

A SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF THE NEEDS OF THE AGRICULTURAL POPULATION IN ALBA COUNTY

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Abstract: *The present paper pays special attention to the needs of the farming population living in three villages of Alba County: Ighiu, Pianu and Gârbova. The population needs are approached from a socio-economic perspective. The purpose of this paper is to suggest solutions to the matter of socio-economic counselling provided for the farming population. The main research instrument was the questionnaire. For more complex research activities, the questionnaire can be completed with other methods such as interview guides and document analysis.*

Key words: *needs,, population, agriculture, European funding*

INTRODUCTION

This research paper covers the agricultural population of the pilot villages Ighiu, Pianu and Gârbova in Alba County. The object of this investigation is the at-risk population in the rural area.

We developed our subject starting from several hypotheses that were confirmed or ruled out in the course of our research process.

The working hypotheses were the following:

- the low level of knowledge of the agricultural population related to how they can apply for European funding;
- the gender variable influences the wish of obtaining European funding for agricultural activities;
- the low level of knowledge of the agricultural population concerning socio-economic counselling facilities;
- the age variable influences the wish to appeal to socio-economic counselling programmes;
- professional training influences the appeal to socio-economic counselling programmes.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

We decided to use the questionnaire to bring our research to a particular level and therefore identify the needs of the agricultural population.

The present questionnaire deals with the needs of the agricultural population. This method was chosen as it makes information is easier to find and more accurate. The choice of the interviewed subjects and the processing of their option suffered no exterior influence.

The data obtained with the questionnaire method help us to form the general image of the agricultural population in the villages that were the subject of our analysis and their needs. It also helps us to take action and provide for them.

The questionnaire consists of 32 questions and is divided in several sections, as shown below:

- The first section includes 4 questions (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4) about the subjects' factual data; such data helps compare and correlate the attitudes of people of a certain age, gender and level of education with those of other people of different age, gender and level of education. These questions validate or invalidate hypotheses.
- The second section includes 8 questions (Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9, Q10, Q11, Q12) concerning the subjects' occupational status.
- The third section has 5 questions (Q13, Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17) related to the subjects' income.
- The fourth section consists of 6 questions (Q18, Q19, Q20, Q21, Q22, Q23) related to the subjects' housing conditions.
- The fifth section includes 6 questions (Q24, Q25, Q26, Q27, Q28, Q29) related to farmers' households.
- The sixth section includes 3 questions (Q30, Q31, Q32) about European funding and socio-economic counselling.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Next we shall analyse the answers concerning the main aspects contained in the questionnaire.

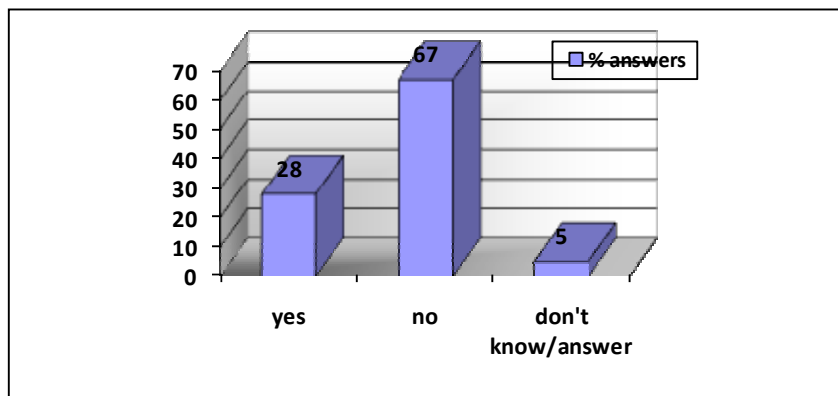


Fig. 1 – Have you ever heard of European programmes for agriculture?

With the help of this question, we found out the subjects' level of information about European funding programmes for agriculture. (A total of 1,100 people were interviewed.)

Sixty seven percent of the subjects answered that they had never heard of European funding programmes for agriculture, 28% said that they had heard of such programmes, while 5% said they didn't know or chose not to answer.

The answers reveal that more than half of the subjects state that they have never heard of European funding programmes for agriculture.

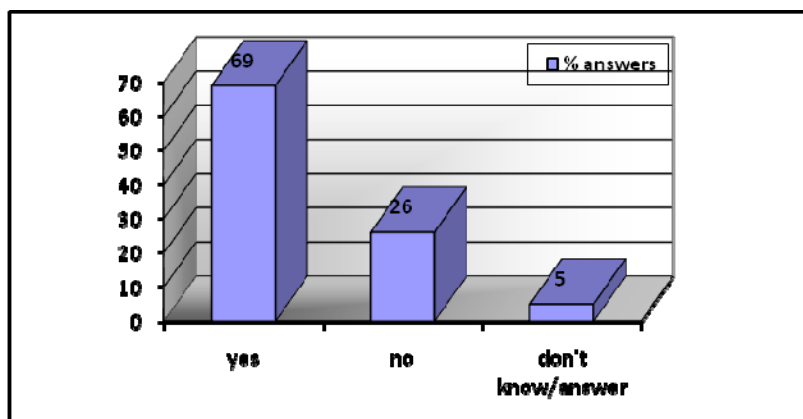


Fig. 2 – Would you be interested in obtains such funds?

