

**Foundation Agro-centre for Education
(FACE)**



Foundation Agro-centre for Education
PROGRAMME

(GENERAL POLICIES AND STRATEGY)

Skopje, May 2006



FOREWORD / PREFACE

The sole purpose of this document is to present the GENERAL POLICIES AND STRATEGY, medium and long term, of the Foundation Agro-centre for education (FACE).

In this document the development of the FACE will be presented, the rationale, along with current challenges to be surmounting and the ones ahead, concluding with our vision of the FACE's position in the society.

Vision: Drawing on the extensive experience of the Institute of Agriculture, ACE is a centre of excellence for development of human resources in the areas of agriculture, food production, environment protection and rural agricultural development in Macedonia and the region.

With this vision in mind FACE the following objective is defined:

Development of the agriculture in R. of Macedonia and the region by human resources capacity building through formal and non-formal education.

Focussing on the problems FACE can show that there is a solution, but there is discrepancy between the capacity and the needs. The Foundation has to grow stronger by exploring all the possibilities in finding the right way to meet the objectives as soon as possible. As good as FACE is, it cannot perform it by itself. We need support and help from all parties that share our ideas and goals, but in a sensible and responsible manner. We cannot do too much with too little.

In order to use the resources effectively FACE tends to have clear strategy on the: target groups; geographical areas and levels of implementation; sectors and subjects; the instruments and methods used; as well as to have a clear strategy for internal development of the structure of the foundation.

This document's formulation is based on the real development needs, priorities and the possibilities at this moment in Macedonia, the experience of the Institute of Agriculture – Skopje, as well as on the activities of many inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations in Macedonia.

In this turmoil of changes FACE will, on regular basis, evaluate its position and general policies in order to adapt to the new challenges that will be presented before us.

May 2006, Skopje

Gordana Popsimonova, PhD.
President of the Board of Trustees

FORMATION AND REASONING

THE FORMATION

FACE is non-profit organisation, founded in 2006 by the Institute of Agriculture-Skopje.

The agriculture in Macedonia, in order to become competitive, through this process of transition and restructuring, needs to be tightly connected with all the relevant research institutions which can provide essential information for future development. The research staff at the Institute for Agriculture – Skopje is up to date with the advancements of the contemporary agriculture, and as an institution is one of the oldest in R. of Macedonia, founded in 1927. Regardless of the conditions, the Institute has provided excellent support to the improvement of the agriculture in our country.

In correlation with the efforts to adjust to the new challenges in the agriculture, rural development and environmental protection, the Council of the Institute passed a decision to establish a separate organisational unit which will have a task to implement formal and non-formal education in the field of agriculture, under the name: Foundation Agro-centre for education (FACE).

RATIONALE

Macedonia with an economy in transition faces impediments in all the areas of direct budget funding, especially in the segments of education and agriculture. For that reason, among others, the educational and scientific institutions need to find alternative ways in funding in order to achieve their goals, essential to the community. At the same time, the role of these institutions in the development of the agriculture on national level needs to be clearly defined. Having this in mind, two strategic documents were created in RM:

National program for the development of education in RM 2005- 2015;

Strategy for Adjusting the Macedonian Agriculture to the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP);

An integral part of the action plan for implementation of the strategies is: "Education, seminars and training of farmers, packaging industry workers, exporters and transporters."ⁱ The links between the formal, non-formal and informal education, promotion of life-long learning and education of seniors are key elements of developmentⁱⁱ. They present the basis of this project.

Other important documents in the area are in preparation as part of the strategies in the fields of agriculture and education.

The position adopted by the Institute of Agriculture – Skopje, having the above in mind, is that the linkage between scientific research and advanced teaching methods holds the key for the future development in the fields of agriculture, education and economy, in general.

