

AGRIPRENEURIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING IN ROMANIAN RURAL AREAS

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Abstract: To attract young people to live and work in the rural area in Romania (as well as in any other part of the world), one needs to ensure a set of advantages among which creating job choices / opportunities. Since non-agricultural job opportunities in the rural area are scarce, the best solution would be to create agricultural job opportunities. To do so, one needs to turn subsistence family farms into entrepreneurial family farms. The problem is that, apart from low access to financial resources for SMEs, young farmers also face poor entrepreneurial culture (lack of basic management knowledge and skills). NGOs (including LAGs) could be providers of training in agricultural entrepreneurship. This paper details the necessary specific entrepreneurial / managerial knowledge, skills, and work styles.

Key words: entrepreneurship, management, knowledge, skills, Romania

INTRODUCTION

Employment statistics in the EU Rural Area shows that, in 2015 the opportunity for new employment including re-employment and the newly achieved conditions had a large impact at the level of living conditions; in certain Mediterranean rural regions the participation rate to labour for women was 1/5 behind the male rates indicating that gender differences acts as an important factor; the same Mediterranean rural regions or countries record the most reduced rates in terms of employment with emphasis on the age range 20-60; the employment is indicated as a source of income impacting the wellbeing and satisfaction.

Unemployment statistics in the EU Rural Area shows that, in 2015 the rural unemployment rates were far lower than the urban unemployment; there is a visible difference between the rural unemployment rates in the new and old member states where the new regions have significantly higher unemployment as compared to the EU average; as reported the EU average indicates a slight difference between the unemployment in suburbs and rural areas [1].

Unemployment statistics in Romania on August 31, 2018 shows that: **unemployment rate at national level** was 3.46% (0.04% less than in July 2018 and 0.72% less than in August 2017); **total number of unemployed people** was 302,589 (2,780 less people than in July 2018); **male unemployment rate** dropped from 3.59% in July 2018 to 3.54% in August 2018, while **female unemployment rate** dropped from 3.38% in July 2018 to 3.37% in August 2018, with a gap of 0.17% between the two sexes; **total number of female unemployed people** was 133,585, while **total number of male unemployed people** was 167,004; 89,202 unemployed people were from the urban area, and **213.387 unemployed people** were from the rural area, i.e. **70.52% of the total number of unemployed people** [2, 10].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper presents a systematic synthesis of the necessary specific entrepreneurial/managerial knowledge, skills, and work styles any farmer needs to run an agribusiness in the rural area. It relies on both literature and official documents in the field.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The most relevant specific agricultural topics at European Level are: generating and maintaining occupation in food sector; coping with the global warming (water and soil management and biodiversity threads); devising **fairer support systems for farmers**; doubling **world food production** by 2050 as response to the population growth and food security and safety; supporting **fair-trade for the benefit of the developing countries** encouraging their inflows of exports towards developed and consolidated markets; consolidating farmers' place along the food supply-chain; transporting and supporting the innovation transfer to farmers; supporting quality-schemes, farm level decision-making, modernisation; promoting the integration of innovations in farming activities, waste management and green energy conversion; diversification of sustainable rural economy by an enhanced use of knowledge and research results; cleaner and maintained environment [1].

The most relevant specific agricultural topics at Romanian Level are: **bureaucracy**; degradation of traditional cultural value settlements and historic monuments; environmental issues; **high costs of crediting products**; high rate of school dropout (high schools and vocational schools); increasing percentage of people at risk of poverty / social exclusion (particularly among Roma); land fragmentation; limited connection to broadband Internet and AGU; **low access to financial resources for SMEs**; low level of ICTs knowledge; low level of income per household; low level of instruction; **low level of labour productivity**; **low participation rate of rural residents to training programmes in non-agricultural activities**; negative demographic trend (ageing population); **poor ability of LAGs to reach the objectives of local development strategies**; poor access to water supply and sewage systems; poor basic infrastructure (including in the mountain area); poor basic rural services (including in the mountain area); **poor development of non-agricultural activities and jobs (hence subsistence agriculture)**; **poor entrepreneurial culture (lack of basic management knowledge and skills)**; poor rural tourism services; poor tourism infrastructure; regional disparities within Romania; rural development; size of the Romanian farm population; and unbalance between agricultural imports and exports.

