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MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Strategic Plan of the Kosovo Advisory System for Agriculture and Rural Development 2023-2027



Shërbimi Këshillimor Bujqësor Rural i Kosovës
Kosovo Agriculture and Rural Development Advisory Services
Poljoprivredna Ruralna Savetodavna Služba Kosova



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**MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY
AND DEVELOPMENT
RURAL**

**Strategic Plan of the Kosovo Advisory System for
Agriculture and Rural Development
2023-2027**

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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In the preparation of the SASRD 2023-2027, several institutions from state and private sector participated and contributed from their field of expertise. The SASRD stakeholder group included MAFRD representatives, representatives of farmers, the cabinet of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Faculty of Agriculture, KAI, FVA, KFA, the municipal advisory information centre (MAIC), market actors and business organizations.

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DISCLAIMER

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Acronyms¹

ADC	Austrian Development Cooperation
AKIS	Agriculture Knowledge and Innovation System
ARDP	Agricultural and Rural Development Plan
CACH	Caritas Switzerland
CECRA	Certificate of European Consultants in Rural Areas
DATS	Department of Advisory and Technical Services
EU	European Union
EUFRAS	European Forum for Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KASARD	Kosovo Advisory System for Agriculture and Rural Development
LW	Landwirtschaftskammer (Austrian Chamber of Agriculture)
MAFRD	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development
MAP	Medicinal and Aromatic Plant
MIAC	Municipal Information Advisory Centre
NAK	Hungarian Chamber of Agriculture
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NTFP	Not Timber Forest Product
OSzK	Hungarian National Advisory Centre
RAS	Rural Advisory Services
SASARD	Strategy of the Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development
SASS	Strengthening Advisory and Support Services
SIRED	Sustainable and Inclusive Rural Economic Development
TNA	Training Needs Assessment
ToR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Train the Trainers
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WG	Working Group

¹ There are several ways for acronyms; for this report the official Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development 2022 – 2028 in the English version was used regarding acronyms.

1 Introduction

The sector of advisory services was established within the Department for Rural Development of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development (MAFRD) in 2003, with the aim of expanding the network and increasing the capacities of advisory services in an institutional and permanent form.

Based on Regulation (GRK) No. 37/2013 on Internal Organization and Systematization of Jobs in the MAFRD and Law No. 04/L-074 on Advisory Services for Agriculture and Rural Development, the advisory services sector was organized as a public and private service.

The Strategic Plan of the Kosovo Advisory System for Agriculture and Rural Development 2023-2027 aims to improve the agricultural sector in Kosovo, as well as increase productivity, processing and agricultural marketing. This strategic plan defines the long-term goals and priorities of the policy for the development of advisory services, as well as facilitates the implementation of sectoral policies for the development of agriculture, forestry and rural development, which contains clear objectives, foresees the implementation of actions and the operation of all mechanisms that enable the achievement of these priorities in the field of development of the agricultural advisory system and rural development.

In order to improve Kosovo's agricultural sector, as well as to increase agricultural productivity, processing and marketing, the consultant was contracted to support the Working Group (WG) of the MAFRD with more than 17 members on compiling and validating the advisory strategy. Many official meetings of the WG have been arranged and additionally also meetings with stakeholders in smaller groups.

Actually, the advisory and support services in Kosovo are not able to solve all rural development problems in Kosovo, but they can support farmers to increase production, productivity and diversify the sources of income generation. To ensure the long-term technical and financial sustainability of advisory and support services in Kosovo they should be designed and managed with the following principles of best practice in mind:

- Services must be demand-driven and accountable to stakeholders with end-users involved in the management process.
- Effective and practical working relationships must be established with partner suppliers of services including other government agencies (Municipalities), NGOs, private sector advisers, agricultural-support organisations including banks, “academia/research institutions” especially with the institute in Peja, Economic Analysis Department, FVA, and relevant donor-funded projects.
- The government should act as a promoter and facilitator for rural development, supporting the private sector, which will be the driver of rural development in Kosovo. As such, public sector advisory and support services should influence the growth of the private sector market for service demand and provision.
- There should be strong interaction between advisory services, technical departments of the MAFRD and research and training institutions.
- Advisory and support services should maximize the comparative advantage of the organizations involved.
- Economic efficiency - the benefits must justify the costs of the services.
- Participatory approaches should be used as appropriate.
- Activities should be undertaken and managed at the level closest to the customer that has the ability and resources to do so in a cost-effective manner.
- A clear redistribution of costs (cost sharing) and an optimal mix of financing and service delivery mechanisms should be established.

- Best agricultural practices should be replicated.

Current laws related to the strategic plan

Law on Advisory Services for Agriculture and Rural Development no. 04/L-074 (GZ. No. 04/19 March 2012), entered into force in 2012 and is complete with all by-laws for its implementation, Purpose of the law

- 1) This law regulates the organisation and implementation of the activities of advisory services for agriculture and rural development, relations between interested parties for the purpose of the development of agriculture and rural development in the Republic of Kosovo.
- 2) Raising the general level of farmers' knowledge, training them to manage the farm, increasing farm income, support in solving problems related to production, economic and organisational issues for farm development, conservation of 2 resources natural, environmental, tracking achievements and trends in the EU, based on market requirements.

Other laws relevant to the KASARD Strategic Plan

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- Law No. 03/L-098 on Agriculture and Rural Development (Official Gazette No. 56 / 27 July 2009);
- Law No. 04/L-090 on Amendment and Supplementation of Law No. 03/L-098 on Agriculture and Rural Development (Official Gazette No. 28 / 16 October 2012)
- Law No. 2003/3 on Forests of Kosovo (Official Gazette No. 34 / 01 August 2008)
- Law No. 03/L-029 on Agricultural Inspection (Official Gazette No. 45 / 12 January 2009);
- Law No. 02/L-26 on Agricultural Land (Official Gazette No. 13 / 01 June 2007);
- Law No. 02/L-9 on Irrigation of Agricultural Lands (Official Gazette No. 11 / 01 April 2007);
- Law No. 03/L-198 on Amendment and Supplementation of Law No. 02/L-9 on Irrigation of Agricultural Lands (Official Gazette No. 77 / 16 August 2010);
- Law No. 2004/13 on Seedling Material (Official Gazette No. 22 / 01 March 2008);
- Law No. 2003/5 on Seeds (Official Gazette No. 8 / 15 December 2006);
- Law No. 2004/21 on Veterinary Medicine (Official Gazette No. 18 / 01 November 2007);
- Law No. 04/L-191 on Livestock (Official Gazette No. 25 / 08 July 2013);
- Law No. 02/L-10 on Animal Care (Official Gazette No. 5 / 01 October 2006);
- Law No. 03/L-214 on Environmental Impact Assessment (Official Gazette No. 83 / 29 October 2010);
- Law No. 03/L-025 on Environmental Protection (Official Gazette No. 50 / 06 April 2009);
- Law No. 08/L-120 on Food, (Official Gazette No. 23 / 12 August 2022)
- Law No. 04/L-085 on Organic Agriculture (Official Gazette No. 28 / 16 October 2012);
- Law No. 02/L-111 on Beekeeping (Official Gazette No. 35 / 15 August 2008)
- Law No. 02/L-8 on Wines (Official Gazette No. 9 / 01 February 2007)
- Law No. 04/L-019 on Amendment and Supplementation of Law No. 02/L-8 on Wines (Official Gazette No. 13 / 01 September 2011).
- Law No. 06/L-034 on Consumer Protection (Official Gazette No. 11 / 14 June 2018)

2 Methodology

The methodology for the preparation of the Strategic Plan of the Kosovo Advisory System for Agriculture and Rural Development (KASARD) 2023-2027 is elaborated below.

The strategic plan was drawn up by the Working Group (WG) with the support of the experts engaged by Caritas Switzerland within the programme "Sustainable and comprehensive rural economic development (SIREN)". During the drafting process, practices of several European countries were used: Hungary, Slovenia, Austria, which are attached as annexes to this document.

In order to incorporate experience from other EU countries, best practices from individual EU member states such as Austria have been incorporated by the consultant. This approach allows everyone to learn from the experiences in other countries.

3 Background and the current situation

Stakeholders in advisory and support services

Farmers rightly see advisory and support services as an efficient way to help improve knowledge, efficiency, effectiveness, productivity, profitability and contribution to the good of the family and community. Planners and policy makers see advisory and support services as a policy instrument to increase agricultural production, achieve national food security and, at the same time, help alleviate unemployment and poverty in rural areas. In addition, some economists see advisory and support services as a policy instrument that will contribute to human capital development and economic growth, and therefore, the resources allocated to advisory services are seen as economic investment, which should produce competitive economic returns.

Agricultural and rural development is no longer just a matter of increasing food production and agriculture; other factors need to be addressed by policy makers and support service agencies in the formulation and implementation of agricultural and rural development policies. These issues include population and environmental concerns, their powerful implications for how support services should be organized and financed such as research, rural education, and advisory and support services.

The population growth implies both an increase in the demand for food as well as more pressure on fragile and marginal lands, increased land fragmentation, and larger numbers of landless people in rural areas. Population pressure and increasing demand for food are commonly associated with soil degradation and pollution of soil, water, and other natural resources. Therefore, advisory services have a central role to play in disseminating sustainable agriculture technology.

3.1 SWOT analysis

Subject	Strengths - Internal Factors	Weaknesses - Internal Factors
Human capital / staff	Experienced, educated and professional staff with many years of working experience	Need for more coordination within MAFRD
		Low number of human resources/employees in DATS / MIACs
		Too few female advisors
		Difficulty in recruiting new personnel
Skills	Most agricultural skills available	ITC is not available, eventually also not digitalisation in agriculture
	Good knowledge of the conditions on the ground by the municipal councilors for agriculture and rural development	.

Certificate of European Consultants in Rural Areas	Municipal agr. advisors are certified (but not the Directors of Dep. of Agriculture at municipalities, as politically nominated)	DATS staff not certified as not involved in counselling. Municipal advisors and others certified, but more in pedagogical items than in technical ones
Certification of private sector stakeholders	Licensed companies for providing consulting services	.
CECRA certification		Not in place
Office		Limited space within MAFRD, no own meeting room
Logistic & cars	In principle available and budgeted	Lack of logistics, i.e. cars to make sudden field visits
Electronic devices	Municipal advisors are equipped with computers, and some equipment to facilitate activities in the field	Lack of laptops and other equipment
Budget	Having EUR 500.000 for different support activities like facilitating inputs from associations, private advisors, etc.	Insufficient budget
New advisory strategy	More client oriented, based on need assessments	.
Organisational structure		Advisors spend more than 80% of their working time dealing with non-counselling tasks, which are related to the realisation of other administrative tasks of other units in the MAFRD, while municipal councilors deal with 90% of their working time for administrative activities of the municipality
Legal framework	Existence of relevant legislation	Limited implementation of the Law on Agricultural Advisory Services
Public and private cooperation	Potential to facilitate services	Limited understanding (of cooperation with private sector)
	Existence of producer associations (interested to cooperate)	.
Monitoring & Evaluation	Municipal advisors report to Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development	SMART indicators for monitoring are most likely missing, external evaluation is missing. Not all municipal councilors report; there is irregular and outdated reporting
Reach out	Potential to reach out to more farmers and stakeholders through municipal advisors	.

	Cooperation and good communication with agricultural producers	.
	Opportunities - External Factors	Threats - External Factors
Policy		Inconsistent agricultural policy, in support of the advisory system of Kosovo, according to EU standards
		Difficulties in the financial support of the advisory system of Kosovo.
Legal framework	Implementation of the Law on Agricultural Advisory Services; completion and amendment of the Law on Agricultural Advisory Services and administrative instructions	.
Budget	Budget from Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development, MAFRD and donor support	Insufficient budget and lack of support from donors
External advisors, NGOs, farmers / producers associations and others	Large number of unemployed agricultural/agronomic personnel with higher education could be subcontracted	Certification easy obtainable. Other experts might be qualified but not certified
	If certified, they can implement advisory services if hired by DATS (classical private public partnership); 400 advisors are certified	.
Cooperation	Cooperation with neighbouring countries and EU Member States by agreements	.
	Educational, professional and scientific research institutions in the field of agriculture and other professional institutions open to cooperate	.
Clients	Willingness to keep records on the farm	Limited trustworthiness of farmers to advisors
	Willingness of clients for long-life learning in agriculture and others	.

3.2 Public advisory services

The structure and organisation of the advisory system of Kosovo for SARD according to Law No. 04/L-074 looks as follows.

The Kosovo Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development, which organises the advisory service according to the law, the requirements of farmers and the community, is responsible for the activities of the advisory service. Public advisory services are provided free of charge.

Public advisory services are organized in:

- Central level;
- Municipal level.

