



Study Guide

Topic Area B

Strengthening the cooperation in the area of food security and food safety standards emphasizing on the environmental sustainability of the agricultural production.

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1. Welcoming Message

Dear participants,

It is our utter pleasure to welcome you to RhodesMRC 2016 and more specifically to BSEC, one of the first committees that have ever been simulated in this magnificent simulation of regional and international organizations. Both of us first participated in RhodesMRC back in 2014 and despite the fact that its size almost quadrupled over the past two years its unique characteristics such as academic excellence, organizational perfection and cooperative ambience are still omnipresent. For those reasons we truly believe that your participation in RhodesMRC will be an unforgettable experience for each and every one of you regardless of your previous experience in such simulations.

The document that you are holding in your hands is the study guide of our committee. Its aim and our expectation is that through it you will be able to acquire a more profound insight into the topic under discussion. During your preparation this document will be a compass for your research and, in combination with it, will allow you to present us your position paper (i.e. your country's policy on the topic) and will prepare you academically for the sessions of the simulation. However, apart from acquiring knowledge on the topics under discussion do not neglect to read the rules of procedure, which is something that will facilitate our committee's work.

As the board of BSEC we are here to assist you in your endeavors through the functioning of the SME sector and food security issues. We acknowledge that this year's topics are both intriguing and challenging but we are here to answer your inquiries and assist you in any way possible. We both expect that our cooperation will be based on trust, communication, punctuality and respect which all work both ways.

Looking forward to meeting you all next October in the beautiful island of Rhodes!

The Board of BSEC,

Tzivra Kallirroï-Rodanthi, President

Lagouvardos-Kotronicis Orestis, Secretary General

2. Introduction to the Council

The Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (also known as BSEC) dates back to 1992 when the heads of 11 states gathered in Istanbul with the purpose of signing the ‘Istanbul Summit Declaration’ and the ‘Bosporus Statement’. With the entry into force of its Charter on 1 May 1999, BSEC acquired international legal identity and was transformed into a fully-fledged regional economic organization –the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation¹.

With the accession of Serbia in 2006, the Organization has now 12 member states. Those are the following: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine. Apart from them, there are also 13 observer nations (including the United States of America), 8 sectoral dialogue partner nations and a plethora of observer and sectoral dialogue partner organizations.

The role and the mandate of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation is to promote multilateral political and economic cooperation in many important areas such as agriculture, the role of SME’s, crime prevention, banking and finance, energy etc. in the Black Sea region.

Moreover, the financial pillar of BSEC is the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB). Created from the 11 founding members of BSEC the BSTDB’s cumulative portfolio has approved many operations in the key sectors of infrastructure, energy, manufacturing and telecommunications amounting to EUR 3.5 billion².

BSEC headquarters are located in Istanbul.

3. Introduction to the Topic

Agriculture, starting from the development of sedentary human civilization, constitutes a key factor of survival for many people around the world. First and foremost, agricultural production is closely linked with the concept of self-sufficiency; a family or a village (in modern times a state) can be sustained through the cultivation of flora, fauna and fungi. However, this does not mean that

¹ The Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, *BSEC at a glance*. Available from: <http://www.bsec-organization.org/Pages/homepage.aspx>. [Accessed: 12th May 2016]

² Black Sea trade and Development Bank, *About Us*. Available from: <http://www.bstdb.org/about-us>. [Accessed: 12th May 2016]

agriculture is a one way road to isolationism. On the contrary, agricultural commerce enables states to greatly increase their revenues via exports, while enriching their variety in products through imported commodities³.

Thus, a pattern becomes evident. Agriculture moves in a circular motion on a world-wide scale. The importance of cooperation in the field of agricultural production arises as a demanding request in our globalized world, especially when one takes into consideration the many developing states that constitute agriculture-based economies.

