, information gathering – methods; education level and specific technological skills)
   d. Developing a model for the establishment of a regional accreditation body

2. Human resource development to strengthen advisory services (for new skills)
   Target: Field advisers Content:

   | a. EU standards on environmental schemes for agriculture | • Short term training of advisors |
   | b. Training on rural development                          | • Curricula development for training for future advisors |
   |                                                        | • Development of innovative training delivery methodologies (e.g. on-line training tools) |

3. A Regional study for rejuvenation of rural communities and through:

   a. Identifying needs and critical factors that will keep young people in rural areas (business opportunities)
   b. Building competencies in extension, advisory service and research institutions
   c. Developing programmes for young rural people
      i. Work opportunities
      ii. Improvement of life quality (e.g. Young Farmers Club, Rural Youth Club – sport activities, etc.)
Working Group 3: Farmer Participation in Extension Services and the Use of Information Technologies

In session 1 of the working group, the group discussion focused on the following two questions:

a) How can farmers be encouraged to be more actively engaged in developing agriculture and rural extension services?

b) How can information technology (IT) be better utilized to support the development of effective extension services?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farmer Participation</th>
<th>Use of ICT</th>
<th>Possible Regional Initiatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Issues to be Considered</strong></td>
<td><strong>Areas for Support focus</strong></td>
<td><strong>Issues to be Considered</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Municipalities are not positively engaged in farmer association development (too political, lack of farmer trust and insufficient capacity)</td>
<td>o Encouraging the further development of integrated value chains</td>
<td>o Market, “Tele” centres and other basic information systems have begun to develop at national level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o There are few fully integrated commodity value chains</td>
<td>o Assisting in strengthening more commercial commodity focused associations in partnership with the private sector</td>
<td>o The initial set up costs of many IT programmes are expensive and financial sustainability needs to be considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Most associations have mainly been developed by donor funds and not farmer capital</td>
<td>o Including more farmers in programme design and continually encouraging more “empowerment”</td>
<td>o There still remains inadequate farm registry data in many countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Farmers are rarely invited to contribute to setting the advisory/training or information agenda</td>
<td>o Building more farmer to farmer initiatives and networks</td>
<td>o There are Internet connectivity constraints in many rural areas (except in Macedonia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Linkages and networks between farmers outside their villages are poor</td>
<td>o Identifying and primarily focusing on farmers with ideas and motivation</td>
<td>o The use of the English and other international IT languages is limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Farmers do not see any practical (commercial) benefit in cooperating or participating in projects</td>
<td>o Re-organising (step by step) support services that tackle practical realities facing farmers and rural communities</td>
<td>o There is an increasing interest in IT throughout the region and particularly amongst younger people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o The role of the private sector in leading farmers is often underestimated</td>
<td>o Organising clearly defined services for different target groups (commercial/resource poor/young farmer etc)</td>
<td>o Better planning of field visits and having available proper logistical (transport) resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Support services are still often based on historical approaches and not current realities</td>
<td>o Improving the needs of resource poor/versus commercial farmers is often very different</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Annex 5
In session 2 of the working group, participants discussed and further developed the possibility for developing two regional initiatives:

1) Development of a virtual extension and communication network and potentially based on the FAO VERCON model
2) Development of a farmer to farmer resource exchange network based on a “bottom up” approach and building on existing field programmes and “success” stories

1. Development of a virtual extension and communication network and potentially based on the FAO VERCON model

The VERCON model uses Internet based ICTs to strengthen linkages among policy makers, research and extension workers, academics, NGOs and farmers organisations. As an electronic platform it provides an opportunity for a variety of networked services to be developed, such as information and materials exchange/downloads, chats, conferencing, databases, market and weather information etc.

The intention would be to establish a link point and network in each country and to link them together regionally. It was proposed that a concept note and project document should be developed (with possible support from the TCP) and in order to:

- Identify appropriate institutes and determine and overall coordinating institute
- Conduct a needs assessment and get feedback from potential beneficiaries on the design and operation of such a service
- Present a proposal on specifically what needs to be done/actions taken and present recommendations on who should do what and including financial requirements and sustainability options
- Construct and pilot a virtual extension and communication network

2. Development of a farmer to farmer resource exchange network based on a “bottom up” approach and building on existing field programmes and “success” stories

It was felt that a number of field programmes had now been established throughout the region and the potential exists for identifying leader farmers and “success” stories and on which further regional farmer to farmer contacts, information exchanges and programmes may be developed. Priority products were identified as being livestock (primarily in mountainous areas), fruits and vegetables. The approach would aim to assist the process of farmer empowerment and participation in local capacity building and upgrading of skills.