As far as the desire to obtain European funding is concerned, 69% of the 1,100 subjects said they would like to obtain them, 26% would not like to obtain them, while 5% did not know or did not wish to answer this question.

On the whole, the answers show that most subjects wish to obtain European funds for agriculture, which we think is a good thing for the further development of national agriculture.

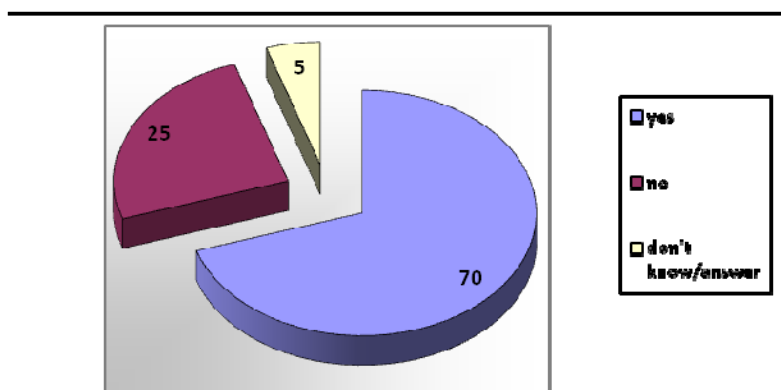


Fig. 3 – If you were offered socio-economic counselling, would you accept it?

With the help of this question we wanted to find out the subjects' opinion on socio-economic counselling programs. More than half of the subjects (70%) agreed with socio-economic counselling, 25% did not wish to receive it, while 5% said that they did not know or did not wish to answer.

The high percentage of affirmative answers suggests that people truly understand the necessity of such socio-economic counselling services.

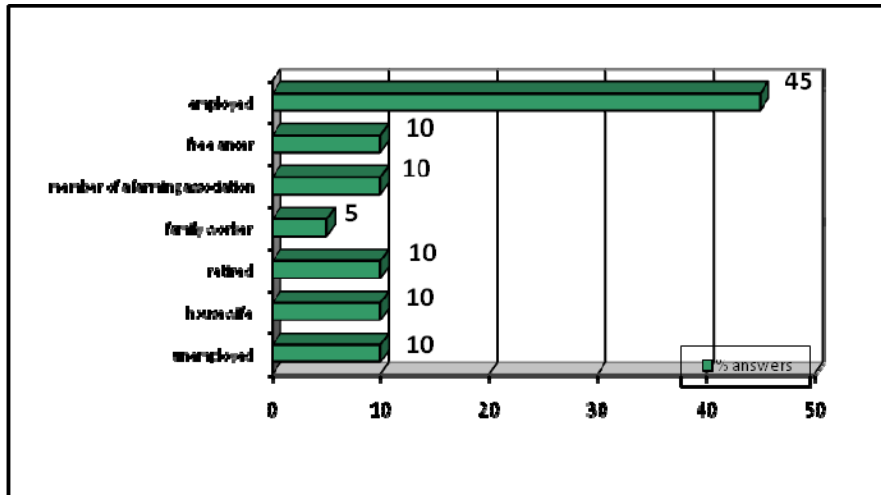


Fig. 4 - What is your current occupational status?

With the help of this question we wanted to inquire about the subjects' occupational status. Forty-five percent earned a monthly salary, 10% were unemployed, 10% of the women were housewives, 10% of the people interviewed were retired, 10% of them were family workers, 5% were members of a farming association and 10% were free lancers.

The answers reveal a small percentage of employed individuals, which is a worrying reality all over the country.

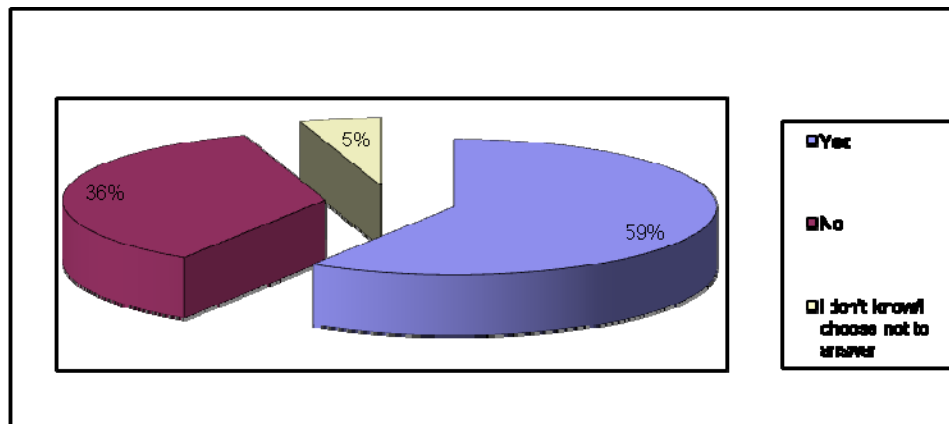


Fig. 5 - Have you applied for a job in the past 12 months?