Ad central level

The central level is organized within MAFRD through DATS. The role of DATS is to:

- 1) To manage and coordinate the provision of extension service and training based on (say) the three-year work programme for the MIAC advisers, to be able to ensure the sustainable realisation of all activities of transfer of knowledge (technical and financial);
- 2) Proposes, drafts and ensures the implementation of legislation in the field of advisory services for Livestock and Rural Development.
- 3) Proposes, drafts and ensures the implementation of documents, policies/strategies in the field of advisory services for agriculture and rural development.
- 4) To programme all work activities, regarding:
 - a) Identification of needs;
 - b) Preparation of proposals;
 - c) Drawing up action plans; and
 - d) Preparation of activities according to the agricultural calendar and requirements from the field;
- 5) To provide support to the public advisors of the NCIC (as well as to the private advisors), to ensure that they have the capacity to inform, train and motivate all categories of farmers (leaders, followers and others);
- 6) To monitor and evaluate all activities, based on the monthly reporting form (with IT support to bring together all activities of MIAC and all types of beneficiaries, such as FLs, FPs, sub-sectors, age, etc.);
- 7) Compile, manage and distribute advisory information, using different media;
- 8) To provide quality control, performance and impact assessment;
- 9) To provide information in the design of agricultural and rural development policies;
- 10) To coordinate all the activities of actors of advisory services for agriculture and rural development;
- 11) To communicate and provide information about consulting services;
- 12) To coordinate the activities of international donors; AND
- 13) To compile and update the register of all providers of advisory services in agriculture and rural development, i.e. certified agricultural advisors, (public and private) and licensed companies;

The department is organised in 3 divisions

- 1) Division of technical services
- 2) Division of field extension services
- 3) Division for information, cooperation, monitoring and training

Ad municipal level

The municipal level is formed by the Municipal Advisory Information Centres (MICAs). It is planned to empower all MIACs for use by farmers and the rural community. MIACs are well equipped with information and materials for providing extension advice, as well as they are equipped with the basic supporting infrastructure (financed by MAFRD and possible donors).

Each MIAC is equipped with at least one agricultural advisor to meet the demands of farmers.

The intended beneficiaries of the MIACs are:

- 1) Commercial farmers;
- 2) Potential commercial farmers; and
- 3) Subsistence farmers who currently do not have a satisfactory income from agriculture.

MIACs offer advice and training to farmers and members of the rural community. This includes imparting knowledge about new agricultural production and marketing technologies in all agricultural sectors. As well as assistance in completing applications for direct payments (subsidies) and grants financed by the Kosovo budget and donor/EU development programs, as well as the availability of written advisory materials.

The MIAC are organized and coordinated by the DATS. The main tasks of MIAC will be in the realisation of these activities:

- 1) Visiting farmers to offer advice at the scene;
- 2) Identification of information needs, as well as drafting and distribution of informational materials;
- 3) Organisation of seminars, demonstrations, agricultural exhibitions, etc.
- 4) Providing specialized advice (related to animal husbandry, plant protection, processing and rural development);
- 5) Support for the Payments Agency through the provision of advice on the MAFRD 2022-28 and grants and direct payments, informational activities, supporting farmers in completing applications, etc.;
- 6) Organisation of study visits inside and outside Kosovo to share experiences and observe the best practices in agriculture and rural development;
- 7) Raising awareness of advisory services within the municipality to ensure that clients of the advisory service have access to advice and information to meet their needs;
- 8) Identifying lessons learned and human resources developed in the municipality that may be useful to others and assisting in the distribution of such information within the municipality;
- 9) Support in ensuring legislation and opportunities for farmers to receive business loans;
- 10) Support of agricultural production marketing, prices, markets and production standards according to market requirements, etc.;
- 11) Maintenance of the registration book for all farmers who have benefited from the support of advisory services; and
- 12) Conveying information to farmers through IT and mobile phone applications.

Both levels are regulated by law and administrative instructions.

3.3 Private providers of advisory services

Private advisory services for agriculture and rural development, based on Article 8 of Law No. 04/L-074, are provided by private advisors, advisory companies, NGOs, veterinary stations, farmers' associations, agro-processors, agricultural input representatives, etc.

Private providers provide services to farmers in direct and indirect ways. They are a good source for the transfer of knowledge and information, but the provision of such a service needs to be well organized and coordinated with public advisory services in order not to duplicate activities and efforts. This can be done with a better transparency and coordination, as well as by forwarding the reports about the activities developed in the DATS, according to the Administrative Instructions based on the Law on Advisory Services in Agriculture and Rural Development.

The private advisory service is funded by income generated from services provided (also for MAFRD) and other funding.

The private consulting services include the following activities:

- 1) Advisory service for agriculture and rural development can also be provided by private advisors as natural and legal persons
- 2) Private advisory service is financed by the income generated by the services provided and by other donations.
- 3) Private consulting services include the following activities:

The main activities of private sector advisors for agriculture are:

- 1) Advise the farmers according to the priorities that they have determined in the farm and association;
- 2) Introduce the best practices of farm business management, sustainable agricultural practices and rural non-agricultural enterprises;
- 3) Stimulates farmers to use methods for agricultural production that enable the preservation of natural resources and soil fertility through the implementation of ecological agriculture and the increase in the level of quality and quantity of agricultural crops and rural products;
- 4) Encourage farmers to adapt production to the natural conditions and circumstances of regions and markets;
- 5) Encourage and support farmers in their organisation in cooperatives and associations, as well as support them with advisory services for agriculture and rural development;
- 6) Supports the ministry in the framework of the implementation of the programme for rural development and measures for direct payments through the provision of relevant advice, information activities, support to farmers regarding the preparation of applications;
- 7) Offers advice on the use of new technologies;
- 8) Supports the distribution of information on agriculture and rural development for farmers and the community in rural areas;
- 9) Supports the process of cooperation between farmers.

The private advisory services for agriculture and rural development can provide advisory services without having a certification – as long as they will get paid by the clients and not by MAFRD.

3.4 Certification of advisors and others

Certification

The CECRA (Certificate of European Consultants in Rural Areas) is a certificate demonstrating the appropriate competence for rural advisory services. Currently, Kosovo is using its own certification scheme based on law and administrative orders for advisory services and everybody is entitled to get certified, if well qualified. In mid-term it might be worthwhile to consider adopting CECRA in Kosovo too, to have the same advisory qualities like consultants in other EU countries.

A change towards CECRA would be feasible.

Advisory and support services from a strategic point of view

The advisory and support services address the following strategic objectives:

- Enhance the overall viability of agricultural / rural enterprises and the sustainability of the whole sector.
- Help individual rural enterprises coalesce into a cohesive group with a shared vision in terms of improved competitiveness and target markets.
- Provide support to farmers in lowering unit costs of production, transport, and marketing.
- Encourage and facilitate innovation and diversification at the enterprise level.
- Support producers in increasing marketable surpluses.
- Facilitate the conceptualisation, and establishment of new agro- and rural enterprises.
- Provide support to lower entry barriers related to capital, technology, information and market access.
- Provide support in attracting private capital as well as international donor resources;
- Strengthen backward linkages to suppliers as well as forward linkages to buyers.

However, the effectiveness of advisory services depends primarily on the prior achievement of a number of “necessary” conditions, including:

- Public sector has to create a policy and regulatory environment that catalyses private sector initiative.
- Availability of appropriate human resources and adequate infrastructure to disseminate agricultural knowledge and expertise.
- Availability of inputs, including access to credit where required, for credit worthy businesses, adequate transport system so that access and links between producers and consumers exist.
- Availability of appropriate innovations (technology) that address the primary concerns of farming and rural communities (end-users of advisory services).
- Effective operation of price mechanisms and markets.
- Farmers should be categorized according to their needs.
- Perceived and real needs of different farmer groups should be identified accurately; advisory programmes need to be designed to meet the requirements of each group and to take into account the resources available.
- Links between client groups and advisers need to be strengthened, to ensure that the advisers meet farmers' needs.
- Two-way links between research and farmers need to be reinforced by making effective use of advisory organisations.

- Agricultural scientific community needs to understand that advising requires skills that are different from, but equivalent to, those needed in research.
- Issues of rural development and its relationship with agricultural advisory services need to be addressed.
- MAFRD needs to determine whether the widespread use of information technology is practical and, if it is, to prepare a programme that fully utilizes this powerful tool.

Organizational system challenges

One of the main issues regarding the organizational structure that needs to be addressed involves overcoming the non-efficient operation of the advisory system between the municipalities and the MAFRD. Therefore, the purpose of this plan is that the municipal advisors should be operated under the DATS/MAFRD. Currently, municipal advisors perform services for municipalities, implementing activities related to advisory services as secondary activities since they are financed by the municipal budgets.

Through this strategic plan, the MAFRD would like to transfer the municipal agricultural advisors under the MAFRD.

The municipalities are interested in transferring their agricultural advisers to the MAFRD, if the MAFRD would employ with its own budget. If this were to happen, municipalities could immediately hire new staff to continue working on municipal agendas. Since this work is very much related to their commitment during the process of applying for subsidies for farmers under the national support scheme, no one can have a serious interest in doing this.

This system urgently needs a sustainable solution for the agricultural advisory service provided by the MAFRD, and this should be enabled through the transfer of municipal advisors or the recruitment of new advisors at the local level.

Whichever of the proposed solutions is chosen for municipal advisors, they must be offered the necessary conditions for implementing advisory service activities; they must have offices in municipalities with the necessary equipment.

The last point to be noted here is the public-private partnership. The strategy mentions incorporating more local knowledge from private consultants, associations, NGOs and other stakeholders.

To overcome the knowledge gap or eventually better the problem of advisory capacities between the DATS and the solution needed by farmers and rural enterprises, specific tasks should be given to associations and other private sector parties and financed from the budget of the MAFRD, as associations can offer advice to farmers in the sector. Therefore, qualified associations must have the capacities, sectoral knowledge and the trust of farmers or rural businesses.

Farmers' associations can provide advice on production technologies including products, plant protection and post-harvest handling; inform about production standards; and organize information sessions and even study visits. The approach would be similar at DATS and MAIC, i.e. counseling through theoretical training in classrooms, practical advice on farms, preparation of (electronic) brochures, organization of field days and eventually annual conferences.

This strategic plan also contains an annex with best practices from EU agricultural advisory systems, which may include topics and approaches that could be implemented under this plan.

4 Strategic Plan for the Advisory Service in Kosovo

4.1 Target groups

All natural and legal persons engaged and interested in agriculture, forestry and rural development activities in Kosovo.

Explanatory footnotes

- *Farmers, forest owners, agribusiness entrepreneurs (incl. input suppliers, regardless of micro-enterprises or big ones, collection and processing centres) are considered as clients of advisory services; also young people and women. Also foreigners in case they are interested in local agriculture.*
- *It is assumed that the majority of clients are smallholder farmers, but big farmers or forest owners are not excluded.*
- *Furthermore, agricultural activities take usually place in rural areas, but upcoming activities like urban farming is also part of agriculture and therefore urban areas will be covered by the services as well.*
- *Registered NGOs and associations are legal persons.*

4.2 Vision

The development and advancement of the Kosovo Advisory System for Agriculture and Rural Development offers easily accessible, quality and timely advisory services. Advisory services will be aligned with the standards of the EU Farm Advisory System (EU FAS).

Explanatory footnote

- *As Kosovo is approaching the EU, all activities should be oriented towards EU requirements. It is possible to start with “light versions”, which can be improved over time; but no activities should head into the opposite direction as indicated by the EU.*

4.3 Mission

The mission of KASARD is to support and promote the transfer of knowledge and technologies to increase productivity, quality, food safety standards, environmental protection, sustainable development, in accordance with the objectives of Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development and the alignment with the Common Agricultural Policies of the EU.

Explanatory footnote

- The consultant does not agree with the sentence “The mission of KASARD is in line with the objectives of the ARDP and the EU Common Agricultural Policy” as it is just a non-verified statement and rather meaningless.

4.4 Objectives

The Strategic Plan of the Advisory System of Kosovo for agriculture and rural development has the following strategic objectives;

- 1) Increasing the number of farmers and other actors who have access to and receive advice on agriculture, forestry and rural development;
- 2) Adaptation of advisory services, according to the needs and requirements of farmers, forest owners and other interested parties and according to the policies and instructions of the ministry;
- 3) Promoting and assisting the implementation of national development policies, national and international programs in support of agriculture, forestry and rural development; and
- 4) Raising the capacities and advancing the public-private partnership in the improvement of advisory services

Explanatory footnotes

- *It was discussed in the WG that DATS should not see itself as a Project Implementing Unit; all departments are obliged to follow the official strategy and assist to implement it. - DATS has a pure advisory role, meaning that it has to inform farmers and other stakeholders about existing and upcoming support programmes but the DATS is not involved in e.g. direct payments – except as advisors to farmers. Any involvement would be a conflict of interest as advisory and inspection activities cannot be in one hand.*
- *As the objective is to increase the number of farmers and other actors who have access to and receive advice on agriculture and rural development, it would need a SMART indicator to follow up if there was an impact.*
- *The needs and demands of farmers, forest owners and other stakeholders include information about support schemes.*

Strategic action plan

The strategy deals with the appropriate personnel and material capacities of the Public Agricultural Advisory Service.

The first step in establishing it in accordance with the Law is the implementation of a training programmes for the certification of agricultural advisers, followed by continuous annual training of agricultural advisers to improve their knowledge and skills.

The next step is the strengthening of the Agricultural Advisory Service system in Kosovo at all levels of action, in accordance with the law, taking into account the state of agricultural production and the needs of the field. On the basis of this as above, the description of the work of agricultural advisers is defined according to specialized fields and the number of agricultural advisers in Kosovo, who were needed for the implementation of the Strategy, was determined.

Important for the work of the Agricultural Advisory Service is the connection with research-educational and professional institutions to transfer research achievements and new technologies in agricultural production, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the direction of the development of primary research, in agriculture in towards meeting the needs of the agricultural economy and producers.

Promotion of advisory services through the creation and development of the Advisory Service Website and the creation of the Agricultural Advisory Service bulletin is very important for raising the capacities of the Public Agricultural Advisory Service.

