

HIERARCHY OF AGRICULTURAL BRANCHES AND PRODUCTS OBTAINED IN ROMANIA ACCORDING TO THE CRITERIA OF PERFORMANCE AND ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

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Key words: agriculture, ranking, productivity, economic efficiency, social responsibility, ecological resilience

In the long series of reforms of the agricultural sector, the one aimed at the period after 2020 included the sustainability component from the beginning, wanting European agriculture to be registered on three axes: economic efficiency, social responsibility and ecological resilience.

In this doctoral research work, we started from the hypothesis that the ecological dimension of development is strategically vital and requires the reporting of agricultural policy to the essence of the future multiannual financial frameworks. This process requires the reporting of the European agricultural sector to the requirements related to the environment - as they were foreseen in the Green Deal - and to those regarding the mitigation of climate change.

Both at the level of national and community institutional structures, as well as at that of the academic and scientific environment, heated debates are being held regarding the solutions that must be found in order to successfully face the multitude of challenges to which the European economy is exposed, as a whole, but also the agriculture and rural development sector.

From the research we carried out, it emerged that some aspects related to the monitoring of future actions are still relatively understudied and further require more complex analyzes in which more attention is paid to multi, trans and inter-disciplinary aspects. A thematic area in which there are many elements to clarify, from an analytical and methodological point of view, is that related to the reaction of the European agricultural sector in conditions of geopolitical and geo-economics turbulence and to the confluence with crisis states, as was the case with the one caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite the shortcomings that it has always had to face, the agricultural sector in Romania also has a number of strong points that will have to be reconsidered within the PNS of the PAC Post 2020, the most expressive being the high quality of agricultural land that falls into the category surfaces with a high natural value; expanding the actions of attesting agricultural products domestically, which could turn into real opportunities for the development of new activities in the rural area (such as, for example, micro-processing, rural tourism), etc.

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From the research carried out it resulted that, in addition to some strong points attached to the Romanian agricultural sector, unfortunately often not fully exploited, quite a few weak points remain, the most disturbing being: the very large number of small and medium-sized agricultural households ; weak cooperation in production, reflected by the low degree of association and cooperation of agricultural producers; the very small number of products (7 products) included in quality schemes recognized at European level (IGP, DOP, STG); the still low level of capitalization at the level of agricultural holdings; the reduced capacity of small and medium-sized agricultural households to market the production obtained and to participate in short supply chains; the predominance in Romanian exports of agricultural products of unprocessed or with a very low degree of processing; the modest level of added value incorporated in agricultural products and the imbalance between plant and animal production; the still low level of training of farmers, the advanced age of heads of agricultural holdings, but also the poor development of specialized consulting services for the needs of small and medium-sized agricultural households, etc.

This doctoral research paper was structured in five chapters, as follows:

In Chapter 1, entitled "General notions of performance and competitiveness in agriculture", the research efforts were focused on the following thematic areas: defining and clarifying the concepts of performance and competitiveness; setting up an aggregated system of indicators that can be used to measure performance and economic competitiveness by product and agricultural branches; clarification and methodological substantiation of the most pertinent ways of measuring performance and economic competitiveness practiced in the agri-food sector.

In Chapter 2, entitled "Agricultural policy and sustainable rural development", the analysis carried out was directed, mainly, to the following axes: the nature, principled and instrumental foundations, the evolution and the various reform packages that targeted the Common Agricultural Policy; commenting and comparative analysis of the main objectives of the CAP, with a special emphasis on the sustainable development of agriculture until the 2040 horizon, including the new strategy of the CAP Post 2020; the general objectives of the New Strategy aimed at Post 2020 agriculture; the PAC Post 2020 budget; how to transpose the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from the 2030 Agenda into the Post 2020 PAC; the main strategic directions of the development of the Romanian agricultural sector. One of the additional research objectives that I focused on during this chapter concerned the most sensitive aspects attached to the process of maximizing the performance of economic activities carried out in the EU. In order to give a clear outline of the picture of economic performance at the European level, I used the following indicators: the value of agricultural production; intermediate consumptions for primary agricultural production at EU level; gross added value generated by agricultural production; labor productivity in the agricultural sector.

