

Draft Strategy for Strengthening of Agricultural Education as part of the implementation of IPARD 2007-2013 in Macedonia

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Annex 1: Sources of information

1. Introduction

The upgrading of agricultural production and processing sector and the improving employment and income opportunities in rural areas of Macedonia to Community standards are the subject of the fifth component of the Institutional Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) for Rural Development (IPARD).

According the possibilities of measure 303 of the IPARD program, IPARD may be granted to contribute to the improvement of the occupational skills and competence¹ of persons engaged in the agricultural, food, and forestry sectors and other economic actors operating in the fields covered by this component. However assistance shall not be granted to courses of instruction or training which form part of normal programmes or systems of education at secondary or higher levels.

Beneficiaries shall elaborate a training strategy for the implementation of the operations envisaged above. The strategy shall include a critical assessment of the existing training structures, an analysis of the training needs and objectives. It shall also establish a set of criteria for the selection of training providers.

See: Official Journal of the European Union, L 170/60; 29.6.2007; Art. 181. Improvement of training

This *Strategy for the Implementation of IPARD* is the elaboration of a training strategy as meant above. The strategy will start with a description of a perspective of an upgrading of agricultural production and processing sector to the standards of the common European market. It will continue with an analysis of the present state of the art in the sector with the focus on agricultural education and training in Macedonia to develop to a situation as depicted in the perspective. Based on the observed discrepancies between desirable and real situation a training strategy for the IPARD measure will be formulated. This strategy will be merged with other suggestions for development initiatives in Macedonia.

The actual situation of the agricultural education and training is largely taken from the 2010 SIPP report (Support to IPARD Preparation Project) "Critical Assessment of the training structure in Agriculture and rural development in republic of Macedonia".

¹ Skill is performing a task properly. Competence is acting properly in a dynamic context. Competent acting requires an appropriate capacity to judge.

2. The Perspective

2.1 Macedonian agriculture, food and rural economy

In February 2007, the Government adopted the National Development Plan 2007-2009 (NDP). Based on the detailed assessment of the current economic, social and environmental situation in the country, the strategic objective of the NDP is: *“to increase international competitiveness of the country that is required for a sustained economic growth and higher employment.”*

At a more operational level, the NDP’s five sub-objectives are the following:

- I. To strengthen economic competitiveness of the corporate sector through intensification of broad range structural reforms, including improvements of the business environment and investment climate, conducive to economic growth and job creation.
- II. To develop new and improve existing physical infrastructure, particularly those related to transport, energy, ICT, environment and irrigation, in order to support economic growth and improve the overall competitiveness of the country.
- III. To improve quality of education and training so that it will respond effectively to the requirements of the labour market, including the requirements of the knowledge based economy.
- IV. To create preconditions for better use of agricultural potential of the country through better land management and institutional capacity building of the sector, through strengthened rural development, and through establishing conditions for safe food production and trade.
- V. To create preconditions required for effective design and implementation of the balanced regional development policy within the country. Agriculture and rural development are one of five development priorities through which the NDP’s objectives are to be achieved.

In the framework of the NDP MAWFE formulated the National Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy 2007-2013.

The ultimate goal of the pre-accession assistance under *component V* is to prepare the agricultural sector for the EU accession and therefore the upgrading of the agricultural holdings and the food establishments to meet the EU environmental, hygiene, food quality and safety, plant and animal health and animal welfare standards is of high importance. Support granted towards the achievement of these objectives should mainly be concentrated on sectors where the related *acquis* standards to implement are particularly comprehensive and demanding like in the dairy, meat, rendering, fruits, vegetables and wine sectors. Investments in food processing establishments should mainly target SMEs and should focus specifically on the weakest links in the production, processing and marketing chain of each sector chosen according to *acquis* relevance.

The general objective of the Measure 303 Improvement of training is to generate awareness, develop and upgrade knowledge and skills of the rural stakeholders towards the sustainable and viable rural development in line with the EU practices and legislative. The specific objective is to ensure successful implementation of IPARD programme through capacity development of the actual and potential applicants for fundamental sectors and active IPARD measures: investments in agricultural holdings, processing and marketing of agriculture and fishery products and diversification and development of rural economic activities.