This question is useful to determine how interested the subjects were in finding a job. The answers show that 59% of them had searched for a new working place in the past 12 months, 36% had not searched for a job, while 5% did not know or did not wish to reply.

The described situation is positive, as most subjects (59%), had searched for a job in the past year. As a result, we can describe them as responsible individuals.

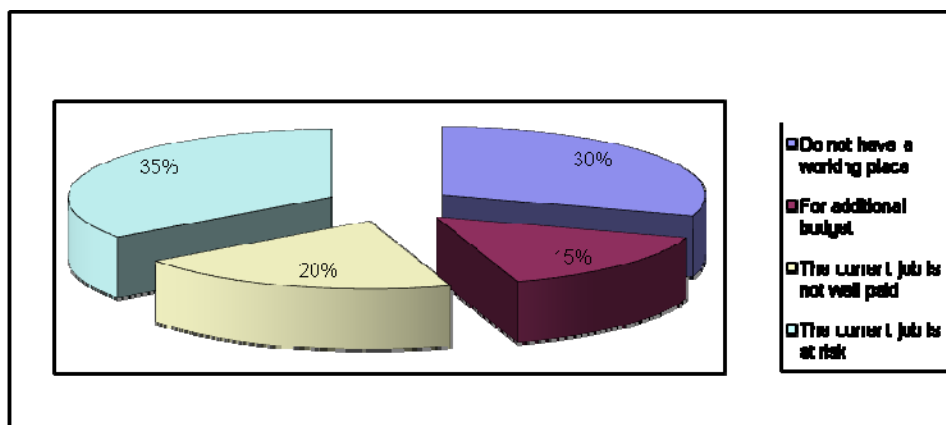


Fig. 6 - Reasons for looking for a job

With the help of this question, we wanted to find out the 1,100 subjects' reasons for looking for a new job. Thirty percent of them answered that they were not employed at the time, 35% said that their present job was at risk, 20% said that their current job was not well paid, while 15% said they needed an additional budget.

There is a worryingly high percentage of people who do not have a job; to make things worse, 35% of the people who said they had a job felt that they were under the threat of losing it.

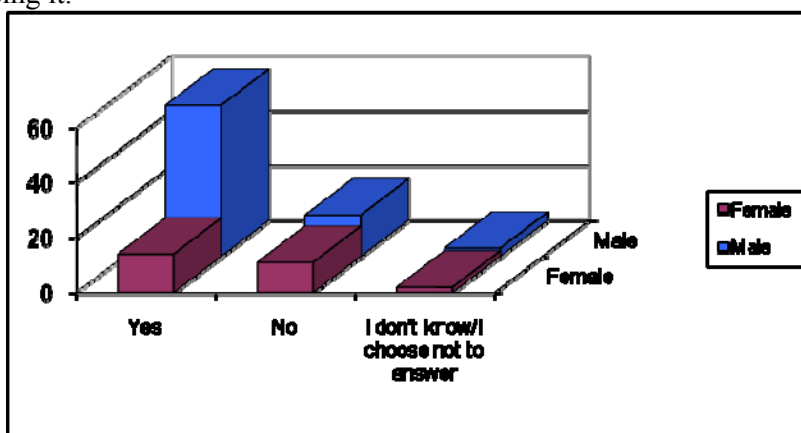


Fig. 7 - Gender & Would you be interested in obtaining European funds for agriculture?

As far as the gender of the subjects and their interest in applying for European funds for agriculture are concerned, it seems that most of them have the intention to do so. The highest frequency occurs where the answer “yes” meets the answer “male”. As shown in the table, 14% of the subjects who wish to apply for European funds are female, while 55% of them are males; 11% of the subjects who do not wish to apply for European funds are female, while 15% of them are male. Only 5% of the subjects (2% female and 3% male) did not wish to share their point of view on the subject.

Table 1

**Gender & Intention to obtain European funding for agriculture
Cross tabulation**

		Intention to obtain European funding for agriculture			Total
		Yes	No	Not sure/did not answer	
Gender	Female	14	11	2	27
	Male	55	15	3	73
Total		69	26	5	100

CONCLUSIONS

Having evaluated the answers given to our questionnaire, we have come to the conclusion that farmers should be provided with personalised guidance in accordance with their economic and social welfare. Additionally, they should be advised on how to make better decisions about their future activities and how to access EU funds or become involved in national programmes of financial support.

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