



**Fourth annual EU conference
on EAFRD financial instruments
for agriculture and rural
development in 2014-2020**
Sofia, 5-6 June 2018

Speakers' Biographies



Day 1: 5 June 2018 (Tuesday afternoon)

Welcomes and introductions



Phil Hogan

*European Commissioner
for Agriculture and
Rural Development*

Phil Hogan has occupied various senior posts at local, national and European level before becoming the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development in 2014. This includes the Presidency of the Council of EU Environment Ministers (2013), Chairman of the European People's Party of Environment Ministers (2012-14), National Director of Elections for the Fine Gael party (2010-11), Fine Gael Director of Organisation (2002-2007), Chairman of Kilkenny County Council (1985 and 1998), Chairman of the Fine Gael Parliamentary Group (1995-2001) and Minister of State at the Irish Department of Finance (1994-1995).

As European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Phil Hogan oversees EU agricultural and rural development policies for promoting growth, investment and new jobs and the effectiveness of EU spending on agriculture and rural development.



Rumen Porodzanov

*Minister of Agriculture,
Food and Forestry,
Bulgarian Presidency of
the Council of the EU*

Rumen Porodzanov is Minister of Agriculture, Food and Forestry from 04 May 2017. He has a long professional experience at the Ministry of Finance. From 1992 to 2009, he consecutively held appointments in expert positions at the Special Activities Funding Division, Head of Finance, Agriculture, Trade and Services Division and Director of Real Sector Finance Directorate. In the period 2009 to 2011, he was Head of the Cabinet of the Minister of Finance. He has also held executive positions in the real and public sector, including: Chairman of the Board of Directors of Arsenal AD-Kazanlak (1993-1999), Chairman and Member of the Board of Directors of Bulgartabac Holding AD (2001-2005), Member of the Board of Directors of Sofia Tobacco Company (2005-2011), Chairman of the Board of Directors of Burgas-Alexandroupolis Oil Pipeline Project Company, Chairman and Member of the Supervisory Board of Bulgarian Development Bank (2009-2014).

In the period March 2011 to the end of August 2013 Rumen Porodzanov was Executive Director of the State Agriculture Fund Paying Agency. He was also head of the institution from November 2014 to February 2017. In 2014, he was appointed Minister of Finance in the Caretaker Government.

He holds a Master's degree in Agrarian Business, Economics and Management and a Master's degree in Defence Industry, Economics and Management from the University of National and World Economy. He has specialised in public finance, public management and structural reforms in the Joint Vienna Institute, Austria and the USA.



Andrew McDowell

*Vice-President,
European Investment
Bank*

Andrew McDowell joined the European Investment Bank as Vice-President on 1 September 2016. He is the first Irish member of the Bank's Management Committee for 12 years.

Prior to joining the European Investment Bank, Andrew McDowell was Economic Advisor to the Taoiseach, Ireland's Prime Minister, from 2011. He has 20 years of experience in economic policy and public service management. Prior to working for the Taoiseach, Andrew was Chief Economist at the Irish business development agency, Forfás, and European Deputy Editor at the Economist Intelligence Unit.

He holds an MBA from the Michael Smurfit Graduate School of Business and studied at John Hopkins University and University College Dublin.



Pier Luigi Gilibert

*Chief Executive,
European Investment
Fund*

Pier Luigi Gilibert is the Chief Executive at the European Investment Fund since March 2014. He has been working for the European Investment Bank (EIB) since 1984, where he was Director General of the Directorate for Operations in the EU and EU candidate countries from 2010 to 2014. Prior to that, from 2003 to 2010, he was Director General of the Risk Management Directorate at the EIB. Between 1984 and 1996, Pier Luigi Gilibert worked at the EIB's Financial Research Department, first as an Economist and later as Head of Division.

Pier Luigi Gilibert graduated from the University of Turin (Italy) and Rochester (New York) with degrees in Economics.

EU farm policy statements on the future of EU and Bulgarian agriculture and its investment needs



Pekka Pesonen

*Secretary General,
COPA-COGECA*

Pekka Pesonen is Secretary General of Copa-Cogeca, representing European farmers, and Cogeca, representing European agri-cooperatives, which together include more than 70 national farming organisations from across Europe. Previously, he was State Secretary for the Finnish Ministry for Agriculture and Forestry. In addition, Pekka Pesonen has extensive professional experience in lobbying at EU level on behalf of Finnish farmers, forest owners (MTK and SLC) and agri-forestry cooperatives (Pellervo). In the 1990s, he worked in the sales and marketing department of Valio, a Finnish dairy company. Pekka Pesonen has also been a member of several high level advisory groups concerning EU policy preparation.