2.2 Agricultural Education and Training

A competitive agricultural production and processing sector in the open EU market with improved employment and income opportunities in rural Macedonia in 2025 may rest with less than 5% of the working population (actually 18% of working population). This means that fewer and higher qualified entrepreneurs could lead larger and more competitive firms. This development will bring alternative job and business opportunities in rural area.

In real terms between 25.000 and 35.000 entrepreneurs educated at EQF level 4 or 6 are expected to realise agricultural production, processing and marketing.. The products need to meet the standards of the open EU market: attractive and competitive, traceable and reliable, utilising unique rural assets and specialised in niche markets, sustainable and profitable etc.. The scale and turn over of the viable enterprises may be between 10 and 25 times larger than the present average. Successful entrepreneurs may realise development cycles in which they double their economic size every 5 years. This strategy paper has the focus on the contribution of the agricultural education to the above described development in Macedonia.

The qualification of entrepreneurs and their labour force is an undeniable important prerequisite for a development towards a competitive agricultural and rural area. Although at national level Macedonia has adopted the eight EQF levels, this level have not been incorporated in the education system as a whole. A future framework of qualifications, a structure for vocational qualification, is described in table A. The possible entry levels, EQF-level, the qualification, and the length courses are listed. The EQF level and underlying diploma's and module structure can also be applied in adult or non-formal education.

Entry level from Macedonian general education	EQF-level	Qualification	formal course	informal VPE/VPK
Primary education (5 to 14 y)	1	Guided worker		< 1 y
Primary education (5 to 14 y)	2	Self reliant worker	2 y	< 2 y
Primary education (5 to 14 y)	3	Practitioner	3 y	< 3 y
Primary education (5 to 14 y)	4	Craftsman	4 y	< 4 y
Sec. ed. (14 to 18 y) / level 4	5	Advanced craftsman	1 y	
Sec. ed. (14 to 18 y) / level 5	6	Bachelor	2 y	
Level 6	7	Master	2 y	
Level 7	8	Doctor	3 y	

EQF: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/publ/pdf/eqf/leaflet_en.pdf

VPE / VPK: validation of prior experience / knowledge

Table A: Future framework of qualifications for vocational qualification

Levels of judgement:

- EQF level 1: applying an operation efficient
- EQF level 2: applying a process in an efficient way, achieving the result, meeting the agreed target
- EQF level 3: choosing an effective process to achieve the effect, making a feasible agreement
- EQF level 4: choose goals and assign means to goals, entrepreneur with reference to the state of the art in the branch and region.
- EQF level 5 up to 8: decision making with high levels of (technological or scientific) reference.

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With 30.000 entrepreneurs in 2025 and a generation length of the labour period of 25 years, the annual replacement demand will be 1.200 qualified entrepreneurs. The annual intake of the schools offering level 4 and 5 courses should be larger than 1.200, to stay at the safe side of a sufficient supply.

The content of the structure is provided with descriptions of occupational profiles. Priority sectors are economic viable sectors. The NDP of Macedonia has specified the priority sectors. The education of workers and practitioners is in line with the development of the demand of the enterprises. Examples are in Table B.

Profile	intermediate	differentiation	EQF	pathway
agricultural production	plant production	fruit	4,6	formal
		vegetable	4,6	formal
		wine	4	formal
	animal production	dairy	4	formal
		meat	4	formal
		shepherd	2	informal
rural economy	bed and breakfast	2	informal	
food processing	diversification	cheese maker	2	informal
	industrial processing	food technology	4,6	formal
agricultural business		agricultural products	4,6	formal
		agricultural supplies	4,6	formal

Table B: Occupational profiles provide content for the structure of qualifications.

The descriptions of the occupational profiles are broad; this is to assure the flexibility of the qualified graduates and also quantitative robust courses with high qualified school personnel. Schedule B is just an example to be further detailed in diploma (intermediate), differentiation/specialisation and modules. The titles of diploma's and modules should be recognised by the future employers; the specification of the qualification structure for that purpose needs to be agreed among schools (or government) and the professional organisations (unions or representatives of employers and employees).

