

ASPECTS IN THE TRADE OF THE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Abstract

Wishing to achieve economic integration in the European Union's internal market in 2013, the Republic of Moldova authorities signed and launched the Association Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States. This objective is explicitly stated in the "g" paragraph of Article 1, paragraph 2, which aims to "create favourable conditions for improving economic and trade relations, the ultimate goal of which is the gradual integration of the Republic of Moldova into the EU internal market ... including through the establishment of a comprehensive and comprehensive free trade areas ... in accordance with the rights and obligations arising from the WTO Membership of the Parties and the transparent application of these rights and obligations ... ". Of course, the export of agri-food products from the Republic of Moldova to the markets of the 28-member states of the European Union differs. Undoubtedly, this situation encouraged us to initiate this modest study on the impact of Moldovan partners on foreign trade in agri-food products, hoping to suggest some proposals for selecting those that would contribute to increasing efficiency and improving the competitiveness of the agricultural sector in the national economy.

Key words: agriculture, market, foreign trade, creativity, efficiency

INTRODUCTION

Aspects regarding the study of the foreign trade of agri-food products from the Republic of Moldova were discussed in the public space at various official meetings, exhibited in various national and international publications. However, scientific research on this subject is very modest and obviously after the initialing of the Association Agreement between the Republic of Moldova on the one hand and the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States on the other [1] remains to be a current investigation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The materials used in the research include publications in the field that helped us to understand and explain the phenomena that occur in the external trade of agro-food products. The quantitative analysis of the

evolution of the exports of agro-food products, the factors that influence it, gave us relevant meanings and explanations in relation to the impact of the Association Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova on the export of the national agri-food products, which suggested some proposals on export efficiency and on increasing the competitiveness of national agri-food products.

This study is a continuity of other researches whose results are mentioned in various publications. [3,4,5,6,7].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Consumption and internal market for agri-food products

For all countries, including Moldova, agriculture has been, is and will remain the support of human existence. Agricultural production, in current prices, increased from 4,243 million lei in 1995 (Figure 1) to 30,362

million lei in 2016 or 7.16 times. This growth, for the most part, is due to prices. If in 1995-2005 the global agricultural production in current prices increased three times and in the years 2005-2014 - 1.9 times, then in comparable prices of 2000 - only by 10.8% and in 2005 - by 4 percent.

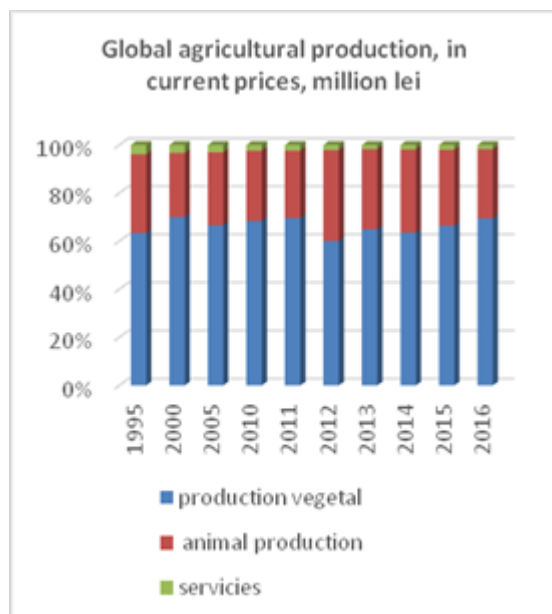


Fig. 1. Global agricultural production, in current prices, million lei

Source: Authors based on selected information on [http / www.statistica.md](http://www.statistica.md), [2,9]

The most spectacular, from 2,687 million lei in 1995 to 18,082 million lei in 2015 or 6.73 times, the vegetable production increased. Vegetal products show the cereal crops, which in 2015 accounted for 20.3%. Over 80% of the area cultivated in the Republic of Moldova is covered by low-value crops such as cereals, oilseeds, sugar beet and fodder crops. Only cereals (including wheat, corn and barley) occupy more than half of the sown areas. Fruits and vegetables occupy less than 20% of the cultivated area. If in the 90s of the last century the fruit was 17%, then in 2016 neither the fruit, nuts, berries nor grapes nor fruits, fruit, nuts and grapes reached the share of fruit in the 90s, forming only 13.5%, which is by 6.8% than the share of cereal crops.

