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GLOBAL QUALITY
AND STANDARDS PROGRAMME

COMPETITIVENESS & CLIMATE CHANGE

Implications & Challenges for the Agrifood Sector

Post Conference Catalogue

International Conference

May 28th, 2024

Tirana, Albania





● **Family Photo**

May 28th, 2024, Tirana, Albania

COMPETITIVENESS AND CLIMATE CHANGE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

BACKGROUND

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Competitiveness & Climate change Implications and Challenges for the Agri-Food Sector in Albania

Held on the 28th of May 2024 in Tirana, Albania

The first INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE on Competitiveness & Climate Change – Implications and Challenges for the Agri-food Sector in Albania, organized by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Agriculture University of Tirana took place on the 28th of May, 2024.

This conference was organized within the Global Quality and Standards Program (GQSP) which is implemented by UNIDO and financed by the Swiss Government, through the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). Special thanks go to Drini Imami and Edvin Zhllima, DSA, for conducting the underlying studies and supporting the organization of the event. The event brought together around 120 key stakeholders to bring in focus and address challenges that climate change presents to the global agri-food sector.



Panel Discussions | Speakers

Opening Remarks:



Ms. Dorina Nati

United Nations Industrial Development Organization, UNIDO HQ



H.E. Ruth Huber

Head of Mission of Switzerland to Albania



Prof. Edvin Zhllima

Agriculture University of Tirana and Development Solutions Associates, Albania

Panel 1: The impact of climate change – Implication for the agriculture sector



Mr. Dhimitër Kote

Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Albania



Prof. Dr. Daniel Muller

Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Transition Economies (IAMO), Germany



Prof. Dr. Aleksandra Martinovska

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, North Macedonia



Prof. Dr. Evan Rroco

Agriculture University of Tirana, Albania



Dr. Iliriana Miftari

University of Pristina, Kosovo



Mr. Agim Rrapaj

President of the Albanian Agribusiness Council (KASH)

Panel 2: Staying competitive in times of climate change - Market requirements and trends