It was proposed that a concept note and project document should be developed (with possible support from the TCP) and in order to implement a programme by determining how to:

- Identify “key” farmers/stakeholders from across the region and to widely promote the concept
- Conduct participatory meetings with farmers to define key issues
- Build on effective farmer to farmer programmes already established across the region
- Deliver participatory approaches through “farmer to farmer” visits, demonstrations, meetings, study tours, workshops etc
### Annex 6 Summary of the 6 Potential Regional Cooperation Initiatives Proposed by Working Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title of Proposed Regional Initiatives</th>
<th>Countries/Province Interested in Developing the Initiatives</th>
<th>Lead Party/Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>VERCON – VIRTUAL EXTENSION AND RESEARCH COMMUNICATION NETWORK</strong> (Based on a preliminary baseline study) <strong>and combined with</strong> <strong>ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INFORMATION SYSTEM FOR EXTENSION PROVIDERS</strong> (Based on preliminary baseline study)</td>
<td>ALB (Ms Tatjana Dishnica) BiH (Mr Nedzad Karic) BUL (Mr Mladen Mladenov) KOS (Mr Fadil Musa) MCD (Ms Sonja Ivanovska) MNE (Mr Gojko Babovic) SRB (Mr Dragan Sretenovic)</td>
<td>BUL (Mladen Mladenov) MCD (Sonja Ivanovska)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>FARMER TO FARMER RESOURCE EXCHANGE NETWORK</strong></td>
<td>ALB (Mr Adrian Doko) BiH (Mr Nedzad Karic) BUL (Mr Mladen Mladenov) KOS (Mr Bajram Imeri) MCD (Ms Gabriela Micevska) MNE (Ms Tatjana Dedic) SRB (Ms Mileva Tucakovic)</td>
<td>MNE (Tatjana Dedic)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 3   | **REJUVENATION OF RURAL COMMUNITIES**  
- Identify needs and critical factors to keep young people in the rural areas (business opportunities)  
- Build competencies in extension, advisory service and research institutions  
- Develop programmes for young rural people | BUL (Mr Mladen Mladenov) KOS (Mr Bajram Imeri) MCD (Mr Ljupce Tosev) MNE (Mr Gojko Babovic) SRB (Ms Mileva Tucakovic) | SRB (Saso Martinov) |
| 4   | **HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT OF ADVISORY SERVICES**  
- EU standards on environmental schemes for agriculture  
- Training on rural development **and combined with** **TRAINING OF TRAINERS**  
- Topics focused on research extension according to demand  
- Long-term: regional training centers | ALB (Mr Adrian Doko) BiH (Mr Nedzad Karic) BUL (Mr Mladen Mladenov) KOS (Mr Fadil Musa), MCD (Mr Ljupco Tosev) MNE (Mr Milan Markovic) ROM (Ms Monica Staicu) SRB (Ms Tatjana Knezevic) | MCD (Ljupco Tosev) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5</th>
<th>REGIONAL ACCREDITATION SYSTEMS FOR ADVISORY SERVICES, RESEARCH &amp; EDUCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Scoping study on existing services and institutions and their current standards (....plus farmer’s needs assessment) in the region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Study on the existing accreditation concepts (outside the region – e.g. national proficiency training camps in UK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Establish a regional network on accreditation for development of criteria for quality control and for sharing experience (e.g. communication, facilitation, organization skills, information gathering – methods; education level and specific technological skills)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Develop a model for the establishment of the regional accreditation body</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALB (Ms Tatjana Dishnica)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BUL (Mr Mladen Mladenov)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KOS (Mr Fadil Musa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MCD (Mr Ljupco Tosev)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MNE (Mr Milan Markovic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SRB (Mr Dragan Sretenovic)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6</th>
<th>FACE TO FACE PLATFORMS FOR EXCHANGE WITHIN RESEARCH, EXTENSION/ADVISORY PROVIDERS, TRAINING INSTITUTIONS AND BETWEEN AKIS STAKEHOLDERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creating face to face platforms for exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Extension/advisory providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Training Institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- AKIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Regional workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Exchange visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Harmonized platform=strategies for extension</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BUL (Mladen Mladenov)  
MCD (Ljupco Tosev)  

Annex 6