

## FAO HIGH LEVEL DELEGATION EXPLORING STRENGTHENING SUPPORT TO MONTENEGRO

The FAO Deputy Director-General (Operations), He Changchui, and the FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Europe and Central Asia, Fernanda Guerrieri, paid a visit to Montenegro from 25 to 26 May 2011. The purpose of the visit was to discuss FAO's work and the way forward with representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, the UN Country Team, the delegation of the European Commission and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. Luxembourg has been donor since 2006 of a cross-border project in the north-east of Montenegro and Kosovo with FAO as the implementing agency.



*Mr He, Minister Milosevic and Ms Guerrieri*

Upon their arrival in the afternoon of 25 May, the high-level FAO delegation was welcomed in Podgorica by Montenegro's Minister for Agriculture, Mr Tarzan Milosevic and his team. The Government representatives expressed satisfaction with FAO for the effective support to rural area development in the north-east of Montenegro. This support is provided through the auspices of the cross-border project, "Technical assistance to livestock farmers in remote areas of Northern Montenegro and Kosovo (GCP/RER/019/LUX)." Mr He and Mr Milosevic discussed various possible cooperation activities such as organic agriculture and marine fishery as well as assistance to the flood emergencies.

The visit proceeded with a scheduled trip to north-east Montenegro where field project staff presented the activities to Mr He and Ms Guerrieri. The progress and the results of the project were analysed and FAO senior management gave a few suggestions in order to improve effectiveness and visibility. The FAO delegation met with Mr Pierre Weber, Head of Office of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg in Pristina and they discussed the project results and prospects for its possible further extension. Together, the FAO-Luxembourg delegation visited the project-associated Berane Farmers' Marketing Cooperative. The delegation was briefed on export wool marketing; certified cereal seed production; seed processing and packaging; and seed sales to farmers - all of which the Cooperative is engaged in.



*Mr He and Ms Guerrieri visiting a farm*



*With the Young Farmer's Club members in Bor*

The same day, Mr He and Ms Guerrieri visited a Farmers Machinery Association, a Young Farmers Club and a Farmers Cheese Production Unit. They took this opportunity to speak directly with beneficiaries and listen first-hand to their experiences and opinions. The FAO delegation showed particular interest in the impact of the project on farmers' income and quality of life. A meeting with the Youth Association promoted by the project revealed that rural youth are willing to remain in rural areas if they have facilities and basic services.

On the third day of the visit, during a meeting with the representatives of the United Nations Country Team in Montenegro (UNCT), the FAO delegation discussed aspects of cooperation within the framework of future UN engagement in Montenegro. The UN Resident Coordinator, Mr Alexander Avanesov, expressed satisfaction with the good cooperation with FAO. He emphasized the growing importance of addressing rural development, by stating "Your presence is clearly visible in Montenegro. We very much look forward for your greater role in the framework of UN's support to Montenegro in addressing national development challenges."

Mr He briefed the UNCT about the trends and current challenges in global food production. He highlighted the importance of development of green and organic agriculture in the future. He noted: "FAO is actively working on creating mechanisms for ensuring sustainability of the food production outcomes in the future, in order to tackle increase of food prices. Drop of food production should be comprehensively addressed both on local and global level through more efficient policies." Mr He added that setting up an agriculture information system and independent monitoring mechanisms will be of crucial importance for such an endeavour.

FAO's high level delegation also met with Mr Nicola Bertolini, Head of Operations at the Delegation of the European Union to Montenegro. Areas of potential FAO cooperation were discussed within the context of Montenegro's economic growth and progress towards EU accession.

The three-day visit enabled FAO senior management to interact with the field staff and take up lessons learnt and good field suggestions at policy level. At the same time, the visit of the Deputy Director-General (Operations) inspired and motivated the FAO staff and the Government.