



Funded by
the European Union



FARM *to* FORK
ACADEMY

GREEN WESTERN BALKANS

OUR SHARED EUROPEAN FUTURE

The regional project 'Farm to Fork Academy for Green Western Balkans Our shared European future' involves the following countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia. The Farm to Fork Academy Project - is jointly implemented by the family of National Rural Development Networks (NRDNs) in the six Western Balkan countries (WB-6) and Croatia and their regional cooperation platform Balkan Network for Rural Development (BRDN).

Context

Rural areas in the WB-6 are both economically and demographically very important. The agriculture and rural development sector is the main economic activity, playing an essential role in the social and economic development of the region. However, the structural and resource limitations and challenges hinder sustainable agriculture and rural development in the region. Moreover, losses in biodiversity, climate changes, and weather extremities affecting the smallholders across the region, coupled with high land fragmentation negatively affect the region and the sustainability of its agricultural sector. The six WB countries face similar challenges in transforming and modernizing their agriculture and rural development sector.

There is a general awareness of the complexity and challenges that the agrarian and rural sector reform process toward EU integration poses for the small agricultural holdings. Smallholder farmers face a series of challenges in ensuring food quality standards and food safety requirements, so that their products are competitive on the national and international market. Still, there is not sufficient progress in the green transition of the sector. On the other hand, farmers lack the knowledge and skills that would facilitate their transition into sustainable farming practices, including organic farming, or they have failed to embrace new techniques or invest in smart and cost-effective machineries or processes.

The six WB countries are in the process of their legal approximation with the EU CAP and further will make efforts to align with Green Agenda measures. Even though this process is led by Governments of the WB countries, NRDNs as civil society actors remain important for a sustainable European integration process, and they should be involved at all levels in the preparation, implementation, and monitoring of the EU acquis' implementation. Apart from their expertise and knowledge, NRDNs monitor and hold the respective governments accountable by pushing for accelerated reforms and the implementation of EU CAP policies and build trust in the reforms and generate the so needed public support in the EU integration process.

Project title	Farm to Fork Academy for Green Western Balkans – Our shared European future
Funded by	European Commission Support to Regional thematic networks of Civil Society Organizations EuropeAid/174154/DH/ACT/Multi Lot 3: Green and Digital Transition
Project region	WB-6 Countries and Croatia
Lead organization	Albanian Network for Rural Development
Duration	16.01.2023 – 15.01.2027
Budget	1,442,183.16 Euro

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence

Project Intervention

The project focuses on the implementation of the EU integration and approximation process in the WB countries in the agricultural and rural development sector by advancing the green and just transition in the region through the contribution of civil society actors. It will do so by stimulating a better environment for CSOs and CSOs Networks and other rural stakeholders to proactively contribute in addressing societal challenges related to climate changes and biodiversity losses through building competencies able to assist farming and rural communities toward green and just transition across the region, whereas

are able to sustain participatory and bottom-up *consultation* and constructive policy dialogue to accelerate the reforming process in approximating with EU's common agricultural policy (CAP), in particular alignment with the EU Green Deal and F2F Strategy.

❖ Competences for societal impact

The F2F Academy will support and build sustained capacities of CSOs and CSOs networks, enabling them to effectively address current societal challenges. It will be accomplished through the delivery of tailored training programs focusing on sustainable food systems and livelihoods. The 'Farm to Fork Academy' aims to empower the civil society sector, enabling them to better serve their constituencies, including farming and rural communities in the region.

A regional Farm to Fork Academy will offer a comprehensive training program of Training of Trainers (ToT), targeting representatives from CSOs in the WB-6. The ToTs will cover pertinent topics related to the F2F strategy. The ToT participants will subsequently transfer their newly acquired knowledge to grass-root CSOs at national level within the region. Additionally, NRDNs will launch a nationwide awareness campaign on sustainable, green and resilient food system.

❖ Sustainable Local Solutions

The F2F Academy Fund is dedicated to providing financial support to CSOs and CSOs Networks with a focus on supporting *locally led small-scale actions promoted by civil society organizations on innovative, green and inclusive solutions for sustainable food systems and livelihoods*. The F2F Academy Fund will support NRDNs in each WB-6 and BRDN in improving coalition and capacity building for an increased impact of CSOs on agriculture and rural reforming processes, while **F2F Academy Awards** will serve as an instrument for introducing and promoting sustainable solutions pertaining to environmental and biodiversity protection.

In order to foster networking, knowledge transfer, exchange of good practices in sustainable food systems

and livelihoods, the F2F Academy Fund will organize open door, tutor-led demonstration workshops for small groups of young farmers.

❖ Bottom-up advocacy and policy agenda

The fundamental guiding principle and the founding perspective of the NRDNs in WB-6 is centered on promoting bottom-up, inclusive and participatory rural development. Participatory consultation processes remain at the heart of initiatives undertaken by NRDNs to empower the 'bottom up', inclusive and participatory approach to local development. In this light, the proposed advocacy initiatives at regional and national level seeks to raise the voice of rural people and other vulnerable groups such as small farmers, young farmers, women's' producer groups, foresters etc..., and bring it to the policy making processes.

❖ Networking for sustainable rural development

National Rural Development Networks in the WB and Croatia represent a driving force in shaping the rural development landscape within the countries of the region. NRDNs, composed of dedicated grassroots CSOs have emerged as catalysts for change, championing the interests and aspirations of rural stakeholders. The NRDNs advocate for inclusive, participatory, and bottom-up approaches to rural development. They play an instrumental role in fostering collaboration among various stakeholders, including public authorities, economic and social partners, and civil society representatives.

The establishment of the **Balkan Rural Development Network (BRDN)** further strengthens their regional influence and the sharing of experiences. Their commitment to evidence-based policymaking and bottom-up initiatives is driving improvements in the quality of life in rural areas and accelerating the alignment with EU Common Agricultural Policy standards. This proactive approach energizes local stakeholders, enabling them to effectively engage with governments and other relevant rural actors to shape sustainable rural development policies and actions.

This Fact sheet is funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of project partners and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

Contact:

Email: info@anrd.al

Facebook: Farm to Fork Academy

Instagram: [farmtoforkacademyproject](https://www.instagram.com/farmtoforkacademyproject)

#FarmToForkWB #SustainableAgriculture
#GreenInnovation #Farming4Sustainability

