

THE ROLE OF AGRICULTURE IN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF WESTERN REGION'S RURAL AREAS

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Abstract: At national level agriculture had and continues to have an important role in the structure of the national economy being an important economic factor in the formation of the market economy. The contribution of this sector to the overall economic development is one comparable to that of the secondary sector, but lower, compared with the third sector. Agriculture has remained a priority branch of the material production, the socio-economic development of the contemporary world being in a close dependence relationship with the performances obtained in agriculture, can not being conceived outside the ongoing development of this production sector.

Key words: *agriculture, agricultural area, agricultural holding, agricultural production*

INTRODUCTION

For West Region, agriculture is considered as one of the most relevant resources of the development. In this regard a special importance should be given to increasing the crop and livestock productions and also to agricultural productivity in order to create a competitive agricultural market.

West Region represents 12.74% from the agricultural surface of the country, having an important capitalization potential. However, at regional level it can be seen differences among the counties, in the counties of Timis and Arad, the nonagricultural surfaces being superior both qualitative and quantitative, with those from Caras-Severin and Hunedoara counties. So, agriculture finds good conditions for development in the most part of the region's territory.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research methods used in this scientific paper are: the analysis and synthesis as well as the comparison in time and space. These methods allow the collection of data regarding the main features and trends of the agricultural activity, allowing the establishment of a causal analysis of the agriculture from the studied area and developing policies and strategies for its development.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Western development Region consists from four counties (Arad, Caras-Severin, Hunedoara and Timis) occupying 13.43% from the country's territory. West Region was formed in 1998, having the role of coordinating the regional development projects and management of funds from the European Union.

The agricultural area of West Region is 1.8694 million hectares representing 58.19% from the total surface of the region and 12.74% from the agricultural area of Romania. The structure of agricultural area, by the way of use, at the region's level presents as follows: arable 58.51%, pastures 28.34%, hayfields 11.32%, vineyards and vine nurseries 0.47%, orchards and nurseries 1.36% (Figure 1).

The highest percents of arable surfaces are registered in Timis and Arad counties (48.73% and 32.15% from the total surface), these two counties having a great agricultural potential, given by the presence of Western Plain.

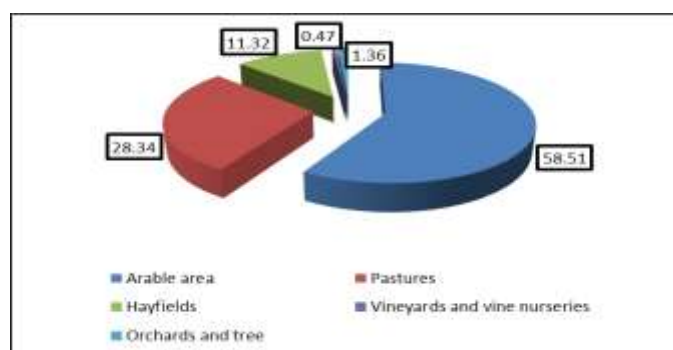


Figure 1. The structure of agricultural surface, by category of use, West Region, 2013

The other two counties indicates a higher concentration of pastures and hayfields category, 34.59%, and 27.22%, favored by the presence of the hills and mountains, as predominant forms of relief. [2,3,6]

The employed population in agriculture at the level of 2013 numbered 193400 people, representing 23.1% from total of employed population of the region (compared to 27.33% at the level of the entire country), decreasing compared to previous years. Proportionally, the largest agricultural population is found in Timis County (35.47%) and Arad (23.11%), The share of the employees from agriculture in the total number of employees varies between 20.84% in Caraș- Severin County and 23.56% in Hunedoara County. [3,5]

An important feature of the population employed in agriculture is the high average age, a common feature, at national level, not just regionally. The workforce employed in agriculture, is formed, in many cases, from persons without adequate specialized training, fact felt more acutely at the assimilation of new production technologies. In addition, many from the heads of individual farms have not the basic knowledge in the field of agricultural business organization.

Technical equipment of Western Region agriculture is characterized, lately through an increase. In the year 2015 in the West Region were registered a number of: 28578 physical agricultural tractors (14.80% from the country's fleet of tractors), 21494 plows for tractor (13.69% from the national park), 10276 mechanical seeders (13.47% from the total) and 3337 self-propelled combines for cereals (12.99% from the national park). [1,3,5]

The average area that returns to a tractor, of 38.6 hectares, is lower than the national average, 48.65 hectares. The arable surface that returns to a tractor, in Timis and Arad counties, is 50.18 and 45.46 hectares, in the Caras-Severin and Hunedoara counties of only 22.23 and 16.56 hectares.

At the level of the West Region, the situation of agricultural holdings presented in the table 1.