However, in this ever changing world, ensuring the sustainability of agricultural practices and production can be a rather difficult task. More specifically, environmental sustainability as a goal is heavily dependent on the concept of indefinite continuity. Some might argue that this is unachievable and that the only realistic approach is making efforts towards stabilizing the rates of renewable resource harvest, pollution creation, and non-renewable resource depletion on the long run.⁴

Achieving environmental sustainability is primordial not only for economic purposes, as mentioned above, but also for health-related reasons. It is not uncommon that during an effort of producing more, food security and safety are disregarded. Safeguarding the security of edible products is directly linked both to the supply of food as well as to one's access to them.

The states of the Black Sea have actively engaged on cooperation on levels of economic development, but political initiatives with the view of fostering stability and prosperity for the people of the region are also a very important issue discussed in this Ministerial Council. Thus, strengthening the cooperation on food security and safety is a decisive step towards this direction. Agricultural production is a main pillar of many of the Member States' economies due to the advantage their geographical location provides them with. Addressing the security of the products of agriculture is crucial both for the producers as well as for the consumers, the people of the BSEC countries. Cooperation in the field of food safety among relevant institutions and accredited laboratories of the BSEC Member States is of utmost importance and securing the sustainability of

³ "Definition of Agriculture". State of Maine. [Accessed: 15 of May 2016]

⁴ Daly, H. E. 1990b. *Toward some operational principles of sustainable development*. Ecological Economics. [Accessed: 15 May 2016]

the agricultural production is an imperative need, as well. The promotion of sustainable agriculture is not an issue officially discussed by the BSEC members, but it greatly enhances the purpose of food security.⁵

The importance of agriculture for the area can be further understood through the following statistics;⁶

COUNTRY	% EMPLOYED IN AGRICULTURE	% OF COUNTRY'S GDP
Albania	47.8%	18.9%
Armenia	46%	21%
Azerbaijan	39.1%	7.1%
Bulgaria	21%	15%
Georgia	14%	8.4%
Greece	12%	3.6%
Moldova	26.4%	40%
Romania	30%	6%
Russia	9%	4%
Serbia	17.1%	25%
Turkey	21.5%	8%
Ukraine	17.2%	10.4%

⁵ Trade Reforms and Food Security: Conceptualizing the Linkages. FAO, UN. 2003. [Accessed: 18 May 2016]

⁶ Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations: Country Profiles <http://www.fao.org/countryprofiles/en/> [Accessed: 15 June 2016]

4. Topic History

4.1. Food security

Timeline

1945 Quebec, formation of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations

1974 Rome, first World Food Conference; definition of the term “food security”

“availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices”

1983 FAO expands the definition above by adding;

“ensuring that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to the basic food that they need”

1994 World Food Summit; a more complex definition is introduced;

“Food security, at the individual, household, national, regional and global levels [is achieved] when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”

The last definition is the most inclusive, underlining the importance of both the availability as well as the factor of health. ⁷

4.2 Relevant Past Recommendations by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation

Food security is a crucial issue for the BSEC states. While none of the states are facing noteworthy food shortages, the issue of food safety and security along with other relative issues such as; sustainable agriculture, fisheries and environmental challenges of the region, have already been discussed upon by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC).

⁷ FAO: Food security concepts and measurements. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/y4671e/y4671e06.htm> [Accessed: 15 June 2016]

- 2001 Recommendation 54/2001 on *“Promoting Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development”*;
The report revolved around the importance of food quality and safety standards, genetic resources, health of livestock (for the purposes of farming), information for farmers regarding land degradation and nutrient depletion and last but not least phyto-sanitary control over the food quality
- Recommendation 49/2001 on *“Black Sea Environmental Protection: New Challenges”*
- 2003 Recommendation 74/2003 on *“Fight against poverty in the BSEC member states”*
- 2005 Recommendation 81/2005 on *“Economic aspects of resolving environmental problems in the BSEC Member States”*
- 2006 Recommendation 90/2006 on the ‘*Cooperation in combating the bird flu in the Black Sea region*’
- 2007 Recommendation 94/2007 on *“State and prospects of fisheries in the Black Sea countries”*
This report underlined the important role that living water resources carry out as a natural renewable source of food.
- Recommendation 99/2007 on *“Global Climate Change: Consequences for the BSEC Member States”*
- 2009 Recommendation 111/2009 on *“Water Resources Management in the Black Sea Region”*
Recommendation 112/2009 on *Rational Management of Natural Resources in the Black Sea Region: Enhancement of Legislative Framework”*
Recommendation 113/2009 on *Shaping Ecological Awareness and Behaviour in the BSEC Member States”*.⁸

