

## FEATURES OF SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN MARAMUREȘ

POP VIOREL<sup>1</sup>, POP CECILIA<sup>2</sup>, POP I. MIRCEA<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vasile Goldiș University of Arad, Romania

<sup>2,3</sup> USAMV Iași, Romania

**Abstract:** The strategic priority of Maramureș county in the rural development is represented by a set of measures to promote the renewal of the village from Maramureș, while preserving and capitalizing its unique traditions and cultural aspects. Based on specific current issues of agriculture and rural areas of the county of Maramureș and taking into account the interdependence between them, The Strategy of the county is based on applying of a multifunctional model of agriculture and rural development. The basic principle in the application of multifunctional model consists in promoting the development the agricultural of rural areas, accompanied by equally promoting non-agricultural functions of these areas. This model is compatible with the economic and social policy of the European Union, respectively with the National Sustainable Development Strategy, whose main objectives are to reduce disparities between the European Union regions and thus reducing development gaps between rural and urban areas.

**Key Words:** sustainable development, rural area, rural area functions, ecological agriculture, SWOT analysis.

### INTRODUCTION

Maramureș, this ancient Romanian hearth with significant traditional components, with significant agricultural and forestry potential, very diverse landscape, is one of Romania's counties located on a wide range between altitudes from 140 meters (Someș Valley) up to 2305 meters (Rodnei Mountains), Maramureș has a long tradition of sustainable rural activity, yet long before the emergence and development of this concept.

Farming, fruit growing, beekeeping and animal husbandry, processing flax, wool and fur, processing wood and sale of berries and medicinal plants, are solid guidelines in this area with ancient Romanian houses, gates and well-preserved wooden churches, which make this land blessed by God, still one of the best preserved rural areas civilization.



### Definition of rural area

**Rural area** is the result of man's endeavors of hundreds and thousands of years to put in his service the components of physical and geographical landscape. Through his work, man has shaped the rural areas according to his daily needs and filled with his useful creations.

In the last two centuries, in terms of industrialization and urbanization, rural areas have experienced evident structural changes, facilities and improvements both to increase the production capacity of the soil and to modernize rural habitat.

Under the pressure of continuous expansion of urban space and the development of communication networks, in more and more areas, have developed non-agricultural economic activities (industrial, commercial, tourism etc.), uploading the rural area with new elements and new relationships, enriching it not only quantitatively but also qualitatively (P. Georges - 1990).

Traditional *characteristics* of the rural area according to several authors reveal the following:

- rural community is closer to nature through predominantly agricultural occupations, spending much time in the middle of it and facing its vicissitudes of weather,
- the pace of life is characterized by seasonality and evident cyclicity,
- rural communities are more homogeneous, being smaller than the urban ones and the anthropization of the territory is lower etc.

Graeme Hugo also summarizes the main traditional characteristics of rural area, included in the following table:

**Table 1**

**Traditional characteristics of the rural area**

Dimension	Rural area	Urban area
Economic	Primary sector is predominant and related activities	Secondary and tertiary sector activities dominate
Occupational structure	Agriculture and related activities	Industry, construction, services and administration
Demographic dimension	High fertility and birth	Low fertility and birth
Level of education and training	Lower than the national average	Higher than the national average
Access to information	Low	High
Access to services	Low	High
Ethnic	Homogeneous	Ethnic diversity
Political	Conservatism and resistance to change are prevalent	Liberal and radical elements are prevalent
Migration level	Low in the sense of entry in rural	High in the sense of entry in urban

Regarding the *development* and *modernization* of the Romanian rural area, I. P. Otiman - 2006, says: "agriculture is the backbone of rural areas, but the emergence of industrial activities and services will modernize the Romanian village and fewer farmers through mechanization will lead to changing the way of life. However, modernization and development of the village should not lead to rural depersonalization, to loss of its cultural and ecological specific. "

### **Evolutions and realities of rural area**

At European Union level rural area comprises over 80% of its total area, but only 25% of the population. In Romania, about half of the population lives in rural areas, where the poor quality of infrastructure and services, the decline of traditional agricultural activities, the exodus of rural population and its aging, are just some of the problems that rural areas are facing now.

In the years 1960-1980, representing Romania's industrialization, the population was forced to migrate to the city. The flow was reversed after 1990 and after 2007 with the accession to the European Union, several million (mostly young) have left Romania, many from the countryside, in search of better paid jobs in the developed countries of Europe.

