

CONCLUSIONS

of the Ministers/Heads of Delegation responsible for agriculture and rural development in South Eastern Europe

Convened in Belgrade, Republic of Serbia

30 September 2026

We, the Ministers of Agriculture and Heads of Delegation from South Eastern Europe (SEE), gathered in Belgrade on 30 September 2026 for the 20th Annual Working Meeting, under the joint auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Serbia and the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG RRD), in preparation for the forthcoming Berlin Process Leaders' Summit,

RECALLING the commitments made and the Conclusions/Declaration of the Ministerial meetings in Budva (2022), Jahorina (2023), Skopje (2024), and Priština (2025), the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans and the Berlin Process Chair Conclusions,

ACKNOWLEDGING the Agriculture Policy Forum (APF) Agenda 2026 and the European Commission's Vision for Agriculture and Food as reference points for competitive, sustainable and resilient agriculture and rural areas,

RECOGNIZING that agriculture, food systems, rural development, forestry and fisheries are strategic for food security, economic growth, territorial cohesion and stability, while climate change, landscape fires, demographic decline and geopolitical shocks demand stronger preparedness and solidarity,

REAFFIRMING our aspiration to membership in the European Union, our determination to align with the EU acquis and the Common Agricultural Policy, and confirmed principle that regional cooperation is an accelerator of accession.

Based on our discussions, **WE ADOPT** the following **Conclusions** and **REAFFIRM** our shared commitment to their implementation:

WE REMAIN COMMITTED to delivering the reforms required for EU membership and **EMPHASISE** that a credible, merit-based and predictable accession process, supported by adequate financing and practical opportunities for gradual participation in relevant European structures, is essential to sustain reform momentum across the region.

WE RECOGNISE that, for farmers and rural communities, the benefits of the European integration process should be tangible through investment, knowledge transfer, fair market opportunities, stronger institutions and improved prospects for sustainable livelihoods.

WE CALL UPON the European Commission, the European Council, the Council of the European Union and EU Member States to maintain agriculture and rural development as an integral part of enlargement policy and the Berlin Process.

Turning accession commitments into results

WE REAFFIRM our commitment to advancing approximation with the EU acquis and the Common Agricultural Policy, including the legislation and implementation systems related to Chapters 11, 12 and 13, and to strengthening paying agencies, Integrated Administration and Control Systems (IACS), Land Parcel Identification Systems (LPIS), food-safety, veterinary and phytosanitary services, official controls, statistics, monitoring and policy coordination, with a view to achieving the highest possible level of alignment by 2030.

WE CALL for a structured EU–Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova agricultural accession and convergence framework, developed in partnership with the region and SWG RRD, linking reform priorities and annual benchmarks with institutional capacity building, investment needs and available EU instruments, and supporting regular ministerial review of progress.

WE SUPPORT gradual and phased participation of the Western Balkan partners and the Republic of Moldova, wherever possible and in accordance with applicable EU requirements, in relevant EU agricultural, advisory, research, data, market and crisis-preparedness structures, enabling administrations and stakeholders to build practical experience ahead of membership.

WE ENCOURAGE the development of practical proposals for the gradual integration of the Western Balkan partners and the Republic of Moldova into relevant EU policies, programmes, structures and instruments, with particular attention to agriculture and food.

WE CALL for adequate, predictable and accessible pre-accession support for agriculture and rural development, including broader access to IPARD support across the Western Balkans and simpler and more efficient procedures, while continuing to facilitate trade in agricultural goods, inputs and services in accordance with applicable food-safety, animal-health and plant-health requirements.

WE ENDORSE the APF Agenda 2026 as a common regional policy reference and **INVITE** SWG RRD, together with national focal points, to translate its priorities into a concise implementation framework for 2027.

Food security, climate resilience and natural resources

WE RECOGNISE food security and resilient food systems as shared regional and European interests and **EMPHASISE** the importance of stronger preparedness, coordinated action and reliable information in addressing crises affecting agriculture and food supply.

