

Summary Report



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International
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for the Protection
of the Danube River

Internationale
Kommission
zum Schutz
der Donau

ICPDR Business Friends of the Danube - Agricultural Forum
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Abbreviations

BAP	Best Agricultural Practices
BAT	Best Available Techniques
BMP	Best management practices
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DRB	Danube River Basin
DRBMP	Danube River Basin Management Plan
EU	European Union
EC	European Commission
GE	General Electric
ICPDR	International Commission for the protection of Danube River
IFIs	International Financing Institutions
JPM	Danube Joint Programme of Measures
ND	Nitrates Directive
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NVZ	Nutrient Vulnerable Zones
PPP	Public Private Partnership
RDP	Rural Development Programs
4R	Right fertilizers source, Right rate, Right time and Right place
SWMI	Danube Significant Water Management Issue
TOPPS	Training the Operators to prevent Pollution from Point Sources
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UWWTD	Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive
WB	World Bank
WFD	Water Framework Directive
WWF	World Wild Fund

1 Background and Context

1.1 Background

The Danube River Basin Management Plan and the associated Joint Programme of Measures identifies a number of actions necessary in the Danube River Basin to achieve the “Good Status” or “Good Potential” of water throughout the Danube. These actions include policy changes as well as actions requiring technical assistance and investment addressing significant pollution pressures from agglomerations, industries and agriculture. As around 40% of agricultural land is vulnerable to nitrate pollution, threatening water resources, a considerable amount of measures are needed to address nutrient pollution reduction. In addition, managing water use in agriculture has been identified as one of the key topic relating to water scarcity and drought, due to a large increase of Danube River Basin population, intensification of agriculture in downstream countries, and anticipated climate changes.

Cooperation with observers - to date 22 organisations have become observers to the ICPDR – has proven to be successful in ensuring that differing aspects and approaches influence and shape water management in the Danube River Basin. These organisations include NGOs, organisations representing private industry, and intergovernmental organisations.

One important mechanism, the Business Friends of the Danube, established in 2008 by the ICPDR, offers companies the opportunity to enter into mutually beneficial partnerships that will help to preserve and protect the Danube, its tributaries and environment.

In order to facilitate dialogue among the stakeholders for actions to improve water quality and ensure rational water use, the ICPDR convened on 23rd of March 2012, in Budapest, an event called “Business Friends of the Danube - Agricultural Forum”, involving members of the ICPDR delegations, representatives of international companies with a special interest in water use or with a great impact on water resources, agricultural associations and programmes.

The meeting is a regional specific follow up to previous bilateral dialogue with business sector representatives and the agricultural community in order to provide a background on the needed actions to implement the Joint Programme of Measures and support of the ICPDR activities promoting good water quality.

1.2 Context

The Danube River Protection Convention signed in June 1994 established the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River which acts as a forum for cooperation and dialogue on water related issues and environmental issues dealing with water.

The ICPDR has produced the Danube River Basin Management Plan (DRBMP) which is a detailed and comprehensive plan specifying the significant water management issues in the Danube River Basin, the status of water in the Danube and the actions needed to achieve the Water Framework Directive environmental objectives as a basis for sustainable development.

The importance of the Danube Basin is also recognized by the European Union, currently involved in the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, where the ICPDR is actively involved.

Furthermore, the EC is recently discussing the organization of a stakeholders orientated European Innovation Partnership on “Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability”, to bridge the research, science and the application of innovative approaches in practice, following the strategic directions of "Europe 2020" and "The CAP towards 2020".

The ongoing assessment of the River Basin Management Plans of the EU Member States conducted by the European Commission in 2010-2012 show that there are fundamental weaknesses in the implementation of the current water legislation as well as conflicts between water policy and other EU policies' objectives, such as Nitrates Directive. On the basis of this analysis, the ICPDR will identify actions to address the gaps and support the countries in the integration of water and other policies' objectives.

Many businesses with operations or markets in the Danube Basin have already voluntarily assisting the ICPDR and Danube countries. As participating partners, they have attended ICPDR workshops and negotiations to voice their concerns and solutions and cooperate with other stakeholders.

Current Business Friends of the Danube include The Coca Cola Company, Coca-Cola Hellenic, ORF and Borealis.

2 Meeting objectives

Agriculture is being challenged to maintain profitable farm economics, while meeting the increased product demands of a growing population. ICPDR is ready to provide the platform where a dialogue should take place to meet the agricultural sustainability challenges which means addressing economic, environmental and social goals.