3. The present situation

3.1 Agriculture, food and rural economy

As a follow up of intensive integration of the country in the international courses of commodity exchange, primarily via the accession of the country to the WTO and signing of other multilateral and bilateral free trade agreements, in a specific situation where the sector experienced slow and incomplete restructuring conditions and low competitiveness, the country's agriculture is facing major challenges. Additionally, due to the process of political access to EU whose aim is to increase the capacity of domestic economy to act in the conditions of the single European market and approximation to the European standards of food quality and safety, the country's agri-food products should be brought in line with the demands of the domestic and European markets regarding the price, quality and expectation of the consumers in conditions of increased market competition. To that end, it is necessary to restructure the predominantly unfavourable structure of agriculture producers who either produce limited market surplus or produce for the needs of their households, into specialised farmers and processors with increased economy of scale, thereby reducing the costs, improving the productivity of the factors of production and increasing the development potential in accordance with the real comparative advantages. On the other hand, the less competitive farmers should be allowed to diversify their economic activities in terms of production of non-traditional agriculture products demanded on the markets, which generate higher income out of limited resources, but also in activities, which are not necessarily linked with agriculture production.

For the purpose of developing the IPARD strategy 2007-2013 a SWOT analysis has been performed. Based on the findings, the most important areas that demand urgent intervention, determining this way the directions of rural development, are summarised as follows:

- » The dis-balanced population density, economic development and the social capital feeds the process of out migration in the rural areas thus affecting the perspectives of development of rural areas;
- » Agriculture is a predominant activity of the rural population who is being heavily dependant on agriculture income as a result of primary production.
- » The age composition of the population in agriculture is extremely unfavourable: the proportion of young generations (below 40) is very low as regards employees and private farmers.
- » Agriculture holdings lag behind in capital investments for modernisation and implementation of environmental protection, hygiene, product quality, food safety and animal welfare; Insufficient regulation of the sector hinders furthermore the interest for investments in the sector;
- » The occupational skills and competence of small-scale private farmers are inadequate: their complex business administration skills (business administration, operation, finances, and marketing) as well as EU-related knowledge (standards, support conditions) are particularly deficient; besides, the system of such services (including extension services) is also underdeveloped.
- » Small and medium-sized enterprises are lack of capital and additional operational assets, which hinders the implementation of developments and operations in compliance with EU requirements in the fields of environmental protection, hygiene, product quality, food safety, animal welfare and nature preservation.
- » The underdeveloped manure and wastewater management in animal husbandry, as well as absence of integrated crop management systems in plant production is an obstacle for the development of sustainable agricultural businesses.

In support to the structural adjustment of the country's agricultural sector, the emphasis will be placed in particular on increased production competitiveness and higher quality of products. The IPARD measures focus at improving the competitiveness of economically viable agricultural holdings and food industry in selected sub-sectors through investment policies to improve technological and market infrastructure aimed at increased added value of agricultural products and achieved compliance with EU quality, health, food safety, animal welfare and environmental standards. Equally, the IPARD assistance is aiming to contribute to improved quality of life of the rural population, increased income

and creation of new employment opportunities through the development and diversification of on-farm and/or off-farm activities to counterbalance disparities between regions and compared to urban areas.

3.2 Agricultural Education and Training

The present situation has been described in the report *Critical assessment of the training structure in agriculture, food and rural development in republic of Macedonia. Implications for the programming of the IPARD measure 303* (SIPP Report). From the SIPP report, from the meetings at the inception for the project *Improvement of training in agriculture (ITAM)* and from additional sources (ANNEX 1) the following has been observed.

The overall responsibility for the education in R.Macedonia is under the Ministry of Education and Science. Additionally, in the country exists the Bureau for educational development, Vocational Education Centre, Adult Education Centre, National Agency for European Educational Programs and Mobility, Agency of Youth and Sport and Ministry of Information Society. Every institutions covers different part of the education process. The Macedonian government has announced to establish two independent bodies for quality control in the field of education. During the second half of 2010 a National Education management System (NEMS) has become operational, registering the services and output delivered and flow of finances.