Measures to be taken

The basic mechanism for the development of the functional system of the Agricultural Advisory Service System in the Republic of Kosovo is the implementation of the Law:

- Raising and strengthening the capacities of agricultural advisers,
- Creation of an agricultural advisory service with material and personnel capacity that corresponds to the needs of the field.
- Establishment of stable financing of the service from all levels of the organisation.

An important mechanism in raising the capacities of the Agricultural Advisory Service is the connection with scientific - research and professional institutions to transfer research achievements and new technologies in agricultural production through demonstration farms, field days, etc.

4.5 Rerganisation

Plan for the reorganization and strengthening of the Department of Advisory Services for Agriculture and Rural Development 2023-27

The reorganization plan envisages changing the name of the department and bringing it in compliance with basic documents such as the law and the strategy. Thus, the DATS will hereinafter be called the Department for Advisory Services for Agriculture and Rural Development (DASARD). The same change was also proposed under the law on advisory services, which is in the Assembly. This amendment envisages the possibility of transferring municipal public advisers within the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development or through procedures to recruit new advisers in municipalities as staff of the Ministry of Agriculture.

In this reorganisation plan, only the changes that will occur are presented;

Public counseling services are organized and extend to:

- Central level
- Municipal level

The central level is organized in the MAFRD through the Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development. Another change is the planning of the opening of regional offices within the central level, where 7 coordinators are expected to be placed in the 7 regional offices who will organize and coordinate the field work with the KBPBs in the municipalities.

The description of duties remains the same as above for the central level, the municipal level as well as the private sector for advice.

The systematisation of jobs for the Department of the Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development will be done with the Regulation for the internal organisation and systematisation of jobs in the MAFRD, which is in process.

The regional coordinators (7) will have the following main tasks:

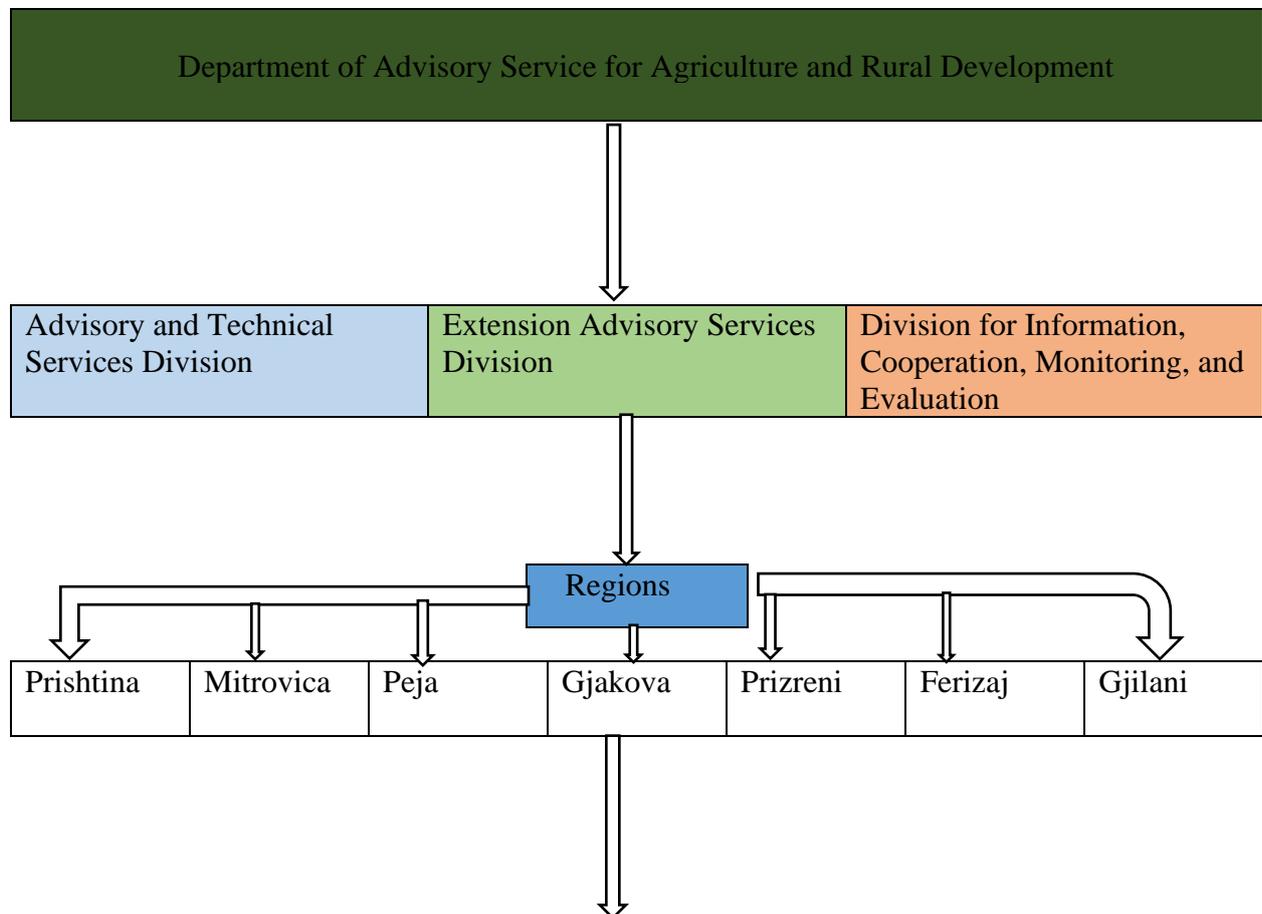
- Coordination of activities with municipal councilors
- Providing information to municipal councilors.
- Management of necessary trainings at the regional level.
- Quality control monitoring for public and private consultants operating in the municipalities it covers.
- Participates in the drafting of the annual work plans for the municipalities that he coordinates and the plan for raising the capacities of field advisors according to market requirements.
- Reporting to the Department of Agricultural and Rural Development Advisory Services, specifically the Extension Advisory Services Division

The Department of the Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development has identified for use three training centres for farmers and councils within the framework of cooperation:

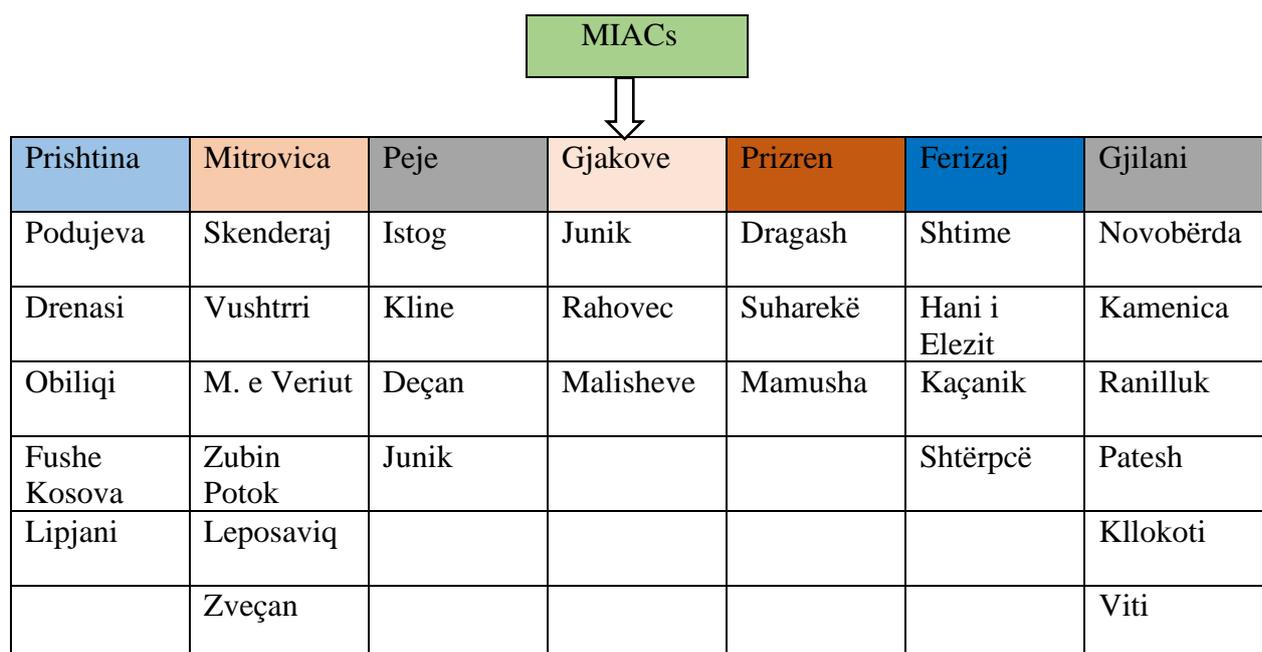
- Training centre in Lipjan
- Training centre in Peja
- Training centre in Rahovec

Organogramm

1. Central level



2. Municipal level



The Department of Advisory and Technical Services within MAFRD has to facilitate all services described under the objectives. Facilitation does not mean implementation, but to make sure that someone is implementing the requested services. Majority of services will be provided by ministry and municipality staff, however, services can be outsourced to other certified persons, companies, associations and institutions. In that case, when these others provide services for MAFRD, they have to be financially compensated for their work through the Department of Advisory and Technical Services' budget.

Advisors being posted in rural areas, currently in the MIACs, can always request support from more specialised institution; e.g., universities, research stations, but also private sector

Structure and organisation of the National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development

The development of the National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development includes the cooperation between different actors that are directly and indirectly involved in agriculture (see the chart below), and they are:

- 1) DATS/MAFRD;
- 2) Municipal Advisory Information Center (MAIC) for agriculture and rural development;
- 3) Private providers of advisory services;
- 4) Agency for Agriculture Development (Payment Agency);
- 5) Faculty of Agriculture, University of Prishtina;
- 6) Agricultural Institute of Kosovo, Peja;
- 7) Kosovo Forest Agency (KFA)
- 8) Department for Viticulture and Winemaking;
- 9) Food and Veterinary Agency of Kosovo;
- 10) Vocational agricultural schools;
- 11) Agri-food businesses;
- 12) Rural businesses, e.g. product suppliers, goods collection centers, etc.; and
- 13) Farmers and the rural community, including Local Action Groups.

Additionally, the municipal advisers for agriculture and rural development are part of the advisory services located within the Municipal Information Advisory Centres (MIACs) (and financed by the municipalities). Despite being in administrative issues under the municipalities, they are providing advisory services based on instructions from the Department of Advisory and Technical Services within MAFRD.

For a better cooperation between the central and municipal levels, 7 new regional coordinators will be employed in the MAIC; these regional coordinators will be funded by the MAFRD and this staff will coordinate and advise at the municipal level. As a medium-term goal, municipal advisors will be transferred under the MAFRD as foreseen in the Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development.

In addition to the permanent staff in the Department of Advisory Services within the MAFDR and in the Municipal Advisory Information Centers, the MAFDR may also hire qualified experts temporarily from abroad if there is a lack of sufficient capacity.

Advising methods

- Approaching individuals
- Approaching groups
- Mass methods

Advising approaches

- a) Direct advices, face-to-face on the farm or in office and by telephone / virtual meeting
- b) Group counselling – mainly in the field
- c) Practical demonstrations and field days organised in the field with farmers
- d) Professional lectures and workshops about special topics
- e) Demonstrations that aim to introduce GAP as well as achievements of technology
- f) Demonstration and experimental plots, at state institutes or at model farmers (without additional payments therefore)
- g) Farming circles²
- h) Training seminars and information meetings in presence or by webinars
- i) MAFRD / DATS website
- j) Agricultural platforms and new media
- k) Unofficial consultative councils to every municipal office
- l) Brochures, instruction book, manual, leaflets and other publications, which contain advices and information about different topics.

All providers of advisory services for agriculture and rural development in their work are obliged to adhere to the advisory work methods determined under Law No. 04/L-074 and the sublegal acts deriving from it.

Subjects / topics be covered by the agricultural advisory service (not exhaustive list)

- Plant production & horticulture
- Animal husbandry
- Aquaculture
- Beekeeping
- Agro-processing
- Organic agriculture – sustainable agriculture – regenerative agriculture – environmental issues
- Forestry and agro-forestry (including NTFP, MAPs, etc.)
- Agritourism
- Economy and finance (farm management, agro-finance, insurance, bookkeeping and accounting, etc.)
- Diversification of rural activities

² The purpose of "Farming circles" is to spread among farmers useful information and to promote best practices in the field of agriculture and the application and implementation of projects as well as to increase the efficiency of advisory services. In farming circles are involved active farmers from the relevant region; they disseminate information and innovations news among other farmers. DATS will send information to farmer cycles' participants about important issues for farmers, including for the forthcoming support schemes as well as for upcoming trainings, seminars, information events, agricultural exhibitions, meetings with national and international experts and about forthcoming consultancy days and others events. The information is sent by email and SMS (short text messages) or by e.g. WhatsApp groups.

- Renewable energy (biomass, biogas, solar/photovoltaic)
- Food safety
- Legal services
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
- Digital agriculture
- Agricultural innovations
- Urban farming / agriculture
- • Agricultural insurance
- Acquaintance with the criteria, application procedures and implementation of grants and subsidies
- Other subjects/topics according to requests.

Financing

The financing of Advisory Services is done from the budget of the MAFRD and donors. In the next chapter Action Plan a matrix is elaborated showing not only activities / projects, indicators and timeframe but also the estimated budget by activity / project. Furthermore there is an overall indicative budget for the coming years up to 2027.