The general objective of the forum was to strengthen the cooperation with Business in meeting the goals of the Danube River Basin Management Plan and the corporate commitment in water stewardship, and to acknowledge that the

More specifically, the objectives were to:

- (i) present the results of the Danube River Basin Management Plan, especially in connection with agricultural pollution,
- (ii) discuss the opportunities created for both businesses and the environment by the EU Strategy for the Danube Region,

- (iii) present best practices and actions undertaken by companies for water protection and how support for these efforts can be provided to protect water resources and improve water quality.
- (iv) see what role the business sector should play in order to facilitate the implementation of the ICPDR Best Agricultural Practices and the actions plan defined by the EU Danube Strategy, and
- (v) brainstorm and discuss the actions needed for companies for securing the long term matching of needs and support for the measures identified in the Joint Programme of Measures.

3 Format of the meeting

The sessions of the forum provided an opportunity to examine the contributions of agricultural business to environmental protection through the application of best practices.

The forum was attended by the representatives of the Danube countries, corporations such as the Coca Cola Company, Borealis and Coca Cola Hellenic, Agrium, Agrana, General Electric, Cargill, and landowner organizations and environmental NGOs, as well as other international businesses with a high impact on agriculture and the way water is used in the Danube River Basin.

The forum program included chaired sessions, where presentations were made by known experts. Through a "Facilitated Dialogue", the participants had the opportunity to provide input on the topic, in a structured discussion.

The agenda of the forum, is attached to this report.

4 Summary of the Presentations

4.1 Day One – Thursday 23 March 2010

4.1.1 Opening session

At the ICPDR Business Friends of the Danube - Agricultural Forum meeting in Budapest, opening remarks were given by the ICPDR President, Mr. Wolfgang Stalzer, by the ICPDR Executive Secretary, Mr. Philip Weller and by the Deputy Secretary of State of the Ministry of Rural Development, Mr. Peter Kovacs.

Mr. Wolfgang Stalzer, on behalf of the ICPDR, formally welcomed the participants of the meeting, hosted by the ICPDR. The ICPDR President pointed out the importance of bringing together the representatives of water and environmental authorities and business companies, highlighting the

challenges and opportunities it can address. He indicated the synergy with the EU Danube Strategy process for streamlining the priority areas or projects in the Danube River Basin.

The ICPDR President called for sharing the responsibility as Danube waters are shared by us all and congratulated the Secretariat for the initiative to organize the meeting and wished all participants success.

Mr. Philip Weller officially welcomed the participants of the meeting and thanked the Mr. Peter Kovacs for the support in organizing the event. Mr. Weller mentioned the present meeting is important for Danube countries and should be seen in close synergy with the implementation of Joint Program of Measures and the EU Danube Strategy process. He expressed his belief that the results of the Agricultural Forum in Budapest will also stimulate the cooperation with the business sector, together with the application of visible best practices in improving the environment.

Mr. Philip Weller introduced the agenda of the event and presented which participants were invited for attending the Forum.

The Secretary of State of the Ministry of Rural Development, Mr. Peter Kovacs also addressed the meeting and made reference, documented with data and figures, to the International World Water Day which is held annually on 22 March as a means of focusing attention on the importance of freshwater and advocating for the sustainable management of freshwater resources and rational water use.

The newly appointed Deputy Minister for Agriculture, in Croatia, Mr. Kurecic Drazen also introduced himself and expressed his interest to be involved in the activities of the ICPDR.

4.1.2 Session 1 THE CHALLENGES OF GOVERNMENTS IN PROTECTING WATER FROM AGRICULTURAL PRESSURES

The Chair of this session was Mr. Stalzer who introduced the importance of the EU WFD and the work of the Danube countries in developing the Danube River Basin Management Plan.

The paper "Overview of water protection in the Danube River Basin" was presented by the ICPDR Executive Secretary, Mr. Philip Weller.

The ICPDR Executive Secretary Philip Weller presented the key findings from the Danube River Basin Management Plan (DRBMP) and the Joint Programme of Measures (JPM). Mr. Philip Weller gave a comprehensive overview of the DRPC history, current developments of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), and key results of the DRBMP and investments needs for implementing the Joint Programme of Measures to reach the WFD environmental objectives.

Ms. Meglena Plugtschieva, member of the National Assembly of Bulgaria, presented the 'Challenges of governments in terms of water protection'. She outlined the situation of agriculture and the activities in Bulgaria and expressed appreciation of cooperation between business and governments in managing water issues.

Ms. Daniela Catana, Senior Advisor, at the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Romania presented "The tools of governments to answer these challenges", and summarized the results of the ongoing World Bank project on Agricultural Pollution Control implemented in Romania. In Romania: activities in the Calarasi County (manure management, promotion of environment-friendly Agricultural Practices, incl. nutrient management, integrated management of Boianu - Sticleanu Polder and Ecological Restoration of part of the Calarasi - Raul Polder, and strengthening capacity in Calarasi county to monitor soil and water quality and environmental impacts. This project is currently followed by an ongoing project "Integrated Nutrient Pollution Control Project", to be implemented until December 2013, by the Ministry for Environment and Forests, in Romania. This project includes investments focusing on Nitrate Vulnerable Zone-designated communes in ten river basins and eleven counties and capacity building within the Ministry of Environment and Forests and the National

Administration Romanian Waters, as well as other national, regional, and county agencies involved in the implementation of the Nitrates Directive, which also includes a broad public awareness and information campaign.