Level education	Total graduates/ year		Agri-food graduates/year
Doctor degree	119		
University MSc	425		
High school Bsc	10838	Agric. Faculty	1770 (year 2005)
Secondary school	24210	Agric. VET (10/18 schools)	7892
Primary school	27000		

Table C: Number of graduated students in 2008 in Macedonian school system (Statistical Office FYRM)

The occupational qualification

At present 192.000 Macedonians own a piece of land. Approximately 95.000 earn an income from agriculture. The occupational qualification of the 90.000 is for the larger part comparable to EQF level 1; 50% of the farmers did not complete primary school. In case the future professional population in agri-food and rural economy would be estimated at some 100.000 persons at different level, the actual output of qualified graduates is well sufficient.

Actually the professional workers in R.Macedonia very often are not qualified to meet the modern requirements of competitive markets, sustainable production systems and quality programs. Much of the knowledge transfer is consisting of the professional magazines and the representatives of suppliers of pesticides, seeds and veterinary medicines. For example the actual issues of the FFRM magazine contains many articles on the EQF level 2 or craft level: for example plant protection, choices of varieties, and safe use of machinery. Little attention is given to (international) market developments, competition and consumer behaviour.

Summarising: The size of farming activities is too small of scale for the managers to gain wider experience. In addition to that the initial qualification level is too low for effective farming and successful application for and participation in the IPARD projects. It can be concluded that tailor made approach in supply of additional training is well required.

Formal education

At a national level Macedonia has adopted the eight EQF levels for occupational qualification. Formal

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agricultural education is supplied from 4 universities, providing level 5 up to 8. Ten secondary schools with agricultural orientations provide a level with entry to the university; the professional level is possibly EQF 3. The schools are well equipped with computers; the education however relies on instruction from the book and merely theoretic assignments of analysis and research. Schools are not familiar with validation of prior knowledge or experience.

The actual situation of the education and knowledge transfer related to the target sectors in agri-food and rural economy does not provide a supportive instrument for the operators. Where as the fast majority of the Macedonian farmers and rural operators do not meet the minimum qualifications required for the application for IPARD support, there is an important challenge in this respect for the schools and universities. The schools need to be more involved in the development initiated by IPARD and they can play a role in the short term supply of short module based courses.

Non formal education, adult education

The framework for non formal education is provided by the law on adult education. The aim is to improve flexibility on the labour market by specific training and recognition of acquired competence. The first level of adult education can be paid by government. So far there has been no development of any structural description of the non-formal education for the target sectors of the IPARD program.

In 2009 the EU have adopted the Council conclusion² in regards to non-formal education and life-long learning by 2020. “European cooperation in education and training for the period up to 2020 should be established in the context of a strategic framework spanning education and training systems as a whole in a lifelong learning perspective. Indeed, lifelong learning should be regarded as a fundamental principle underpinning the entire framework, which is designed to cover learning in all contexts — whether formal, non-formal or informal — and at all levels: from early childhood education and schools through to higher education, vocational education and training and adult learning.” It is also important that ” the establishment of more flexible learning pathways — including better transitions between the various education and training sectors, greater openness towards non-formal and informal learning, and increased transparency and recognition of learning outcomes”. Since Macedonia have the aspiration to join EU and adopt the EU policies in that regards, it is visible this principles to be implemented in the strategy for improvement of training in Macedonian agriculture.

In the Macedonian law on Agriculture and rural development are provisions in regards to trainings. The trainings can be informative session or education courses. The duration of education courses should not be less than 40 hours and more than 200 hours. The educating courses must to consist of practical and theoretical part. Information sessions are with duration of minimum 6 hours, but not more than 18 hours. If the information sessions are executed with repeating in more than one settlement, the cumulative time duration of the sessions cannot be more than 500 hours.

The qualification structure

Many of the professionals of the Macedonian education are familiar with the European Qualification

² Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020)

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Framework. Although no applications have been implemented so far the experts have confirmed the benefits to harmonise the qualifications of formal and non-formal education from the start.

Together with the British Council a methodology recently has been implemented to develop the professional standards in 14 sectors of which agriculture is one. Four standards will be completed by the end of 2011. Flower grower (EQF level 3) is ready. In the framework of IPA a standard at EQF 2 will be developed for tractor driving and working with agricultural machinery. Next standard will be developed for greenhouse and open field at EQF 3 or 4. The courses will take 2, 3 and 4 years after primary education. The basis provided in cooperation with the British Council for the production of occupational profiles can be utilised in the IPARD initiative. The majority of the relevant descriptions of professional qualifications and related modules for education have been described in other EU member states. These can be taken as example for the Macedonian suppliers of training during their preparation of the trainings.

