

IMPORTANT ASPECTS REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ROMANIAN RURAL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract: *Rural areas have substantial growth potential and a vital social role, being very important the support of rural activities in general and agriculture in particular. The diversification of the rural economy is a key issue for the success of the rural development. Romania enjoys an important development potential, although insufficiently exploited. The target of the paper is to highlight some aspects regarding Romanian rural area, from agricultural point of view and not only, being brought to light: aspects regarding the development of the Romanian rural environment, the distribution of communes according to agricultural area, the map of the distribution of large agricultural holdings (over 2000 ha) and finally the reasons why agriculture can be the support of Romania's development.*

Key words: *development, rural area, research, aspects*

INTRODUCTION

Rural and agricultural areas are one of the most significant contributions to natural capital. Talking about "rural development" and trying to establish the priorities of this sector is, without exaggeration, one of the most ambitious and difficult projects. The diversification of the rural economy is a key issue for the success of the rural development policy in Romania, the priorities being: [2,6,7,8,10]

- *Economic development* it must aim for any action and activity undertaken to be carried out in a profitable manner at the level of the production entities and to act in all ways to make them viable. The share of the employed population in rural areas operating in agriculture is the highest, referring to the other areas of activity of the rural area. So, agriculture is the determining activity and the basic pillar around which the economic activities of the rural area must revolve. The basic cell of rural development is the viable agricultural holding, and the existence of viable agricultural holdings leads to the vitalization of rural economic life.

- The principles of ecological rural development must be in line with the economic and social development of the rural area and ensure the avoidance of environmental degradation. Environmental protection is a key element of sustainable development and must be in line with the principles of sustainable agriculture.

- *Rural development in social term* it must be conceived as a guarantee of ensuring the living conditions at the level of the human condition, for all the localities and regions where human activity is present. It is known that not all regions offer the same conditions for economic and social development, which differ both in terms of natural conditions and in terms of the evolution of the level of development of the region from an economic point of view. In general, the social development of a region starts from the level of economic development of that region and is dependent on it. Thus, the more economically prosperous a region, the less negative effects are registered that lead to social regression. Large discrepancies also occur within the same community, where we meet social groups that prosper more than others, which determine that new flows of circulation and formation of income and profit appear in the rural economy. What is obvious and visible in the formation of incomes is that they increase in the sector of exploitation and administration of rural activities and decrease or decrease in landowners and especially in those who

cannot or do not have material conditions for direct exploitation. This shows the importance of supporting rural activities in general and agriculture in particular. What is obvious and visible in the formation of incomes is that they increase in the sector of exploitation and administration of rural activities and decrease or decrease in landowners and especially in those who cannot or do not have material conditions for direct exploitation. This shows the importance of supporting rural activities in general and agriculture in particular. What is obvious and visible in the formation of incomes is that they increase in the sector of exploitation and administration of rural activities and decrease or decrease in landowners and especially in those who cannot or do not have material conditions for direct exploitation. This shows the importance of supporting rural activities in general and agriculture in particular.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The main purpose of this research is to highlight some aspects regarding Romanian rural area, its development potential starting from agricultural point of view, the agricultural land having a high natural value. They are pursued the reasons why agriculture can be the support of Romania's development and are made some proposals of some key actions to achieve the goal of developing rural areas.

To fulfill this desideratum are used many source of information, and different stages of research: gathering general information, processing the information provided from different sources and presentation of the main conclusion drawn.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Romania enjoys an important development potential, although insufficiently exploited. With a total area of 238 thousand km² and a population of 19.041 million inhabitants, Romania is, in size, the second new member state of the European Union, after Poland. It represents 6% of the total area of the European Union and 4% of its population.

Romania is one of the European countries that enjoy a good endowment in terms of land, water and human resources. However, to date, these advantages have had only a limited influence in terms of generating significant development and restructuring in agriculture and rural areas. [1,11]

Rural areas have substantial growth potential and a vital social role. The development of the rural environment, Romanian and not only, is influenced by numerous factors, the ones we considered to be the most representative are analyzed in the following.

