

TITLE:

3RD INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING EVENT

SKILLING-UP THE WESTERN BALKAN AGRI-FOOD SECTOR: DIGITALISING, GREENING

DATE AND VENUE

21 – 22 November 2024, BioSense Institute, Dr Zorana Đinđića 1, Novi Sad, Serbia

Context

The ETF looks at skills from a small business standpoint. It facilitates networking among companies and those who seek to develop concrete solutions to support innovation and competitiveness. The ETF's work is closely linked to emerging industries, where traditional sectors are being transformed through digital and green transitions; and are raising competitive pressures and corresponding skills needs of companies. The ETF's project '*Skilling up the Western Balkan agri-food sector: digitalising, greening*' aims to enhance joined-up skills development among a broad range of Western Balkan stakeholders and their European peers. The ETF actions directly contribute to the Acquis Chapter 25, Science and Research.

The agriculture and food sectors are the largest producing and manufacturing sectors in Europe. In the Western Balkan region all six economies have identified agri-food as a priority sector for smart specialisation. In Eastern Partnership countries agri-food is also a key sector, in particular in Moldova and Ukraine.

Agri-food is at the core of the discussions on sustainability. As part of the European Green Deal, the European Commission has proposed the Farm to Fork (F2F) Strategy which highlights the need to make food systems more climate resilient and sustainable in the face of climate change-related insecurities; and the European Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 which emphasises the need to protect natural areas on land and sea. The Green Deal also includes provisions for CAP reform, specifically focusing on supporting the agricultural sector through improved management of resources used for agriculture, sustainability of food systems, and more robust protection for biodiversity.

Digitalisation, alongside the green transformation, is one of the EU's policy priorities. The European Digital Decade's targets, expected to be achieved by 2030, includes the digital transformation of businesses, secure and sustainable digital infrastructures, and digital skills development. Digital and data solutions can help optimise agri-food production practices, increase the efficiency of the use of available agricultural land, and help cut down carbon emissions. The uptake of precision technologies is a core feature of digitalisation in the agri-food sector.

To tackle the challenges ahead, all stakeholders i.e. agri-food companies, business intermediary bodies, policymakers, and education, training, and research institutions, need to work together to jointly identify and address education, training, upskilling and reskilling needs. To support this process, the ETF project '*Skilling up the Western Balkan agri-food sector: digitalising, greening*' is centred around collaboration and peer learning, backed by research.

Aim of the event

The third international networking event of the ETF's project '*Skilling up the Western Balkan agri-food sector: digitalising, greening*' will be joined by peers from EU member states and Eastern Partnership economies.

The event will provide participants with networking opportunities around two core aims:

1. To advance on already started joint initiatives and explore new collaboration opportunities.
2. To collaboratively explore and co-design the way forward with the network.

The event is co-organised with the BioSense Institute, a Serbia-based European Centre of Excellence for advanced technologies in sustainable agriculture. The event will be held in the premises of BioSense Institute in Novi Sad, Serbia.

Arrival: 20 November 2024

Time	Sessions	Venue
Afternoon	<i>Arrival and registration</i>	Hotel
18:00 - 20:30	<i>Aperitif hosted by the BioSense Institute</i>	Accelerator room in Biosense

DAY 1: 21 November 2024

Time	Sessions	Venue
09:00 – 09:30	<p>Welcome session</p> <p>Vladimir Crnojević, Director, BioSense Andrej Papić, Project Manager, EU Delegation to Serbia, Pirita Vuorinen, Project Team Leader, Skills for Enterprises, ETF</p>	Plenary – Auditorium Room
09:30 – 09:50	<p>Keynote speech: The importance of networks in the 21st century</p> <p>Moderator: Milica Trajkovic, BioSense Adrien Guichaoua, ACTA, France</p>	Plenary – Auditorium Room
09:50 – 10:15	<p>Tracking progress ... Moderator: Pirita Vuorinen, ETF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journey of the project 2022-2024 • Key messages from the Foresight • Advisory Board <p>Kristien Van den Eynde, ETF Piotr Stronkowski, ETF Gordon Purvis, ETF</p> <p>Q&A</p>	Plenary – Auditorium Room
10:15 – 10:30	<p>Introduction to the site visits Moderator: Kristien Van den Eynde, ETF</p> <p>Representatives of the companies to be visited:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senka Gajinov, Dunavnet • Site visit 2, Biosense • Site visit 3, Smart Watering 	Plenary – Auditorium Room

10:30 - 11:00	Introduction to the WB6/EaP/EU networking session and idea generation Speaker: Jasna Mastilović, BioSense Institute	Auditorium followed by break-out rooms
11:00 - 11:30	<i>Coffee break</i>	
11:30-13:00	Group work: idea generation Overall moderator: Jasna Mastilović, BioSense Institute Group facilitators: Pirita Vuorinen, ETF Kristien Van den Eynde, ETF Piotr Stronkowski, ETF Gordon Purvis, ETF	Plenary 4 Breakout rooms
13:00 – 14:00	<i>Lunch</i>	Cafeteria of BioSense
PARALLEL PROGRAMME – site visits:		
14:15 - 17:00	Site visits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DunavNet • BioSense (2 groups) • Smart Watering 	
19:30 - 21:00	Networking dinner	Restaurant Sokače

DAY 2: 22 November 2024

Time	Sessions	Venue
09:00 – 9:15	<p>Welcome and feedback from Day 1</p> <p>Facilitators: Pirita Vuorinen, ETF BioSense Institute</p>	Plenary
9:15 – 10:15	<p>Panel discussion Regional network with European outreach: sharing experiences on cross-border networks to boost innovation and competitiveness of the agri-food sector</p> <p>Moderator: Milica Trajkovic, BioSense Institute</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veerle De Graef, Flanders Food, Belgium • Simon Maas, Agrifood Capital, Netherlands • Sjaak Wolfert, Wageningen university, Netherlands • Aleksandra Popovic, Serbia innovates, Serbia <p>Q&A</p>	Plenary
10:15 – 10:45	<i>Coffee break</i>	
10:45-12:00	<p>Moving from common issues to joint initiatives: part 1 in Plenary</p> <p>Moderator: Jasna Mastilović, BioSense Institute</p>	Plenary-Auditorium
12:00 – 13:30	Moving from common issues to joint initiatives: part 2 in groups	Break-out rooms
13:30 – 14:00	<p>What's next: 2025 and beyond</p> <p>Speakers: Pirita Vuorinen, ETF BioSense Institute</p>	Plenary
14:00	<i>Lunch and departure</i>	Cafeteria of BioSense