

DECLARATION
of the First Rural Parliament
of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Sarajevo, 15th May 2015

Participants of the First Rural Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina, held on 15th May 2015 in Sarajevo, taking into account the following issues in agriculture and rural development:

- low volume and productivity of production, an unregulated and unorganized market and poor protection of domestic production, as well as poor utilization and use of agricultural land;
- inadequate level of employment in rural economy, insufficient association of rural population, poor application of new knowledge and innovations as well as disharmony between organizational, legal and other conditions for the use of EU funds;
- low representation of civil society in decision-making, policy-making and implementation strategies in the field of rural development, dysfunctional relationships, coordination and partnerships with stakeholders of rural development, and undeveloped capacities and funding system of civil society organizations,

propose

RECOMMENDATIONS

for the development of agriculture, rural development and the role of civil society in rural development

A. Development of agriculture

1. Increasing agriculture competitiveness and improving agricultural markets through promoting the concept of contract production, buying and processing into high-value products as well as through building specific value chains and valorization of typical products

Market improvement need to be achieved through vertical and horizontal connecting of producers, processors and distributors. This would mean organizing production for a known buyer, production of food products from local raw materials, provision of more favorable financing sources for producers and processors.

Also, it is necessary to perform the process of identification of typical products, then they need to be valorized in the market, their image built, sales and marketing improved and the level of processing of typical products increased. These products should be recognized by their geographical origin and they should meet the standards of product quality. Typical products, especially food, need to fully involved in the tourist industry. For manufacturers, facilitate direct sales on the farm and provide them with support for investments in processing products of high market value.

2. Increasing the volume and productivity of agricultural production including the use of new varieties and breeds of plants and animals

In order to increase volume and productivity, in addition to efforts for a more efficient use of existing capacity and technology, it is necessary to improve the genetic potential in crop production and livestock rearing, to provide support programs for production of domestic seed and planting material, to improve reproduction in livestock breeding, to improve procedures and conditions for the import and production of genetic material from abroad.

3. Regulating the system and conditions of foreign trade business, greater protection and promotion of domestic production

When it comes to subsidized and excessive imports, the system should be regulated through protection of domestic agricultural production, establishment of a system for introducing a variety of measures that aim to equalize market conditions. Among other things, it is about the introduction of anti-dumping and countervailing duties. It is necessary to continuously perform needs analysis for entrepreneurs and citizens, to monitor the situation on the internal market, to monitor movement of goods, to define critical periods,

determine action mechanisms and time frames. Also, it is necessary to constantly promote consumption of domestic products.

In order to increase export opportunities for agricultural products, it is necessary to establish a system which will ensure the fulfillment of export standards which means, on the one hand, the establishment of a chain of command between institutions in charge of control of food safety and, on the other hand, meeting standards at the farm and individual producer levels.

4. Manage land policy

In order to manage land policy it is necessary to establish a cooperation and exchange of information between the ministries responsible for agriculture and institutions which have data about land parcels. Managing land policy can be attained by establishing an Office for land management, land consolidation of agricultural land, creating a Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS) and changing the law on inheritance in order to prevent further splitting of parcels during the transfer of property rights to heirs.

B Rural development

1 Improving opportunities for employment and self-employment in rural areas by increasing the level of investment in agricultural and non-agricultural activities.

Investments should be increased through higher budget allocations for financing agricultural and non-agricultural activities, providing favorable investment loans, especially start-up loans for young people, while, at the same time, putting into operation the existing resources in rural areas (land, water, buildings, equipment, etc.). Participation in training and generally in activities for human resources capacity building in rural areas should be a precondition for obtaining funds for starting a business.

In order to improve the long-term competitive position of agricultural producers and establish a key prerequisite for the modernization and restructuring of agricultural production, it is necessary to invest in construction of new and reconstruction of existing production facilities, purchase of new equipment and agricultural machinery, and growing perennial plantations or purchase of livestock with improved genetic performance.

2 Animation of the rural population and capacity building for the purpose of self-organization and association, and also making local development plans.

Participation of the rural population in the implementation of rural development of their areas can only be achieved through animation and capacity building within this population. The rural population need to recognize their needs and interests to come together in associations, cooperatives, local action groups, machinery rings, clusters and other types of organization.

3 Improving the level of application of knowledge and innovation in agriculture and rural development including the improvement of entrepreneurial skills.

The level of application of knowledge and innovation in agriculture and other aspects of rural development should be raised through improving availability and through raising the quality and quantity of professional services in all rural areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina based on the partnerships between the public, civil and business sectors in providing advisory services. It is necessary to continuously work on increasing the number of organized training sessions in entrepreneurship, innovation and self-organization, creating a system of knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture with providing adequate funding of applied research in agricultural production and rural development.

