NATIONAL WORKSHOPS REPORT TEMPLATE

IPMWORKS National Workshop *SERBIA*

Date: 20.10.2023.

Place: Kikinda

Type: face-to-face

National Focal Point for *Serbia*

Reporting person for this meeting: Isidora Stojačić

Participants:

List with Name, position and affiliation of each participant

- Kristina Petrović, Researcher, Biosense institute
- Isidora Stojačić, Project manager, Biosense institute
- Rajko Lazić, Advisor, Organic Claster of Vojvodina
- Miloš Petrović, Professor, Faculty of Agriculture Novi Sad
- Igor Harhaji, Advisor, Zeleni Hit
- Aleksandar Ivezić, Researcher, Biosense institute
- Ivan Postolovski, Consultant, Magan-Mak
- Milan Mašić, Consultant, BASF
- Jovana Kos, Researcher, FINS institute

1. *Outcomes on Session 1: Validation of the IPMWORKS recommendations*

Indications from FEUGA:

- **What do we expect to get from the NFPs in this session?**

The goal of this session was to address the current issues regarding crop protection in Serbia and emphasize the importance of involving National Focal Points (NFPs) in national strategies to shift agricultural practices towards alternative and environmentally friendly methods for pest control. Another objective was to align the views of various stakeholders in Serbian agriculture regarding the excessive and uncontrolled use of chemical agents in agriculture, highlighting their harmful impact on the environment, biodiversity, and the health safety of final agricultural products. Furthermore, different approaches that NFPs could take with all AKIS stakeholders at the national level were discussed to alter established practices and expand the frontiers of agricultural production. In this regard, there was a defined need for conducting more social and demonstration events, as well as various training sessions and workshops, all aimed at acquainting the general agricultural community with innovative trends in agriculture.

- **Concepts to be reflected**

In the context of eco-friendly agricultural practices, various methodological approaches applicable to different agricultural crops were presented to offer all participants the opportunity for practical application of non-chemical agents. Although not at the forefront of agricultural producers' attention, these agents are available on the market at competitive prices compared to conventional products, with effectiveness that, when properly applied, matches that of chemical agents. Additionally, legal aspects and legislation concerning agricultural production in Serbia were examined, including the extent to which existing laws need to be amended to favour the implementation of IPM measures in regular practice, as well as how current legislative regulations do not contribute to this. It is important to emphasize that in Serbia, there is still no law limiting the unrestricted and daily purchase of pesticides without consequences or control. In this regard, pressure on decision-makers and their involvement is necessary and essential as the first step toward a successful transition from conventional to integrated agriculture.

- **Information to be provided**

To present available information, workshop participants were divided into groups based on the type of agricultural production they are involved in. Each group outlined key aspects of production for a specific crop, identifying limiting factors and specific challenges they face. Accordingly, workshop facilitators introduced available biological solutions and highlighted IPM principles that would enable producers to address current issues while reducing pesticide use and increasing efficiency. In this manner, an alternative option was introduced in contrast to the prevailing agricultural production model in Serbia. Practical market opportunities and scientific evidence were highlighted for all workshop attendees to heighten their ecological consciousness and guide them towards contemporary agricultural methods that consider health implications and the environmental impact of agriculture. This encompasses local biodiversity, which suffers from the lack of ecological principles in everyday agricultural practices. Additionally, participants were invited to the upcoming training event planned for the next season, which will include demo farm visits and presentations on the practical application of biobased alternatives for pest management. On that occasion, it is planned to familiarize the agricultural community (farmers, advisors, and decision-makers) with available tools and methods for crop protection and eco-friendly pest management according to IPM principles, with a focus on reducing pesticide use. Furthermore, the e-learning modules will be presented, facilitating knowledge exchange and the sharing of experiences from experts within the IPMworks consortium.