The agricultural area is a strategic resource that determines the specificity of a locality in terms of economic activities and can also be a guiding element in the development strategy of rural areas. The agricultural area represents a percentage of 55.8% of the total area of the country. The communes with the largest agricultural areas are those in the plain and hill area, with the opposite population being the counties in the Carpathian arc, which have the lowest values of the indicator. Almost 80% of the communes have agricultural areas less than 6000 ha. There are a number of 20 communes, whose agricultural areas exceed 16,400 ha.

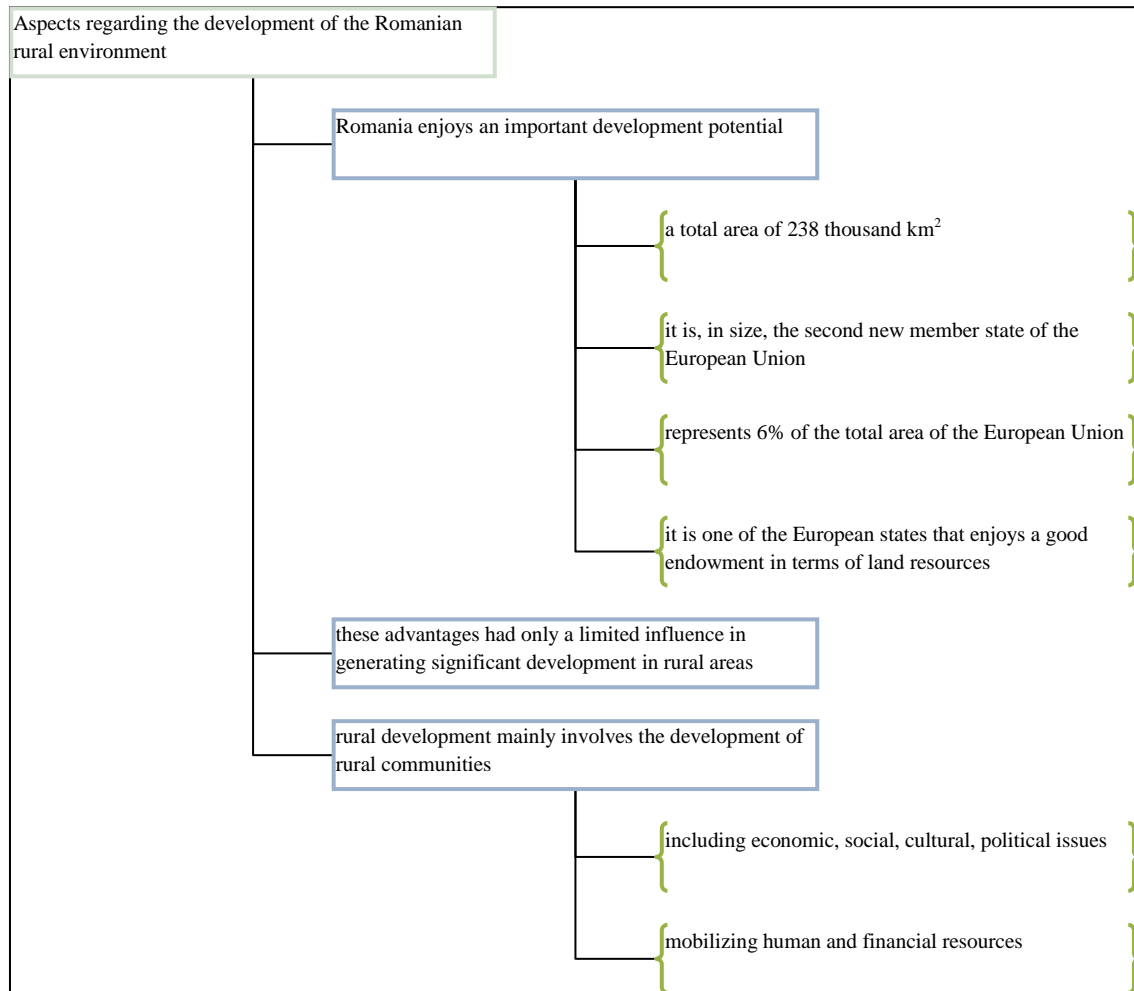


Figure 1. Aspects regarding the development of the Romanian rural environment

According to the European Commissioner for Agriculture, "we have twice as much arable land per capita as the European Union average, one million hectares of arable land are uncultivated, but still 28% of the population (the rural active) produces 6% of GDP ”.

Among the EU member states, Romania has the highest bio geographical diversity (5 biogeographical regions out of 11 in Europe), this being mostly in a favorable state of conservation. Much