



ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Permanent International Secretariat

BS/WG/AAI/R(2019)1

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE BSEC WORKING GROUP ON AGRICULTURE AND AGRO-INDUSTRY

BSEC Headquarters, 2 December 2019

1. The Meeting of the BSEC Working Group on Agriculture and Agro-Industry was held at the BSEC Headquarters on 2 December 2019.
2. The Meeting was chaired by Ms. Ioulia DROSSINOY, Head of International Affairs Department, Ministry of Rural Development and Food of the Hellenic Republic.
3. The Meeting was attended by the representatives of the following BSEC Member States:
 - Republic of Armenia
 - Republic of Bulgaria
 - Georgia
 - Hellenic Republic
 - Republic of Moldova
 - Romania
 - Russian Federation
 - Republic of Turkey
 - Ukraine
4. The representatives of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) participated at the Meeting as Guests.
5. The List of Participants of the Meeting is attached as **Annex I**.
6. The Draft Agenda of the Meeting was discussed and adopted. The Agenda, as adopted, is attached as **Annex II**.

AGENDA ITEM 2: CONSIDERATION OF THE ACTION PLAN OF THE WORKING GROUP

7. The Working Group considered and approved the Action Plan, elaborated and presented by the Republic of Turkey as the Country-coordinator of the Working Group on Agriculture and Agro-Industry, as a road map with concrete objectives and priorities as well as a number of activities in the field of agriculture for the next two years. The Action Plan, as approved by the Working Group, is attached as **Annex III**.

AGENDA ITEM 3: DISCUSSION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT “BSEC REGIONAL COOPERATION CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS”

8. Under this Agenda item, the representative of FAO sub-regional office in Ankara made a presentation on the project proposal on “Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization Regional Cooperation Centre for Sustainable Food Systems (BSEC-SFSC)”, including the concept, the objectives, the areas of application and the financial implications of the project proposal. The presentation is attached as **Annex IV**.

9. The representative of the Republic of Turkey stressed the importance of the project for the Member States and for the BSEC region and informed on the activities to be carried out, operational modalities, outcomes and expected results.

10. The participants took note of the presentation and information provided and stressed that this initiative may assist the Member States in implementing joint research programs, special training activities, exchange of information and knowledge in the BSEC Region.

AGENDA ITEM 4: CONSIDERATION OF THE RESULTS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LETTER OF AGREEMENT WITH FAO FOR STRENGTHENING THE AGRI-FOOD TRADE IN THE BSEC REGION

11. The participants took note of the information provided by the BSEC PERMIS on its interaction with the FAO, particularly on the implementation of the Letter of Agreement for provision of supporting the strengthening of agri-food trade within the BSEC Region, signed between the two Organizations on 19 December 2017. In addition to the findings of the “Analysis of the Intra-Regional Agri-Food Trade in the BSEC Region: Trade, Constraints and Promoting Intra-Regional Trade” and the outcome of the BSEC-FAO Workshop on Promotion of Agri-Food Trade in the BSEC Region (BSEC Headquarters, 10-11 July 2018) the participants exchanged views on the project proposal on “Building national capacity to support agricultural small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) export compliance with private market voluntary standards, International Trade Regulations and European Union (EU) food safety regulations under existing trade regimes” (SME food safety export compliance) which was elaborated by the FAO based on the previous two outputs implemented under the same Letter of Agreement.

12. The BSEC PERMIS, expressing its readiness to render the necessary assistance, invited the interested Member States to consider the possibilities of implementing this project proposal in their respective countries.

AGENDA ITEM 5: PROSPECTS OF THE BLACK SEA REGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

13. The participants continued to exchange views on this agenda item and stressed the importance of enhancing regional cooperation in the field of fisheries and aquaculture, taking also into account the relevant activity of other regional and international organizations.

14. The participants took note of the participation of BSEC PERMIS in the 30th session of the European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC) which was held in Dresden on 11-13 September 2019, during which the discussion took place on the issues related to inland fisheries and freshwater aquaculture as well as on the on-going national activities such as research programs, projects, conferences and workshops.

15. The participants were informed on the participation of BSEC PERMIS in the Regional Workshop on “Post-harvest market measures, rules, and standards for the safe and quality fish and fish products”, organized by the Central Asian and Caucasus Regional Fisheries and Aquaculture Commission (CACFish), in cooperation with FAO and EUROFISH with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of the Republic of Turkey in Istanbul on 13-14 November 2019, which considered, *inter alia*, market based measures to promote trade with fish products, traceability regulations and certification, and international food safety standards for fish and fishery products.

16. The representatives of the Hellenic Republic and of the Republic of Turkey informed the Working Group on the activities carried out in their respective countries aimed at implementing the national measures to support and promote the sector of fisheries and aquaculture. The statement of the Hellenic delegation is attached as **Annex V**.

17. The participants encouraged the BSEC PERMIS to continue proactively exploring the practical means of enhancing Black Sea regional cooperation in the field of fisheries and aquaculture.

18. Recalling the view the Working Group expressed at the previous meetings of potentially beneficial significance for the Member States to consider joining the “FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing”, the participants exchanged views on this issue and agreed to discuss at the next meeting the situation in the territories of the Member States and the measures to combat illegal, unreported and undeclared fishing.

AGENDA ITEM 6: COOPERATION WITH REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

19. The participants took note of the information provided by the BSEC PERMIS on its interaction with the FAO and other organizations and institutions aimed at development of new projects which will contribute to the attainments of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

20. The participants took note of the participation of BSEC PERMIS in the AgriBusiness Forum held in Serres, Hellenic Republic, on 31 October – 2 November 2019 which focused on “The future of agriculture in the digital era” and was aimed to advance the knowledge concerning the digitalization & digital transformation of the agri-food value chain. The participants also took note of the initiatives of BSEC PERMIS to organize subsequent events in the host country and abroad as a result of cooperation with the AgriBusiness Forum.

21. The participants encouraged the BSEC PERMIS to continue its close cooperation with the FAO and other international organizations aimed at strengthening the regional cooperation in the field of agriculture and agro-industry.

AGENDA ITEM 7: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

22. No issue was raised under this Agenda item.

AGENDA ITEM 8: DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING

23. The date and venue of the next Meeting of the Working Group will be communicated in due course.

AGENDA ITEM 9: ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING

24. The Working Group adopted the present Report for its submission to the Committee of Senior Officials and the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs for their consideration.