Prof. Dr. Klaus Grunert

Aarhus University, Denmark



Prof. Dr. Oliver Meixner

BOKU-University, Vienna, Austria



Prof. Dr. Rainer Haas

BOKU-University, Vienna, Austria



Dr. Luciano Leonetti

Development Solutions Associates, Albania



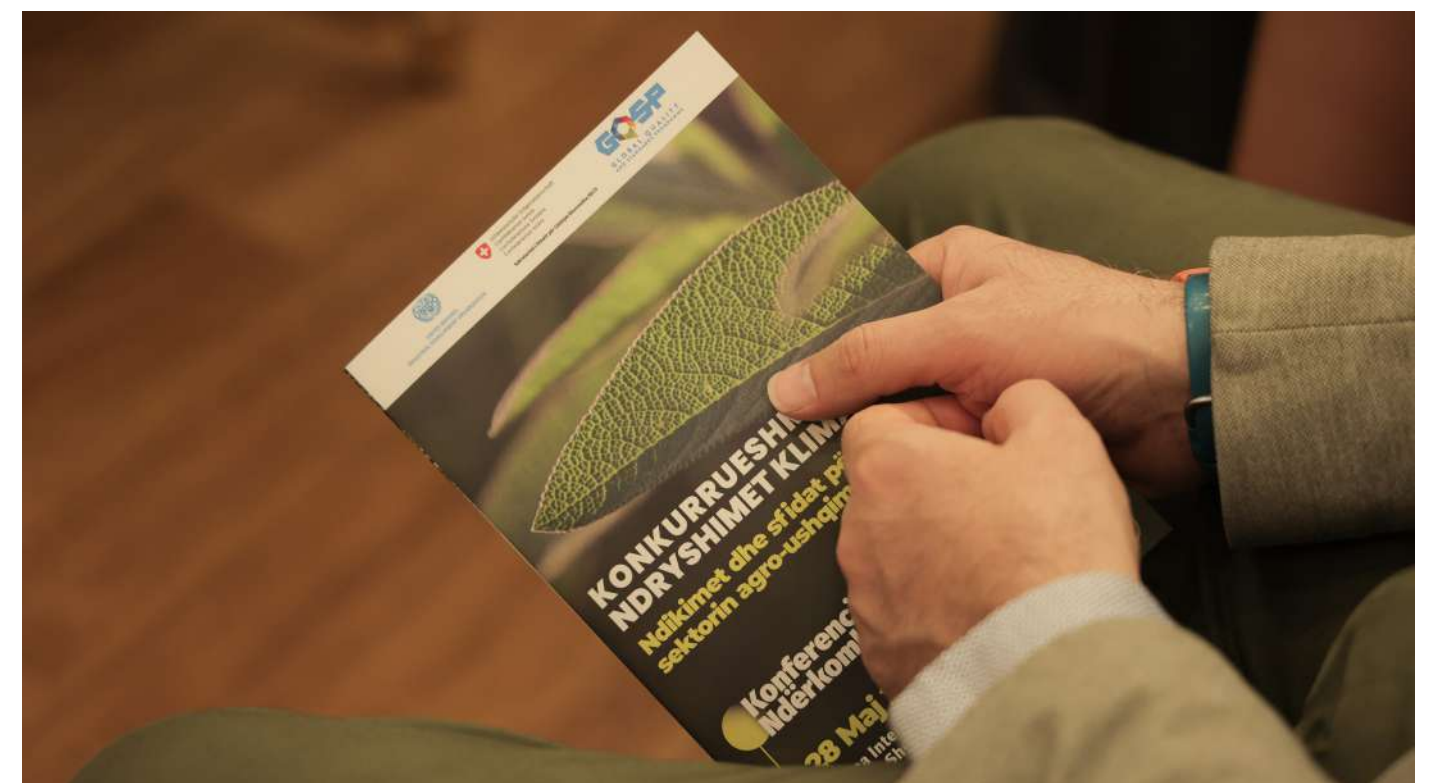
Ms. Dorina Nati

UNIDO Vienna HQ



Ms. Klodiana Balla

Managing Director of Bio Inspecta Ltd., Albania





Opening Remarks

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Climate Change is a global cause with local implications on quality, agriculture, trade, people, prosperity. It means a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity.

In these turbulent times, countries like Albania are striving to develop their economies, ideally in a sustainable way. To strengthen competitiveness in times of climate change, new business practices are needed and standards can provide guidance in line with international best practices, conformity with these standards needs to be proven and results internationally acceptable while accurate measurement is the cornerstone for measuring and monitoring the success of climate action.

The GQSP, funded by Switzerland through SECO promotes the use of quality and standards for trade and sustainable development. The programme develops solutions for common challenges at the global level for application at the local level. It is within this spirit that we have prepared two documents highlighting the implications of climate change on the competitiveness of the agrifood sector in Albania.

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Climate change is a reality and a global challenge. And while it affects us all, every country and every sector, climate change is of particular concern to agriculture, with its very direct exposure to weather and the climate in general. Any negative effect on production or quality is bound to create economic and financial stress. Therefore, it is timely for us to address these issues as we are doing today through this conference.

The call to both national and local authorities is to ensure environmental protection and also to make cities and rural areas more resilient towards climate change and natural hazards. We are working together with several institutions on these areas.



Ms. Dorina Nati

United Nations Industrial Development Organization, HQ



H.E. Ruth Huber

Head of Mission of Switzerland to Albania



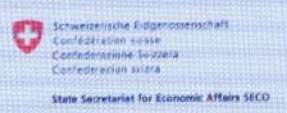
Prof. Edvin Zhllima

Agriculture University of Tirana and Development Solutions Associates, Albania

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The agrifood value chain is undergoing rapid transformation. Market liberalization and consumer awareness bring stringent requirements regarding quality and press for cost reductions. One of the factors that contribute to the (non)compliance with food safety and quality standards is climate change. Albania is one of the most exposed countries in the region to climate change. There is a scarcity of understanding of the link between climate change and quality. High concerns arise for small farmers operating in export-oriented value chains regarding their competitiveness in the context of opening markets. Albanian policymakers, business community and academia should take a holistic approach to invest in climate change adaptation strategies, support research and innovation through new forms of financing and cooperation and improve Quality Infrastructure (QI) and associated services along the agrifood value chains