Explanatory footnotes

- *Currently there are 13 staff members within the department and 38 within the municipalities. 7 coordinators will join by early 2023.*
- *The Working Group wants to stick to certification in principal; this makes sense if all activities financed under agriculture advisory services will have to be performed by certified advisors only; that would be valid also for e.g. university professors.*
- *This strategy papers deals with the strategy of the Department of Advisory and Technical Services within MAFRD. Therefore it has to explain the organisation between the department and sub-ordinated units / institutions like the Municipal Information Centres, where the municipal agricultural advisors are working under the MAFRD. All other cooperation agreements like with the Kosovo Institute of Agriculture in Peja should be summarized under AKIS. The Department of Advisory and Technical Services is part of AKIS.*
- *Providing advisory services to a group of farmers will be more efficient.*
- *Services will make use of digital tools, as they are cheaper to produce and can be adopted quicker to new circumstances.*
- *Websites have to be easily build up so that most members of DATS can adopt the content.*
- *Veterinary services - if having medicinal background - are not implemented by the Department of Advisory and Technical Services. However, general advise on livestock about fodder composition and fodder requirements will be provided.*
- *Advisors being posted in rural areas, currently in the Municipality Information Centres, can always request support from more specialised institution; e.g., universities, research stations, but also private sector – as long as being part of the future AKIS.*

4.5.1 Monitoring & Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of KASARD

Monitoring (and evaluation) is an essential part of the management process. Systematic monitoring of activities by KASARD will:

- 1) Review the performance of KASARD in achieving its general strategic objectives and operational plan;
- 2) Identify the necessary changes in the operational plan at the municipal level;
- 3) Support the process of planning and updating the services of KASARD and the activities of officials and experts;
- 4) Support management decisions;
- 5) Control the use of resources related to the provision of advisory services;
- 6) Provide transparency and responsibility for the implementation of the activities of KASARD; and
- 7) Enable the identification of problems/errors earlier, so that their resolution (overcoming) can be managed in an efficient and timely manner.

Responsible for monitoring

The Division for Information, Cooperation, Monitoring and Evaluation through the monitoring and evaluation officer is responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of the Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development and the strategic plan of the KASARD. The division in question is responsible for supervising the systematic monitoring of all activities of the DATS on behalf of the Director of the Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development. In addition, the MAFRD through the Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development can contract independent, professional third-party monitors to carry out monitoring and evaluation activities.

Tasks of the Division for Information, Cooperation, Monitoring and Evaluation:

- 1) To create an effective monitoring and reporting mechanism in accordance with the requirements of monitoring and reporting and ensure the implementation of the Strategic Plan of the advisory system for agriculture and rural development.
- 2) To prepare regular annual reports for the implementation of the strategic document
- 3) Review the performance of Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development in achieving its general strategic objectives and operational plan;
- 4) Identify the necessary changes in the operational plan at the municipal level;
- 5) Support the process of planning and updating the services of Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development and the activities of officials and experts;
- 6) Support management decisions;
- 7) Control the use of resources related to the provision of advisory services;
- 8) Provide transparency and responsibility for the implementation of the activities of Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development; and
- 9) Enable the identification of problems/errors earlier, so that their resolution (overcoming) can be managed in an efficient and timely manner.

Impact monitoring

Impact monitoring is carried out at two levels:

- 1) Progress towards achieving the strategic objectives of Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development ; and

- 2) Progress towards achieving the objectives in the operational plan of the Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development for the provision of advisory activities and training through the MIACs.

Monitoring tools

These monitoring tools are used:

- 1) Incoming and outgoing administrative correspondence that is registered by Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development, MAFRD;
- 2) Reports of field visits to the place of the event;
- 3) Studies;
- 4) Different questionnaires;
- 5) Analysis/basic information;
- 6) Surveys;
- 7) Reports on international visits/studies;
- 8) Budget and finance reports;
- 9) Ad hoc reports;
- 10) Monthly, quarterly and annual reports (of staff); and
- 11) Monitoring indicators, including the assessment of the impact on the beneficiary.

The commission for the supervision of the advisory service for agriculture and rural development

MAFRD is responsible for the supervision of the advisory service for agriculture and rural development; the relevant legal basis is the Law on Advisory Services and the administrative instruction 11/2015.

The commission consists of all the public-private partners of the KASARD and is competent to ensure the supervision of the entire KASARD, including the strategic plan, through the evaluation of monitoring plans and reports as well as their approval.

5 Action Plan 2023 – 2027

This action plan proposes the following activities and projects over the next years. The proposed actions have been discussed in the Working Group based on general observations and needs and also considering the remarks from MAFRD’s approved “Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development 2022 – 2028”. The implementation of this action plan is the responsibility of DASARD in cooperation with stakeholders.

5.1 Action plan in matrix form SMART and preliminary budget

Next page

Action plan with indicators and indicative budget										
Objectives	Projects	Activities	Funding sources	Budget 2023	Budget 2024	Budget 2025	Budget 2026	Budget 2027	Responsible and supporting institutions	Product / outcome
1 Objective - Increasing the number of farmers and other actors who have access to and receive advice on agriculture, forestry and rural development										
1.1 Specific objectives - Development of rural areas through the advancement of advisory services	1) Training of public-private advisors 2) Training and counseling of farmers 3) Publication of brochures 4) Farmer-to-farmer visits 5) Organisation of special trainings / consultations for women farmers and young people	75 public and private advisers; groups of farmers trained; 8 titles of brochures, 24000 copies; 18 visits; farmers advised; organization of trainings for a total of 50 women farmers and young farmers	From the budget of Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development within MAFRD and donors	105 000	105 000	200 000	200 000	200 000	MAFRD and donors	Closing the knowledge gaps of DSHKBZHR by transferring some training and advisory work to the private sector (private advisors, associations, NGOs such as IAKD and other interested parties). The work to be outsourced must be determined, the number of working days must be determined, and a comprehensive fee for the private sector consultant must be determined.
1.2 Specific objectives - Organisation of demonstration plots	1) Identification of farmers and demonstration fields in the framework of municipalities 2) Definition of crops for demonstration fields 3) Institutions responsible for the selection and transfer of fields	21 demonstration areas within the framework of 7 regions, selection of crops for demonstration according to Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development, MIACs, Faculty of Agriculture, FVA, APK, Wineries and Vineyards Authority, etc.	From the budget of Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development within MAFRD and donors	60 000	60 000	50 000	50 000	50 000	MAFRD and donors	
1.3 Specific objectives - Empowerment of women and young farmers	1) Identification of women 2) Organisation of training for women 3) Support through agricultural advices 4) Stimulation of young people to engage in agriculture	50 women farmers receive at least twice a year group trainings and individual on the farm support according to need; 30 trainings through training and education of young farmers	From the budget of Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development within MAFRD and donors	20 000	20 000	20 000	25 000	25 000	MAFRD and donors	

2 Objective - Promotion and assistance in implementation of national development policies, national and international programmes in support of agriculture, forestry and rural development	1									
2.1 Specific Objectives - Advancement I - Information and Communication System for Advisory Services	1) Creation of digital system of reporting forms 2) Creation of database of the advisory system of reporting forms 3) Creation of the Department's website 4) Digital registers of public and private advisors 5) Creation of an electronic and traditional library with relevant articles 6) Securing the necessary facilities for digitisation 7) Creation of an advisory platform accessible by smartphones	1) Functional system in place 2) Database set-up and updated constantly; standardised reports 3) Functionalisation of the web 4) Number of books and electronic articles ready for download on the Department's website	From the budget of Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development within MAFRD and donors	100 000	30 000	30 000	30 000	30 000	MAFRD and donors	A solution that can be implemented and does not exist only on paper like the current one. The intention is that the Department will have advisors in the field, based in the municipal offices, who are directly coordinated and managed by the Department.
2.2 Specific objectives - Strengthening the monitoring and evaluation system within Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development	1) Preparation of monitoring and evaluation plan 2) Performance measurement through indicators 3) Creation of a monitoring framework 4) Preparation of guidelines for monitoring and evaluation procedures	1 planiti monitorimit dhe vlersimit i pergaditur 2 Matja e performances permes indikatorëve e realizuar 3 korniza monitoruese e krijuar 4 udhezuesi per procedruat e monitorimit dhe vlersimit i pergaditur	From the budget of Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development within MAFRD and donors	15 000	15 000	5 000	5 000	5 000	MAFRD and donors	Clear job descriptions with weekly tasks and SMART indicators to measure the impact of their work

3 Objective - Reorganisation and strengthening of Advisory Services										
3.1 Specific objectives - Capacity building and advancement of public-private partnership in the improvement of advisory services	1) Creation of the Regional Advisory Office 2) Transfer of municipal advisors within the framework of the Department and MAFRD 3) Advancement of the process and certification of agricultural advisors in accordance with EU rules (CECRA) 4) Advancement of the licensing process of legal entities which offer advisory services 5) Supplement to the amendment of Law No. 04/L-074 for Advisory Services and by-laws	7 Regional Advisory Offices created and functional; 38 municipal Advisors transferred to the Department and MAFRD; training plan for harmonised certification; advisors certified in accordance with EU rules (CECRA); advancement of the licensing process of legal entities which offer advisory services in accordance with administrative instructions; Law No. 04/L-074 for Advisory Services for agriculture and rural development and by-laws drafted and approved	From the budget of Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development within MAFRD and donors	60 000	90 000	120 000	150 000	160 000	Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development	
3.2 Specific objectives - Better coordination of the public-private advisory system	1) Strengthening of the Supervisory Commission of national strategy for agriculture and rural development 2) Organisation of regular meetings with NGOs and licensed companies 3) Cooperation with educational and research-scientific institutions	1) Supervisory Committee of National Strategy functions according to the Organization Law 2) regular meetings with NGOs and licensed companies 3) Signing of memorandums of cooperation with educational and scientific research institutions	Buxheti i DSHKBZHR Brenda Buxhetit tË MBPZHR dhe donatoret	20 000	0	0	0	0	Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development	
3.3 Specific objectives - Cooperation of Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development with similar systems in the region and the EU	1) Participating in regular meetings of the Advisory System of the region 2) Application for membership in EU Organisations for advisory services 3) Exchange of evidence and good practices related to the counseling services of different EU countries	Participating in 2 regular meetings of the Advisory System of the Region; application sent for membership in EU Organisations for counseling; carrying out a total of 2 visits to different countries of the region and the EU	From the budget of Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development within MAFRD and donors	50 000	50 000	70 000	70 000	80 000	Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development	Certification process is transparent. Number of well-qualified advisors has been hired and sub-contracted to ensure quality services to farmers, rural entrepreneurs and other stakeholders
3.4 Specific objective - Better logistics for more efficient advisory services	1) Supply of 7 regional offices with inventory and work equipment 2) Supply of consumables to 38 municipal advisors	7 regional offices supplied with inventory and work equipment; supply of consumables to 38 municipal advisors	From the budget of Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development within MAFRD and donors	130 000	70 000	10 000	10 000	10 000	Department of Advisory Service for Agriculture and Rural Development	Advisors can react immediately and go into the field to solve problems there
TOTAL in EUR				560 000	440 000	505 000	540 000	560 000		
Year				2023	2024	2025	2025	2025		

Farmers is used as a synonym of all stakeholders; including forest owners, rural enterprises, etc.

5.2 General indicative budget for DATS

Advisory and Technical Services Department

Table - Budget forecast 2023 – 2027 in EUR

Subjects	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Wages and daily payments	107 253	107 253	107 253	107 253	107 253
Goods and services	502 380	600 000	650 000	700 000	750 000
Donors' contribution	50 000	200 000	200 000	200 000	200 000
Total in EUR	659 633	907 253	957 253	1 007 253	1 057 253

Comments

When thinking out of the box, one could question the overall MAFRD budget for support schemes. Currently around EUR 50 million are spend for farmers. Considering the approach “public money for public goods”, one could think about reducing the grant contribution and invest in green markets for smallholders, in slaughterhouses (poultry and ruminants), weighing stations (suitable for trucks) and many other items – serving public interest.

5.3 Implementation steps and involved risks

The advisory activity in the Republic of Kosovo is regulated by the Law on Agricultural Advisory Services. The mid-term strategy for the provision of advisory services (2023 – 2027) traces the path towards achieving the set goals. It will be implemented gradually in the following years, until 2027. At the end of the period, the success of its implementation and the achievement of the goals will be evaluated. The evaluation of the success of the implementation of the strategy will be made public.

- The establishment of Public Agricultural Advisory Service structures ensures public interest and the possibility of access to Public Service services for all farmers. Its financing is provided from the budget and from other sources.
- The private agricultural advisory service with its specific activities ensures the competitiveness of the offer of advisory services. Private agricultural advisory services are established and financed in accordance with the law. Partnerships can be linked to the Public Agricultural Advisory Service, local communities, business entities and professional institutions, thus providing a public-private partnership.
- Advisory services in their work must adhere to advisory work methods. The work of agricultural advisers with groups of agricultural producers ensures efficiency and work with all categories of the population from rural areas.
- For the most effective implementation of the Strategy, directing the work of the Public Agricultural Advisory Service, proposing corrective measures and solutions to eliminate possible difficulties in its work, as well as cooperation between the Public Agricultural Advisory Service and private agricultural advisory services, is necessary. to form a permanent working body to coordinate the work of agricultural advisory services in the Republic of Kosovo under the MAFRD.