ⁱ Strategy for Adjusting the Macedonian Agriculture to the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

ⁱⁱ National program for the development of education in RM 2005- 2015

CHALLENGES

PRESENT AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

In a rapidly changing social and natural environment, agricultural education and training should play a crucial role. Over the years, the world has changed and, in many of the developing countries, agricultural education and training have failed to adapt and respond to the realities of rural societies. Curricula and teaching methods and tools that have been developed are rarely relevant to the development objectives of individual countries, to the needs of farmers and to the labor market in general. The situation has further deteriorated as a result of economic crises. The education is not compatible with the needs of the highly sophisticated commercial companies.

As far as the non-formal education is concerned, trainings, courses and seminars, as part of the program activities of local and international non-governmental organizations have been successfully implemented. However, due to lack of comprehensive programs and national strategy, there was no continuity.

In the bulk of South-European countries, including Macedonia, the public sector played the absorbing role for the majority of the scientists in the agriculture. That is not the case any more. These valuable professionals face enormous difficulties with employment. Environmental degradation, rapid changes in scientific and technical knowledge, local government organization, the changing role of women in society and the increasing marginalization of agriculture and rural life, are the challenges of agricultural education.

Significant factors with multi-level influence on agricultural education are as follows:

Urban expansion and the marginalization of agriculture and rural life;

Population growth issues and the need to incorporate them into agricultural curricula;

Rapid scientific progress and corresponding technological implementation;

Employment opportunities;

Increased awareness of gender issues and the roles of women in the agricultural sector;

Increased awareness for environmental issues; and

The need to revise the education of extension officers to make their knowledge, skills and attitudes more relevant to current development needs.

MAIN DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

The main challenges facing the agricultural development, and the economy in general, in Macedonia are: transition to market economy principles, sustainable development, environmental protection and rural development. In general, it means endorsing the policies of EU on the subjects, and adopting the CAP of the EU. These are the key components for sustainable and competitive development.

DIRECTIONS OF DEVELOPMENT

New modules in the agricultural educational curriculum

The new scientific data in the areas of biotechnology, computer based technologies and digital communications shorten the time required for their implementation into practice. In the global economy the processing industry, storage, packaging, transport and marketing are of enormous importance for the agriculture, so is the education in these areas. The agricultural education needs to incorporate new modules to gain their socio-economic benefits. The environmental protection and the urgent need to conserve the natural resources, is of no lesser significance, provided that the relevant factors would be

educated on topics such as: Plant protection Management, Integrated Pest Management, Rational Plant Fertilizer Management etc. The education needs to provide knowledge, skills and positive approach towards sustainable agricultural and rural development.

The link between education and research

With a few exceptions, the link between educational and research institutions in Macedonian agriculture is inadequate. This is the result of years long rigid separation of research from education, and vice versa. This program will focus on the establishment of a strong link between the two through a single institution.

The focus of FACE will be on three main segments:

- Development of non-formal education through courses, trainings and seminars;
- Development of formal education with introduction of postgraduate studies;
- Capacity building of FACE as institution as well as teaching and administrative capacity.

Other issues relevant to the program and important to the implementation are:

- The link between agricultural education and advisory services;
- Usage of local resources for education and training;
- Development of joint educational programs on university level;
- Cooperation with international (European) programs and methodologies;
- Adjustment of agricultural education to the market economy and entrepreneurship;
- Incorporating the needs of the public administration and the private sector;
- Improvement of the relations with regional and international organizations;
- Inter-institutional cooperation and coordination.

Rural development

The problems that we are faced with, relevant to the agricultural education and rural development can be represented as follows*:

- Disregard to the local needs and problems;
- Categories, such as small farmers, female farmers, and similar, are neglected;
- Future users are not involved in defining the objectives and programs;
- Weak links between agricultural institutions and socio-economic environment.

The recommendations from this paper, for interaction with the rural communities are:

- Establishment of local offices for access to the educational programs and trainings, which will perform ongoing analysis of the needs and the possibilities for employment;
- To have an appropriate number of representatives with agricultural and rural background in the program development bodies at the educational institutions;
- Implementation of outsourcing for educational activities;
- Establishment of long term educational service;
- Active involvement in the research and similar activities.

* Issues and opportunities for agricultural education and training in the 1990s and beyond" (FAO, 1997).