»» **PANEL I**

THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

IMPLICATION FOR THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR



Panel 1

● **Panel 1: The impact of climate change – Implication for the agriculture sector**



Mr. Dhimitër Kote

Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Albania

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There is a decrease in production, the damage caused by hail, so ultimately this requires a cooperation not only from the government but from the farmer, all the institutions and all the communities to realize and protect our current difficult situation that the whole world is in. We also have the responsibility for our country, we also have our obligations to supply other European countries with our products and even though the number of exports has increased, there is still a lot to be done.

We altogether must really respond to the issues that the Albanian farmer faces and to really take the quality product to the right destination, because this is the goal of quality production. This has to do with the quality of life, it has to do with the quality of the environment, it has to do with the quality and inheritance of the future generations.

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Climate change and the response to climate change are at the center of EU policies. The related EU policy strategies aim to improve climate resilience and reduce vulnerability to climate change and emphasize that adaptation strategies need to be tailored at the local level, both for the agricultural and food systems and for maintaining agricultural productivity.

Amidst accelerating climate change, it is clear that there is a need to implement measures and to come up with solutions, especially for rural people who face rising challenges due to climate change. Solutions need to be developed very fast and we must act quickly to address these challenges not only in the EU but also in WB, which is a region that is severely affected by climate change.



Prof. Dr. Daniel Muller

Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Transition Economies (IAMO), Germany



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Prof. Dr. Aleksandra Martinovska

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, North Macedonia

The countries in the region want to increase the yields, modernize and move at the same pace as the EU countries, but it is very difficult to balance all these elements - to be more productive, to deal with climate change and to ensure environmental protection and sustainability, all in parallel. There are very good strategies in place, but if we see their implementation, then the picture is very clear, the number of objectives (related to environmental benefits) is high, but the amount of money spent is not enough.

Recommendations must be made based on evidence and data, and those show that there is a need to invest more public funds and other donor funds, because now we are aware of the climate situation and it should be a priority. If not supported in the right way, and as much as necessary, then the pressing issues will not be solved, at least not as quickly as they should be.

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Prof. Dr. Evan Rroco

Agriculture University of Tirana, Albania

Climate change and coping with it is a very serious issue. A further increase in temperatures, a further decrease in rainfall, these impacts are expected to be even more extreme, then it is imperative for the measures to be taken as soon as possible.

The organic matter, the decrease in organic matter is a serious problem because with climate change, we have a decrease in organic matter in the soil, which leads to a decrease in soil fertility.



Dr. Iliriana Miftari

University of Pristina, Kosovo

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Regarding the development of the political framework and legislation at the WB level, all countries seem to be ambitious in terms of the development of strategic documents and legislation regarding climate change but on the other hand we know that climate change requires substantial investments whether in infrastructure, technology or renewable energy and we know the economic status of all these countries that they have budget limitations in the allocation of sufficient funds to address such problem.

The WB countries face a challenge with having a different focus on the dimension of economic development as well as the readiness of the policy makers to address this issue.

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Mr. Agim Rrapaj

President of the Albanian Agribusiness Council (KASH)

There are 6 main challenges that we are facing because of the climate change: the first are floods, water inundations and dam breaks, the second are fires in forests and pastures, and then technological accidents, earthquakes, infectious diseases, erosion and landslides, intense rainfall of hail, rain and snow, storms and avalanches.

Our costs have increased significantly, the first reason is that we do occasional spraying even when it is not necessary (lack of knowledge) but even the pesticides and insecticides that come to Albania do not have the right effect or have gone out of function and are impermissible and this is an element that we must keep in the center of attention.