of the national territory is covered by the Community network of Nature 2000 protected areas. Of the 198 types of European habitats identified in the Nature 2000, of which 65 are a priority, in Romania there are 94 types of habitats, of which 23 are a priority at community level and whose conservation requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). [3,9,11]

According to studies conducted under the NRDP, agricultural land with high natural value covers a significant area of Romania's UAA, but both the abandonment of agricultural activities and their intensification threaten their good conservation. Although in the case of Romania (and even at European level) there is very little experience in using this concept, an important step has been taken to identify agricultural land with high natural value, using methods provided by studies developed so far.

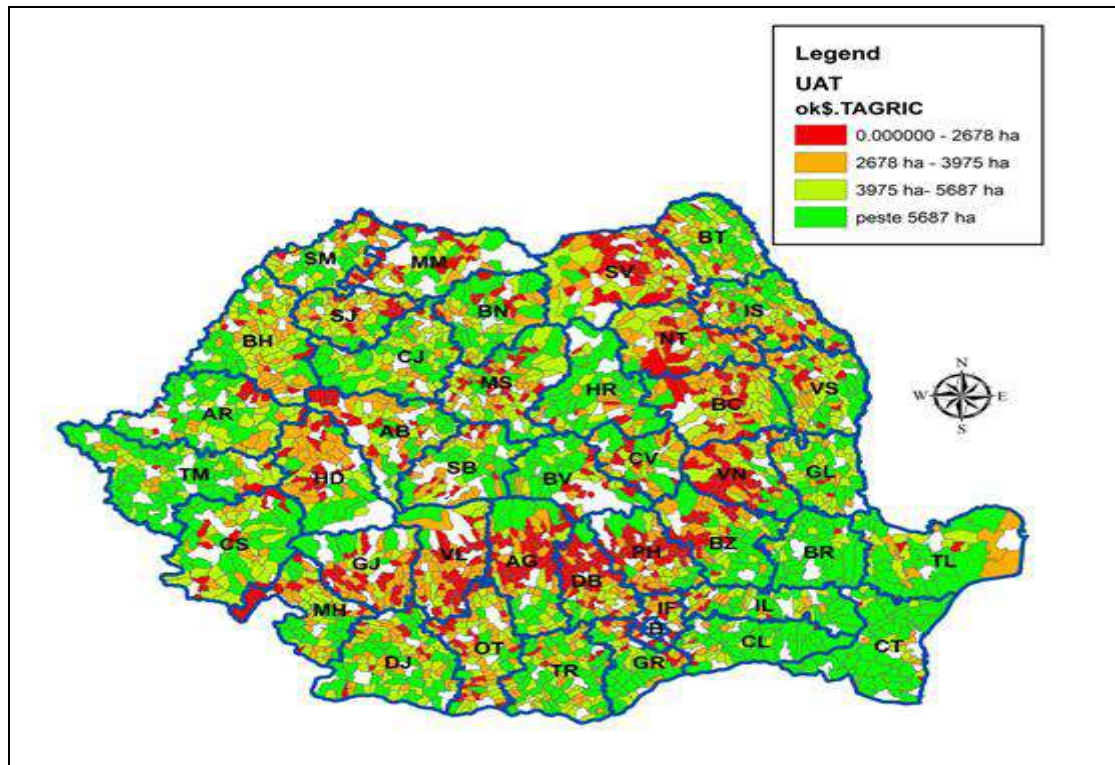


Figure 2. Distribution of communes according to agricultural area

Source: Academia de Studii Economice din București, *Studiu privind stabilirea potențialului socio-economic de dezvoltare al zonelor rurale, realizat în cadrul proiectului C/511/1/1/S/12/00/02/S0*, <http://www.madr.ro/>[12]