4.3. Conclusions

The BSEC states have already shown a great amount of interest in further enhancing their cooperation on the field of food security. The stabilization of the environmental frame of the region through both tackling the issues that arise as well as promoting shared high-level standards for the production and the control of food circulating in the area is one of the most important aspects

⁸ PABSEC: Reports and Recommendations. <http://www.pabsec.org/documents.asp?id=3&hl=en>
[Accessed: 15 June 2016]

currently under discussion in the Ministerial Council. The focus is shifted towards the term of sustainability, bearing in mind the need of the people for long-term security.

5. Root causes of the problem

5.1. Introduction/Overview

Despite the great importance the agriculture holds for the area, the globally recognized imperative need for better food security standards and the overall demand for sustainability, oftentimes the effective cooperation of states on the matter is not achieved. Different agricultural patterns and practices, a deficit in the field of information sharing for health standards and certain environmental issues that the area is faced with, have proven to be preventive concerning the aim of the adoption of a cohesive sustainable strategy. For the purpose of facilitating your research, we are going to examine the issue separating it on 3 different aspects;

- A. Agriculture
- B. Ensuring food security and safety
- C. Environmental Sustainability

5.2. Agriculture

Agriculture can be found in different forms all around the world. First, there is the practice of **pastoralism**, which is solely based on the raising of livestock. However, this practice is more popular in arid, less productive lands, unlike the ones under discussion. Secondly, there is the practice of **shifting cultivation** that involves the burning of a certain area for the purpose of growing crops, something not frequent in the BSEC area due to a lack of abundant rainfalls for the regeneration of the land demanded by this method. Lastly, the most common agricultural approaches for the states of our Ministerial Council are **subsistence farming** and **intensive farming**, the one aiming to

deliver to local needs exclusively and the other referring to a profit-based commercial purposed cultivation.⁹

5.2.1. Agriculture and the BSEC States

The agricultural sector of the States has undergone great changes during the last years, specifically regarding the price and trade liberalization. These changes have a direct effect on the production as well as the consumption of foods. However, still the region is considered as one of the most promising areas concerning the world food supply.

Unfortunately, certain states still have a lot on their plate. Natural resources, food demands and poverty reduction are the main goals that these states are trying to achieve simultaneously. When the circumstances demand from them to take up the role of a competitive agricultural player in the global market as well, it becomes clear why the need for a more coherent long-term agricultural strategy is imperative.

5.2.2. Agricultural production practices

A report by the **International Food Policy Research Institute** claims that agricultural production technologies increase their impact on food production if adopted in combination with each other. Testing agricultural productivity, food security standards and trade through these methods by 2015, the International Food Policy Research Institute found that the number of people at risk from hunger could be reduced by as much as 40% and food prices could be reduced by almost half, thus vastly securing the availability.¹⁰

The practices followed are the following;

- **Tillage**; the plowing of soil for the purpose of preparing it for planting, nutrient incorporation or pest control. This practice has both positive as well as negative effects. On the one hand, it improves through heat the productivity of the soil, on the other, it may cause erosion,

⁹ Tony Waters. *The Persistence of Subsistence Agriculture: life beneath the level of the marketplace*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books. 2007

¹⁰ International Food Policy Research Institute: Agriculture and food production <http://www.ifpri.org/topic/agriculture-and-food-production> [Accessed: 18 June 2016]

decomposition of organic matter releasing CO₂, and has detrimental effects on the numbers and conditions of soil organisms.

