

PRESS RELEASE 3/2017

Efficient Water Supply for Agriculture in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Challenges and Solutions

Outcomes of a panel discussion at the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture in Berlin

An agricultural policy expert panel under the title “Everything Flows? Water as Decisive Resource and Factor for Agriculture in Eastern Europe and Central Asia” took place on 19 January 2017 at the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture (GFFA) held during the International Green Week in Berlin, Germany. The panel discussion was organized by IAMO in cooperation with the German Agribusiness Alliance of the Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations (OA). During the event, representatives from the areas of politics, agricultural engineering, international collaboration and agricultural practices, together with around 130 guests, discussed the challenges of sustaining an adequate water supply for agriculturally used land in the region. The GFFA took place this year under the title “Agriculture and Water - Key to Feeding the World” and was organized by the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL).

IAMO Director, Professor **Alfons Balmann**, opened the expert panel with a speech on the increasing importance of the Eastern European and Central Asian countries as exporters of agricultural products such as wheat, oilseeds, fruits and vegetables. Despite significant deficits still to be found in infrastructure and institutional rules as well as a lack of capital and know-how on the part of the agricultural holdings, existing potential must be put to use. Although there are substantial fertile lands, there are also often distinctive climatic conditions including extreme temperatures and lack of water. Above all, the scarcity of water resources and the increasing demand for water is a major challenge for this region.

Hermann Onko Aeikens, State Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL), stressed in his opening address, that soil and water are essential resources in agriculture: "Recent projections show that the planet will be populated by around 10 billion people by 2050. Functional agricultural production is therefore necessary in order to be able to supply the growing world population with sufficient food," Aeikens explained. Only through the sustainable management of resources can a continuous increase in

agricultural productivity in Eastern Europe and Central Asia be encouraged in order to feed the world and stabilize the global economy.

In the face of increasing water scarcity, Professor **Dieter Gerten**, Professor for Global Change Climatology and Hydrology at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and Coordinator Earth Modelling at Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), gave a keynote speech in which he presented solutions for efficient water management in agriculture. Measures need to be taken to considerably reduce the use of fresh water and the pollution of ground water. Improved irrigation systems, rain water collection and the prevention of water evaporation could lead to a reduction of around 20 percent of global water use and lessen the negative effects of climate change.

During the ensuing panel discussion, Professor **Hans-Georg Frede**, former chair of the Institute of Landscape Ecology and Resources Management at the University of Gießen, and expert on water use at the German Agricultural Society (DLG), explained that greatest share of fresh water is used for the cultivation of agricultural lands. Traditional irrigation methods still used in many Eastern European and Central Asian countries today cause a loss of between 70 to 80 percent of water. The implementation of a modern and efficient irrigation system in agriculture could provide the best means of saving water whilst also contributing to the development of agricultural production.

Despite periods of drought in southern Ukraine, Dr. **Olga Trofimzewa**, Vice Minister of Agricultural Policy and Food in Ukraine, remained positive that there is great potential in agriculture. According to her, the government has made top priority of the revision of partly outdated legislation, the improvement of infrastructure and above all the collaboration between state and private investors. Of particular importance for increased agricultural production is the rapid and effective design of water management and water conservation measures which are to take into account all stakeholders involved at all stages of the value chain.

Askar Nametov, Chairman of the board of the National Agricultural Research & Education Center Kazakhstan, stated during the expert panel discussion that the Kazakh government has also decided to focus on a marked intensification of agriculture. Particular problems for farming in the region are soil salinity and the drying up of rivers. Water conservation technologies must therefore be developed, saline soils avoided or made usable again, salt-resistant crops cultivated and the use of transnational rivers with neighboring countries agreed upon. In addition to international solutions, investments in new technology such as drip irrigation and greenhouse cultivation as well as state assistance for investors in the form of tax cuts and reduced customs duties were discussed.

Host **Torsten Spill**, co-chair of the German Agribusiness Alliance at the Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations (OA) summed up the event, declaring that "the consequences of water shortage, poor harvests and drought do not stop at national borders. The use of water resources therefore requires, in addition to the necessary judgement, a political, economic and social collaboration that spans national borders. Modern technology is essential for efficient water use. Investments in new technology allow for the efficient use and protection of resources."

Further information and photos from the expert panel can be found here:

www.iamo.de/en/events/details/gffa-expert-panel-everything-flows-water-as-decisive-resource-and-factor-for-agriculture-in-eas.

Text: 5,997 characters (with spaces)

About IAMO

The Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Transition Economies (IAMO) analyzes economic, social and political processes of change in the agricultural and food sector, and in rural areas. The geographic focus covers the enlarging EU, transition regions of Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe, as well as Central and Eastern Asia. IAMO works to enhance the understanding of institutional, structural and technological changes. Moreover, IAMO studies the resulting impacts on the agricultural and food sector as well as the living conditions of rural populations. The outcomes of our work are used to derive and analyze strategies and options for enterprises, agricultural markets and politics. Since its founding in 1994, IAMO has been part of the Leibniz Association, a German community of independent research institutes.

Contact

Daniela Schimming

Public Relations

Tel.: +49 345 2928-330

Fax: +49 345 2928-499

presse@iamo.de

www.iamo.de/en

About the the German Agribusiness Alliance at the Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations

The German Agribusiness Alliance, unites leading associations and companies in the German agriculture and food sector focussing in particular on agricultural machinery and equipment, animal husbandry, plant breeding and plant protection as well as agricultural trade. Its objective is to actively support the development of agriculture and industries in partner countries by providing knowhow, modern technology as well as by promoting economic relations and direct investment. The German Agribusiness Alliance operates its Eastern Europe office in co-operation with the Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations.

The Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations (OA) is a joint organization of the leading associations representing German business and acts as a central point of contact for German companies with interests in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Central Asia, South Caucasus and South-eastern Europe. The OA supports economic policy developments in bilateral relations with those countries and promotes trade, investments and service transfers by German companies in this region.

Contact

Dr. Per Brodersen

Director German Agribusiness Alliance

Committee on Eastern European Economic Relations

Tel.: +49 30 206167-124

Fax: +49 30 2028-2569

p.brodersen@bdi.eu

www.ost-ausschuss.de