The following risks that can be expected in the implementation of the medium-term strategy for the provision of advisory services in the Republic of Kosovo 2023-2027:

- 1) Incomplete organization and empowerment of the DASARD advisory system;
- 2) Legal framework, non-adoption of the new law;
- 3) Insufficient coordination of stakeholders in the advisory system;
- 4) Limited financial resources;
- 5) Obstacles in administrative procedures.

6 AKIS – an outlook

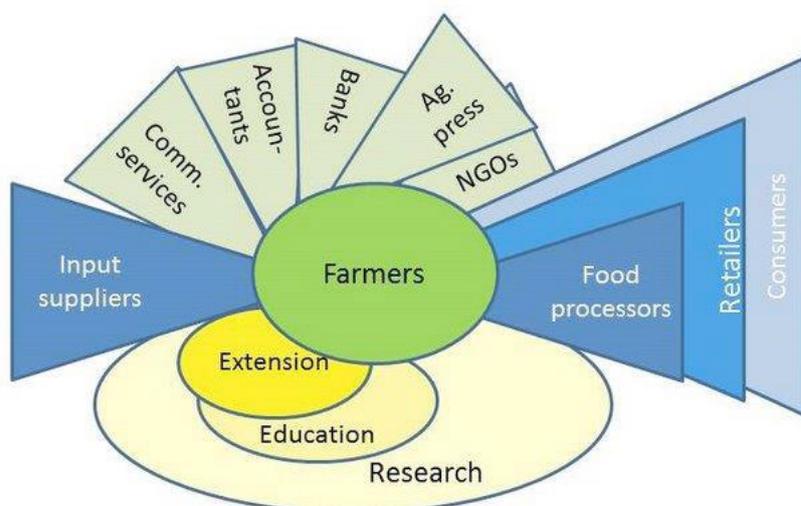
The term Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) describes the whole knowledge exchange system: the ways people and organisations interact within a country or a region. AKIS can include farming practice, businesses, authorities, research, etc. and can vary a lot, depending on the country or sector. A good AKIS takes the technical, organisational and social dimensions into account (“systems approach”), and this helps to bridge the gap between science and practice. Furthermore, AKIS helps to connect people and make sure that knowledge is shared between everyone who uses and produces it. Currently many countries including Kosovo face the problem that agricultural research is done by governmental organisations, but the findings do not trickle down to the farming community, or at least not fast enough.

In essence, what farmers need is timely, tailored, trusted and simple advice, even if they do not constantly need it, and if sometimes they do not always know the value of it until afterwards. For a farmer to take time out of their day is a larger sacrifice than it might seem. Therefore, when they do so to ask advice, this advice needs to be the best it possibly can be, to make the best use of everyone’s time.

Farmers’ organisations in many countries notice that low profitability in farming results in the fact that paying for advice is lower down the priority list for many farmers. This is made worse by the need to pay for advice to comply with rules and fill in forms. With so much advice needed to simply comply with rules, there is little time or resource left to advise farmers on how to improve their systems. They advocate funding from governments to help, but currently this is low on the national/regional political agendas. Careful attention must be paid to the suitability of the advisor involved. Farm advice is increasingly privatised. While this itself might not be bad, the problem is affordability; for sure Kosovo is not ready yet for a purely private advisory service.

An AKIS is often composed by central and provincial governments, the Chamber of Agriculture, various research institutes including agricultural universities, schools, associations and some NGOs are part of the AKIS. The Ministry of Agriculture is taking over the coordination role.

Graph – ARKIS overview³



As already mentioned in the Kosovo Advisory System for Agriculture and Rural Development 2015-20, the former structure and organisation of KASARD could be close to the new one of AKIS.

- 1) DATS, MAFRD;
- 2) Municipal Information Advisory Centres (MIACs) for agriculture and rural development;
- 3) Private advisory service providers;
- 4) Agriculture Development Agency (Paying Agency);
- 5) Faculty of Agriculture, University of Pristina;
- 6) Kosovo Institute of Agriculture, Peja;
- 7) Institute of Viticulture and Enology;
- 8) Kosovo Veterinary and Food Agency;
- 9) Vocational Agriculture Schools;
- 10) Agri-food businesses;
- 11) Rural businesses e.g. input suppliers, commodity collection centres etc.; and
- 12) Farmers and the rural community, including Local Action Groups.

This AKIS could be set up with substantial input from DATS. To coordinate different institutions is always closely linked to financial decisions. In other words, it is the minister at MAFRD who has to take decisions and coordinate the major activities; many of them can be implemented in daily work by DATS. Currently DATS seems to be too weak to coordinate with other state owned institutions, however when the general conditions are fixed by the minister, then DATS could be an efficient driver in improving the advisory service through all partner organisations.

³ i2connect: AKIS and advisory services in Ireland. Report for the AKIS inventory. 2020

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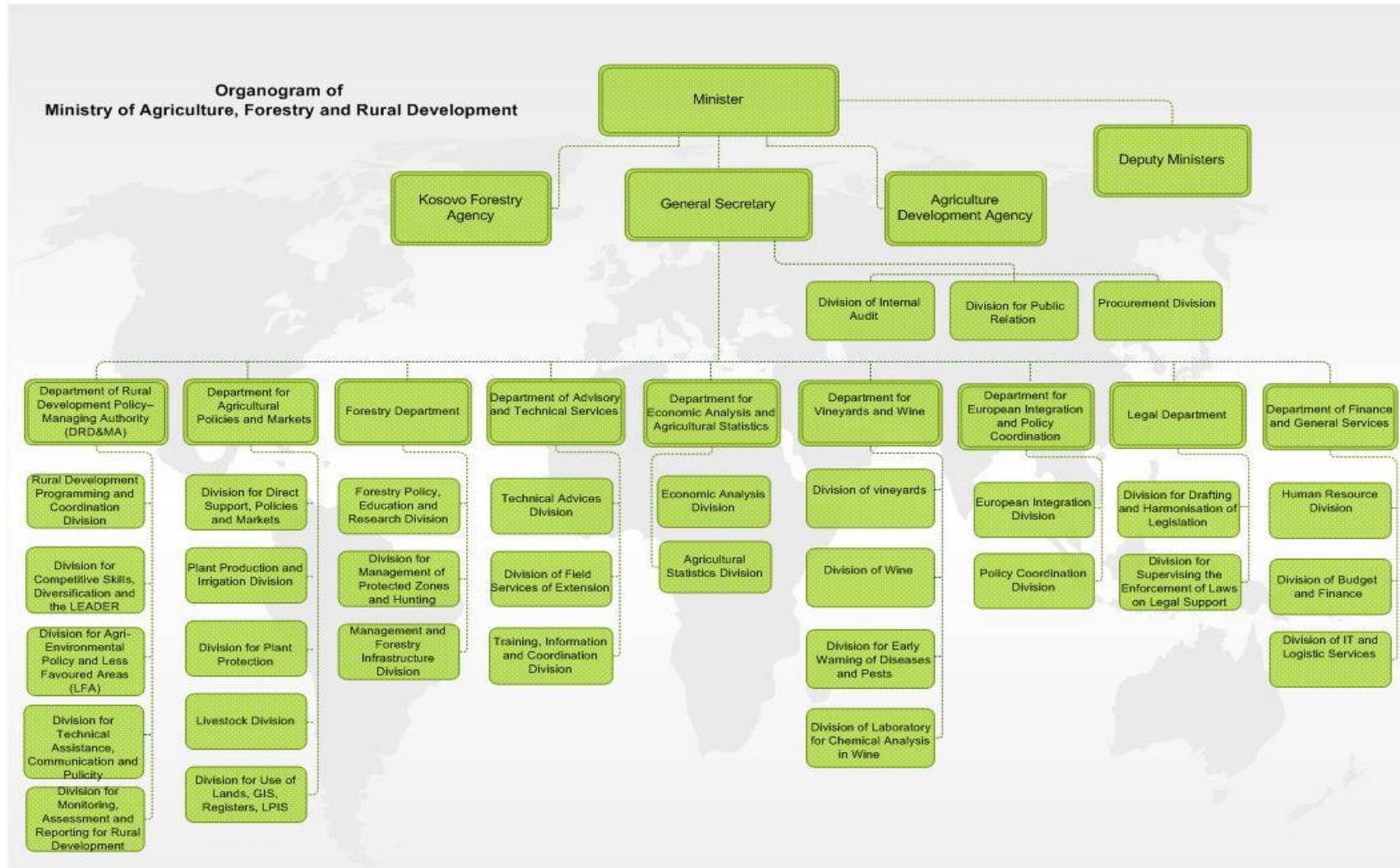
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8 Annex - Members of the Working Group

- 1) Ahmet Zejnullahu- DATS / Department Technical and Advisory Service
- 2) Tahir Halitaj- DATS / Department Technical and Advisory Service
- 3) Hysen Muzliukaj –Kabineti i Ministrit (Cabinet of the Minister)
- 4) Bekim Cikaqi- DATS / Department Technical and Advisory Service
- 5) Hasan Sejfiqaj- DATS / Department Technical and Advisory Service
- 6) Shyhrete Bunjaku –DL / Legal Department
- 7) Kadri Kadriaj - APK / Kosova Forestry Agency
- 8) Lulzim Shamolli - DPZHR / Department of Rural Development Policy
- 9) Skënder Bajrami - DAE&SB / Department of Economic Analysis and Agricultural Statistics
- 10) Kemajl Kadriu - DP / Department of Forestry
- 11) Ylber Kuçin - DVV / Department for Vineyards and Wine
- 12) Arsim Memaj - DPBT / Departement of Agricultural Policies and Markets
- 13) Zekirja Loku - AZHB / Agency for Agricultural Development
- 14) Fadil Musa – Fak. i Bujqësisë / Faculty of Agriculture and Veterinary
- 15) Lamir Thaqi - AUV / Food and Veterinary Agency
- 16) Agim Zuzaku - ESG- kompani këshilluese e licencuar / Licensed Consulting Company
- 17) Betim Bresilla- IBK / Kosovo Agriculture Institute
- 18) Avdyll Feka – QIKK Vushtrri / Municipal Centre for Information and Advices

9 Annex – Organogram MAFRD



10 Annex – Remarks to Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development 2022 – 2028

The consultant comments the relevant phrases in the agricultural strategy, so that these comments could be reflected in the chapter Action Plan 2023 – 2028.

MAFRD: Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development 2022 – 2028

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advisory activities are currently weakly implemented in Kosovo.

- Farmers do not get sufficient advise; more contacts (on the farms) between advisors and farmers are needed

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Under a legal framework in place, the public advisory system is the responsibility of a MAFRD department, which coordinates the activities of the Municipality Centres for Information and Advisory.

Though relatively young, the private advisory system is larger than the public system. Its activity is associated with specific topics for the interest of the farmers: inputs, collection centres, agri-food processing, and grants schemes. Collection centres and food-processing plants provided successful training on market standards and donors' help. A consolidated local organisation with horizontal agricultural-related activities and good experience in providing training for farmers is IADK; nonetheless, its action is more project-oriented, and, as in the case of donors' support, the issue of long-term sustainability is raised.

- It needs a better cooperation with the private advisory system, and that will happen, if the Department of Advisory and Technical Services will outsource and finance private advisory services; that is applied public private partnership.

(Above was agreed in the WG)

The coordination between public and private advisory systems is weak. One of the reasons is the lack of well-organised farmers' associations that could be involved in knowledge transfer for the benefit of their members. The public advisory system cannot correctly address the farmers' needs, as it relies on a limited budget, and there is no monitoring and evaluation system for its activity. At the same time, the private sector is usually linked with specific businesses or helping farmers access grants, while a plan for the accreditation of the advisory providers is missing. Universities and research institutes are weakly involved and not farmer-oriented; the concept of innovation within knowledge transfer is mainly missing. The advisory system is not targeting the category of farmers with the highest potential of applying the newly acquired knowledge: young farmers, and also does not target modern agricultural practices for soil and water protection.

- ❖ For sure well-organised (private) farmers' associations are missing, but more important is that the advisors are not there. Having a budget of EUR 500,000, the Department of Advisory and Technical Services could do at least first steps to reach the farmers.
- No monitoring and evaluation system for the advisory activities are in place; in other words, the municipal advisors do what they want or what their mayors want, but the influence of the Department of Advisory and Technical Services seems to be very limited.

- It needs a plan for the accreditation of the advisory providers; a) how to get accredited, possibly by CECRA (as the EU standard) and b) how to get on board / how to get paid service contracts?

P 24

Weak farm management skills and lack of comprehensive advisory services and regular training

- Farmers do not get sufficient advise; more contacts (on the farms) between advisors and farmers are needed

P 25

Legal basis for training and advisory services completed. (Law No. 04 / L-074 on advisory services for agriculture and rural development with bylaws);

The organisational structure of advisory services is established. Establishment of the Department of Advisory and Technical Services (Decision of OPS-769/12 and 38 Municipal Information Advisory Centres / MIACs);

Lack of support for the MIACs, with the necessary logistics and the introduction of massive use of information technology and the Website of advisory services;

- On the MAFRD website, one can see the departments and when opening the Website of Department of Advisory and Technical Services, one can see only the tasks but no information at all. The website has to be put into practice.

Considered number of trained and certified agricultural advisors (about 400 certified public and private advisors);

The willingness of 38 MIAC and 43 public advisors for agriculture and rural development to cooperate with Department of Advisory and Technical Services;

- It seems that the municipal public advisors are busy with municipal tasks; therefore they seem to be willing to cooperate with DATS, but cooperation is limited.