- **Pest control;** the management of weeds and malicious insects. This practice can take several forms such as; chemical (pesticides), biological (biocontrol) and mechanical (tillage).
- **Nutrient management;** a more inclusive approach, it encompasses both the source of nutrient inputs for crop and livestock production, and the method of utilization of manure produced by livestock.
- **Water management;** practice useful for areas where rainfall is insufficient or variable. As an alternative to rainfall, irrigation methods are being used, as well. Agriculture represents 70% of freshwater use worldwide, and especially, for the BSEC States the practice of water management is of utmost importance regarding the fisheries. ¹¹

5.2.3. Issues that arise

Agriculture is undoubtedly a great source of prosperity for the people, and an invaluable source of human survival. However, the above mentioned practices that are specifically targeted towards the profit-based commercial cultivation and production have showed some regretful effects on the environmental.

Such effects are closely linked with the conversion of natural ecosystems to agriculture. What is more, certain agricultural nutrients have been found malicious to aquatic and terrestrial habitats and groundwater, while, it is well known that pesticides, have detrimental results on the soil. Agricultural nutrients as such while providing great advantage to producers, they carry a great risk. They may enter other ecosystems that are not compatible with their use and cannot support them. This “intrusion” can be done through leaching, volatilization and the waste streams of livestock and humans. Pesticides and pathogens, are also known to have reportedly the ability to harm directly the human health.¹²

¹¹ Principles of Crop Production, Theories, Techniques and Technology. Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ. [Accessed: 18 June 2016]

¹² World Health Organization (WHO). Public Health Impacts of Pesticides Used in Agriculture [Accessed: 19 June 2016]

5.3 Ensuring food security and safety

The conversation on food security started from the point of *availability* and *access for all*, later on the concept of price stability was introduced concerning items of basic necessity and lastly, the need for a *healthy life* was underlined.

A UN study found that there are 840 million undernourished people in the world.

In certain countries, especially developing ones, food insecurity is a tremendous reality. The prevailing reason for that is poverty. Moreover, circumstances like war and civil conflict, specific environmental problems in the area, an enlarged population can contribute to the insecurity.

States, and more specifically governments, play a pivotal role as corruption, national policies that do not promote equal access to food for all categories of population, barriers to trade, insufficient agricultural development, social and gender inequality and poor healthcare status have a direct link with food insecurity.¹³

The BSEC states do not currently have an official food insecurity issue.

5.3.1. Access/Availability/Stability

The prerequisite of having access to food, was something that was included from the very first definition of the term and is up until this day still stressed out.

Having to safeguard that the “demand” is met, we must not neglect the “supply”. During the last years, specifically due to the economic crisis and the turbulent socio-politico-economic situation in the region of BSEC, there has been an important shift on the domain of “supply”.¹⁴

The economic instability led to a decline in agricultural investment, while the growing population, as a whole, pressed for an increased demand of food. Both of those aspects had the unfortunate result of **rising prices**.

Of course, there are more immediate supply and demand dynamics (e.g. rapidly increasing oil prices and diversions of various types of food production).

¹³ FAO. 2002. *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2001*.

¹⁴ Godfray, H. C. J.; Beddington, J. R.; Crute, I. R.; Haddad, L.; Lawrence, D.; Muir, J. F.; Pretty, J.; Robinson, S.; Thomas, S. M.; Toulmin, C. (28 January 2010). "Food Security: The Challenge of Feeding 9 Billion People".

On the whole, the crisis highlighted the food insecurity in states where it existed, underlined the counterproductive inner workings of world food markets (associated with production subsidies in rich countries and trade tariffs), that have a direct effect to price spikes and problems with food availability.¹⁵

5.3.2. Health Standards

All people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their needs and preferences for an active and healthy life.