Regarding agricultural land Romania has good quality soils - especially in plain areas, but phenomena such as soil erosion, drought, negative water balance in the soil or gleization, salinization, acidification or alkalization and compaction greatly affect their fertility. From this point of view, the agricultural lands are grouped in 5 quality classes, differentiated according to the average rating mark (class I - 81-100 points up to class V - 1-20 points). It is noted that, in the case of arable land, which occupies 63.34% of the mapped area, most lands are grouped in the field of quality classes II and III. Practically, only 8.77% of the total agricultural lands enter the first class of arable quality, the rest of the classes presenting different restrictions. In the case of pastures and hayfields, the majority are classes III-V, in the case of vineyards, classes II-IV, and in orchards, classes III-V. Most of the agricultural lands with high grades are located in the Romanian Plain (in a relatively compact area with Bucharest as its central place) and in the Western Plain.[4,5,11,14]

The central element of the rural primary sector is the agricultural holding. The current size of agricultural holdings does not favor the efficient use of available resources in agriculture, which has negative effects on the rural economy and farmers' incomes. Therefore, the reduction of the number of farms practicing subsistence agriculture should be one of the main objectives of the rural development policy, if the aim is for Romanian agriculture to exist and to influence the community market. [4,13]

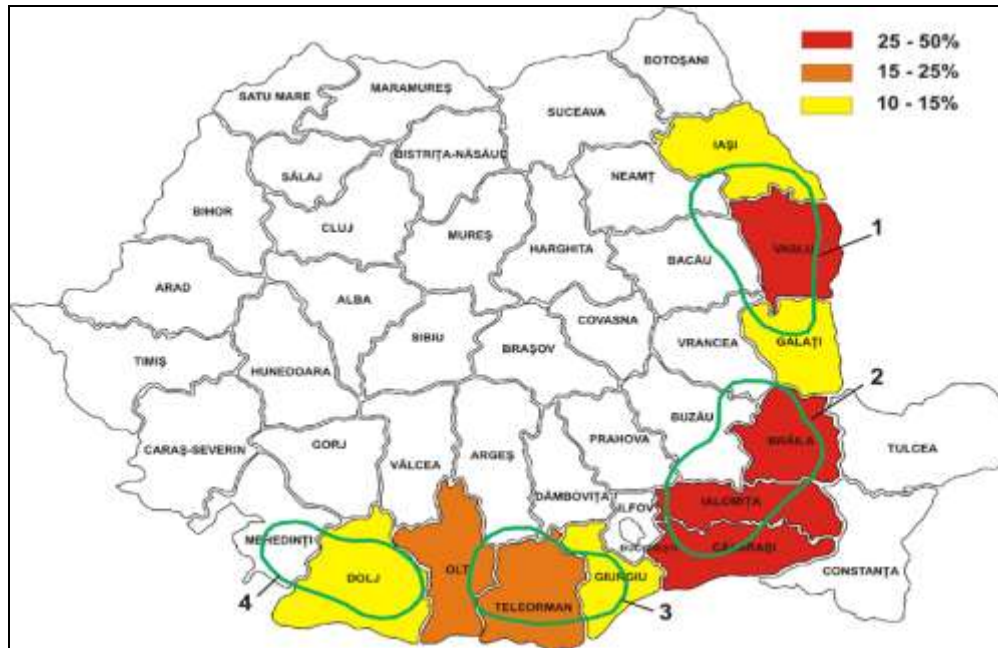


Figure 3. Map of the distribution of large agricultural holdings (over 2000 ha) and areas of extreme rural poverty