P 26

Lack of evaluation of training programs and public advisory services, as well as lack of assessment of trainers;

- Impact analyses is missing; e.g. is the farmer earning more money after participating in the training? What has he changed on his farm? Are environmental considerations getting more important? ...

P 27

Lack of sufficient government budget for the sustainable functioning of the Advisory Services;

- ❖ DATS needs EUR 100,00 for the staff within MAFRD and its operation; another EUR 500,000 are available. It is assumed that sufficient budget is available.

Operational budget of DATS cannot be used to finance staff!

P 28

Better cooperation and coordination of activities with private providers/advisors to expand the availability of advisory services in support of the pluralistic advisory service, which can be provided for farmers and the rural community;

- It needs a better cooperation with the private advisory system, and that will happen, if the Department of Advisory and Technical Services will outsource and finance private advisory services; that is applied public private partnership.

Lack of an approved strategy (within MAFRD) for advisory services.

- The consultant is assisting the Working Group to define one; obviously it would be helpful to address all the deficits mentioned in the agricultural strategy.

Risk of perception of advisory services as useless by farmers;

- Farmers hardly ever see a public advisor on their farm. Therefore this perception could be true.

Lack of a certification/accreditation body for the licensing of agricultural advisors

- It needs a plan for the accreditation of the advisory providers; a) how to get accredited, possibly by CECRA (as the EU standard) and b) how to get on board / how to get paid service contracts?

Lack of political will in the restructuring and organisation of Department of Advisory and Technical Services, into an educational, advisory, and research institution supporting sustainable agriculture.

- It needs a better orientation of sustainable agriculture and environmental issues.

P 33

advisory system had minimal actions to promote good environmental practices to conserve natural resources.

- It needs a better orientation of sustainable agriculture and environmental issues.

P 47

Advisory services are not yet correctly addressing the issues of rural business. Local NGOs (on environment protection, women empowerment, sustainable development, etc.) are a valuable resource that may be efficiently involved in the development of the rural areas.

- It needs a need analysis of rural businesses and then in-house training to get into the position to assist effectively the rural businesses. Local NGOs (associations, cooperatives, farmers groups) should be involved and contracted;

P 51

underdeveloped advisory system

p 60

Regarding climate change adaptation, practices, advisory services should be more involved in developing awareness campaigns and delivering training sessions.

- It needs a better orientation of sustainable agriculture and environmental issues.

P 61

Need 1.13: Strengthening the advisory services and including the innovation as an essential part of the knowledge transfer

With a largely dominant small-scale farming, private consultancy and farmers' organisations are not currently having the capacity to provide means for access to information and innovation for this category. The human and financial resources for advisory should reflect this need. It remains the state's duty to do so.

- Private consultancy and farmers' organisations have to be contracted by DATS to get involved in knowledge transfer; possible they have to be trained upfront.

P 61

Kosovo should first design a set of simplified Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAECs) and implement awareness campaigns among farmers with the support of the public advisory system.

- It needs brochures, reports in electronic form produced by DATS

P 66

Need 4.2.1.3: Consolidating other MAFRD departments

Other MAFRD departments that are in urgent need of consolidation (properly/extra staffed and adequate training) is the department for EU integration, advisory services, irrigation, organic farming, and economic analysis.

- It needs extra, well trained staff, which will partially be hired soon in form of 7 Regional Coordinators. These regional coordinators will “coordinate” between municipal and DATS staff and provide consulting task at farm level. - 7 persons for more than 100,000 farmers are not sufficient, but can be considered as a start. (For optical reasons it shows a discouraging picture, if 13 permanent staff at MAFRD are organising work for 7 persons in the field. Here instead a relation of 2 : 1, a ratio of 1 : 30 should be envisaged; i.e. for each person at MAFRD 30 advisors in the field.) In mid-term 21 regional advisors are foreseen.
- As MAFRD staff is getting better paid than municipal staff, it would be wise to train all persons interested in becoming advisors under the DATS who then have to undergo a certification process (CECRA); those who pass the test will be hired by the MAFRD.
- Advisors at the current municipal level might not be sufficiently qualified and then they will not be able to switch to MAFRD staff.
- Actually the foreseen coordinators will have a double function; a) to align municipality activities with DATS and b) to provide advisory services to farmers in the field; therefore these regional coordinators have to be trained and certified.

The public advisory services should be prepared to establish the Farm Advisory System (FAS), thus making available the information for farmers and promoting the adoption of good practices.

p 81

Strengthening the MAFRD department for Advisory Services

The technical coordination of the advisers from the municipality level should be through their complete administrative transfer to the MAFRD department. Job description, monthly tasks, and reports shall be approved at the level of MAFRD. As their number is still limited, their duties should be resumed to sharing information, especially for the issues related to direct payments and grants, but not including advisory or consultancy actions.

- A meeting between the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Local Government Affairs and the Minister of Finance is encouraged to finalize the transfer of all municipal agricultural advisers to DATS; in case that this will not be successful, DATS will have to recruit its own staff which will be placed at municipal level.

(Above was agreed in the WG)

Farm Advisory System focusing on environmental conditioning should become part of the department for Advisory Services responsibilities.

- It needs a better orientation of sustainable agriculture and environmental issues.

p 82

Advisory services for farmers on farming practices, accountancy, and marketing with the consideration of the innovation

One long-term (at least three years) technical assistance project coordinated by the advisory services department shall be signed with service providers. The beneficiary shall be the farmers.

- As there is no qualified service provider in Kosovo, it might be better to build up own capacities within MAFRD, especially when municipal advisors will be finally part of MAFRD.

11 Annex - Experiences from other countries

The agricultural advisory service of a few European countries are described here to provide insights into other countries' set-up and to encourage the Working Group members to “think out of the boxes”

11.1 European Forum for Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services



The European Forum of Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services (EUFRAS) is a European association, established in 2013. Its aim is to improve farm and rural advisory services and to strengthen the competences of advisers. It comprises 31 member organisations from 21 countries.

EUFRAS is designed to play an advocacy role for the members addressing particularly EU-Institutions in the field of agricultural policy and rural development. Conferences, seminars and events shall offer a platform for exchange and cooperation between advisory services from all over Europe.

EUFRAS has published the EU FarmBook, a collection of vetted best practices for farmers & foresters. The aim is to gather all the best practices in one digital knowledge reservoir in EU-FarmBook (<https://eufarmbook.eu/>). All content in the library is provided by Horizon research projects.

The EU FarmBook is being developed to test a big idea: Can all of the tangible outputs of EU-funded research and innovation projects be brought together and organised in one user-friendly platform to help get practical knowledge into the hands of the farmers, foresters and advisors across Europe who need it most? The challenges to doing this are great – data(base) quality and compatibility issues, language barriers, and intergenerational considerations to name a few – but we believe that the future of agriculture and forestry innovation in Europe is digital, and requires a vastly increased and improved digital exchange of knowledge between EU regions and Member States, as well as between different agricultural stakeholders: researchers, policymakers, SMEs, advisors, farmers and foresters.

11.2 Austria

Austria – background and challenges

Austria has a population of 8,913,000 people and an area of 83,871 sq. km. It has 160.000 agricultural holding and around 80.000 of them are full-time farms; i.e. no other income.

Agricultural land covers 38 % of the country; arable land 17 %, permanent crops 0.8 % and permanent pastures 21 %; forest covers another 47 %. (A farm has to manage more than 2,5 ha.)

Average total area per holding is 45 ha, of which 20 ha are utilised as agricultural area; rest is mainly privately owned forest.

Austria's agriculture and forestry are facing numerous challenges:

- a) Preparation of the national CAP strategic plan for the period 2023 to 2027 with consideration of the EU requirements (Green Deal, Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategy)
- b) Convey the requirements and conditions of the CAP 2023 to 2027 and implement them together with farmers through educational and advisory activities.
- c) Implementation of measures for climate protection and adaptation to climate change
- d) Development of optimised processes for better energy efficiency
- e) Reduction of the use of pesticides, fertilisers and antibiotics
- f) Measures to improve animal welfare
- g) Improving the position of agricultural and forestry enterprises in the value chain
- h) Measures to ensure short supply chains
- i) Increasing the value of regional food
- j) Improving competitiveness
- k) Improving food quality
- l) Promotion of digitisation in agriculture and forestry
- m) Development of additional offers for digital further education and extension (webinars, farminars, online extension) with the corresponding prerequisites (technical equipment and training of extension staff and farmers) risk management or crisis prevention (e.g. power failure in electronically controlled stables, Covid-19)
- n) Reducing emissions and thus the greenhouse effect

The agricultural advisory service – guidance service – is part of AKIS.

AKIS

The term Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) is used to describe the whole knowledge exchange system - the ways people and organisations interact within a country or a region – at least within the EU. AKIS can include farming practice, businesses, authorities, research, etc. and considers technical, organisational and social dimensions to bridge the gap between science and practice. AKIS is based on the cooperation between research, education and extension.

The Austrian Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS) is therefore based on a

- 1) Comprehensive Vocational and educational training (VET)
- 2) Adult education
- 3) Nationwide and high-quality range of guidance services and
- 4) Agricultural research landscape.

Since agriculture and the viability of rural areas are public interests, public bodies, the Ministry of Agriculture (with its teaching and research institutes), the federal offices and the provincial governments of the nine provinces, the 10 Chambers of Agriculture with their 73 district chambers and 1700 employees, various research Institutes (including agricultural university (BOKU), schools, associations and some NGOs are part of the AKIS.

Only a few organisations are in direct contact with farmers, first and foremost the chambers of agriculture, but also veterinarians, organic farming associations, a few farmers' associations and non-profit organisations.

Cooperatives, private consultants and the agro-industry play only a minor role in advising farmers. Only in special areas (e.g. horticulture, vegetable and fruit growing, herd management, marketing, tax issues) private consultancy firms do play a greater role.

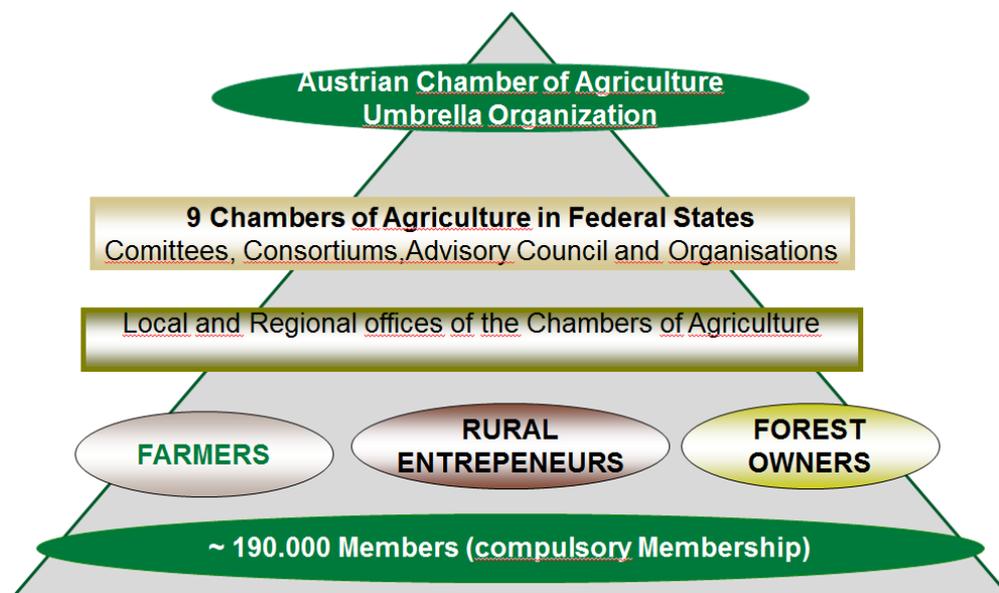
Responsibilities are generally clearly defined and divided between the organisations at federal and state level. Cooperation – as well structured - between the actors and the flow of information within the AKIS is good, overlapping of responsibilities and competition are rare. The permeability from research to practice and vice versa basically works well, even if the transfer of information is slow and there is no regular, institutionalised exchange of information between all actors.

AKIS is heavily dependent on public funds and the Ministry plays an important role as a funding agency.

Chambers of Agriculture (LK) as leading advisory services provider

The Chambers of Agriculture – established in 1922 - are the statutory representation of the interests of Austrian farmers and bodies under public law established by provincial law. They are semi-publicly financed as they are (mainly) financially supported by the provinces and the federal government, but also receive compulsory membership fees (“Kammerumlage”) from farmers. Limited fee-based advisory offers contribute less than 10 % to the chambers’ budgets.

The Chambers of Agriculture are divided into the 9 Regional Chambers of Agriculture with over 70 regional district chambers or branch offices, in which a total of around 1,700 full-time employees work. The Austrian Chamber of Agriculture (“Präsidentenkonferenz”) is the umbrella organisation of the nine Chambers of Agriculture at federal level.



4 main tasks of the Chambers of Agriculture

- 1) Representing the interests of its members (all farmers and foresters in Austria)
- 2) Involvement in funding administration (e.g. funding management for the state and federal government)

- 3) Advice for members: The mandatory mandate to advise all agricultural and forestry enterprises is laid down in state laws. Thus, the Chambers of Agriculture assumes the role of the official advisor of Austria.
- 4) Initial and continuing training for members through the Rural Training Institute (LFI, see below). Vocational training is provided by the Apprenticeship and Skilled Worker's Office (LFA, see below) affiliated to the Regional Chambers of Agriculture.