The money sent home by those working abroad create significant flows in the rural economy of Maramureş county. These money could participate in the modernization and development of rural areas, but most of this amount was invested in real estate, by buying land and building excessively big houses, and less investment with entrepreneurial character.

The introduction of more numerous non-agricultural activities in the rural areas gradually affects its fundamental characteristics, resulting their transition to suburban areas or urban industrial and commercial areas etc.

Rural area is characterized by the following specific basic functions:

- *the economic function*, supported by a system of agricultural and forestry production, fishing, rural tourism, harnessing of natural mineral resources etc
- *the socio-cultural function*, with maintaining traditional values related to rural livelihoods,
- *the ecological function* through the protection of natural biological systems and the care to preserve the quality of natural elements: air - water – soil.

Regarding the rural area positioning and the targeting of its use, B. Kaiser - 1994, classifies:

- *the rural areas near urban*, that circumscribe the major urban-industrial centers, manifesting here both rural and urban specific activities. Communication networks are well developed, people do commute in both directions, all economic sectors are present, and intensive agriculture is appropriate to the urban requirements.

- *real agricultural area*, represent the agricultural area with specialized farms, smaller or larger,

- *peripheral rural area*, representing a socially and economically disadvantaged area. The main factors leading to rural areas to be peripheral are their position with urban centers of interest, pedro-climatic conditions and poor agro-ecological potential and also agricultural overproduction in the other two agricultural areas mentioned above.

**Future**, under the concept of rural regions development of the European Union has the following **objectives**:

- maintaining viable rural communities while preserving their culture and traditions,

- diversification of crops (flax, hemp, rapeseed, soybean, underbrush, herbs) and animal species (snails, crayfish, trout and huck, animals with fur, birds, ornamental birds, ostriches and so on) that can be grown depending on the type of land and preventing the application on land of chemicals in excess,

- supporting traditional crafts, including those of national minorities, Ukrainians, Gypsies, Hungarians etc.

- construction of facilities for alternative energy resources exploitation (wind, solar, bio fuels) including small hydro plants,
- diversifying and improving infrastructure, also equipping with modern high productivity tools,
- improving the quality of life by promoting economic and social cohesion, creating new jobs and maintaining an untainted natural environment.

### **Features of the rural area in Maramureș**

Maramureș, this ancient Romanian hearth with significant traditional components, with significant agricultural and forestry potential, very diverse landscape, is one of Romania's counties located on a wide range between altitudes from 140 meters (Someș Valley) up to 2305 meters (Rodnei Mountains),

Maramureș County is the fourth in the country in terms of forest and grassland, standing less in terms of arable land and grain production.

Rural population especially those from the historical Maramureș area (north of the mountains range that separates into two on the East-West the County territory) and from Lăpuș County, set aside a valuable genetic and biological anthropology reserve. People of these areas are healthy, strong, vigorous, hospitable, with a very good moral education, good Christians and with well organized families, keeping alive traditions and costumes. Under the cultural aspect, the vast majority has a native archaic wisdom and an archaic culture over which overlapped the Austrian education and discipline. The peasants that live here do not expect state aid in case of natural disasters but they face united their needs, rebuild their homes, farms, as they have always done in time, which has not always been favorable.

Based on current problems of agriculture and rural areas, and taking into account the interdependence between them, the County Strategy is based on the application of a multifunctional agriculture model and of a rural development model.

European Charter of Rural Area, provides that the development policies must take into account the specific conditions of the countryside regions, following a series of principles, such as: prioritizing rural development programs, integrated approach to rural development process, supporting diversity of social and economic activities, subsidiarity by decentralization of decision and collaborative partnerships between local, regional and national levels etc.

*The objectives of the County Strategy* for agriculture and rural development is based on the National Rural Development Plan and the European Rural Development Policy. Thus, the strategic areas aim:

- improving the quality of life in rural areas through infrastructure modernization and diversification of the rural economy,
- the sustainable economic development of farms and agricultural exploitations
- increasing the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry sectors and the adjustment of the offer to market requirements, giving a great importance to the ecological agricultural production.
- reducing the development disparities between European Union regions and thus reducing the development gaps between rural and urban, social infrastructure improvements in education field and health services, shopping centers and leisure etc.