The concept of the minimum dietary energy requirement (MDER) is commonly used to detect **undernourishment**. When the caloric intake of a person, meaning the calories they consumed, is lower than their MDER, then this person is undernourished. MDER represents the energy needed for light activity and basic bodily functions, and it differentiates by country and from year to year depending on the gender and age structure of population.¹⁶

5.4. Environmental Sustainability

As the global food demand is predicted to be doubled in the next 50 years, great challenges for the sustainability both of food production and of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems arise.

The key to a sustainable present, but more importantly to a sustainable future is located within the concept of food security in respect to the environment, leading us to the inevitable solution of creating a specific long-term strategy.

Many argue that this strategy can be reflected through the sustainable development of the world as a whole.

5.4.1. Food security as a Sustainable development goal (SDG)

A movement towards commencing the creation of strategies and policies on food security on an international basis was developed. The most important key player to this respect is a United Nations

¹⁵ Ecker and Breisinger (2012). The Food Security System (PDF). Washington, D.D.: International Food Policy Research Institute [Accessed: 22 June 2016]

¹⁶ Loring, Philip A.; Gerlach, S. Craig (2009). "Food, Culture, and Human Health in Alaska: An Integrative Health Approach to Food Security". Environmental Science and Policy [Accessed: 22 June 2016]

Agency, the **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations** (FAO, Quebec 1945). FAO is specialized in food quality and safety, and in all the different stages of food production; from harvest to storage to transport even to processing and distribution.

Another basic UN agency involved in the fight on food security is the **World Food Programme (WFP)** established in 1963. WFP cooperates closely along with partners, including the **Food Aid for Development (FAD)** Office of the **World Health Organization (WHO)**.

Food security is mainly viewed through the spectrum of **Millennium Development Goals (MDG)**. These eight goals - each with specific targets and indicators - are based on the UN Millennium Declaration, signed by the world leaders in September 2000. The core of this declaration is the commitment of the states to combating poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and discrimination against women. One of the eight Millennium Goals is eradicating poverty and hunger that focuses on two targets: Halve, till 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day, and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.¹⁷

Thus, making the link between the sustainable development and food security apparent. Hunger can not exist, if our aim is to develop as an international community on the basis of sustainability, with a view to the future, on long-term premises.

The **EU** plays a pivotal role as a key player not only for the international community, but for the Ministerial Council, as well. Through its activities, the union showcases a comprehensive food security strategy covering not just safe food, but also animal health and welfare and plant health. The EU food strategy has three core elements – legislation on the safety of food and animal feed; sound scientific advice and decision-making on that base; enforcement and control.¹⁸

6. National Policies and Common Interests

In **Albania** the agriculture sector continues to play an important role in Albania contributing about 21 percent of the GDP and employing more than half of the active labor force in the country. About

¹⁷ Joachim von Braun; M.S. Swaminathan; Mark W. Rosegrant (2003). Agriculture, Food Security, Nutrition, and the Millennium Development Goals: Annual Report Essay. IFPRI. [Accessed: 22 June 2016]

¹⁸ European Commission: Food Safety: Overview. http://ec.europa.eu/food/index_en.htm [Accessed: 25 June 2016]

52 % of the population is living in rural area. Agriculture sector has, generally, experienced high growth rates during last years. Changes due to privatization did not stop the Albanian farmers from adapting quickly, leading to a recovery through the modification of their production structures. However, producers are not able to deal with all the issues that arise and they struggle when it comes to : small and fragmented land holding, limited access to markets and poorly developed business relations with agribusinesses at the commercial end of the agricultural supply chains, limited access to rural finance, poor rural infrastructure, etc. In spite of this, farmers' interest and investments have significantly increased during last years, especially in vegetables, vineyards, fruit trees, olive, livestock and processing, leading to higher annual growth in these sub-sectors. For example, in Albania the annual growth of the food industry output was about 11% during 2007 with annual growth of agriculture is 3,5 %. The country's main exports in products are fishery products, medicinal and aromatic plants, vegetables etc. Their basic imported products are cereals and fruits. The medium-term goal of the Albanian economy as of now is to play a competitive role as a productive agricultural market and thus, promote its integration into the EU and the regional markets. The main measures being taken by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection include: increasing public investments for market infrastructure and market information systems; introduction of direct support schemes for farm competitiveness; improvement of standards and food safety; development of rural finance, foster cooperation and business linkages.

