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## **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**Post:** Sarajevo

### **EC Finds BiH Makes Little Progress in Agriculture in 2016**

**Report Categories:**

Agricultural Situation

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**Report Highlights:**

On November 9, the European Commission (EC) released its progress report on Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) pre-accession efforts, noting that preparations in the areas of agriculture and fisheries are at an early stage. The EC concluded that in the coming year, BiH should in particular focus on developing its rural development policy, improving the veterinary and phytosanitary control systems, and upgrading its inspection services and laboratories. The report noted that BiH has made some progress in the veterinary and food safety areas and obtained approval for export of dairy products to the EU market in September 2015, but there is much work that remains to be done. Furthermore, BiH lacks a national agricultural information strategy and should improve its agricultural statistics. Also, BiH has yet to create a legal framework for the agricultural census, and the land registration systems need to be harmonized country-wide.

## **General Information:**

On November 9, in its 2016 Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) progress report the European Commission (EC) noted that BiH is in an early stage of the preparations for the EU accession in the areas of agriculture and fisheries. The EC specified that although some progress was achieved on food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policies, there is still much work to be done. The EC suggested that in 2017 BiH should focus in particular on aligning its official control system with the EU's, and improve its inspection services and laboratories.

Specifically, in the area of agriculture and rural development policy, the EC noted that BiH should prepare a state-level rural development strategy and create a structure for utilization of pre-accession assistance through the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance for Rural Development (IPARD). BiH should also adopt state-level legislation on wine and organic agriculture. Regarding the agriculture support measures, their effectiveness and EU compliance remain inadequate to increase the sector's productivity and competitiveness.

Furthermore, BiH should adopt a national agricultural information strategy and create a legal framework for carrying out the agricultural census. Agricultural statistics and the agricultural information system need to be improved. Moreover, BiH should improve the land registration systems and land management.

There has been some progress in the area of food safety. In September 2015, BiH obtained approval for export of ultra-heat treated milk and certain dairy products to the EU market (eight approved establishments). However, the implementation of BiH's action plan for export of dairy products to the EU is still incomplete. The new state-level veterinary and food safety laws and amendments to the national agriculture and rural development law are yet to be adopted. Also, the Hygiene Package has yet to be fully enforced country-wide. BiH should strengthen its import control system and internal market controls according to the EU legislation, and continuously implement the food safety monitoring plan. The food producers need to be better educated and trained on specific EU safety and quality requirements. The EC noted that the capacity of the food testing laboratories was strengthened and the number of accredited laboratory methods for diagnostics increased. Still, BiH needs to establish a fully operational central database for the official food and feed control system.

On veterinary issues, BiH continued monitoring and controlling communicable animal diseases and implemented control of brucellosis and tuberculosis in cattle, and rabies. The animal disease notification and outbreak information management system should improve to become fully functional. Laboratories' capacity was improved in terms of new equipment and increased number of accredited laboratory methods for diagnosing animal diseases. The EC noted shortcomings in the animal identification, registration and movement control system, including the central database. Also, BiH needs a country-wide strategy for managing animal by-products in line with the EU's requirements.

In the phytosanitary sector, BiH improved the registration of plant protection products and developed guidelines and a manual for phytosanitary inspectors related to the standard operating procedures and controls in the internal market and at border crossings. In July 2015, BiH obtained approval for export

of potatoes to the EU market and continued special surveillance of potatoes for quarantine pests. BiH continued to carry out registration of producers, importers, exporters and distributors in a single phyto-registry. The EC noted that progress has been made in the work of official diagnostic laboratories, but accreditations of laboratories need further improvements. BiH should improve the registration of new plant varieties to enable greater trading potential.

In the area of genetically engineered (GE) products, the EC stressed that BiH needs to harmonize its implementing legislation to provide for uniform operating procedures country-wide. BiH issued approvals to 16 companies for the placing of GE feed on the market and established a fully operational registry of GE food and feed.

On fisheries, the EC emphasized that legislation in this sector needs to be harmonized across the country to facilitate export of fish and fishery products to the EU.