4.1.3 Session 2: CONTRIBUTION OF AGRICULTURAL BUSINESSES TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES

This session chaired by Mr. Weller aimed to offer good examples for water stewardship in the DRB, and to illustrate options on how the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can encourage a positive influence on the environment.

The Coca Cola Company and Coca Cola Hellenic, through Mr. Tony Baynes, highlighted the results of a long lasting cooperation with the ICPDR, providing examples of various activities carried out with the Secretariat and the Danube countries. The main goals of these activities followed the reduction of water use, ensuring the water recycle and replenish water. The concept of Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) is also embedded in the company's mission and values.

A film produced by Borealis, a leading innovative provider of plastics solutions, has been presented to the audience, introducing "Water for World Initiative", a jointly implemented program of Borealis and Borouge, having a similar profile, to address water supply and sanitation and agricultural challenges.

The film was well received by the participants and requests were formulated by Croatia and accepted by others to facilitate the translation of the film and disseminate it in events such as Danube or Sava Days.

Dr. Lukas Maier, the Head of Economic Affairs at AGRANA, presented their initiatives and best practices in ensuring recycling and reuse of water in sugar production, providing assistance to the farmers, and saving raw materials. The company is active throughout the Danube region

AGRIUM, which provides fertilizer products to a variety of customers in agricultural, industrial, speciality and export markets, represented by Dr. Svetlana Ivanova, from the International Plant Nutrition Institute (IPNI), introduced the Global 4R Nutrient Stewardship Framework, a well known initiative. 4R Nutrient Stewardship represents an innovative approach to fertilizer best management practices (BMPs). The 4Rs imply there are four aspects to every fertilizer application and it provides a framework to assess whether a given crop has access to the necessary nutrients. Asking "Was the crop given the right source at the right rate, at the right time, and in the right place?" helps identify opportunities to improve fertilizer efficiency and prevent nutrient movement from each field. The four aspects of fertilizer management are interconnected, and none of the four can be right when any one of them is wrong.

Dr. Adriana Mircea, representing the General Electric International introduced greener technologies for greener agriculture including the Jenbacher engine, and well known tri-generation gas – fueled engine. She provided several illustration of its use, efficiency and benefits in saving energy.

Mr. Andreas Beckmann, Director of WWF Danube Carpathian Programme made a presentation on the activities, programs and projects carried out in support of improving the water quality and biodiversity in the Danube region. He highlighted as well the excellent cooperation between the WWF and a variety of companies who are trying to ensure good agricultural practices. WWF and the ICPDR are also cooperating to achieve environmental objectives of the EU Directives.

A presentation was given by Dr. Manfred Rottele, the Project manager of TOPPS, on solutions and recommendation to mitigate the pesticides losses to the water bodies. Point sources are considered responsible of more than 50% of the water contamination due to plant protection products. The European Project TOPPS (Training the Operators to prevent Pollution from Point Sources, by the

European Union and by ECPA (European Crop Protection Association) is aimed at identifying Best Management Practices and disseminating them through advice, training and demonstrations at a larger co-ordinated scale in Europe with the intention of reducing plant protection products (PPP) point sources contamination of water.

5 THE EU STRATEGY FOR DANUBE REGION

A special session was dedicated to present the most recent developments of the EU Danube Strategy. The presentation was offered by the EU Danube Strategy Commissioner for Hungary, Mr. Balazs Medgyesy, who summarized the process, and introduced actions undertaken or proposed for different Priority Areas. The presentation was structured on issues linked to the timetable, content, implementation, roles and responsibilities and about who pays for the implementation.

The presenter summarized the key issues of the strategy: mobility, energy, water, biodiversity, risk prevention and management, socio-economic development, capacity-building, culture and identity, safety. It is foreseen the link with the EU strategy for EU2020. The Strategy is an EU Strategy

The Commissioner cited the ICPDR as a good example for regional organization/integration of environmental concerns, and advocated for achieving synergy between the EU Danube Strategy and the DRBMP. Conversely, the Danube Strategy is expected to give ICPDR's work and notably the DRBMP even more political recognition.

Contribution was requested from the Commissioner mainly in relation to expanding action plan elements to "roadmaps" under the Danube Strategy. There are more than 160 actions framed within the Danube Strategy. Also several questions were raised concerning the approaches leading the integration of point and diffuse sources of pollution within different actions, and the good practices under the CAP.

