

YOUTH AND AGRICULTURE IN ROMANIA

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Abstract: *When there is a word about agriculture, the image that comes to mind for most people is a thin, aged, old man with a flat hat and tweed jacket, who sucks a piece of straw and looks beaten by the sun. It hardly seems that agriculture is the "job of the year". Many young people today are moving from rural to urban areas in search of a job, leaving rural areas half-empty. Young people living on rural farms mostly manage family farming. The main question is - how to make agriculture attractive to young people and make them stay in rural areas?*

Key Words: *agriculture, rural, strategies, reforms, funding, youth*

JEL Classification: *O00, O10, O13.*

Introduction

A lot of evidence shows that agriculture offers a viable way to succeed in a sustainable future. In terms of the flourishing of human civilization in the past, agriculture is also important for future development. When it comes to combating poverty, agriculture is more efficient than any other sector. Given this goal, agriculture can be a gold mine for young people who can contribute to the production of a sufficient amount of nutritious food for the rapidly growing population through the use of new modern agricultural technologies.

Research methodology

Innovation and technology are now an integral part of the lives of many young people, and experts say it could also be the key to bringing the younger generations closer to agriculture. Precision farming systems are already an important part of new farming methods: for example, drones can gather real-time data for better planning of agricultural practices. The agriculture of the future will see a wide range of applications, for example FAMEWS, a system of data collection and sharing designed to combat the

spread of the autumn army worm, which has already caused massive crop damage in sub-Saharan Africa. Small-scale fishermen can use the Abalobi app, which allows them to record data on caught fish and earnings, helping these communities become more resilient and cope with global challenges, such as climate change. Finally, but only in order of launch, there are several applications that provide real-time information on the risks to crops related to the weather, the availability of raw materials on the market or the demand for certain agricultural products, ie how to produce, preserve and consume food. nutritious. Because digital skills, almost by definition, belong to younger people, this suggests that only the younger generations will be able to successfully take on the leading roles in the agriculture of the future.

Romania ranks 6th in the EU in terms of cultivated agricultural land.

In Romania, the cultivated agricultural land amounts to approximately 13.9 million hectares, but the lack of specialized knowledge as well as the advanced age of those who deal with agriculture do not bring the desired result.

- 9.7% of Romanian farmers are under 24 years old.
- 49.6% are between 25 and 50 years old and 40.7% are over 50 years old, according to a 2015 study.

It is clear from this that few young people are engaged in agriculture, although the future of the country lies in them.

The European Union supports young farmers through the implementation of specific programs, the common agricultural policy, through the paying agencies APIA and AFIR.

The businesses started by young farmers in agriculture can be in the beekeeping, animal husbandry and vegetable fields.

Romania has among the fewest young farmers in the European Union. According to European Commission data published in 2018, only 10% of farmers are under 40 years old. Of these, only 23% are women, and the numbers are steadily declining. At the opposite pole are countries such as Germany, Austria and Poland where only 10% of farmers are over 65 years old.

Among the causes of the increase of the average age of Romanian farmers are:

- Mass exodus of young people to other countries;
- Migration from rural to urban areas;
- Lack of development opportunities in the agricultural sector;
- Outdated agricultural technology;
- Limited access to agricultural land;
- Existing prejudices regarding farmer's work or "country life".

To all these causes is added the lack of successful models in the agricultural field, but also the difficulty with which European funds are obtained for investments in agriculture. Therefore, young people find it difficult to find good reasons to finance significant agricultural projects.

Without an effective program to rejuvenate the agricultural sector, production in this area may suffer considerably in the future both nationally and in the European Union. In this regard, efforts are being

made to implement viable solutions to increase young people's interest in agriculture. As part of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), it aims to support small farmers and young farmers by limiting direct payments to 60,000 - 100,000 Euro / beneficiary / year.

Although this initiative will affect the activity of large farmers who will no longer receive direct payments at the same amount as at present, small farmers will be able to make investments more easily and access more developed agricultural technologies. Another solution for rejuvenating agriculture may be to rent agricultural land. This practice is often found in other European countries where the agricultural area is limited and much smaller than that of Romania. An example of this is Slovakia where 95% of farms are located on rented land. The aim of the Czech Republic is to implement a solution similar to the opportunity for young farmers to buy land after a period of ten years.