The goal is to have through the Chambers of Agriculture a "one-stop-shop" principle in the areas of advice, promotion and training for agricultural and forestry enterprises.

The Chambers of Agriculture is also home to many other trade associations. Bringing them together under the umbrella of the chamber enables close coordination and a well-functioning flow of knowledge between the central elements of counselling, initial and continuing vocational education and training which are central to the AKIS.

See also at <https://www.lko.at>

In agricultural and forestry extension services the Chambers of Agriculture are the central provider in Austria. In addition, advisory services are also partly provided by professional associations. In the field of organic consultancy, the Chambers of Agriculture work together with BIO Austria, the largest Austrian organic association, under the umbrella of ARGE Bioberatung.

Private counselling providers are represented regionally in special and niche topics but play a subordinate role in the AKIS as a whole.

Agricultural cooperatives – mainly belonging to Raiffeisen – provide consultancy services. However, this is limited to the specific sector and the product groups offered. Breeders and producers of livestock, cereals, fruit and vegetables are organised in several dozen associations in Austria – like BIO AUSTRIA (the association of organic farmers).

The advisory and support services are therefore primarily aimed at helping farmers to cope with the new economic framework conditions and to adapt the agricultural subsidy system to EU requirements. The importance of the Chamber of Agriculture continued to grow when joining the EU in 1995, but public support for advisory services began to decline. In return, however, public funding for training measures was massively increased thanks to EU funding.

The Ministry of Agriculture supports extension services in several ways, for example through strategic control,

- 1) Agreement on extension priorities and extension programmes,
- 2) Subsidy for the personnel costs of extension staff,
- 3) Preparation of extension documents and aids, and
- 4) Further training of extension staff in cooperation with teaching and research institutions under moa).

Advisory support is provided since 2017 via 2 tracks: from funds of the LE 14-20 programme and, in addition, from purely nationally financed federal funds. For this purpose, a public procurement procedure was carried out in advance, from which a service concession contract was awarded to ARGE LK Beratung (consortium of all chambers of agriculture) and to ARGE Bioberatung (consortium of chambers of agriculture and Bio Austria) for the years 2017 to 2021.

Each year, EUR 8.5 million are available, of which 5.06 million euros come from LE funds (EU, Federal Government, federal provinces) and 3.44 million euros from national funds.

The funding of an association like ARGE Bioberatung is a personnel cost subsidy for advisors with a specific technical and methodological qualification (prerequisite for funding) who advise farmers on specified topics using specified methods.

The catalogue of topics, which covers a total of eleven areas of advice, also includes the contents of the Farm Advisory Service ("FAS"), which is prescribed by EU law (see below).

The clients of the advisory service are all persons working in agriculture and forestry.

- Almost every farmer (97%) had a contact with the Chamber of Agriculture in the last 2 years.
- 88% of the farms in contact with the Chamber of Agriculture used advisory services.

The main focus of advice and the most frequent advisory contacts are in the following areas

- a) Advice on EU-funded, EU co-financed and national subsidies,
- b) Legal, tax and social security issues,
- c) Topics of business administration and business development,
- d) Improving competitiveness (new and optimised agricultural production methods in all sectors of the farm)
- e) Construction of economic facilities and operational buildings
- f) Forestry and forest management

Topics of public interest such as nature conservation and environmental protection and cross-sectional issues such as digitisation are usually not taken up as independent offerings. By embedding these topics in the broad range of educational and advisory services, they can be transported in the production technology or business management offers.

Individual contacts account for the largest share of all interactions with customers. Advice is provided through

- 1) Telephone conversations and electronic replies to enquiries,
- 2) Direct contact with the farmer on the premises of the advice organisation and
- 3) Farm visits with the aim of developing specific recommendations or proposed solutions.

On-the-spot advice or assistance in developing a new strategy or diversification of income and products is less frequent due to limited resources and the high costs involved.

Group counselling is a very popular method of reaching a large number of clients, focusing on the process of generating learning and innovation through interaction between the actors involved.

Qualification of the advisory staff. The general level of experience and training of counsellors in Austria is high. Many counsellors run a business themselves – usually a farm! The majority of all counsellors have completed a university degree and participated in training courses at least once a year. In addition, many counsellors have completed a university course in counselling and adult education or a training course in agricultural pedagogy at the College of Agricultural and Environmental Education.

The professional qualification required for the promotion of guidance and counselling services is a degree from a higher agricultural and forestry school (HBLFA), college or university.

Farm Advisory System – an EU obligation and implemented by the Chambers of Agriculture

The EU requires Member States to provide a Farm Advisory System (FAS). The FAS helps farmers to better understand and meet the EU rules for the environment, public and animal health, animal welfare and good agricultural and environmental condition (GAEC).

EU countries ensure a clear separation between advice to farmers and checking the right allocation of income support (e.g. support schemes).

FAS is providing the following information

- a) Cross-compliance obligations at farm level,
- b) Agricultural practices conducive to climate and environmental protection, including the maintenance of agricultural land in a condition suitable for cultivation or grazing
- c) LE 14-20 programme provides for measures at farm level to modernise farms, promote competitiveness, integrate the sector, promote innovation, market orientation and encourage entrepreneurship
- d) Requirements at the level of the beneficiaries, as laid down in the nitrate action programme and the national water management plan
- e) General principles of integrated pest management applicable to beneficiaries
- f) Minimum requirements for the use of fertilisers and plant protection products set out in the LE 14-20 programme

In Austria the services of the FAS are available to all farmers (largely) free of charge; in Austria it is included in the consultancy contract between the Ministry and the Chambers of Agriculture and since 2017, EU co-finances FAS.

11.3 Slovenia

Slovenia– background and challenges

Slovenia has a population of 2,101,000 people and an area of 20,273 sq. km. There are 70,063 agricultural holdings in Slovenia with a decreasing number of agricultural holdings – as almost everywhere in the EU. Agricultural holdings in Slovenia use 898,365 hectares of land, approximately 53 % of land is utilised agricultural area, about 44% is forest, 2% is unutilised agricultural area and 2 % is barren land.

An average agricultural holding in Slovenia uses 3,91 hectares of permanent grassland and 2,51 hectare of arable land. Consequently agricultural production in Slovenia is predominantly taking place on small-scale farms. To overcome limited far size, 80% of agricultural holdings breeds animals. Also fruit growing and wine growing is well advanced. The demographical and educational structure of farm managers present a challenge: 30% of them are older than 65 years and only 1.3% of farm managers have completed their studies on agronomy on university level. And additional important issue is that small family farms have a low market orientation.

AKIS in Slovenia

The structure of institutions that forms advisory service within agricultural knowledge and information system (AKIS) in Slovenia is diverse. It can be classified into six groups according to their purpose and contribution to agriculture. The first three groups are comprised of

- 1) Public sector with the Ministry for Agriculture and affiliated bodies,
- 2) 18 research and education institutions and
- 3) Group of public institutions that provide public services.

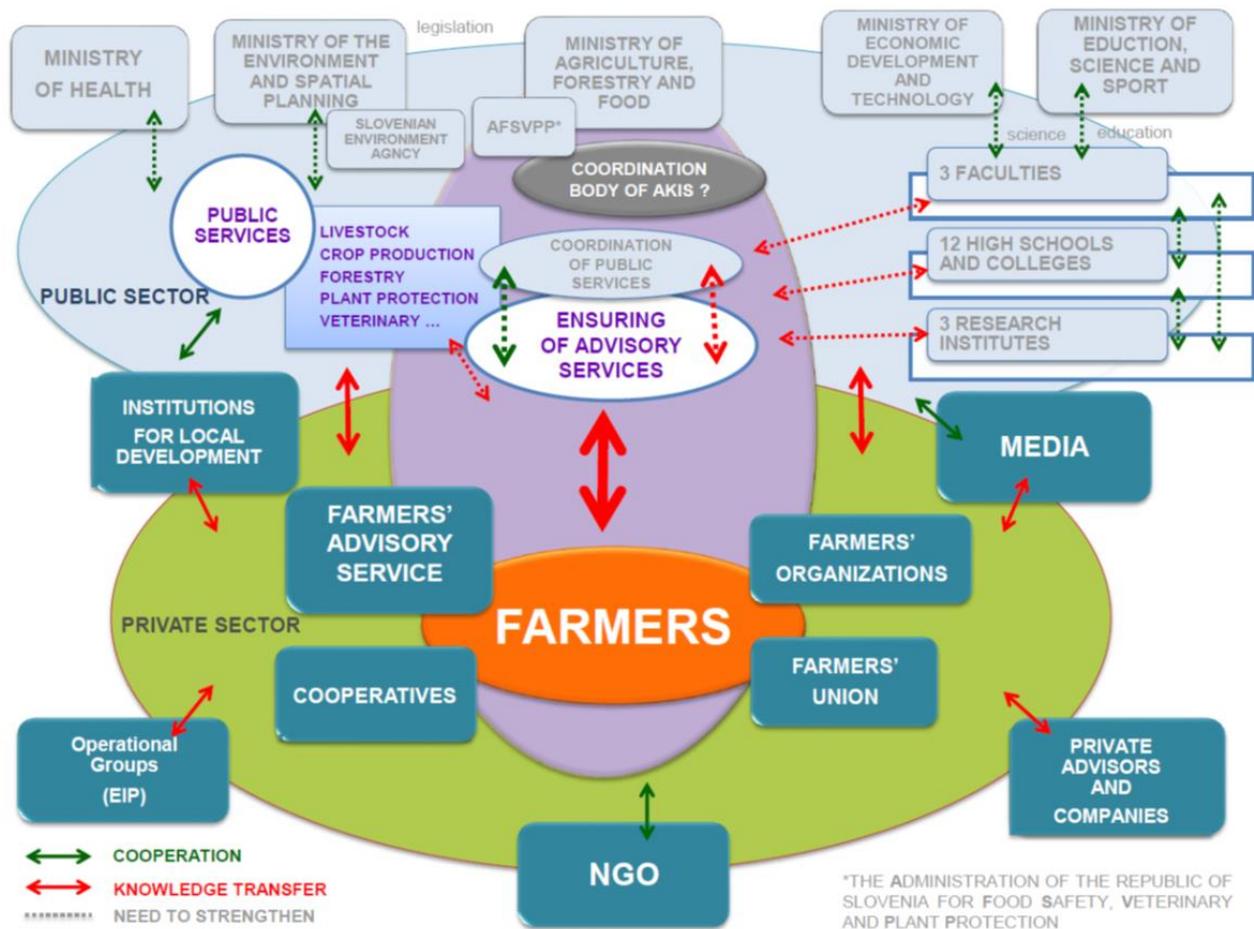
Next, three groups are private interest-driven institutions that consists of

- 4) Farmer based organisations,
- 5) Private advisory organisations, and companies and
- 6) NGOs.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Environment -as a governmental body - is in charge of agriculture. Public services in agriculture are implemented by different public and private organisations, such as Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia (CAFS), and Slovene Forest Service.

CAFS represents farmers and forest owners. The membership for farmers and forest owners in CAFS is still obligatory. In addition to representation of members' interests, CAFS co-established 8 Agricultural and Forestry Institutes and provides Farm Advisory Service (FAS) as well as other activities, such as research, implementation of services of national interests, trainings, seminars and promotion activities.

Another group of farmer-based organisations, based on voluntary membership, is the Cooperative Association of Slovenia with 73 members.



Associations also play an important role in the agriculture and food processing sector (e.g. producers of food products protected within EU or national food quality schemes, eco products, small cheese producers, goats and sheep breeders, etc.). Most of them are non-commercial organisations / associations and their scope of activities for members differs, though all of them provide some technical support, organise promotion activities and events etc.

Private professional advisors face a small market for private advisory service in Slovenia, mainly because of CAFS. Private consultants are providing help to different producers' groups with the main focus on marketing and organisation; additionally some veterinarians give support to farmers on basic agriculture issues.

Knowledge and innovation transfer from research institutions through FAS and interest organisations to the end user, farmer, is low and insufficient. There are several reasons for the lack of cooperation between institutions. One of key issues is the research system which promotes basic research. Researchers are not stimulated to do applied researches.

All public services are mostly financed from the budget and are organised throughout the country, but the problem is that knowledge does not reach the end user, farmer or forest owner to a sufficient extent. Basic consulting services for various areas of agricultural production are provided by public advisory service field agricultural consultants. However, there is a lack of specialist consulting services in the field of newer technologies, in economics of production, in protection of natural resources and climate change.

Advisers are relatively little educated abroad, and usually provide mainly advice on an individual intervention / measure, rarely addressing the farm as a whole.

Private agricultural consultants advise in the areas of submitting collective applications, preparing business plans, obtaining external financial resources, agricultural machinery and plant protection products, and these consultants are often also representatives of providers of agricultural machinery, fertilizers, etc. - Private consultants are not included in AKIS.

Chambers of Agriculture (CAFS / KGZS – in Slovenian language) as leading advisory services provider

The agricultural advisory service is a public body under the Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry. In 1992, FAS was organised as a public administration within ministry for the field of agriculture. CAFS was established to represent and protect the interests of agriculture, forestry and fishery. Other regional institutes, formally independent legal entities, became part of its organisation's structure and so all different types of advisors were united in CAFS.