Armenia has proceeded with a macroeconomic reform and land privatization plan that was proved to have positive results in the agricultural sector, despite the limited agricultural land of the country that regularly requires supplementary irrigation. As far as food is concerned, Armenia is dependant at a rate of 60% on imports, and that leads the government towards efforts of increasing their own national production, as a way of securing food safety. With that in mind the policy of Armenia on food security concentrated in two aspects: improvement of national production and adaptation of legislation to the international standards. The Law of the Republic of Armenia on promoting food security defines fundamental directions of government. Those are; implementation of measures aimed at enhancement of macroeconomic performance and increasing on this base purchasing power of the population, regulation of the food market and food stock building at the Government Reserve of Armenia and their effective use.

In **Azerbaijan** agriculture and food safety are viewed as priorities and the State introduced a programme on long-term sustainment and ensuring food security for the period of 2008-2015. The government of Azerbaijan allocated 75 \$ million for funding this programme in 2009, including additional 15 \$ million for agricultural lending. What is more, the state locates subsidies to farmers for the development of livestock, fishery and poultry.

Bulgaria as a European Union state is making efforts in increasing the size of investment in farming, with emphasis on small and medium-sized farms and successful absorption of European Union funds allocated to help the competitive development of the industry. The country's European identity is mirrored directly onto their national policy as they follow the European Union's common policy. The state further cooperates with international relief organizations, financial institutions, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the international community.

Georgia completely individualized its agriculture from 1993, currently 37% of agricultural land (or more than 70% of arable land) is used by individual farmers. A practice worth noting in Georgia, is the recruitment of African farmers. A program was established that calls for Afrikaaner farmers to migrate to Georgia. The state launched this plan with the view to revive the nation's agriculture.

Greece, as another state holding an EU membership, has to abide by certain EU framework requirements in this sector. The state has, thus, created their Hellenic Multiannual Control Program 2007-2011. The programme includes; a) control and management of zoo-noses and zoo-notic factors and aspects, eradication of specific zoo-noses at the level of primary production; b) prevention and management of chemical and biological hazards in foodstuff and animal feeds; c) protection of consumer interests through measure implementation towards the effective guarantee of legitimate practices for foodstuff supply and processes with a view to making reasonable and updated choices; d) taking of measures ensuring the effective implementation of community legislation on plant health checks for the protection of national capital, national resources and the environment.¹⁹

Moldova's first import is cigarettes, according to FAOSTAT, but food nes prep and cereal come a close second. Having agriculture account for 40% of their GDP and privatization of nearly all of

¹⁹ HELLENIC MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND FOOD GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF PLANT PRODUCE
<http://www.minagric.gr/greek/data/MultiAnnualProgrammePesticideResidues-2012-2014.pdf> [Accesed: 27 June 2016]

Moldova's agricultural land from state to private ownership, the state is very promising.

Romania, through the Common Agricultural Policy, received 14.5 billion euros between 2007 and 2013. However, the country still struggles with some major issues such as; a lack of major investments in agriculture, due to difficulty in accessing available funds, fragmentation and erosion of soil, property-related lawsuits and obsolete technology.