2. *Outcomes on Session 2: IPMWORKS strategy for Long Term Sustainability*

Indications from CONSULAI:

- **What do we expect to get from the NFPs in this session?**

Developing a strategy for systematically integrating NFPs into the National Policy Network and national or regional AKIS was imperative in this session. Possibilities for effective knowledge exchange in both directions were considered, aiming to adequately present decision-makers with the real needs and requirements for changing agricultural policy at the national level. Involving NFPs and decision-makers in regional associations and connecting them with European funds that support modern agricultural concepts is a key factor in establishing a long-term and sustainable agricultural strategy in Serbia and the region. Continuing the initiated initiative even after the project cycle ends is the only sure path to achieving the desired goals. Considering the current level of awareness among most agricultural producers in Serbia, it's crucial to acknowledge and participate in similar initiatives at both national and regional levels. Serbia and the entire region still have a significant journey ahead to achieve the ultimate goal of safe agriculture, both for people and the environment.

- **Concepts to be reflected**

During this session, all possibilities for continuing the initiated actions were explored. Calls to action at the national, regional, and European levels were discussed. Identified calls recognize the current issues crucially, enabling an effective transition towards modern agricultural practices in parts of Europe that still lag behind in adopting contemporary crop production concepts. Such calls can significantly improve the attitude of Serbian farmers regarding the adoption of IPM practices. Only comprehensive support, both at the national and international levels, can bolster the following strategies:

- Education and Training: Providing comprehensive training and educational programs to farmers about the principles and practices of IPM, including its benefits for food safety, can help improve their understanding and confidence in IPM methods.
- Demonstration Farms: Establishing demonstration farms where farmers can observe and learn about successful implementations of IPM practices firsthand can be an effective way to showcase the benefits of IPM for food safety.
- Access to Resources: Ensuring that farmers have access to reliable information, resources, and support networks related to IPM implementation can empower them to adopt and effectively use IPM practices on their farms.
- Research and Development: Investing in research and development initiatives focused on improving IPM techniques, developing new tools and technologies, and addressing specific challenges related to food safety in IPM can help build trust and credibility among farmers.
- Policy Support: Implementing supportive policies and regulations that incentivize or mandate the adoption of IPM practices while ensuring compliance with food safety standards can create a conducive environment for farmers to embrace IPM.
- Collaboration and Communication: Facilitating communication and collaboration among farmers, extension services, researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders can foster knowledge sharing, exchange of best practices, and collective problem-solving efforts to address concerns and build confidence in IPM for food safety.

3. Outcomes on open discussion

The NFPs will reflect in this section the issues raised during the open forum for questions and discussion.

Topic 1 – **Feasibility of IPM in Serbia**

Conclusion: Implementing Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices in Serbia is feasible, but it depends on various factors such as the specific agricultural context, available resources, level of awareness and education among farmers, and support from governmental and non-governmental organizations. IPM has been successfully implemented in many countries worldwide, including those with diverse agricultural landscapes and climates similar to Serbia's. However, adapting IPM strategies to local conditions and ensuring effective communication and collaboration among stakeholders are essential for its successful implementation in Serbia.

Topic 2 – **The cost of IPM production**

Conclusion: Convincing farmers of the cost-effectiveness of IPM practices in agriculture requires a multifaceted approach. Education plays a crucial role, as providing comprehensive information about the benefits of IPM practices, such as cost reduction, increased yields, improved product quality, and environmental protection, can help build understanding and trust among farmers. Practical demonstrations are also essential, as organizing field events where farmers can witness IPM methods in action can be highly persuasive. Additionally, sharing experiences from successful IPM practitioners can further reinforce the benefits and address concerns. Financial incentives, including subsidies for equipment purchases and training costs, can motivate farmers to transition to IPM practices. Expert support from agronomists, researchers, and other professionals is vital for providing guidance and addressing specific challenges. Monitoring and evaluating the results of IPM implementation on farms can provide evidence of its effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. Ultimately, sustained support and collaboration from all stakeholders in the agricultural sector are key to convincing farmers of the viability of IPM practices in agriculture.

Topic 3 – **Food safety of final products in IPM**

Conclusion: Serbian farmers' opinions on the food safety of final products in IPM may vary. Some farmers may perceive IPM practices as beneficial for food safety because they reduce reliance on chemical pesticides, which can leave residues on crops. Others may have concerns about the effectiveness of IPM methods in controlling pests and diseases adequately to ensure food safety standards are met. Overall, the opinions of Serbian farmers on this topic may depend on their level of knowledge about IPM, their experiences with implementing IPM practices, and their trust in the effectiveness of alternative pest management approaches.