VPE / VPK: validation of prior experience / knowledge

Since the Macedonian rural operators are relatively old and very often did not complete their primary or secondary education, their professional experience is valuable while assessing their training needs.

VPE / VPK has been assigned to CVET. Assessments will be done in a joint action of a teacher, a member from the business and a member of CVET. Little experience is available.

The formal approach with validation of prior knowledge and experience is to be made available for the purpose of the IPARD initiative since this contributes to the limiting of the need for additional training.

4. The strategy

The strategy for the implementation of IPARD will focus on required competence in the IPARD initiative: A. what and when of required competence, B. how to achieve and organise it, and C. how to gear it to future developments in Macedonia.

A. What and when of required competence

Four elementary competences are proposed:

1. Working knowledge with the application for an IPARD project.
This is a form of guidance required before submission of the application.
2. Competent use of the application achieved from the IPARD-project
This means competence with respect to craft at EQF level 2: the aim is to work efficient with the application. This is a module required after approval of the project and before payment of the subsidy.
3. Competent view on the facts in the enterprise
This is a management competence at EQF level 3: the aim is applying the new means effectively. This requires facts about costs and revenues: book keeping / business administration. This is a module required after approval of the project and before payment of the subsidy.
4. Competent views on the open market
This is an entrepreneurial competence at EQF level 4: The aim is to be able to make the choice for the right challenge for the enterprise. This requires knowledge of the consumer market in the EU Community and of the elements of competitiveness on the common market (in combination with knowledge of the enterprise – see point 3).
This is a module required after approval of the project and before payment of the subsidy.
5. Competence at a bachelor level
This subject has not sufficiently been observed.
6. Different levels of participant's

Specific attention needs to be given to the assessment of qualification of the farmer at the start of the training. The program of the training may not be necessary for everyone; doubling of acquired competence and supply of courses should be avoided.

Actually there is no facility for an assessment activity for previous training or experience (see C.5 below); therefore a valid assessment and validation of acquired competence may not be a feasible option for coming years. However, attention to (exemption of) compulsory participation needs to be given, in a most practical way as possible. It is generally considered that high school graduation (in R. Macedonia: 14-18 year age group; VET) is a sufficient starting qualification on general level. Entry levels for those which did not complete the high school could there for be specified as follows:

- No primary education and no relevant experience: 3 months training necessary on both general subjects (EQF 3,4) and technical (EQF 2): 12 modules of 40 hours.
- 5 years relevant experience: 6 weeks specific technical: 6 modules EQF 2 + 3
- 10 years relevant experience: 3 weeks training is required: 1 module technical EQF 2 + managerial EQF 3 + 1 module entrepreneurial training EQF 4.

The proposal is to introduce the above mentioned modules or alike which provide the necessary qualification. For farmers a practical setting may be required for their successful training: demonstration on the farm, issues related to actual rural contexts (Competence based training),

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meetings on the farm, development of applicable information material, usage of practical sources of information including internet etc..

B. How to achieve and organise required competence

The agricultural secondary schools may have a central role in the supply of modules organised in courses for professionals at the levels 2, 3 and 4. They may be estimated to have the capacity to prepare for an annual intake of 1.000 students in case co-operation with relevant other organisations and institutions can be realised. In addition to the VET schools, the relevant faculties (agriculture, food processing etc) of the universities may expect 200 entries for bachelor degrees (EQF level 4 + 5) in agricultural production, processing or business (see estimate in paragraph 2). It is recommended to organise a centrally co-ordinated project for the formulation of the relevant training modules. The format for the modules is available; however the specification of the professional qualifications and the activities during the competence based training still needs to take place.

1. Working knowledge with the application for an IPARD project.

The approach of target groups is organised by the Management Authority (MA), the extension service (NEA) and farmers association (FERM) together. The supply of required guidance is done by NEA and FERM. It may be considered that the providers of the training also approach their target group during the preparation of the training.

2. Competent use of the application achieved from the IPARD-project

The module is supplied by agricultural secondary schools with assistance of NEA.
The assessment and certification is authorised by the MA.

