



EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

New Commission approach on agriculture in Neighbourhood launched

Brussels, 31 May 2012 - Senior agriculture officials from European Neighbourhood Policy partner countries will meet today and tomorrow in Brussels to discuss the modernisation of the agricultural sector in their countries at a Conference on the European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture & Rural Development (ENPARD).

ENPARD is a new policy initiative, part of the EU's commitment to inclusive growth and stability in its Neighbourhood, which recognises the potential importance of agriculture in terms of food security, sustainable production and rural employment. The conference will be opened jointly by Dacian Cioloş, Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development and Štefan Füle, Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy.

The objective of the conference is to present the Programme's vision and approach to high level officials in charge of agriculture, rural development and international cooperation from all European Neighbourhood Policy partner countries in the south and east of Europe. It will also provide the opportunity for participants to take part in in-depth discussions on how the Programme can best respond to the difficulties facing agriculture and rural areas in their countries.

Participants will hear from the experiences of the EU-12 on modernizing agriculture and rural areas, based on the lessons learnt under SAPARD (Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development) and IPARD (Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance for Rural Development) programmes, which yielded significant results during the pre-accession phase.

Commissioner Dacian Cioloş stated today: "With this conference, the European Commission sends a very clear signal of our willingness to put agriculture at the heart of our relationship with our neighbours and friends south and east. Concretely, we are ready to share our experience, our know-how, in the framework of a solid partnership for rural development and for the sustainable valorisation of these regions' agricultural potential. That is the meaning of ENPARD. It is not merely about funding, but also about working methods, which have been shown to be effective, in particular during the accession of the new EU Member States."

Commissioner Štefan Füle added: " ENPARD will not only contribute to more employment but it will also help to improve the quality of life of people in rural areas. Moreover support to agriculture and rural development is also a key element of the EU's commitment to inclusive growth in the Neighbourhood."

The Conference will be web-streamed live at the following links:

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- Thursday 31.05.2012 10.00-17.00:
<http://scic.ec.europa.eu/str/index.php?sessionno=c922de9e01cba8a4684f6c3471130e4c>
- Friday 01.06.2012 09.00-12.30:
<http://scic.ec.europa.eu/str/index.php?sessionno=54fda78aa8a09b4d77b5aaec57b75028>

Background

In the 2014-2020 programming period, partner countries are required to indicate three sectors for cooperation with the EU. The conference is thus an opportunity for partner countries to consider making agriculture and rural development one of those 3 priorities.

ENPARD was established by two joint Communications of the European Commission and the European External Action service of March and May 2011.

The EU offers a dialogue on ENPARD to all partner countries, and is prepared to assist in implementing ENPARD policies and related reforms for all those committed to making agriculture/rural development a focal sector in their cooperation with the EU. This will include assistance in preparing long-term agricultural and rural development strategies with all the relevant stakeholders, and in building necessary institutional capacities at national and local levels.

ENPARD will draw on the EU experience in reforming agriculture and rural areas in pre-accession countries and will take into account the diversity of experiences and efforts in partner countries. ENPARD also adopts a strategic and holistic approach with a strong focus on civil society and sector stakeholders' participation.

The national sector strategy, defining the challenges and objectives of sectors, is the basis of a policy dialogue between the EU and its partners. For ENPARD the dialogue should result in joint multi-annual work programmes, prepared by partner countries and agreed with the EU, in which countries define their aims for agriculture and rural development policies. Such dialogue will also facilitate regional exchanges and help identify pilot actions, where relevant.

Vasile Bumacov, the Moldovan Minister of Agriculture and Food Industry, will also address the audience, presenting the view of a neighbouring country on how to tailor ENPARD to national challenges and needs. Participants are also expected from : Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Croatia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Tunisia and Ukraine, as well as representatives from the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

For more information:

- Conference: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/taiaex/dyn/taiaex-events/detail_en.jsp?EventID=48514
- European neighbourhood Policy, http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/index_en.htm
- Communications establishing the ENPARD programme: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0200:FIN:EN:HTML> and http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com_11_303_en.pdf
- SAPARD: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/agriculture/enlargement/l60023_en.htm

- IPARD:
http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/enlargement/assistance/ipard/index_fr.htm