PRELIMINARY DATA ON THE WILLINGNESS TO INNOVATION OF YOUNG FARMERS IN TIMIS COUNTY

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Abstract: *The aim of the study was obtaining information on the recent position of Young farmers in order to estimate their intention of innovation, the development of the farm and the incrisement of competitiveness. Data came from an extended research in the DKMT Euroregion (West Romania, Vojvodina and South-East Hungary). Young farmers were interviewed (n=10). The answers were processed by Lickert-scale. During the questioning we focused on: mechanization and technological level of the farm; the genetical background of the applied varieties and breeds; the used digital technology, information resources, marketing and the factors of motivation to innovate.*

Key words*: Young farmer, innovation, competitiveness, technological development*

INTRODUCTION

In the agricultural sector, the implementation of innovations relates to product, process, marketing and organization changes. The success of a farm or entrepreneur is related to innovation, both financial and non financial meaning [3].

Young farmers are persons who involved in agricultural production, their age is between 16 to 41 years. They should run a business with major income from agriculture and they must demonstrate a certain level of standard output in the future by a business plan. The age of farmers' population needs to be conceptualised substantially in Europe. There is no theoretical basis for determining a quantitative level at which aging of farmers' community or absence of youth turn into a socially and economically difficult situation [15]. Appraisal of "young farmers' problem" in Europe needs to consider regional differences between and within countries. The obvious age gap appears particularly in Southern and Eastern European countries causing problems in accessing to land, establishing viable farms and innovation in production.

Management success is determined by several factors [10]:

- entrepreneurship of the farm manager,
- the level of education and knowledge and experience,
- tangible resources and assets,
- prices of crops and demand,
- financial support for young farmers,
- legal regulations and bureaucracy.

In a survey on Dutch farms [5] was found that innovation adoption has positive effects on labour resource, attitude to renewal, market position and use of information. Young farmers generally consider important collective knowledge and cooperation with research institutes, professional organizations and contractor in order to gain knowledge and information to develop SMEs in the agriculture [6]. This process merged empirical, technical and scientific knowledge, and promoted both individual and corporate learning. The demand-led research studies let the local stakeholders to improve their learning capacities on their production systems [12].

Young people at the same time feel strongly connected to nature and these farmers think about themselves as producers of nature in the sense of forming landscape and being conscious in sustainable production [4].

After Romania's accession to the European Union the share of the young entrepreneurs increased among the farmers in rural Romania, and the new funding possibilities facilitated the development of rural business [13]. This opportunity had the greatest impact on young people at the beginning of their farming activity. These processes would be promoted in further favourable direction by the equal distribution of direct subsidy among the member countries [8]. In the same period the rural entrepreneurs suffered from the affects of economic crises which decelerated the rural business, the incrisement of the number of young farmers and reduced their innovating capacity [14].

The aim of this survey was to prepare a short overview on the innovation intent of young agricultural producers in Timis County, Romania.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data are coming from a wider survey in the DKMT Euroregion (West Romania, Vojvodina and South Hungary). The data of the study was collected from 10 young farmers in Timis County (Romania) with interview method (Photo 1). The age of the farmers was less than 40 years. The interviewees were asked by standard questions. This sample is not representative. The questions were focused on the following:

- General introduction of the agricultural production of the enterprise (Table 1).
- Possessions of the business at the moment and/or under procurement.
- Information sources of the farmer.
- Factors of competitiveness considered as important.
- Prerequisites of development.

Photo: Karoly Bodnar

Photo 1: Discussion with producers at Bodo (Timis County)

The answer were given and evaluated in most cases by Lickert-scale (0-5), where 0 meant 'not at all' and 5 meant completely. The answers were summing up and an average was calculated.

Table 1

Main characteristics of the farming of Young farmers

Young farmer	Type of enterprise	Qualification	Arable land (hectare)	Pasture (hectare)	Building (m^2)	Plant production (%)	Animal production (%)	Products
1.	4	4	150	1500	900	15	85	cow milk
2.	1	2	70		500	70	30	pig
3.	4	2	150		700	75	25	pig
4.	1	3	40		100	65	35	pig, cow milk
5.	4	4	200		400	85	15	pig, cow milk
6.	4	2	190		200	85	15	pig, cow milk
7.	2	3	90		60	70	30	poultry, pig, cow milk
8.	1	1	20		50	70	30	poultry, pig, cow milk
9.	2	2	20		100	75	25	poultry, pig, cow milk
10.	4	2	90	1500	1000	80	20	sheep, cow milk, meat, cottage cheese

RESEARCH RESULTS

Possessions of the business at the moment and/or under implementation

None of the farmers have medium-term business plan for the management of their farm, but all of them would like to prepare it irrespectively of applications for at least three years. They have development ideas, but they will not ask for investment credit. They generally use currently and in the future innovations.

Information sources of the farmer

Respondent prefer domestic farm visits against the study tours abroad. The main information source of them are extensionists and their own experience. They gave 4.0 on both. In a study 55% of the Greek farmers would prefer to be consulted by private extension bureaus rather than government consulting divisions [1].

The other information resources in descending order by their importance are the following: books (3.2), agricultural exhibitions (Photo 2), trainings and courses (2.5), opinion of customers (2.5), other farmers (2.5), internet (1.7), TV program and business partner (1.0), the results of research institutes got only 0.5. On the other hand, young farmers with reduced trust to institutions and enhanced confidence to individuals (personal trust) are primarily those who aspire collective actions, which allow them to become flexible in order to better adapt to new facilities [11].

Photo: Karoly Bodnar

Photo 2: Banat AGRALIM agricultural show at Timisoara

Factors of competitiveness considered as important

The mechanization and the development of technology seem to be the most important factors of competitiveness (4.6). Adaptability and the monitoring of the attitude of competitors are above the average (3.6 and 3.5).

The cooperation or collaboration of the farmers was listed in the middle (3.0). Unexpected result that the IT background (0.4) and the marketing activity (0.2) reached the lowest values. The production of traditional breeds and varieties got only 1 point from one of the interviewees.

Prerequisites of development

With the help of this group of questions we wanted to know what impact the farmers were going to develop or innovate. Most of the farmers consider the subsidies as the most important factor (4.8) in development of the business. Obtaining new markets (4.4), the secure market (4.2) and increasing revenues (4.4) also important factors for young farmers, while the reduction of costs got only 3.2 value in average.

Technologies have been widespread got slightly higher result than new yet commonly used ones (4.0 and 3.8). The reduced-interest loans for investment are the least attractive among the agricultural entrepreneurs (2.2).

In terms of profitability a studied group of English young farmers is systematically the best and the higher geared with the highest levels of debt, loans and liabilities which could be taken as proof of investment [9].

CONCLUSIONS

Ten years after the EU accession of Romania the sample farms do not have middle-term business plan, but all of them thought that it would be useful in the future. Most of the interviewees found the bureaucracy of the applications difficult and they wish for the subsidies, but they consider it risky and the loan as well. They are more confident in their own experiences as information source than in courses. Unfortunately they do not look at the development of IT facilities like that a factor of competitiveness, but they regard the most important the modern mechanization of the farm. It seems positive that they give preference to extend the market and increase the income instead of the reduction of production costs. Hungarian entrepreneurs emphasized the importance of the possibility of involving external capital [2].

The results suggest that is it worth to continue the survey more widely in the near future.

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