To solve all these problems, the Romanians should make decisions and implement projects aiming at: attracting the interest of policy makers, potential beneficiaries, and stakeholders; bridging the gap between the labour market needs and the lack of knowledge and competences; conserving and improving traditional ways of living; developing a competitive labour market in the European agricultural field; helping keeping the young rural population employed; improving the living conditions of people by offering guidance and support to the target group in developing their own business, thus increasing their level of income; increasing labour occupancy rate; maintaining the activity of the rural areas; making a high impact at European level; preventing migration to big cities; providing jobs for unemployed people of the rural communities; raising the employability level of people from rural and remote areas; **transferring not only agricultural skills to young persons with precarious conditions, but also ICT skills, foreign language skills, and entrepreneurial and social skills, with the purpose of helping them establish their own businesses**; and using the partnership's networks for disseminating the project's products [7, 8].

Young persons with precarious conditions should be trained to become both **entrepreneurs**(persons who set up a business or businesses in agriculture, financial managing risks while aiming for profit) and **managers**(individuals in charge of administering and assessing the staff activities) if they need to become competitive farmers [4, 5]. As managers, they should be aware that farm managers basic activities include:ensuring the services required to accomplish the planned activities;acting in planning, monitoring, producing and marketing;managing the staff and developing their professional competencies;and forecasting and leading the management of any agricultural or forestry production related activities [12].

TO DO SO, A MANAGER NEEDS TO HAVE (SOME) SPECIFIC ENTREPRENEURIAL / MANAGERIAL KNOWLEDGE, (SOME) SPECIFIC ENTREPRENEURIAL / MANAGERIAL SKILLS, AND (SOME) SPECIFIC ENTREPRENEURIAL / MANAGERIAL WORK STYLES.

Agricultural Entrepreneurial / Managerial Knowledge include specific comprehension of models and principles related to:“

- **Administration/Management** - organizing, decision-making, planning, controlling and coordinating as management components and producing,marketing, staffing and financing as business components;

- **Biology** - acknowledging the interactions at the level of living entities, their interactions and exchanges and influences with the environment;

- **Construction/Design** - ability to read and understand plans, designs and processes' layouts and basic understanding of construction techniques and methods with particular emphasis on potential repairing needs;

- **Chemistry** - properties of chemical substances and processes including the potential, danger to humans, animals, crops and environment including proper handling and disposal;

- **ITC** - understanding and operating computers and other smart devices (smartphones and tablets) and the software that equips the devices, including dedicated applications;

- **Human interaction / Staffing** - communication and assessment skills to incorporate and answer clients' expectations as well as understanding the place and the role of selecting and developing the staff competencies, motivation and rewarding;

- **Economics** - understanding economic processes and applying specific financial procedures, interpreting changes, identifying opportunities and the ability to collect and assess financial information;

- **Training** - techniques of training and transferring knowledge, skills and abilities, evaluation of results and achievements of newly achieved comprehension;

- **Technology/Mechanical** - understanding, designing and employing the technical aspects related to the production activities;understanding the mechanisms and functioning principles of different machinery including the maintaining and reparations of various apparatus;

- **Legislation** - Knowledge of laws, legal codes, court procedures, precedents, government regulations, executive orders, agency rules, and the democratic political process;

- **Mathematics** - understanding and applying in use the mathematical techniques and principles for practical purposes;

- **Safety / Security** - understanding the content of the regulated framework and applying the required measures for protective actions related to property, people and environment;

- **Production / Processing** - understanding and mastering the knowledge about production related processes, flows, tools and materials for efficient generation of goods and/or services;

- **Marketing** - ability to understand and react accordingly to market adjustments, demand and supply shifts and changes, selling techniques, sales coordination, project future production changes to adjust to market absorption capacity;

Logistics - understanding the basics of displacing and transporting merchandise by available means on soil, water or air in the most efficient and effective ways [12].