VISSION & MISSION

Vision – Based on the extensive experience of the Institute of Agriculture, ACE is a centre of excellence for development of human resources in the areas of agriculture, food production, environment protection and rural agricultural development in Macedonia and the region.

Mission – FACE's education services satisfy the needs of the farmers, experts, industry managers, policy makers, civil servants and the NGO sector in Macedonia and in the region in areas of agriculture, food production, environment protection and rural development.

OUR ROLE

In our country and in the region there is no specialised centre for non-formal education that has dormitories, classrooms and complementary facilities, linked to the formal education (post graduate studies), based on scientific and research work.

The experience in Macedonia shows that it is very difficult to involve the local business to invest in educational capacity building. The same is the case with the government and the corresponding ministries. The most important contributors to the capacity building are the programs of many different foreign development agencies. They carry the bulk of the total capacity building programs in Macedonia regarding agriculture. Besides the lack of coordination they contribute enormously to the development of the human resources. Unfortunately, after completion of the programs there is no follow-up, no organisation or institution, governmental or non-governmental, foreign or domestic to continue with the development or address the newly developed requirements, or use already established capacities for training other people. Our Role, at the beginning, will be to facilitate the trainings for ongoing programs that will help in the capacity building of local experts, trainers and our staff, than transferring and upgrading the knowledge and capacity, which will allow our sustainability. Furthermore, FACE will use government and business funds for development of programs and post-graduate studies, when the conditions will be mature.

The aim of FACE is development of the agriculture in RM and the region, trough capacity building, based on non-formal and formal education.

This means that FACE will contribute towards strengthening the influence of the education over the sustainable agriculture, environmental protection and rural development, trough implementation of advanced educational programs in the non-formal and formal education.

FACE will conduct its educational activities in two directions

Non-formal education (trainings, courses, seminars etc.);

Formal education (post graduate and PhD studies).

The conclusion from the general goals, FACE defines multiple tasks:

1. To insure equal access to knowledge for farmers, adjacent industries, government and local administration, entrepreneurs, advisory services in agriculture, experts from private and non-governmental organisations, students, FACE employees and especially, but not exclusively, to the members of the rural communities;
2. To connect education and research, with emphasis on the promotion of innovative and applicable mechanisms;
3. To support of local capacity building, by education and training;
4. To foster larger number of users;
5. To implement university programs and programs from other local and foreign educational institutions;
6. To actively work on adjusting the educational programs to the needs to the market economy rules, labour market needs and public administration;
7. To mobilise and receive funding, from internal funds or from outside sources, for educational projects and services;

8. To help in creation of stable environment for development of non-formal and formal education in the field of agriculture;
9. To create a network of cooperation with local, regional and international organisations, as well as support of all inter-institutional cooperation and coordination.

STRATEGY

TARGET GROUPS

The target groups are based on their activities, but generally are divided into:

- Farmers;
- Adjacent industries management;
- Government and local administration;
- Advisors in agriculture;
- Experts in private and non-governmental sectors;
- Graduated students in the fields of agriculture, economy, law and tourism;
- Teaching and administrative staff of the Institute for Agriculture – Skopje, FACE and others.

AREAS COVERAGE

FACE will be active on the whole of the territory of RM.

In our development we work towards becoming regional centre that will cover the activities in neighbouring countries by organising regional trainings, meetings, workshops and seminars.

SELECTION OF PARTNERS

We will carefully assess and choose our future partners. The core sample can be found in the profile of the members of our Board of Trustees.

Those are the ministries of: Agriculture, Education and Science, Environmental protection, as well as the Federation of Macedonian Farmers. We also find indispensable the presence on the board from the members of the business community, The Macedonian Chamber of Commerce and The Federation of Chambers of Commerce of Macedonia. A representative from ZELS (The Association of the Units of Local Self Government) representing the local government is included. Additionally, FACE will have direct cooperation with municipalities in RM. From the educational institutions we will have cooperation with the Faculty of Food & Agriculture, as well as our strongest partner, The University Ss. Cyril & Methodius, of which the Institute for Agriculture – Skopje is a member. We have open communication with all of the rest of the educational and scientific institutions in the Republic of Macedonia and some from abroad.