Russia has a rather stable and growing development in several agricultural sectors. Russia currently holds a seat as one of the top three states globally in the grain market, as grains became the strategic export product – the country sold over 20 mln tonnes of grains on the export market. What is more, the state is one of the guarantors of the global food security. It is predicted that in a decade their exports will grow to the level of 30- 40 mln tonnes. Thus, it becomes clear that the main governmental goals are the increase of grain production and exports, and the Ministry of Agriculture insists on modernization and development of grain infrastructure, including exports, stimulating of innovation technologies, and development of processing capacities. The Ministry also plays a pivotal role as it regulates the price stability of the domestic market through realization of the public purchasing and commodity interventions, and pledge operations. Russia's food security doctrine has as its main aim to ensure a reliable food supply, develop domestic agricultural and fishery facilities, and effectively take part in international cooperation on food security. Russia underlines the importance of the fact that domestic food production should be stabilized with necessary reserves and stocks guaranteed and the share of domestic products in the country's market should be no less than 85 percent. The doctrine also highlights the importance of early prediction, detection and prevention of internal and external threats to food security.²⁰

In **Serbia** the National Agricultural Program is divided into short-term and mid-term goals of the agricultural policy, the methods, sequence and deadlines for the fulfillment of priority tasks in the agrarian sector. Generally, the Serbian National Program includes the following measures: a) strengthening a sustainable and efficient agricultural sector, that can be competitive globally, and by result have positive impacts on the GDP; b) food products that safeguard product safety and quality; c) ensuring the life standards support for people, who are dependent on the agricultural industry, but are incapable to follow the economic reforms; d) ensuring the support for the

²⁰ Ministry of Agriculture of the Russian Federation <http://government.ru/en/> [Accessed: 27 June 2016]

sustainable development of villages; e) protecting the environment from the negative effects of agricultural production; f) preparing the agricultural industry of Serbia for the EU integration; g) adapt the trade policy to the WTO standards.²¹

Turkey, the major agricultural producer among the BSEC states, has a share of the crop in agricultural production at 73,5% and a share of wheat in grains at 67%. With a view to proceeding with integration with the EU, there are efforts made from within the state on the improvement of the relevant legal framework. Turkey's Law on "Production, Consumption and Inspection of Food Stuffs" was adopted in 1995, which contains provisions on hygienic and technical production, processing, preservation and storage of food. In March 2002, with cooperation of WHO and FAO, Turkish government initiated the activities on development of the National Plan of Action for Food and Nutrition (NPAFN). General objectives of the NPAFN was: a) to show the situation in food security, safety and nutrition; b) to make clear the issues in current policy implementation; c) to advice on new policy applications and needs for legislative and administrative changes. NPAFN includes actions for food security, food safety and related activities for nutrition with participation of Ministries of Agriculture and Rural affairs, Health and Education.²²

Ukraine holds maybe one of the most important roles in the BSEC states on the matter of agriculture. **The country belongs** to the top 10 world producers of several crops such as wheat. Ukraine is the world's largest producer of sunflower oil and a major global producer of grain and sugar. Globally, the country is the 5th largest producer of corn and the 3rd largest corn exporter. In 2012 Ukraine signed a contract with China, the world's largest importer of corn, to supply China with 3 million tonnes of corn annually. Clearly, Ukraine is a very promising partner for many of the BSEC states.²³

²¹ Government of the Republic of Serbia: European Integration Office <http://www.seio.gov.rs/documents/national-documents.226.html> [Accessed: 28 June 2016]

²² National Plan of Action for Food and Nutrition (NPAFN) <http://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/mya145314.pdf> [Accessed: 27 June 2016]

²³ Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations: Country Profiles <http://www.fao.org/countryprofiles/en/> [Accessed 27 June 2016]

7. Conclusions and the future

It is undisputable that for many BSEC states the issue of food security constitutes a major part of ensuring their **national security**. Even though, as we've seen above none of the BSEC states are official in state of food insecurity, the importance of safeguarding access to quality food is primordial. Thus, as a first step towards their cooperation, states focus on reinforcing a more comprehensive **institutional and legislative framework** on the matter. Many national governments have already decided upon long-term strategies through determining priority aspects and challenges, **liberalizing price, trade and tax regulations**.