6 Panel Discussion

Mr. Weller conducted the discussions organized on the margin of the presentations made within the sessions. At the panel, Mr. Stalzer, Mr. Weller, Mr. Beckmann and Mr. Rottele responded to the questions raised by the participants.

6.1 Key points of discussion

The participants raised a number of comments and questions answered by the presenters, which refer mainly to the following issues:

- Necessity of governments and private sector to work together for achieving agricultural sustainability and economic profits

- Most important role should be taken by the public sector and therefore action is needed to reform funding instruments to address the agricultural challenges under the CAP
- There are solutions and concepts which could be used in addressing the challenges such: (i) learning, (ii) partnership, and (iii) supply
- The necessity to implement a multistakeholders approach to be able to address all aspects of sustainability and the complexity of approaching point and diffuse sources of pollution
- Expectations from business sectors in countries such as Romania and Bulgaria towards achieving agricultural sustainability
- Factors influencing the increase of productivity, and reaching the objective of moving farming and processing towards being 'greener', while at the same time increasing productivity - and hence becoming more competitive, with reference to AGRANA and AGRIMUM.
- Need to apply the 'triple bottom line' concept, by companies, to base their sustainability practices on economic, social and environmental factors at the same time.
- Factors influencing the increase of demand of food leading to a great increase of water use
- The relationships between the biomass production, energy consumption and higher prices
- Experiences in implementing the CAP and Nitrates Directive in connection with plan of actions in the Nutrient Vulnerable Zones (NVZ)
- The necessity to ensure that the implementation of BAPs is linked to the EU CAP. The CAP, its funds and strategic priorities can also contribute to WFD objectives. In particular, the voluntary agri-environmental measures can be used to address diffuse and point sources of agricultural water pollution (nitrates, phosphates and pesticides) as well as soil erosion.
- Need of ensuring transfer of know-how between countries and companies
- Necessity of increasing awareness, advisory services and dialogue on the agricultural concerns and challenges.

7 Conclusions

Mr. Stalzer had drawn the final conclusions of the forum. He emphasized the broad range of measures in place or planned in the Danube countries included in the JPM of the Danube River Basin Management Plan, where several key lines of action explicitly are highlighted: (i) storage capacity, (ii) equipment for spreading manure, and (iii) advisory services and training. He has drawn the attention on the past experience with implementation of EU Nitrates Directive which has clearly demonstrated the need for financial support out of CAP in particular for setting in place appropriate storage capacities for manure. Otherwise, in case no sufficient support can be provided, enhanced lobbying efforts of the sector concerned may be expected to keep NVZ as small as possible, and to maintain requirements for storage capacity rather low.

When talking about financing of agricultural measures, Mr. Stalzer pointed out the relevance of the political commitment of Danube countries in place (Danube Declaration) which should take all necessary efforts to trigger concrete actions at domestic level.

Mr. Stalzer highlighted the role of the ICPDR in connection with the business sector involvement and the necessity to keep the dialogue and the cooperation as active as possible.

Finally, the importance of strengthening the awareness on issues such as water, environment and health, as key ingredients for a sustainable development in the Danube region.

8 NEXT STEPS AND NEEDED ACTIONS

Mr. Weller presented a summary of the lessons learned from the meeting. The main lessons learned include:

Business can implement a wide variety of actions to demonstrate its corporate social responsibility voluntarily assisting the ICPDR and Danube countries in their efforts acting as a true and committed Danube stakeholder.

The improvement of in-house environmental management practices can also lead to numerous potential benefits for the company itself. For example, best management practices result in less pollution, cleaner and healthier environments and more satisfied employees, local communities and customers. Companies that rely on continuous access to a clean source of water should be particularly committed to ensuring that their practices do not threaten a long-term sustainable resource.

A multistakeholder participation is key in planning and implementation efforts and should begin with information. Stakeholders must be aware of the threats and problems, as well as of alternative solutions, to be able to effectively contribute to discussions and assistance. To help ensure private sector participation, the ICPDR regularly informs companies and business associations about its plans and activities and the issues affecting water in the basin, such as new international legislation affecting water users. Key ICPDR information vehicles include its website and 'Danube Watch' magazine.

The ICPDR is determined to form partnerships with selected companies of countries of the Danube-Region and thus supporting sustainable development. Potential partners for the Business Friends of the Danube initiative are those organisations, which are dedicated to the pursuit of sound ecological practices and possess a strong desire to demonstrate respect and support for responsible and sustainable development.

9 CLOSING STATEMENTS

Mr. Weller officially closed the meeting, thanking all participants for valuable and constructive contributions, they have put in order to achieve the meeting objectives.

All presentations at the event are available on the ICPDR website: www.icpdr.org.