He is a qualified agronomist.



Ventsislav Varbanov

*Chairman of the
Management Body,
Bulgarian Association of
the Agricultural
Producers*

Ventsislav Varbanov is Chairman of the Managing Board of the Bulgarian Association of Agricultural Producers (BAAP). He is an entrepreneur and agri-businessman with extensive experience in investment in the production of agricultural raw materials, storage and processing industries. Ventsislav Varbanov was mayor of the Municipality of Dolni Dabnik (region Pleven), and Member of Parliament in the 39th, 40th, 41st and 42nd National Assemblies of the Republic of Bulgaria during which he was a member of different parliamentary Committees including European Affairs, parliamentary Ethics. He was also Deputy Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Agriculture and Forests. He was Minister of Agriculture from 1997 to 2001.

Ventsislav Varbanov has a Master's degree from the Higher Institute of Zootechnics and Veterinary Medicine in Stara Zagora, Bulgaria. He has specialised in the USA in Marketing and Management in Agriculture as well as in Public Administration.



Mariela Yordanova

*Member of the
Management Board of
the National Association
of the Cereals
Producers, Bulgaria*

Mariela Georgieva Yordanova is Member of the Management Board of the National Association of Cereals Producers and Chairperson of the Association of Grain Producers from the Ludogorie Region.

She is also Manager of the Select Seeds company in Razgrad. The company farms 2 500 ha of land and produces cereals, grain seeds, and deals with the preparation and trading of seeds. She took part in the National Agricultural Forum – CAP 2020+ for developing the common position of the Bulgarian agricultural community on the Common Agricultural Policy post-2020. Mrs Yordanova took part in the organisation and celebration of the IV International Peace and Agriculture Conference 2017 and is an active participant in the Peace Bread project.

Mariela Yordanova has a Master's degree in Business Management.

Investment needs in the Bulgarian agriculture



Anton Asparuhov

*Head of Unit for
Programming, planning,
monitoring and
technical assistance, in
the Rural development
Directorate, Ministry of
Agriculture, Food and
Forestry, Bulgaria*

Anton Asparuhov works as a Head of Unit for Programming, monitoring and technical assistance at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry of Bulgaria. Previously, he was Director Rural Development at the Ministry of Agriculture, actively involved in the design and implementation of the Guarantee scheme under the Rural Development Programme. He started working for the Ministry of Agriculture in 2012 as Head of Unit for Implementation, evaluation and monitoring, at the Rural Development directorate.

Anton Asparuhov holds an executive MBA degree from the American University in Bulgaria.

Experience with EAFRD financial instruments for agriculture and rural businesses in Bulgaria



Borislav Bogdanov

Head of Risk and Monitoring Department, Bulgarian Development Bank

Borislav Bogdanov has been working as Head of Risk and Monitoring Department at National Guarantee Fund Ltd, Bulgaria, for the past three years.

Previously he was Senior Expert in the Business Development Department of the National Guarantee Fund Ltd. He has more than ten years of experience in the Bulgarian banking sector.

Borislav Bogdanov has a Bachelor's degree in marketing and an MBA from The University of National and World Economy in Sofia.

Day 2: 6 June 2018 (Wednesday) Opening



Lozana Vassileva

Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, Bulgaria

Lozana Vassileva has been Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Food and Forestry since May 2017.

She has a long professional experience at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry and State Agriculture Fund Paying Agency (SFA – RA). She was Senior Expert at a Pazardzhik-based directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (2003-2004), an accountant (2004-2009), and head of the Pazardzhik-based directorate of the State Agriculture Fund since 2009. By a decision of the Management Board of State Agriculture Fund of 28 August 2014, Lozana Vassileva was appointed Executive Director of State Agriculture Fund Paying Agency. From November 2014 to February 2017 she was Deputy Executive Director of State Agriculture Fund Paying Agency.

Lozana Vasileva holds a PhD in Agricultural Economics from the University of National and World Economy (UNWE) in Sofia. She completed a specialisation in organic farming at the University of South Bohemia in the Czech Republic.

The new CAP post-2020: general architecture and focus on EAFRD & financial instruments



Josefine Loriz-Hoffmann

Director, Directorate-General Agriculture and Rural Development, European Commission

Josefine Loriz-Hoffmann is Director of Directorate F – Rural Development Programmes I at the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI, European Commission) since July 2014. The Directorate is responsible for the conception and consistency of rural development, for the approval and management of 56 Rural Development Programmes of 12 Member States and for Financial Instruments under the EAFRD, including the relationships with the EIB Group.