3. Competent view on the facts in the enterprise

The module is supplied by agricultural secondary schools with assistance of NEA and the agricultural faculties.
The assessment and certification is authorised by the MA.

4. Competent views on the open market

The objective of the module is formulated in the ITAM project.
The module is supplied by agricultural secondary schools with assistance of the agricultural faculties.
The assessment and certification is authorised by the MA.

Private advisors and the National Extension Agency (15 are available) may be approached to support the actions above when the needed manpower falls short in quantitative or qualitative sense. The participation of these advisors will benefit all parties for future developments.

C. How to gear required competence to future developments in Macedonia

The aim of the qualification structure for vocational education is to bring the labour force on a higher level and more employable; the focus is on broad abilities, transfer and leaning to learn.

1. The occupational qualification

The occupational qualification as required for the realisation of the perspective 2015 cannot be demanded for measure 303. That is why modules may be demanded for the tailor made supply of courses concerning competent craftsmanship, competent management and competent entrepreneurship. These modules should be much smaller than the load for a full diploma course and substantial at the same time to increase the chances of success with the investments

through the IPARD subsidy³. The proposal is three times 40 hours (50 school classes) for the modules 3 up to 4 above.

2. Formal education

The modules are linked to the framework of formal education because of the broad character of the required competence (further to be harmonised with the EQF). A practical reason is that the secondary schools may be able to develop the teaching capacity required for the courses for approximately 100 – 150 students in each round/year of the IPARD initiative.

3. Non formal education, adult education:

The existing organisations active in non-formal education can be considered as an party in this approach as well, having in mind the EU Council conclusions of 12th of May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) The organisations lacks experience with content and courses for the agricultural sector. However in specific sub sectors / subject experts of the actual suppliers of courses may be qualified to do the training of target group.

4. The qualification structure

The description of the learning objectives should be based on information and enquiry in the agricultural sector. The information should be transformed into descriptions of competence. The description may be based of 4-8 task areas with 4-8 working processes each. A module as meant above is a piece of an educational programme derived from the description of competence. Examples are made available by Dutch financed ITAM project and the British Council.

Priority sectors are economic viable sectors and they have been identified and mentioned in the NDP. These can be taken as a basis for the specification of the qualification profiles. Given in the actual situation are 10 schools for secondary education with agricultural orientations. These schools have the practical facilities and a combination of professional qualifications into one educational profile. A number of other high schools should be taken in account since they offer a number of additional topics such as food technology. A quantitative approach of the improvement of vocational qualification should support the picture of a future approach of initial training.

The development of the learning objectives for the required modules may be assisted by the ITAM project after an assignment of the MA to a number of schools and universities. Entry levels, EQF-level, the qualification, the formal length of initial courses and the comparison with present professional levels should be made transparent, to be discussed and be adopted on a provisional and experimental basis in order to be available during spring 2012 for the realisation of the training (after first opening of measure 303).

³ Modules and curricula: At the moment there is a lack of module description on level 2 (craft), level 3 (management) and level 4 (entrepreneur). One module could consist of 40 school hours – 50 school classes. An initial four year course for EQF level 4 could contain 100 modules.

The training for successful participation in IPARD should not be in the volumes of the future initial courses, but levels en approach should relate to a future structure en approach.

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5. VPE / VPK: validation of prior experience / knowledge

VPE / VPK assessment requires assessors with full knowledge of the theoretical and practical content and behaviour of the modules and the level of judgement that is connected with the aimed competence. It also requires empathy and reflection techniques to investigate and value with candidates their process of judging. This assessment competence is not available at present.

For the quality control of acquired competence the MA may assign assessors together with CVET using the method of intake meeting. The final examination of the modules may be written and oral and take one hour. The examination may be carried out by one teacher from a secondary school together with one specialist – e.g. from NEA, and one stakeholder from the branch – e.g. from FFRM or Chamber of Commerce. The examination may focus on theoretical knowledge for a start. Training may be provided to a number of experts of the schools and universities for the assessment of experience and judgment - this is very important, however a long term objective :

Strengthening necessary activities

The strategy described above is likely to fit in desired future developments. It will improve chances for farmers. It will challenge knowledge institutions to invest in future demand. For now it is in line with suggestions from stakeholders, for example:

- It is important that after the application for IPARD budget also follows appropriate training.
- The education and research institutes do not have sufficient capacity; suggestion is to make the extension (NEA) more active in the training of actual farmers. MA should consider a general project to prepare the modules and train the experts / trainers in competence based training, training needs assessment and VPE/VPK.
- The NEA has a national strategy but also performs survey in rural area and there for could be a suitable partner for the selected VET schools.
- NEA covers all producers which request assistance, the annual program is formulated in terms of subjects (technologies, subsidy, and accountancy) and activities per target group, approximately 40,000 farmers are reached.
- FFRM: National federation of regional farmers associations (approximately 50 with 10 to 1.000 members).
- FFRM has announced the second call in their website and organised informative workshops per sub sector. For the next call for projects FFRM has similar plans; It seems as if actually farmers really need to be motivated (and assisted) to perform investments using IPARD support.
- Chamber of Commerce has experience in promoting the IPARD program in food processing and handling sector. For the post harvest oriented companies and service providers the Chamber of Commerce can be an effective source of expertise and capacity.
- NGOs and Private consulting companies also have active role in implementing IPARD measures through specific expertise and consulting services.

5. Implementation

5.1 Development of the strategy

The strategy is aiming at the realisation of structural improvement of the agricultural education and training system which will be harmonised with the EQF. On short term there should be an effective contribution to the upgrading of skills of potential applicants for the IPARD program. In order to reach both the long term and short term results it is important that:

All relevant stakeholders have been involved in the Dutch financed ITAM project from the start: Formulation of strategy and in prioritising the implementation. Further awareness raising among training providers and professional organisations can take place by means of participation of representatives, of stakeholders in information meetings and in a possible project for the preparation of the trainings (as referred to previously). IPARD could facilitate the organisation of a number of discussion / information meetings for all stakeholders during autumn 2011 and spring 2012. These activities could also be part of the project on preparation of the training modules and training of trainers.

5.2 Implementation of the strategy

A draft strategy plan and measure should be ready in May 2011 to follow advisory rounds of MK government and to be presented to EC in August 2011 (total decision making takes 6 months). First call for proposals could then take place in December 2011. The Dutch financed ITAM support project could assist potential applicants in formulation of the proposals during a number of trainings / workshops. During autumn 2011 both MA and Agency could be familiarized with monitoring methodology and formulation of criteria for verification of progress of strengthening of training in Agriculture and rural economy.

- During the period of MK and EC approval of strategy and measure (May – November 2011); the training/workshop can take place with future applicants of IPARD measure 303, officials of Management Authority and IPARD AGENCY concerning assessment of projects, monitoring of results and developments.
- The potential applicants are informed about the future measure; the optional activities eligible for support and application procedures (Autumn 2011)
- The scope of IPARD measure 303 is limited to the potential applicants for the IPARD program. This makes a direct target group of 500 operators for the non-formal training qualifying them for IPARD application. With the scope on the future group of competitive agricultural and rural operators the size of the target group would amount up to 5000 operators. It should be realised that in that case the available budget of €1,4 million during 2012-2015 would not be sufficient to cover both the preparation of the 120 modules, training of the experts/ trainers and pay for the courses to be implemented. Especially the longer courses (6-12 modules) would be too costly in case larger numbers of participants are presenting themselves.

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- The eligible applicants for the IPARD measure 303 can be limited to: Agriculture Secondary Schools, Universities (Faculties and Institutes), NGOs and private providers of trainings. The measure will support Applicants acting as consortia of above mentioned organisations.
- The eligible costs for the IPARD measure 303 which will be covered by 100% are: cost for the preparation of curricula and training modules (expert fees/days), cost in relation to training needs assessment (experts fees/days), costs in regards to implementation of the modules (training room, consumables, food and refreshment, transportation costs) as well the costs for using the facilities implementing practical training sessions (school facilities or farm facilities) and management costs of the Applicant.

ANNEX 1 Sources of Information

1. Critical Assessment of the training structure in Agriculture and rural development in republic of Macedonia (2010, IPARD Management Agency MK)
2. Development and state of adult learning and education (2008, Ministry of Education and Science MK)
3. Strategy of IPARD program 2007-2013 (Part III)