The contribution of agriculture to Romania's GDP is higher than the European Union average, but the Maramureș county share is lower than in other regions of the country, agriculture gross value added in 2011 was approx. 12% of GDP.

The population hired in agriculture and forestry represent 32% of the county's population, and active population represents 46% of the rural population.

Excessive fragmentation of ownership and the lack of association between farmers reduce the competitiveness of the agricultural sector in Maramureş.

**Ecological Agriculture** - can be an alternative with multiple benefits for sustainable development of rural areas bringing significant added value with a major contribution to increasing interest in the countryside. Ecological agriculture respects human health and the environment, effectively exploiting the quality of the resources from the rural area. Moreover, traditionally Maramureş agriculture, fruit, beekeeping, animal husbandry, is an ecological agriculture.

*Certified ecological agriculture*, is a new sector in Romania, with a rapid expansion in recent years, ecological products were well received in export. Among the ecological products exported by producers in Maramureş include honey, milk and milk products, berries and mushrooms.

In the same time, ecological agriculture is a way of diversifying rural employment in general and an alternative to increase revenue for small individual farms.

The National Export Strategy stresses the internal potential for ecological production as being one of the most competitive areas in Romania, ecological agriculture being on second place among priority product groups for export. Therefore greater political support is expected through direct budget support for organic production.

**Forests** - occupy a large part of Maramureş, over 40% of the territory, exploitation and wood processing is a major concern in the county with a corresponding share in the income. Unfortunately afforestation activity is poor, which must be recovered quickly, in order not to miss large quantities of timber in the future, so much needed to the economic activity.

Recovery of wood is made by using it in the furniture industry, timber and other wood products for construction, euro pallets etc.

Thus, the timber is higher valued in factories such as "Italsofa" in Satu Nou, with Italian capital and 1,800 employees, "PliMob" in Cîmpulung at Tisza with 620 employees, "NovaArtis" in Vişeu de Jos with 240 employees, "Taparo" near Târgu Lăpuş, with Swedish capital and 380 employees, and others, whose production of furniture is designed entirely for export.

A series of small companies of wood processing, agro-livestock farms and milk processing are spread all over the county of Maramureş: Seini, Şomcuta, Târgu Lăpuş - Țibleş, Căvnic - Gutâi - Ocna Sugatag, Săpânța, Bîrsana, Poienile de sub Munte, Moisei etc. Moisei and Poienile de sub Munte are the largest joint in Maramureş and Romania, with a population of 9,600 and 10,300 people.

Beside those establishments which process raw materials of natural and agricultural origin, in the rural suburban area of Baia Mare were created factories with entirely typical industrial specific such as the one in Fărcaşa (American company EATON, electrical and electronic products) with 2400 employees, Universal Alloy in Dumbrăvița which produces aluminum profiles for the European company Airbus, with 700 employees, or ItalSofa presented above.

In fact, almost all these large companies and smaller ones are located in the vicinity of major cities in Maramureş: Baia Mare, Vişeu, Sighetu Marmăției, Târgu Lăpuş etc.

In the total turnover of Maramureş County in 2011, according to the County Department of Statistics, major shares were held by the following activities:

- furniture production 35,7%
- electric equipment production 24,4%
- wood processing 10,2%

- milk and meat processing 5,3%.

It should be noted that over 90% of the first 3 listed categories are for export, these accounting for 83% of county's exports.

On the rivers from Gutâi, Rodnei and Țibleș Mountains were put into operation a series of small hydro plants, given the fact that the mountains of Maramureș are the areas with the highest precipitation amount in the country.

It is necessary to make storage spaces including for urban waste, respecting European environmental standards. From compliance with these environmental rules at Fărcașa, commune located 25 km southwest of Baia Mare, the county's landfill of waste is under construction.

Regarding **tourism**, Maramureș County is among the top 10 destinations of our country, the main categories are: spa tourism, the folklore tourism, folk customs and also mountaineering tourism, the share of accommodation capacity except hotels, being 18.4 % for pensions and 21.2% for agro pensions, they take over a large part, approx. 40% of the tourists of Maramureș county.