Josefine Loriz-Hoffmann has been working for the European Commission since 1989, starting her career in the Directorate General of Financial Control, and changing in 1994 to DG AGRI. In 2005, she became Head of the Unit dealing with the Rural Development Programmes of Sweden, Finland, Estonia and Latvia. In 2007, she took over the management of the unit responsible for the policy development and coordination of the Rural Development Policy. From 2014 to 2015, she was Head of Unit for Environment, Forestry and Climate Change in DG AGRI.



Michael Pielke

Head of Unit F.3 Bulgaria, Slovenia, Poland and Croatia; Financial Instruments, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, European Commission

Michael Pielke is Head of Unit F.3: Rural Development Programmes I: Bulgaria, Slovenia, Poland and Croatia; Financial instruments, at the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI, European Commission). In this function, he is responsible for the approval and management of the rural development programmes.

Michael Pielke has been working for the European Commission since 2000, first in a geographical unit dealing with German and Austrian rural development programmes in DG AGRI. Between 2004 and 2006 he changed to market policy and was in charge of subjects related to meat markets and direct payments. Mr Pielke returned to the Rural Development Directorate as Deputy Head of Unit for Consistency of Rural Development in March 2007. The unit dealt with the development and negotiation of the 2014 – 2020 legal framework for rural development. In 2014, he became Head of Unit F 3: Rural Development Programmes I.

Implementation of financial instruments: control and audit framework



Jacques Hofmans

Unit H.4 Assurance and Audit – Rural Development, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, European Commission

Control rules and principles on financial instruments

Jacques Hofmans is an External Auditor at the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI, European Commission). He is currently leading audits of the management and control systems for rural development in all EU countries.

Jacques Hofmans has been working at the Commission since 1991. He worked until 1996 at DG AGRI, and from 1996 to 2001 for the Audit Directorate General (checks prior to payments). In 2001 he returned to DG AGRI, working until 2008 in the Clearance of Accounts Department (Fruits and Vegetables), and from 2008 to 2011, in the Information Unit (Financial Department). He returned in 2011 to the Clearance of Accounts Directorate where he has been in charge of rural development expenses. Before joining the Commission, he worked i.a. for the Banking Commission (Belgian banks prudency control institution).

Jacques Hofmans graduated in bookkeeping and accountancy in 1976.



Toma Sutic

Unit H.4 Assurance and Audit – Rural Development, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, European Commission

Control rules and principles on financial instruments

Toma Sutic is an External Auditor at the Directorate General for Agriculture, Assurance and Audit – Rural development unit. He is leading audits of the management and control systems in both EAFRD and IPARD countries. His area of expertise includes investment measures for both private and public beneficiaries. Previously, he was working at McKinsey and Company advising clients on strategic decisions and increasing their commercial capabilities.

Toma Sutic graduated from Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, NY, USA and obtained his MBA from Webster University in Vienna. He also holds a master in International politics science from the CERIS institute in Brussels.



Paolo Zaggia

*Head of Business
Development Unit of
Finlombarda, Italy*

*The Credit Fund in the
region of Lombardy,
Italy*

As Head of Business Development Unit of Finlombarda, the in-house financial institution of Lombardy Region, Paolo Zaggia is responsible for the development and coordination of innovative financial instruments in the framework of 2014-2020 strategic planning (ESI Funds including EAFRD), supervising audit and reporting processes in compliance with European rules.

He has been working for twenty-five years on European Structural and Investment Funds Programming and Public Finance at European (EC-DG AGRI), national (Ministry of Agriculture) and regional (Lombardy Region) level. He has a long-lasting experience in ESI funding, as well as in processes planning, problem solving and strong management and communication skills.

Enrolled in the National Register of Agronomists, he holds a Degree in Agricultural Science and a Master's Degree in Corporate Finance & Banking.



Fabrizio Colarossi

*Project Manager at the
Financial Products Unit
of Finlombarda, Italy*

*The Credit Fund in the
region of Lombardy,
Italy*

Fabrizio Colarossi is project manager at the Financial Products Unit of Finlombarda, the in-house financial institution of Lombardy Region, where he currently advises and supports the local government in designing and implementing financial instruments for enterprises and local development.

His experience prior to Finlombarda was in academic research and teaching, especially in the field of finance, as a contract professor at Politecnico di Milano.

He got an MSc and a PhD in Management Engineering from Politecnico di Milano.



Madis Reinup

*Member of the Board,
Rural Development
Foundation, Estonia*

*The Credit Fund in
Estonia*

Madis Reinup has been Board Member of the Estonian Rural Development Foundation since 2012. A large part of his tasks concerns the design and implementation of different types of financial instruments to deal with (financial) market failure for SMEs in rural areas in Estonia. Previously he worked for twelve years in the Ministry of Agriculture, including the last six years as Director of Fisheries. During the same period, he was also Head of the Estonian managing authority of the European Fisheries Fund 2007-2013, leading the process of designing and implementing the Estonian fisheries strategy and its operational programme.