In the year 2015, the number of agricultural holdings from the West Region was 269727. The average dimension of the exploited surfaces at regional level, on agricultural holding was 6.32 ha. The highest value in terms of average size, that comes on a holding records in Timis County, and the smallest size are recorded at the level the of Caras-Severin and Hunedoara counties. Individual agricultural holdings represent 98.48% from the total of 273891 holdings, while those with legal personality only 1.52% from the total of agricultural holdings registered at the region's level. [4,6]

Agricultural areas capitalized exploited in agricultural units with legal personality totaling 1133060 hectares, representing 55.28% from the total of agricultural area, while the individual agricultural holdings hold 44.72% from the agricultural area of the West Region. [1,2]

Table 1.

The structure of agricultural holdings, West Region

	Agricultural holding number	Used agricultural area, ha	Average area ha/holding
Agricultural holdings without legal personality	269727	774304	2.87
- individual agricultural holding	269413	758960	2.81
- self-employed person, individual enterprise, family business	314	15343	48.86
Agricultural holding with legal personality	4164	957110	229.85
- societies / agricultural associations	137	71174	519.51
- companies	2470	463319	187.57
- public administration units	319	363161	1138.43
- cooperative units	5	10	2.00
- other types	1197	59444	49.66
Total	273891	1731414	6.50

Source: NIS, Farm Structure Survey in 2010

In the year 2014, the value of agricultural production in the level of the West Region, was 8.010 millions lei, representing 11.79% from the total value of agricultural production, registered at national level (10.75% from the value of crop production, 10.79% from the value of agricultural animal production and 9.58% from animal agricultural services. With this share the West Region ranks 7th place among those 8 development regions of the country. Timis County owns the largest share in the value of regional agricultural production (42.22%) and Caras-Severin, the lowest percentage (13.71%).

The structure of agricultural production in the region level is presented in Figure 2. So, it can be seen that, the vegetable sector represents 65.84% from the total of regional agricultural production, the same with 65.83%, the value registered at national level. [3,4]

Capitalizing agricultural production is a global problem of farmers, at national level. Poor organization of farmers in specific structures, of the domestic competitive agricultural market with European ones, and the insufficient regulation of the relationship producer - seller, causes a reduced capitalization of the agricultural products obtained.

The main problem in capitalizing the products of small agricultural producers, represents the lack of local or regional collection centers for agricultural products but also the lack or inadequacy of storage spaces required for the storage of the agricultural production.

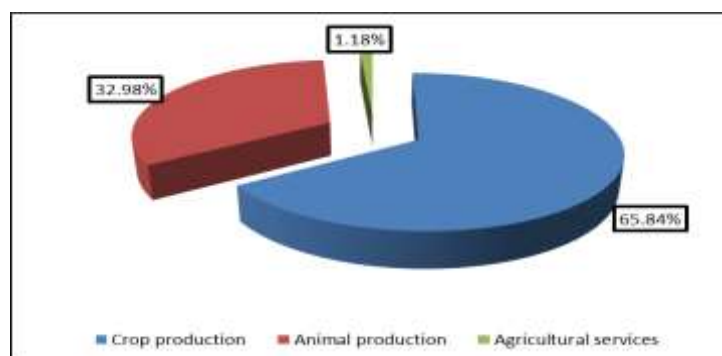


Figure 2. The structure of agricultural production, the Western Region

The lack of associative forms and of cooperation of small agricultural producers associated with the existence of some markets of agricultural products not sufficiently well defined and developed, limits the access of this category of producers, putting them in a

position of inferiority in the relationships that the intermediaries of agricultural products have, wholesalers or major retailers. The existence of a large number of farmers, with individual low productions, high costs of production and transport but also in many cases the lack of products certification determines the existence of a low demand from major local processors of agricultural products.

To all these they add a strong competition from importers of agricultural products, offering the products at a lower price compared with those of local producers, those can not reduce the price below the level of production cost.

The experience and the great success achieved by the greatest farmers from the West Region, but not only, come to support the benefits of an agriculture practiced in medium to large holdings, of the integration of agricultural production and apparent of costs optimization.

CONCLUSIONS

The agriculture of West Region has a particularly important role in the whole of the regional economy, with direct implications on the living standards of the population and food safety.

The agricultural potential that the West Region has is a remarkable one, having large agricultural areas and soils of very good quality. Even if at present the region's agricultural potential is not yet capitalized, at its potential, it can become in the future, one of the most attractive offers of the region, for foreign investors.

Further development, of agricultural activities, requires the establishment of some production agricultural competitive structures and the development of some complex forms of association and cooperation focused on the principles of a agricultural market competitive with those of other states member of European Union.

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