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PANEL II

STAYING COMPETITIVE IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CHANGE

MARKET REQUIREMENTS AND TRENDS



Panel 2

Panel 2: Staying competitive in times of climate change - Market requirements and trends



Prof. Dr. Klaus Grunert

Aarhus University,
Denmark

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Many policies have been formulated to speed up the green transition of the food sector, such that the agricultural sector not only responds to climate change, but also takes measures to mitigate climate change. In the green transition, it is now widely recognized that consumers are a very important agent of change. Any initiatives to produce food in a more sustainable way can be sped up or delayed by consumers, as any new sustainable products brought on the market need to be accepted by consumers in their daily purchases. Understanding consumers and the way they make choices is therefore an important part in the green transition of the food sector. The way in which consumers evaluate the quality of food has been changing – from a focus on taste via an increased focus on healthiness to an inclusion of aspects of sustainability.

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When we talk about the improvement of sustainability in the entire chain of food values, we cannot attribute all the responsibility for the consumption of sustainable food to the consumers themselves.

Climate change and consumer behavior is very stable, it is not that it has changed much. We must change the whole market. We are in a very strange situation and on the one hand we must feed the world and on the other hand we have the big problem of obesity in certain countries. It is not that we will find the solution today, but we must discuss how effective our strategies are, our policies to change the eating habits of consumers, which should change in a significant way.



Prof. Dr. Oliver Meixner

BOKU-University,
Vienna, Austria



Prof. Dr. Rainer Haas

BOKU-University,
Vienna, Austria

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If Albania wants to enter the European market, the first task is to create a system of reliable third parties for auditing and certification, and when this is done, we will think about how we will position the food products in a marketing way that we offer the European consumer a value for which they are ready to pay their money.

How ready are consumers to change their behavior due to climate change? Health is still a megatrend and the pleasure that food gives you is higher, and we must give good advice to consumers so that they are offered products that have health benefits but are also delicious to eat, so they have a pleasant experience. Health should bring happiness.

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Dr. Luciano Leonetti

Development Solutions
Associates, Albania

There are practically 4 aspects that in recent years have created trends, the first is the regulatory way, that is, regulations, strategies, policies that the EU has that determine the rules of the game and then there are the trends in the markets and these trends are related to consumer demand, how is consumer demand changing, especially in terms of connection and expectation for food safety.

The behavior of the actors in the value chain, especially in terms of food processing companies that operate so they must fulfill the demands of end users, of customers, but in fact they are becoming actors in themselves that set the rules, that are influencing what consumers believe that they want politics too. The holistic system in the agri-food industry is influencing policies and influencing consumer behavior.



Ms. Dorina Nati
UNIDO Vienna HQ

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Climate change is high on the EU agenda, which is more and more focusing on due diligence along the entire supply chain, looking at environmental and social concerns. We see a shift from voluntary to mandatory requirements when it comes to sustainability and climate matters. These requirements may result in trade barriers, if not addressed timely and adequately.

By adopting a proactive approach to climate action and alignment with the climate action agenda of the EU, Albania can be at the frontline of meeting the new requirements and enter high-value markets. Albanian farmers must be aware of these new requirements as they will soon be asked to conform, they must adopt new and sustainable business practices. For that, a quality infrastructure system needs to be in place that is able to test and certify that pesticide levels are within allowed limits and that products are in fact organically grown, how else can the farmers prove compliance with these new market requirements?

Quality and environmental concerns are closely interlinked. Quality management principles and practices can significantly enhance the effectiveness of climate action, while robust climate action can lead to improvements in quality across various sectors. Standards are a key tool to enhance the quality of products but also processes, that lead to higher productivity and more efficient use of resources, ultimately reducing waste and emissions which harm the environment.