Madis Reinup graduated from Concordia International University Estonia with a degree in international and EU law.

Experiences of EAFRD managing authorities in using financial instruments



Krešimir Ivančić

*Assistant Minister,
Ministry of Agriculture,
Croatia*

**Loan and Guarantee
Fund in Croatia**

Krešimir Ivančić is Assistant Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture in Croatia. Previously, he was Head of the Sector for Management of the EU Rural Development Fund at the Ministry of Agriculture. He started his career at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development of the Republic of Croatia, first as Advisor and later as an Expert Associate. He has since had multiple advisory and management positions within the Ministries of Agriculture and Regional Development.

In 2006, Krešimir Ivančić graduated from the University of Zagreb with an MSc degree from the Faculty of Agriculture.



**Dr Wolfgang
Wienkemeier**

*Head of Unit, Ministry of
Agriculture and
Environment,
Mecklenburg-West
Pomerania, Germany*

**The Credit Fund in
Mecklenburg-West
Pomerania, Germany**

Dr Wolfgang Wienkemeier is Deputy Head of Department at the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment of Mecklenburg-West Pomerania.

Since 1990, Dr Wienkemeier is engaged in the management of European Agricultural Policy in different functions. He has been Fund Manager of the EAFRD in Mecklenburg-West Pomerania for 16 years. In this programming period, he has initiated the first EAFRD financial instrument in Germany.



Valtiero Mazzotti

*Director General,
Directorate for
Agriculture, Hunting and
Fisheries,
Emilia-Romagna Region,
Italy*

**Multi-regional
Guarantee Platform in
Italy**

Valtiero Mazzotti is the Director General for Agriculture, Hunting and Fishery at the Emilia-Romagna Regional administration. He is also the Head of the Managing Authority of the Regional Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

Previously he was Director of CSO (Centro Servizi Ortofrutticoli), a service centre in the fruit and vegetable sector focusing on production costs, production forecasts and the promotion of retail and consumption activities. He was also involved in several European and international associations such as AREFLH (Assemblée des Régions Européennes Fruitières, Légumières et Horticoles), IKO (International Kiwifruit Organization), and in coordination of activities of the Consortium of Protected Geographical Indication products.

He is a member of the Italian National Agriculture Academy and of the Italian Association for the Agri-food Economy.

EAFRD – EFSI Initiative for agriculture



Dariusz Nieć

*Director for Rural
Development, Ministry
of Agriculture and Rural
Development, Poland*

Dariusz Nieć is Director of Rural Development Department at the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in Poland. He is responsible for programming and implementation of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

Over the last 15 years he was also managing several programmes co-financed by ESI funds at the Ministry of Regional Development, including Competitiveness and Innovation Programmes and Cross-border programmes.

Dariusz Nieć obtained an MSc in Agricultural Economics at Warsaw University of Life Sciences and PhD in the field of the financial economy in the agriculture sector from the Institute of Agricultural & Food Economics.



Antonio Valverde Ramos

*Deputy General
Director, General
Direction for European
Funds, Regional
Ministry of Economy
and Knowledge,
Andalusia, Spain*

Antonio Valverde Ramos is Deputy Director-General for EU Funds at the Junta of Andalusia. He dedicated large parts of his professional career of more than 30 years as public administrator to the implementation of EU regional policy in Andalusia. From 2010 to 2014, he directed the Agency for Innovation and Development of Andalusia and acted as Director-General for EU Funds from 2002 to 2009.

Antonio Valverde Ramos graduated in Law from the University of Seville and the International University of Andalusia. As professor, he regularly collaborates with the Andalusian Institute of Public Administration. He has led numerous studies, works and publications related to European Cohesion Policy, regional development and the implementation of EU Funds in Andalusia.



Katrina Sichel

*Moderator, Wit and
Word Communications*

Katrina Sichel is a London-born, Brussels-based professional moderator of top-level events covering a broad spectrum of current EU policy topics and areas, from finance, R&D&I, agriculture and fisheries to environment, health and digitalisation. Alongside this, she has developed and managed communications campaigns targeting EU and national level stakeholders as well as the general public, and spanning different sectors. A former TV producer, she put together news packages for, among others, the BBC, Sky News, Channel 4 and Reuters, interviewing well-known figures from political and other arenas.

Katrina Sichel holds a degree in Modern Languages from Oxford University. She speaks fluent French, rusty Russian and a smattering of German alongside her native tongue.