4. Creating organizational, personnel and other conditions for efficient use of EU pre-accession funds.

The creation of these conditions can be achieved through the creation of operational organizational structures in the sectors of agriculture and rural development with clear responsibilities on all levels of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina by raising the human resource capacity of organizations working in

the sectors of agriculture and rural development, through the adoption and implementation of legislation in Bosnia and Herzegovina which is in line with legislation of the European Union, but is also fully adapted to local conditions.

C. The role of civil society in rural development of Bosnia and Herzegovina

1. Increasing representation of civil society organizations in decision-making processes, policy-making and strategy implementation in the field of rural development in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Civil society organizations (CSOs) need to build a system which would achieve high-quality representation in spheres where the issue of rural development is worked on at all levels of decision-making - from the municipal to the national level. Reaching a solution to a problem can be achieved primarily in cooperation with decision makers and stakeholders, defining the problem for which a good-quality solution will be offered. Constant presence in working bodies and participation in solving strategic issues of rural development will enable CSOs an adequate representation in all decision-making processes and implementation of plans.

2. Establishing functional relations, coordination and partnership of civil society organizations with all stakeholders in rural development

Civil society organizations can propose and establish functional processes of improving relations, coordinating and establishing partnerships with a range of stakeholders in rural development. Building a functional partnership between rural and urban areas as well as a direct relationship with beneficiaries contributes to solving problems through use of common human and financial capacities. By setting up professional and transparent work with beneficiaries and other stakeholders in rural development the degree of success of implemented projects and effects of rural development increases. Partnerships should be initiated by CSOs, and partnerships have the task to strengthen the consistency and responsibility of all participants in the process of rural development and, in such a way, contribute to a successful implementation of planned activities and ensure a continuation of cooperation.

3. Improving the capacity of civil society organizations so they could effectively contribute to rural development

In the area of rural development in Bosnia and Herzegovina there are CSOs that have developed capacities and act primarily from urban areas. Those CSOs need profiling which would build and focused capacity development of the organization's staff toward specialized fields of rural development, especially in areas related to the process of EU accession, development and implementation of work programs, research and education programs in the field of rural development. Building capacities of CSOs which are primarily engaged in advocacy should be focused on detailed exploring of issues in rural development. CSOs and other formally associated groups that act primarily from rural areas, often have insufficiently developed capacities to effectively contribute to rural development in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The development of the capacity of these CSOs represents a priority task and should be focused on sustainability of organizations and on specialized training in the field of rural development. It is necessary to make a development plan and strengthen capacities of CSOs in field of rural development in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

4. Establishing an adequate system of financing civil society organizations working in the field of rural development

Financing activities of CSOs that work on rural development takes place unsystematically and they are funded from international projects funds or loans, from international institutions or funds from budgets of Bosnia and Herzegovina institutions on all levels of government. Establishing an adequate system of

financing CSOs would be achieved by applying defined criteria for a transparent distribution of funds on all levels, from local to national, to which decision makers will adhere. Another systematic way of financing CSOs could be establishing accreditation of CSOs so they could adequately carry out their activities, and, also, a system of financing CSOs could be established through a permanent implementation of projects funded by international sources which requires developed organization capacities.

In order to implement the above recommendations, the inhabitants of rural areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina and other participants in rural development support the joint active operation of public, private and civil sectors in Bosnia and Herzegovina and, in that spirit, at the first Bosnia and Herzegovina Rural Parliament, the following are drawn

CONCLUSIONS

1. We establish the Rural Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a permanent forum for an active dialogue between the various participants who live and work in rural areas - from individuals to civil society organizations, from economic and social entities to government institutions.
2. We suggest that the Rural Development Network in Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to monitor the implementation progress of proposals and conclusions of the First Rural Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that it takes a particularly active part in the implementation of recommendations from Chapter C - The role of civil society in rural development. In addition, the Rural Development Network in Bosnia and Herzegovina is entrusted, together with other stakeholders, to continue the development of the concept and organization of future rural parliaments of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
3. We demand that the public sector makes appropriate strategic and operational documents, laws and bylaws from the scope of its jurisdiction, establishes an effective system of operation and provides the necessary resources for financing the implementation of the recommendations from the Declaration. It is required from all levels of government to increase the representation and participation of the civil sector in creating programs, plans, decisions, and the work of various bodies in the sectors of agriculture and rural development, and also that the civil sector is given a more significant role in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs and plans.
4. We suggest that the private sector more actively cooperates with the public and civil sectors, undertakes initiatives towards the realization of investments in the field of agricultural and non-agricultural activities in rural areas, as well as activities in order to raise the level of knowledge and skills in the fields of production technology, entrepreneurship and local economic development.
5. We encourage the civil sector to carry out activities on engaging and capacity building of the rural population, and to contribute to building partnerships with all stakeholders in rural areas and in particular with representatives of public and private sectors in identifying the priorities and needs of development in rural areas.