Ms. Klodiana Balla
Managing Director of Bio
Inspecta Ltd., Albania

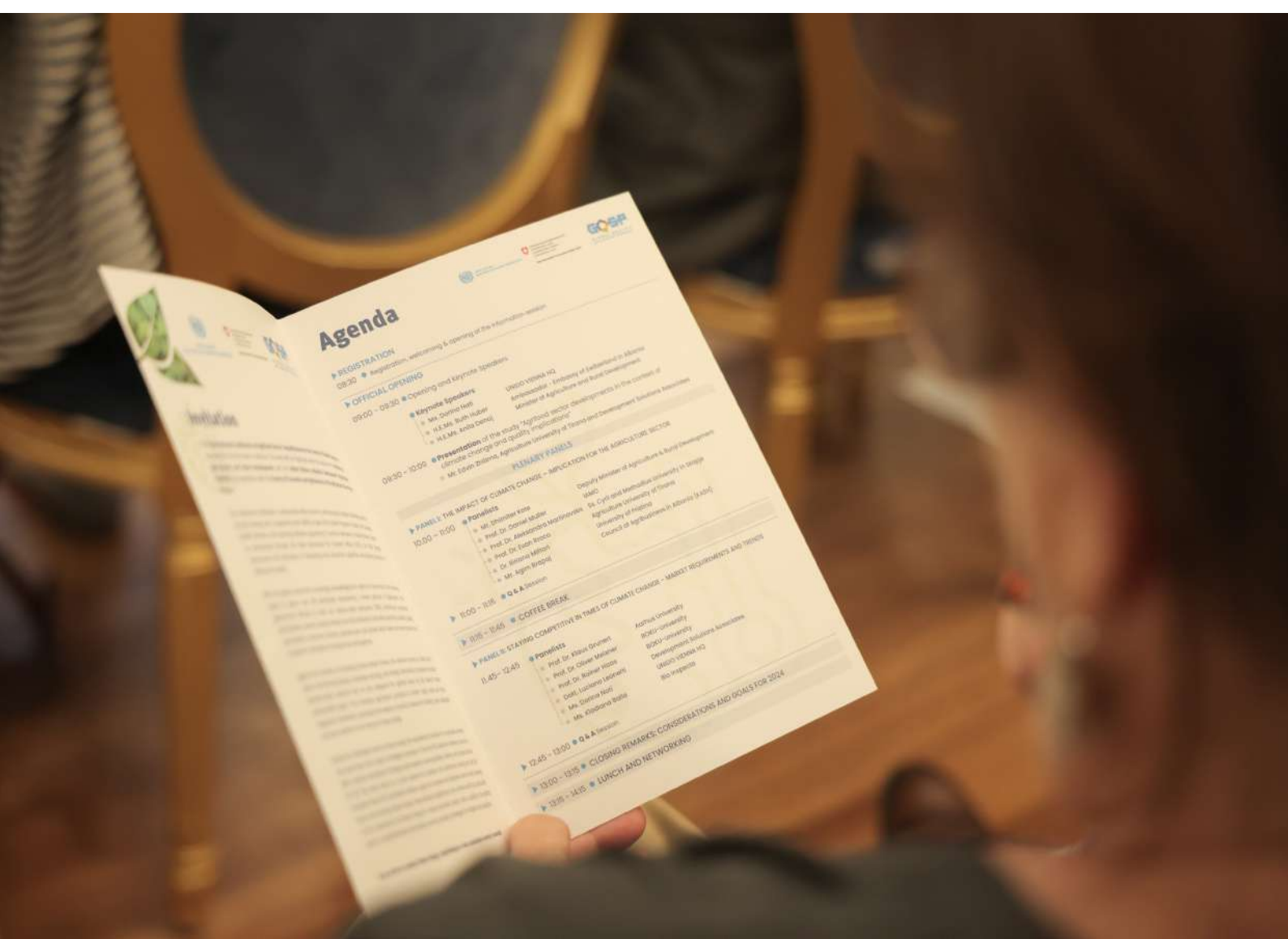
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Albania is a small country, and we cannot compete in the international markets with quantity, the only solution would be to offer quality products to reach the high-quality markets and get higher prices for our products.

It should be the goal and focus of our policies to producing quality products and certifying these products with the relevant standards depending on the products. This will increase our level of competitiveness in the markets and at the same time we will produce, and we will not damage the climate or the environment. These 3 elements, competitiveness, quality and climate go in the same direction and complement each other.

We also need to raise the awareness to farmers because we say that for international markets consumers are more aware of the specific properties of the products and again this constitutes a problem in local markets. We enable producers and exporters to expand to new markets to have economic, environmental and social benefits because health and food are connected to each other.







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**CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT ON
AGRI-FOOD SECTOR WITH
FOCUS ON QUALITY**

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**POLICY BRIEF
NAVIGATING FOOD QUALITY IN
THE FACE OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