Agricultural Entrepreneurial / Managerial Skills concern and include:

- **Analytical Thinking;**
- **Assessing Quality;**
- **Assessment and Deciding;**
- **Assistance Provision;**
- **Carthusian Approach;**
- **Communication**
- **Comprehension;**
- **Conciliation;**
- **Coordinating;**
- **Discoursing;**
- **Dynamic Learning;**
- **Dynamic Listening;**
- **Financial Management;**
- **Human Capital Management;**
- **Identification of Faults and Reaction;**
- **Influencing;**
- **Insightfulness;**
- **Production Activities;**
- **Production Supervising;**
- **Resources' Management;**
- **Scientific Approach;**
- **Solving Complex Situations;**
- **Structural Assessment;**
- **Structure Analysing;**
- **Supervising;**
- **Systematic Learning;**
- **Technological Choosing;**
- **Workflow Administration** [3, 6, 13, 15].

Finally, young people wishing to become entrepreneurs / managers should have some of the following **Agricultural Entrepreneurial / Managerial Work Styles**:

- **Achievement/Effort;**
- **Adaptability/Flexibility;**
- **Analytical Thinking;**
- **Attention to Detail;**
- **Concern for Others;**
- **Cooperation;**
- **Dependability;**
- **Independence;**
- **Initiative;**
- **Innovation;**
- **Integrity;**

- **Leadership**;
- **Persistence**;
- **Self-Control**;
- **Social Orientation**; and
- **Stress Tolerance** [9, 14].

Of course, nobody is expecting young people living in the rural area to acquire overnight all **Agricultural Entrepreneurial / Managerial Knowledge** and to develop all **Agricultural Entrepreneurial / Managerial Skills** and **Agricultural Entrepreneurial / Managerial Work Styles**. However, they are expected to acquire some knowledge and develop a few skills in their agricultural field of choice. Here are a few suggestions regarding the agricultural fields fit for Western Romania (Banat Region): to practice **Agritourism**: advertising/public relations, art/design, business planning, crafts (list), media experience (writing/website/radio/TV teaching); to practice **Apiculture:beekeeping business planning**: fulfil industry standards and administrative regulations; develop activities based on integrated seasonal planning; acknowledging the honey production as a business; **employability skills**: combat a small fire, connect with peers and public, financial management at personal level, manage, monitor and control the activity related hazards and risks, manage time effectively, dynamically develop professionally; **handling bees**: comprehending the elements of elementary bee biology and behaviour; acknowledging the pollination requisites; describe bee specialty enterprises; provide for bees dietary needs; perform field work with colonies; perform field work with queens and cells; accomplish requested operations on bees' sites; hibernation provision and settling of package bees; **maintaining bee health**: control parasitic mites, handle trespassers and biota, reduce pesticide impact, prevent brood diseases, prevent Nosema disease, employ best practices in integrated nuisance control; **operating bee equipment**: understand the purposes and the scheme of related structures; extract honey and wax; maintain hive equipment; run and preserve specific machinery used in production and logistic; handle effectively the relevant particular and basic utensils; to practice **Horticulture**: ability to organise and manage your own workload, ability to use your own **initiative**, ability to work in a team, **business awareness**, **communication** and **interpersonal** skills, excellent **planning** skills, financial awareness, **management skills**, **problem-solving** ability, and **project management skills**; to practice **Organic Farming**, one needs a cool head, a healthy body, a mechanical mind, analytical and critical thinking skills, business savvy, lifelong learning call, management skills, organic integrity, organisational skills, and people skills; to practice **Sericulture**, one needs to know how to choose the proper mulberry tree cultivars and the proper silkworm races, how to manage silkworm diseases, and how to rear the silkworms; finally, to practice **Viticulture**, one should have some occupational work experience education and know about entrepreneurial management, plant pest and disease management, small farm machinery operations and safety, soils and fertility management, sustainable agricultural systems, and viticulture practices.

CONCLUSIONS

Agripreneurial skills for young people living in Romanian rural areas should cover at least the following: **Cooperation and networking skills**: ability to network and utilise contacts, communication skills, cooperation skills – particularly with other farmers and companies, leadership, and team-work skills; **Opportunity skills**: ability to innovate, ability to recognise and realise business opportunities, awareness of threats, market and customer orientation, and risk management skills; **Strategy skills**: ability to develop and evaluate business strategies; ability to receive and make use of feedback; ability to reflect (self-knowledge and knowing one's strengths and weaknesses); conceptual skills; goal

setting skills; monitoring and evaluation skills; strategic decision-making skills; and strategic planning skills (ability to analyse the business situation and its competitive environment and ability to identify and act on unique selling opportunities).

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