Today CAFS is the umbrella interest organisation of natural and legal persons in the Republic of Slovenia engaged in agriculture, forestry and fishery. Its central task is to protect and represent their interests, to consult them and accelerate economical and environment friendly activities. Its preferential tasks are the acceleration of the development and the improvement of economic conditions, the assurance of specialist services operation, the co-formation of legislation, the improvement of social conditions of life, keeping settlement of Slovenian rural areas and the promotion of the Slovenian agriculture at home and abroad. Its specialist services are agricultural advisory service, selection and monitoring production in stockbreeding, forestry advisory service, and centres for fruit growing and nursery.

CAFS operates on three levels. The first level is the Chamber's Headquarters in Ljubljana, the second level consists of 13 district subsidiaries established throughout Slovenia, and 59 local units operating on a local (third) level. Such divided organisation structure provides accessible service in every part of the country.

The basic consulting service for various areas of agricultural production is provided by field agricultural consultants. Specialist consultants work in the fields of rural development, complementary activities on the farm and protection of nature and the environment. There are sector specialists for hop growing, meat processing and on-farm tourism, aquaculture, agricultural machinery, fruit processing into fruit trees, processing and production of herbs and milk processing.

Farm Advisory System – an EU obligation and implemented by the Chambers of Agriculture

FAS is funded from different sources according to annual plan of service agreed by the ministry. Nevertheless, the majority of funds are provided from national funds, though its share and the total amount for public service is gradually lowering down. The volume of public funds allocated by the ministry for the operation of FAS (including beekeeping) shows now a budget of EUR 9.71 million.

“FAS is provided to all types of farmers and forest owners. The methods used by FAS are all concerned typical/classic, thus they use: one-to-one advice on the farm, one-to-one advice outside the farm, small group advice on the farm (study tours for a specific group of intersects), and small group advice outside the farms, printed handbooks and brochures (Manual for meeting cross-compliance requirements, Catalogue of calculations for management planning on farms in Slovenia, Organic farming, technological lists, etc.). Farmers can also contact the advisor or the specialist via telephone or e-mail. As for the use of internet options, they are set simply. On their webpage one can find their contact information and information on seminars and events, though just some basic expert guidance, recommendations and brochures are available there.

The field of agricultural consulting, which is freely available on the market, is not regulated either in terms of legal organisational form or in terms of the necessary knowledge or reference.

Annual Programme of Activities and the Financial Plan of FAS is also confirmed by Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food. In the programme for 2020, there have been the following priority tasks defined:

- Advice on the technological, economic and environmental field of agricultural activity,
- Advising and assisting in the implementation of agricultural policy measures; consulting and support for implementation of agriculture measures
- Advice and assistance in the organisation and operation of breeding organisations, producer organisations and other forms of production associations of agricultural producers
- Advice in the field of agricultural and agricultural-related regulations,
- Work management and coordination,
- Cooperation with other ministries and providers of other public services, development and professional tasks or research work, and with organisations whose work relates to public consultation

Advisors work plan is based on the annual programme and is coordinated by the CAFS in Ljubljana. Procedures for reporting are uniform and set in the protocol. Advisors submit report on special forms in e-version that is archived for their own statistics and are inaccessible to the control system.

FAS operates within the Departments for Agricultural advisory at 8 Agricultural and Forestry Institutes, though farmers can also get support in 53 local units throughout Slovenia. In total more than 300 advisors are working at CAFS.

Consulting within FAS is mostly free for the user. The more successful farmers are willing to pay for good advice!

Certificate of European Consultants in Rural Areas is the new standard for advisors. Slovenia is not using anymore the model for licensing of advisors as they did in the past (after 2015 they do not send their advisors on that kind of licensing = 14 days course prepared by faculty). The reason is, that the ministry do not use the difference between licensed advisors or other for public procurement processes under rural development measures. Today Slovenia uses the CECRA system. CECRA is the European standard for the methodological training of agricultural consultants in rural areas. The CECRA (Certificate of European Consultants in Rural Areas) is a certificate demonstrating the appropriate competence of agricultural consultants to advise farms and rural areas. It is obtained by consultants who take part in training under an internationally designed programme, where they acquire new methodological skills and additional communication skills and are trained to work with appropriate and proven, so-called technology.

Consultants who successfully complete training are comparable in training to agricultural consultants elsewhere in Europe. The training programme is designed in the form of modules. See also at: <https://www.cecra.net/en/overview-of-the-modules/>).

CECRA training is only provided in accredited institutions in several European countries and the training programme for consultants is carried out by educated CECRA trainers. The accredited regional representative of the CECRA European Education Programme in Slovenia is the Chamber of Agriculture of Slovenia. The decision to introduce the CECRA standard in agricultural advice was taken to guarantee that their agricultural consultants are comparable to agricultural consultants elsewhere in Europe and that the quality and efficiency of agricultural advice on Slovenian farms will be increased.

11.4 Hungary

Hungary – background and challenges

Hungary covers an area of 93,030 sq. km and has a population of 9.937 million. Arable land and permanent crops account for 45,000 sq. km, of which about 1,010 sq. km are irrigated.⁴ Pastures account for 8,000 sq. km and forests for 19,000 sq. km. Major crops include wheat (0.9 million ha), corn (1 million ha), and oilseeds - mostly sunflower and rapeseed (0.9 million ha). The country also has a long tradition of producing planting seeds and horticultural products. Animal production includes 2.9 million pigs and a poultry flock of 39 million birds. The number of cattle of all types is approximately 933,000 head.

There are around 500,000 agricultural holdings in Hungary. As the number of holdings decreased and the agricultural land increased, the average size of the holdings grew: it almost doubled, from 4.7 ha per farm in 2000 to 8 ha in 2010. The agricultural holdings show two main classes: small holdings with less than 2 hectares of agricultural area, and farms with 50 hectares or more of agricultural land. Despite the fact that four out of five holdings (455 530) in Hungary fall into this category, holdings with less than 2 hectares of UAA were found to cover only 3 % of the Hungarian agricultural land. On the other end of the scale, farms with 50 hectares of agricultural land or more represented a marginal 2 % of all farm holdings but were found to account for 75 % of the country's agricultural land.

AKIS in Hungary

The Hungarian AKIS has a rather heterogeneous structure. In addition to the various ministries, actors in the advisory system, participants in education and research, professional chambers, advocacy organisations, farmers' organisations, media and information channels, NGOs and various EU networks play a decisive role. The Hungarian Chamber of Agriculture plays a key role in AKIS and advisory services are organised by the National Advisory Centre (OSzK). The National Advisory Centre coordinates, records and controls the Hungarian Farm Advisory System. It is responsible for the following tasks:

- Maintains the list of agricultural and rural development advisors,
- Organises the initial training and examination of advisors;

⁴ <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/hungary-agricultural-sectors>

- Carries out tasks related to the evaluation of the work of advisors and advisory organisations;
- Performs secretarial tasks for the national agricultural advisory committee,
- Operates an integrated electronic system supporting the operation of the Farm Advisory System,
- Performs coordination tasks related to advisory activities, and establishes, maintains and publishes the list of advisors and advisory organisations,
- Keeps contact with agricultural and rural development advisory organisations of the member states of the European Union,
- Provides international representation of the Hungarian agricultural and rural development advisory system.

Chamber of Agriculture (NAK) - as leading advisory services provider

The Hungarian Chamber of Agriculture (NAK) is the leading advisory service provider in Hungary. The membership of the chamber is for all farmers and other stakeholders mandatory. The chamber plays an important role in knowledge transfer by, inter alia, organising the training and examination of advisors, and more.

NAK was established in 2013 and currently employs about 1,200 people nationwide, including 610 village agronomists, who, among other things, provide information and help chamber members regarding issues related to their activities. NAK covers and represents actors throughout the agri-food sector; the membership is mandatory for farmers, food processors, traders and service providers – i.e. 400,000 members in total.

The National Coordination Centre of Advisory Centres (OSzK) plays a coordinating, recording and controlling role within the framework of the Hungarian Farm Advisory System (FAS), which is eligible for EAFRD funding. OSzK is part of the chamber and operates within the chamber but in an independent status. Its main tasks are: registration and training of advisors (1,100 people), as well as liaison with other relevant AKIS actors (e.g. National Rural Development Network). NAK is responsible for agri-food vocational training, it registers and coordinates students and farms participating in dual training, coordinates the organisation of study competitions, takes part in the organisation of master's courses and examinations, and in the promotion of the agri-food professions.

OSzK has 7 regional and 51 territorial advisory centres; at the territorial centres contracted consultants advise the farmers. The registration as consultant is mandatory for natural persons and organisations engaged in advisory activities; not only independent advisors are parts of the system but also those performing advisory services for commercial interests. Around 1,100 advisors provide advisory services in Hungary, and they play a very important role in achieving Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) supports and in complying strictly with environmental and administrative requirements.

There is a great need for this type of service, as farmers are not always familiar with performing administrative tasks, and due to the administrative burden, they would drop out of work, and there are areas in the country where farmers' IT skills also need to be improved.

Concerning advisory service, there is a growing demand – besides all support programmes - for technological advice (new technologies, precision farming tools, organic farming solutions, integrated pest management, improvement of irrigation). Advisors and advisory organisations operate in Hungary as a network farmers can really rely on. It is necessary to note

here that medium-sized enterprises and larger farms have their own employed advisors.

Special technological advisory service is performed by some, usually foreign individuals or companies. These are used by medium- or large-scale special farms, ones that really need individual expertise (e.g. a French advisor for cheese-making, an Italian for winemaking, or a Dutch for strawberry production).

Professional and inter-professional organisations

There are a number of professional and inter-professional organisations in Hungary that focus on the needs of a particular sector and represent the given group to policy makers with advocacy, inform consumers about current events through promotion and provide information, knowledge and other services to farmers in the sector.

A good example of this is the Hungarian Fruits and Vegetables Inter-professional Organisation and Product Council (Fruitveb). The organisation regularly organises professional days – even in foreign languages – focusing on a specific topic, and also conducts surveys, examines market opportunities, gives advice, provides supportive training, and connects farmers. Another good example is the Hungarian Association of Sheep and Goat Breeders and the one of Charolais breeders. Such associations are very useful in regularly informing its members on both regulatory and technological issues.

12 Annex – Recommendations for further donors’ activities

The deficits of the advisory service in Kosovo have been elaborated in this report and the DATS has developed a matrix of upcoming actions; as not all necessary deficits have been tackled in detail, as obviously not being considered as priority, the consultant recommends some further activities. These activities might need donor support and could be summarised as follows.

12.1 Preparation for upcoming AKIS

Elaboration of a full package (set of activities) to fulfil all the requirements of a future AKIS; that should include a comparison of what is needed and what is still on the ground. Main tasks will be to bring the involved stakeholders to a common understanding and based on that on an organisation set-up including the corresponding financing requirements by the Government of Kosovo:

12.2 Efficient training for private advisors aiming to work for DATS

Training Needs Assessment (TNA) to learn what skills are missing at potential candidates’ level and what skills, techniques and know-how is requested by farmers and other stakeholders
Provision of specific training modules, based on the TNA; e.g. financial calculations,

DATS is incorporating public-private partnership as it is aware that DATS cannot cover all technical and economic issues, which are needed by farmers and other stakeholders. Therefore DATS will have to subcontract activities, for which it is not well prepared yet. This activity might fill the gap between

12.3 Soil management and sustainable farming and related specific training

Climate change will become more and more an issue for agricultural and rural enterprises, including forestry and timber processing, and therefore it will be key to increase the resilience of plants through sustainable farming and forestry and linked soil management, as soil will be the basis for all plants and has to be strengthened. This topic could be further elaborated into carbon management, CO₂ sequestration and related certificates.

12.4 Environment and agricultural land: nitrogen balance

The losses of nitrogen from agricultural land to the environment, expressed as the nitrogen balance, are in many locations still too high. Further efforts are needed to manage the nutrient cycle for nitrogen sustainably – also in regards to future EU accession.

This nutrient pollution also results in economic losses and increased costs for society (e.g. in relation to drinking water treatment, human health, tourism and recreation). If not applied appropriately (e.g. taking account of weather conditions, stage of crop growth, dosage), fertilisers lead to excess nutrients that can be released to the wider environment, for instance by run-off into surface water or by leaching into groundwater. Eutrophication caused by excess nutrients can result in increases in weeds and algae, reduced oxygen levels and subsequent biodiversity loss. These impacts can be reduced by balancing nutrient inputs with the outputs of the agricultural system (i.e. nutrients contained in grazed and harvested crops/grassland and in crop residues) in

particular, to limit nutrient losses to the environment. This briefing focuses on nitrogen, which is a key element with respect to managing the nutrient cycle in a more sustainable way – it is one of the main elements of many fertilizers. Therefore it needs a better understanding of the nitrogen cycle, linked with a simple recording and with training to farmers to reduce these nutrient losses.

12.5 Digitalisation in agriculture and related specific training

Digitalisation will be one of the biggest requirements for future rural activities, including agriculture and forestry. Current public advisors, farmers and other stakeholders are not familiar with this topic and therefore it needs training, especially Training of Trainers (ToT); all interested and potentially certified future trainers are considered as target group.

Outlook

It is not recommended to provide technical equipment. It is also not recommended to support DATS in case it is not finally clarified who employs the municipal advisors. As soon as they are transferred under DATS, i.e. being there on the payroll, substantial training especially for public advisory services could start.

Providing mediation to DATS/MAFRD and municipal level about transfer from municipal to central level can be supported; that will require many meetings, especially on ministry level, between the stakeholders, such as Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Local Administration and MAFRD.