Recently, various projects have been launched in Romania to attract young people to agriculture.

Sub-measure 6.1 - Support for the installation of young farmers: the installation of young farmers is one of the most popular investment sub-measures with European funds in the National Rural Development Program (PNDR), granted through AFIR. Thanks to this line of financing, thousands of Romanian farmers managed to set up at the head of a farm and modernize it, in order to become much more competitive on the market.

The purpose of the investments supported under this sub-measure is to support the establishment for the first time of young farmers as sole heads / managers of an agricultural holding.

OBJECTIVES:

- Increasing the number of young farmers who start an agricultural activity for the first time as heads / managers of farms, being encouraged to become competitive, to associate, to participate in integrated food chains;
- Improving management, increasing the competitiveness of the agricultural sector and supporting the process of modernization and compliance with the requirements for environmental protection, hygiene and animal welfare and safety at work;
- Creating the possibility for young resident farmers, with a minimum of basic knowledge, to be installed as heads / managers of the agricultural holding.
- Encouraging young people and families in rural areas to settle in rural areas, which will have a positive effect on the national economy in general.

BENEFICIARIES:

- Young farmers in accordance with the definition provided in art. 2 of R (EU) no. 1305/2013, which is installed as the sole head of the agricultural holding
- Legal entities in which a young farmer within the meaning of art. 2 of R (EU) no. 1305/2013 which is set up together with other young farmers and which exercises effective long-term control in with regard to management decisions, benefits and financial risks in that holding

NON-REFUNDABLE SUPPORT of maximum 50,000 Euro:

- Will be granted in the form of a premium in two installments, as follows:
 - 75% of the amount of support upon receipt of the financing decision
 - 25% of the amount of support within a maximum of three years from the receipt of the financing decision.

Scheme for young farmers, granted through APIA: this involves granting an annual payment to young farmers who are entitled to the single area payment.

Young farmers means those individuals who:

- a) are established for the first time in an agricultural holding as chief managers of the holding or who have already settled in one of the five years prior to the first submission of an application under the single area payment scheme; and
- b) are at most 40 years old in the year of application.

If a farmer requests support for this scheme he must prove that he is the administrator of the holding (regardless of the form of organization: PF, PFA, II, IF, PJ).

Farmers who applied for payment in a year prior to 2020 must not have reached the age of 41 during the current application year. From that period, the number of years that elapsed between installation and the first submission of the payment application for young farmers decreases.

The payment for young farmers is granted to each farmer for a period of 5 years, starting from the first submission of the application for payment for young farmers, provided that the application takes place within 5 years from the date of establishment as heads of holding.

The payment for young farmers is granted up to the limit of 60 ha regardless of the size of the agricultural holding. The single payment request is submitted to APIA, without penalties, between March 1 and May 15. The program works to stimulate the employment of young people in agriculture, aquaculture and the food industry. The farmer who proves the employment of two young beneficiaries of the Program benefits from the following monthly financial support, for each person thus employed:

- a) 1000 lei for persons with specialized higher education in the field of agriculture, aquaculture and / or food industry;
- b) 750 lei for persons with specialized secondary education, as well as short-term professional training courses in the field of agriculture, aquaculture and / or food industry;
- c) 500 lei for people without studies.

Young beneficiaries of the Program must have specialized studies in the field of agriculture, aquaculture and / or food industry, according to COR codes.

In order to benefit from the provisions of the law, the employer employers have the obligation to conclude with the young beneficiaries of the Program individual full-time employment contracts, for an indefinite or determined period, but not less than 12 months, according to the provisions of Law no. 53/2003, republished, with subsequent amendments and completions.

The value of the Program for 2019 was 30 million lei and aims to provide financial support to employers of farmers in agriculture, aquaculture and food industry, in order to hire young beneficiaries of the Program for a fixed or indefinite period, but not less than 12 months, full time .

Conclusions

Today we have the opportunity to use various modern agricultural technologies that help farmers manage their farm much easier, such as smart sensors that can read everything - from plant health, the need for water from the harvest to the level of nutrients in soil, as well as precision-navigated machines and environmentally friendly agricultural practices that can be integrated and tracked in modern farm management software.

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