At last, but not least, there are our partners that implement programs in the Republic of Macedonia from the international organisations. They will be represented through the Advisory Group of FACE, and be asked to take part as representatives of the international programs for development of agriculture and education in the Republic of Macedonia.

SELECTION OF SECTORS

FACE will focus on the following sectors in the agriculture:

- Sustainable agriculture;

- Environmental protection;
- Rural development;

This institution is unique by the innovative approach and the impact on the education in the above-mentioned sectors in order to promote development of the agriculture. The non-formal education will be closely related with the formal education and the most of up to date scientific research.

EXPECTED RESULTS AND ACTIVITIES

The results expected will be a direct answer to the three main goals of our program:

Result 1: Tailor made Training curriculum that embodies established contemporary concepts in the areas of agriculture, rural development and environment protection.

Activities:

- Determine the needs of farmers, administration, business sector, staff of National Extension Agency and all other stakeholders;
- Design the training curriculum;
- Prepare and publish appropriate teaching material;
- Train the trainers;
- Create database of potential training beneficiaries and trainers;
- Organize trainings, seminars and courses;
- Organize regional events with participation of representatives from Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, etc.;
- Organize study tours;
- Monitoring and evaluation of the processes and participants.

Result 2: Curriculum for postgraduate studies in the areas of agriculture, rural development and environment protection established.

Activities:

- Determine the need for postgraduate studies in each area;
- Design the curriculum and the modules in the areas of interest in compliance with the Bologna Declaration for Development of Higher Education;
- Establish the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS);
- Prepare teaching material;
- Create e-learning system;
- Train the lecturers (professors);
- Manage and organize the postgraduate studies;
- Develop programs for exchange of students and teachers;
- Create database of teachers (Macedonian and visiting) and students;
- Organize study tours;
- Monitoring and evaluation.

Result 3: Capacity building of FACE as an institution and of its managerial and administrative staff strengthened.

Activities:

- Determine the need of the staff for training (administrative work, communication skills, computer skills, management skills);
- Restoration of the building of the Department for Fruit Crops – Institute of Agriculture to meet the accommodation and education standards set in the law;
- Procure the equipment necessary for high-quality education (computers, office furniture, overhead projector, copy machine, etc.);
- Train the administrative staff;
- Promote ACE and its activities;
- Organize study tours.
- Monitoring and evaluation.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

FACE is based on flat structure with a governing body: The Board of Trustees, and Executive office with appropriate structure.

SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES

The systems will need to insure and promote openness and responsibility, efficiency and effectiveness, in a balanced manner. The negative effects of too much control must be eliminated in order to promote efficiency and innovation. This is only possible by: formulating and implementing of the strategies, prioritising of the resource allocation and management, monitoring and evaluating regularly, good crisis management and control of key elements. Most important are the systems for financial management, planning and budgeting, execution and regular reporting. They will play a crucial role in efficient functioning of FACE.

FINANCIES AND SUSTAINIBILITY

FACE will be financed from sources like: donations, contributions, gifts and benefits, as well as returns from investments. Finances can also be obtained from legal and physical (private) entities, domestic and foreign, in cash and in goods. FACE can obtain finances through commercial educational services, facility and accommodation service, publications etc.

FACE will not accept funding which are not in line with its objectives and goals, that have distrustful origins, that come from sources harmful to the environment, sustainable agriculture, rural development or education in general.

FACE will at all times work towards maintaining the value of its properties, solvency and towards operational and financial sustainability. The operational sustainability is the prime task for the management. It can be established through revolving funds. FACE will actively work on promoting and mobilising new funds as well as diversification of sources.

The budgeting will be determined by annual financial predictions. All expenses and income will be presented by regular financial reports.

In a case of negative income/expense balance, priorities will be set to promote only sustainable activities.

If FACE shows profit in income/expense balance, the funds can only be used for the aims, tasks and activities of this programme.