

NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON GOVERNANCE OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT - A VITAL NECESSITY

Civil society, business and local government representatives plea the Parliamentary Committee on Productive Activities, Trade and Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, and other public institutions to **BUILD** a continuous **DIALOGUE** to discuss the challenges and barriers that hamper policies and supporting instruments of the sector to be effective and to find possible solutions as soon as possible.

The **NATIONAL ROUND-TABLE**, held on February 12th, brought together some 80 participants from all over the country, representatives of central government institutions and local authorities, civil society, farmers' associations and rural entrepreneurs, academics, experts, donor representatives, etc.

THE DISCUSSIONS focused on the country-wide consulted issues related to the efficiency of public support for agricultural and rural development presented in the **POSITION PAPER** on Governance of Agriculture and Rural Development.¹

Participants fully supported the findings and recommendations included in this policy document while suggested:

National agricultural and rural development policies need to allocate sufficient and stable budgetary support over the years. The structure and support measures should guide farmers and entrepreneurs towards a long-term development vision. IPARD II funds should not be perceived as opportunity to substitute national budget for the sector. The sufficient budgetary support is critical.

The policies of the sector should be oriented towards inclusive development to contribute to the territorial cohesion of the country. Addressing the structural constraints of agriculture - small farm sizes and high land fragmentation is a high priority in this regard. Mountain areas should be at the center of support instruments. Stakeholder consultation remains important for the understanding of territorial specifics and maintaining a climate of trust between farmers and institutions.

Representatives of local government assessed that municipalities hardly do play any substantial role for the development in these areas. National policies and agricultural and rural development require strengthening of the principle of subsidiarity.

Migration of youth from rural areas, especially mountainous and remote areas, has irreversible negative consequences for the country. Specific programs to support them is an urgent need.

Legal Framework for the Organization and Functioning of Local Action Groups, which has not yet been adopted, hampers the implementation of the EU rural development policy instrument –LEADER approach/ Community-Led Local Development.

The members of the Albanian Network for Rural Development express their full readiness to cooperate with institutions to advance this Agenda.

¹ Albanian Network for Rural Development, January 2019. <https://anrd.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/ANRD-PolicyPaper2019-AL.pdf>