WE CALL for closer operational cooperation between Western Balkan and the Republic of Moldova authorities and relevant European food-security and crisis-preparedness mechanisms, including, where applicable, data exchange, stress testing, crisis simulations and improved visibility of regional risks in European assessments. We further **PLEDGE** to strengthening early warning, early action and coordinated preparedness for transboundary animal diseases and plant pests, and to improving the resilience of food and agricultural input supply chains to ensure access to safe, affordable and nutritious food.

WE REAFFIRM the urgency of climate adaptation in agriculture and forestry and **COMMIT** to integrating national strategic outlines into relevant policies, budgets and support schemes, with particular attention to water, soils, biodiversity, drought, floods, heat and emerging pests and diseases.

WE RECOGNISE Landscape Fire Management approach as a regional priority and **COMMIT** to strengthening prevention, preparedness, cross-border response and post-fire landscape restoration while promoting Close-to-Nature Forest Management, improved and compatible forest inventories, satellite-based monitoring and enhanced cooperation on equipment, training, knowledge exchange and applied research.

Knowledge, people and the future of rural areas

WE RECOGNISE that resilient and competitive agriculture depends on knowledge, innovation, reliable data and people, and **REAFFIRM** the importance of effective Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS), supported by clear governance, enabling legislation, stable financing and reliable agricultural, soil, forest, climate and meteorological data.

WE ENCOURAGE strategic cooperation with the FAO eLearning Academy, regional research networks, demonstration farms and technology-transfer initiatives, and **SUPPORT** deeper cooperation with EU scientific and educational institutions in applied research, education and institutional capacity building, so that knowledge reaches public administrations, advisers, farmers and rural communities.

WE AFFIRM that generational renewal is essential for the long-term viability of agriculture and rural areas and **SUPPORT** the establishment, under SWG RRD, of a regional Task Force on Generational Renewal in 2027 to develop, together with young people, a common methodology and practical policy options.

WE EMPHASISE the need to improve opportunities for young farmers, rural entrepreneurs and rural women through better access to land, finance, investment, skills and digital tools, while strengthening rural services, community-led local development and the LEADER approach, including Local Action Groups.

Competitive value chains and stronger regional cooperation

WE REAFFIRM our commitment to competitive, sustainable and resilient agricultural value chains that provide fair income and viable economic perspectives for farmers through modernisation, producer cooperation, transparent market relations, innovation and market-oriented solutions.

WE SUPPORT further development of the wine and viticulture sector through climate adaptation, EU-aligned climatic zoning, geographical indications, quality standards, resource efficiency, renewable energy and eco- and eno-tourism, while strengthening its readiness for deeper integration into the European Single Market.

WE RECONFIRM SWG RRD as the principal regionally owned platform for agricultural and rural policy dialogue, cooperation, delivery and monitoring in South Eastern Europe, and **EMPHASISE** the importance of inclusive participation by public authorities, academia, civil society, youth, producer organisations and the private sector.

WE WELCOME the second phase of the Agricultural Policy Dialogue with the Federal Republic of Germany and **EXPRESS APPRECIATION** for the continued support of the European Commission, EU Member States and international partners. We **CALL** for sustained and well-coordinated political, financial and technical engagement in support of agricultural and rural reforms in the region.

Final Provisions

WE ACKNOWLEDGE the report of the Secretary General of SWG RRD on the results achieved in 2026 and **COMMEND** the Secretariat, the SWG Assembly and the Regional Expert Advisory Working Groups and Task Forces for their contribution to regional cooperation and implementation.

WE CALL UPON the Chair of the Berlin Process to duly reflect the priorities expressed in these Conclusions at the forthcoming Leaders' Summit and **INVITE** the European Commission and SWG RRD to continue dialogue on practical follow-up. These Conclusions shall be transmitted to the EU institutions, EU Member States, United Nations agencies and other relevant partners.

WE WELCOME the organisation of the 27th Agricultural Policy Forum in Serbia in 2027 and **AGREE** to review progress in implementing the APF Agenda at the next Ministerial Meeting.

WE APPRECIATE the support of all participating governments, the European Commission, members and observers of SWG RRD, and **COMMEND** partner organisations and institutions for their continued contribution to agricultural and rural reforms in South Eastern Europe and to the region's European integration process.

WE EXPRESS our gratitude to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Serbia for its warm hospitality and the excellent organisation of the 20th Annual Working Meeting.