### SWOT analysis of Maramureș rural area

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Important natural resources: minerals, mineral water, wood, monuments etc. ,</li> <li>- Tourist attractions ,</li> <li>- Including foreigners show a growing interest in rural facilities ,</li> <li>- Easy access due to its proximity to the Western border of Romania ,</li> <li>- Reminiscence of Western education and discipline.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poor infrastructure, roads, water supply, wastewater collection, electricity etc.</li> <li>- The precarious state of architectural value, abandoned buildings etc.</li> <li>- Inaccurate estate cadastre,</li> <li>- Sales prices for land and houses are not correlated with other EU countries prices</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- European Structural Funds grants</li> <li>- Accessing these funds will make possible the development of small farms, introducing new crops, diversification of rural activities</li> <li>- Young people with specialized studies may seek opportunities to achieve their goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Perpetuation of corruption in accessing European funds</li> <li>- Still there is the danger of migration to the city and abroad of young people from rural areas in search of higher incomes,</li> <li>- The training in a range of rural crafts has largely disappeared</li> </ul>

**For 2020 the national objective** is: the strengthening of the agro-food and forestry structures, in the same time with economic and social development of rural areas to further reduce the gaps and reach the current average level of performance of European Union countries, Romania's assertion as stability element of food security in South-Eastern Europe.

Measures will be taken to improve training and management capacity of farmers in order to capitalize well the local natural resources, improving the work safety standards, encouraging environmental initiatives and ensuring hygiene conditions and animal welfare.

The proposed actions will take into consideration the possible changes in the mechanisms for implementing the European Union Common Agricultural Policy after 2013.

In order to finance the National Strategic Plan objectives for Rural Development, Romania can access pre-allocated funds for 2007-2013 of about 8.02 billion Euros, of which 80.46% came from Community co-financing by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. Also, Community funding are provided for 2007-2013 in amount of 5.5 billion Euros in direct payments to farmers, more than 248 million for market measures in 2008 and 230 million Euros for fishing. In the period 2007-2013 will be transferred from the Community budget for agriculture, fisheries and rural development about 14 billion Euros. Important allocations from the Romanian state budget will be added to these amounts.

*Horizon 2030. National Objective: fully achieving policies and practices of the EU in the field of agriculture, forestry and fisheries; complete the restructuring and modernization of these sectors and of the rural area.*

During this period a high level of competitiveness in the agro-food sector will be achieved, which will be compatible with the Western Europe, due to the creation of viable agricultural structures, due to the rural economy modernization, due to diversification of production and implementation of quality products. Romania will recover the productivity gap in the agriculture sector and will approach the development level of food industries in European countries with tradition. Safety standards of food will be fully provided through cross-compliance requirements from the European community.

## CONCLUSIONS

Sustainable development, a relatively controversial concept adopted by most countries of the world, is the great hope for many people in the effort to ensure a decent future for humanity. We try to assimilate a new way of thinking resulted from long-term observation of the effects resulting from reckless lifestyle - seeking to maximize profits by satisfying in waste conditions of exaggerated desires of consumer of the rich countries of the world.

Rural development concept includes therefore, improving the quality of life in rural areas, preserving natural and cultural landscape, and also infrastructure development, agriculture, tourism, small and medium enterprises, creating jobs, the concept not summarizing only at agricultural development, although rural development policy offers primary support for the establishment of efficient farms and the "Agenda 2000" introduced the "multifunctional role of agriculture" principle.

Although once with the industrialization the role of agriculture as source of income and employment work has decreased, it has remained a vital sector of the economy of any country and region, therefore it is imposed as a major importance the development of rural area management.

**REFERENCES**

1. **GEORGES, P.**, 2008, Le developpement durable, Edition Dunod, Paris, p. 34
2. **GRAEME, H.**, News Conceptualisation of Settlement for Demography: Beyond Rural and Urban Dichotomy, IUSSP Conference, Bahaia Brasil - 2003, în Economie du developpement durable, Eddition De Boeck Universite – Bruxelles 2007, p.188
3. **OTIMAN, I., P.**, 2006, Dezvoltarea rurală durabilă în România, Editura Academiei Române, București, p. 166-191
4. **KAYSER, B.**, 1994, La renaissance rurale, Editura Armand Colin, Paris, p. 211
5. **POP, V.**, 2010, Mediu - Resurse - Dezvoltare Durabilă, Editura Universității de Nord Baia Mare, p. 94
6. \*\*\* Strategia Județeană de Dezvoltare Durabilă - Maramureș
7. \*\*\* Planul Național Strategic pentru Dezvoltare Rurală
8. \*\*\* Strategia Națională de Dezvoltare Durabilă a României