Source: Revista IEA „Economie Agrară și Dezvoltare Rurală”, *Structura agrară actuală a României o mare (și nerezolvată) problemă socială și economică a țării*, Editura Academiei [15]

Most agricultural holdings with a size of over 5 ha are found in hilly areas, plains and more economically developed regions. Approximately in half of the communes in Romania (1364) the share of holdings of over 5 ha in total holdings is in the range of up to 6%. However, there are a number of 87 communes in which the percentage of farms over 5 ha is higher than 30%. [12]

The predominant feature of the Romanian rural economy is the very high percentage of small farms, which produce mainly for self-consumption, selling on the market only by chance the products obtained. The existence of a very large number of small farms in parallel with very large farms reveals the structural imbalance that influences agriculture in our country and its competitiveness. [16]

Specialists also come and say that, even in these conditions, agriculture has chances to become the engine of Romania's development more than anything else, for various reasons:



Figure 4. Reasons why agriculture can be the support of Romania's development

What is certain is that for a balanced development of the economy specific to the rural environment, attention must be focused on increasing the productivity of agriculture and industry, on developing opportunities for job creation in the non-agricultural sector. The biggest obstacle that must be overcome for the profitability of the Romanian

agricultural sector is to solve the problem of excessive fragmentation of farms, which does not allow the achievement of a successful agriculture. Land consolidation, encouraging the association between small producers in order to increase the level of production and the orientation of production towards the market are directions to follow.

The development of the rural environment, we believe, will be a long time, a topical issue, a desideratum that will be imposed, the winners involved in this process of rural development being multiple. To ensure the vitality and viability of rural communities, they need to become more attractive to investors and residents. It is necessary that all measures taken in this direction be carried out in a sustainable manner for future generations, while respecting the unique character of the rural environment. Essential for an active environment is a broad development of the rural economy and communities. These are key elements to increase attractiveness to rural areas, to promote sustainable growth and to generate new employment opportunities.

CONCLUSIONS

In order to achieve the goal of developing rural areas, they are encouraged to focus their support on key actions, which could include, in particular:

- the development of economic activity and employment rates in the rural economy in the broad sense of the concept. Diversification is necessary for economic growth, employment and sustainable development in rural areas and thus contributes to a better territorial balance both economically and socially. Tourism, handicrafts and the provision of accommodation structures are sectors of economic growth in many regions and offer opportunities both in the field of diversification within the farm, but in areas other than agriculture, and in terms of the development of micro-enterprises in the rural economy. broad concept;

- revitalization of villages. Integrated initiatives combining diversification, business creation, investment in cultural heritage, infrastructure in favor of local services and renewal can contribute to improving the economic outlook and quality of life;

- the development of micro-enterprises and crafts based on traditional skills or by introducing new skills especially in combination with the acquisition of equipment, training and education in the field, to contribute to the promotion of entrepreneurship and economic development;

- training young people in the skills needed to diversify the local economy, in order to be able to meet the demand in the field of tourism, recreational attractions, ecological services, traditional rural practices and quality products;

- encouraging the adaptation and dissemination of information and communication technology. Adoption and dissemination of information and communication technology are essential in rural areas for diversification, as well as for local development, for the provision of local services and for encouraging the participation of all in the information society (e-inclusion). Economies of scale can be achieved through local initiatives in the field of information and communication technology, providing residents with computer equipment, networking equipment and providing them with training opportunities within community structures.

- modernization of local infrastructures, especially in the new Member States. In the coming years, major investments will be made in the main telecommunications, transport, energy and water infrastructures. The Structural Funds will provide considerable support, both for trans-European networks, the development of business links and science parks.

In order for the multiplier effect to be fully realized in terms of employment and growth, small local infrastructures supported under rural development programs can play a key role, linking these major investments with local strategies for diversification and development. the potential of the agri-food sector.

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