One of the BSEC states' main goal is to secure a **sustainable future** for the further development both of agriculture and of rural environments, as well. In this regard, competent authorities act towards supporting production and processing industry, including **land property reforms** in some states, improving management, developing **infrastructure** and increasing the quality and safety of agricultural products.

An overwhelming majority of the BSEC states has also showed interest in actively cooperating with the **private sector** and **civil society**, for further enhancement of food security.

The **BSEC Economic Agenda for Future** places great emphasis on developing a **Regional Strategy for Agricultural Development and Food Security** referring particularly to the need to expand regional food and agricultural trade based on the complementarity of the BSEC countries.²⁴ BSEC states further express their dedication to ensuring food security through the works of the **Working Group on Agriculture and Agro-Industry**.

There are also project initiatives, that directly reflect this dedication:

- 1) ***“A Feasibility Study for Variable Rate Irrigation in the Black Sea region: Economical and Environmental Benefits”*** submitted by Greece (Lead Partner), Turkey and Bulgaria;
- 2) ***“Fatty liver incidence on mini dairy cow farms in the Republic of Serbia, Romania and the Republic of Moldova”*** submitted by Serbia (Lead Partner), Romania and Moldova and were recommended to the PDF Steering Committee for approval.

²⁴ The BSEC Economic Agenda - Towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership, 26 June 2012, İstanbul http://www.mfa.gov.tr/the-bsec-economic-agenda---towards-an-enhanced-bsec-partnership_-26-june-2012_-istanbul.en.mfa [Accessed: 27 June 2016]

Placing a great amount of importance on the concept of cooperation, the states have decided to move towards the following means of cooperation;

- a) **bio-technology** (cultivation of high yield wheat, corn, rice and other cereals);
- b) cooperation with **SMEs** to export- oriented agriculture products with emphasis in food processing and packing industries;
- c) determining types of agriculture most suitable for **mountainous terrain**;
- d) establishing **small-sized (family) farms** specialized in fisheries and aquaculture;
- e) exchanging experience and expertise, including **training facilities** in the development of fisheries and aquaculture covering also cultivation of specific breeds in fisheries.²⁵

All of the above are very helpful for the achievement of the ultimate goal (i.e. food security and safety). However, taking into account the current socio-economic circumstances of the region, the states' cooperation should move towards a more comprehensive path.

More specifically, the strengthening of the institutional framework is a very good step, but states should always keep in mind that the long-term of this should be a **joint regional strategy on food security**. Furthermore, inter-state cooperation is quite important, but cooperation between state and national **food business operators associations** is just as important, in order to secure a sustainable synergy for the future. Official **control of food on the entire food chain** is of utmost importance, and states should focus more on improving the relevant methods. A very helpful direction also would be for states to **campaign for stakeholder information** regarding food safety issues. Last but definitely not least, the sharing of experience among the member states is the setting stone of the ultimate goal. Organizing relevant meetings, workshops and conferences with **possible subsequent establishment of common data base** on the issue, can be of invaluable help to the issue.

²⁵ Working Group on Agriculture and Agro-Industry: Action Plan of the BSEC Working Group on Agriculture and Agro-Industry <http://www.bsec-organization.org/aoc/Agriculture/Pages/aPlan.aspx> [Accessed: 28 June 2016]

8. Questions Raised/Points to be addressed during the debate

- I. Elaboration of efficient measures of control and surveillance for the fishing in the boundary-neighbouring aquatories.
- II. Prospects for optimization of cooperation in wine production sphere between the BSEC Member States.
- III. Exchange of information on social partnership in the area of agriculture based on the experience of the BSEC Member States.
- IV. Cooperation in selection, reproduction and protection of plants, further enhancement of cooperation among agrarian research and educations institutions.
- V. Elaboration of a joint program for countering proliferation of high-pathogenous avian influenza and other diseases.
- VI. Development of cooperation in the field of food safety among relevant institutions and accredited laboratories of the BSEC Member States.

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