In Chapter 3, entitled "Diagnostic analysis regarding the performance and competitiveness of the agricultural sector in Romania", the issue on which the research focused was: the dynamics of the economic macrocycle and the direction in which the macroeconomic policies were oriented in the European Union, with an emphasis especially on the positioning of Romania in this dynamic picture; the diversity and specific role of the main actors involved in the supply chain; diagnosis of their economic performance and competitiveness.

In Chapter 4, entitled "The ranking of branches and agricultural products obtained in Romania according to the criterion of performance perception and that of economic competitiveness", we have carried out an aggregated methodological approach aimed at supporting the process of ranking the branches and agricultural products obtained, in Romania, according to the criterion of perception on economic performance and, respectively, that of perception regarding the level of economic competitiveness. This analytical and methodological approach was intended to help decision-makers in the field of public policies in the process of formulating some resource allocation decisions according to either the current state of development or according to future objectives of interest; knowing the level of the potential reserve of performance and/or competitiveness on products and branches of activity in Romanian agriculture in order to support the efficiency of allocations.

After obtaining a table as relevant as possible including the state of performance and competitiveness perception indicators, we proceeded to create an analytical table that includes a

ranking of the main products and sub-branches of activity in Romanian agriculture. The analytical results we have reached can be useful for several categories of societal actors, public or private, helping them to better substantiate the decisions adopted, to establish the priorities to be taken into account in the resource allocation process, to make the corrections that during the development of some projects, it is necessary to substantiate, more thoroughly, the process of establishing the destination of the results.

In Chapter 5, entitled "Directions, proposals, measures and policies to accelerate the increase in the performance and economic competitiveness of Romanian agriculture", the focus in terms of the analytical and methodological approach was shifted to the process of explaining and substantiating future developments in the direction of achieving performance and competitiveness economic. The main analytical vectors considered were: the dynamic adaptation of the sub-sectoral structure of European agriculture to the changes caused by the advancement of the globalization process; capturing the priority objectives of the development of European agriculture during the multiannual financial programming period 2021-2027; the priority objectives of the development of Romanian agriculture in accordance with the Post 2020 National Strategic Plan; proposing possible strategic solutions to increase performance in agriculture. Based on the research carried out, I have included in this part of the paper some useful recommendations for decision-makers at all levels, the most sustainable from an argumentative point of view being: the vital nature of calling for the practice of high-performance technologies; centering public policy efforts on optimizing the use of all production factors; the production and integration into production of the performing biological material, proving a greater concern towards the field of bioeconomy; the initiation and consistent support of national programs aimed at supporting the capitalization process of agricultural farms; the promotion of Sectoral and Strategic Agricultural Product Programs dedicated to agriculture in Romania; reducing the waste of agro-food products; practicing efficient management of public lands administered by the State Domains Agency; expanding organic farming systems; the development of partnerships for education/, ICT, RDI, as well as the improvement of performance at the level of administrative structures specific to the agricultural field.

The final part of the paper contains the conclusions reached based on the research carried out. The main aspects that emerged during the analysis mainly concern the relevance and coherence of the objectives of the programs intended to enhance the efforts to increase the levels of performance and competitiveness at the level of the Romanian agricultural sector, as well as their effects (of the programs for improving the performance and economic competitiveness) in future decisions aimed at the future of this sector. One of the main ideas that I insisted on during my research aimed to highlight the possible impact obtained from the implementation of the PNS Post 2020.

Based on the research carried out, we gathered a large number of arguments in favor of the idea that the aspects addressed should represent topics of interest for future debates initiated at the European, national and regional/local level.