Note that the sum of the global agricultural production in 2012-2013 has increased by 2.95% in 2010-2011 and that obtained in 2014-2015 increased by 24.5% compared to the 2012-2013 period. Of course, this is due to

several factors, but the significant contribution lies in the Association Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova initially by our country in November 2013, Article 68 of which specifies, inter alia, "the promotion of modernization and sustainable production agricultural ... improving the competitiveness of the agricultural sector and efficiency ... promoting quality policies and their control mechanisms, in particular ... geographical indications and organic farming ..."

Agri-food products are primarily intended for consumption within the country. Consumption of bread and bread products by one person decreased from 128.7 kg in 2006 (Figure 2) to 110.4 kg in 2010, then practically remained at the same level, oscillating slightly from 109.9 kg in 2011 to 116.8 in 2016.

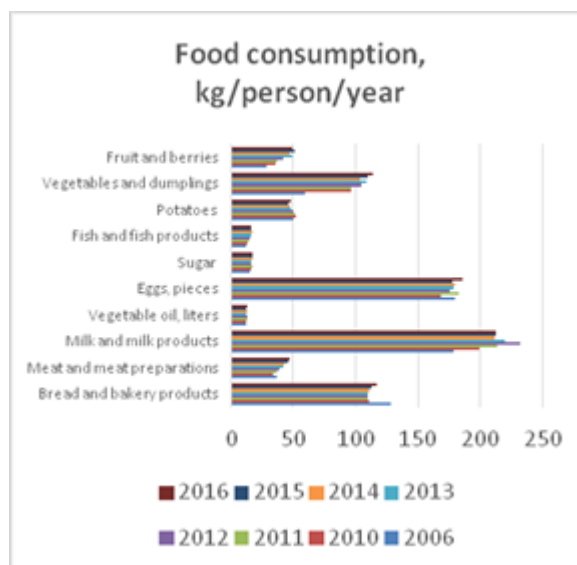


Fig. 2 Food consumption, kg/inhabitant/year

Source: Authors based on selected information on [http / www.statistica.md](http://www.statistica.md), [2,9]

The consumption of meat and meat products increased from 37.0 kg in 2006 to 47.1 kg in 2016 or 27.29 percent. The clear tendency to increase consumption of milk and milk products, sugar, and fish. The most pronounced (1.93 times) in those years, increased the consumption of vegetables and pheasants, (1.76 times) - of fruits and berries. However, this consumption does not cover the calorie requirement.

Economic activity in any area of the national economy, including in the agri-food sector,

requires the exchange of the products obtained with other goods as well as with the necessary resources. This exchange takes place through the market. Undoubtedly, food is aimed at exchange, primarily on the domestic market.

The total retail sales in the national commercial units is continuously increasing, rising from 1,692 million lei in 1995 (Table 1) to 48,517 million lei in 2016 or 28.68 times.

Table 1. Retail sales (million lei)

	1995	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Retail sales – total	1,692	3,394	11,031	25,097	32,133	33,707	39,368	45,972	42,444	48,517
including: - food	1,035	1,443	7,060	12,634	9,914	10,958	13,004	14,004	15,482	18,165
% of total	61.2	42.5	64.0	50.3	30.9	32.5	33.0	30.5	36.5	37.4

Source: Authors based on selected information on [http / www.statistica.md](http://www.statistica.md), [2, 9]

Retail sales of food in national commercial establishments increased from 1,035 million lei in 1995 to 18,165 million lei in 2016 or 17.55 times. If the share of retail sales in total retail sales amounted to 61.2% in 1995, then in 2016 to 37.4%.

The total retail sales in 2016 compared to 2013, the year of the signing and ratification of the agreement, increased 1.23 times, and the retail ones - 1.40 times. The share of food sales in total sales increased from 33.0% in 2013 to 37.4% in 2016.

The internal market of the Republic of Moldova is influenced by the number of consumers who at the time of the 2014 census amounted to 2,998,235 people and their purchasing power.

Monthly average earnings per person increased from 586.6 lei in 2005 (Figure 3) to 2,060.2 lei in 2016 or 3.62 times.

In rural areas, average incomes per person increased from 1,054.7 lei in 2010 to 1,771.3 lei in 2016 or 1.68 times, practically identical (1.61 times) to average per person.

The annual average of the subsistence minimum has evolved from 766.1 lei in 2005 to 1,799.2 lei in 2016. The monthly average income exceeded the monthly average of the subsistence minimum only in 2013, reaching 20.1% to 114.5%, but in rural areas even in 2016 accounted for 99.4 percent. In other words, the income of rural people does not cover the subsistence level, and retail sales in commercial establishments, especially in rural areas, have increased due to remittances, which have created a higher demand for agri-food.

Evidently, the production of agri-food goods in the Republic of Moldova exceeds their consumption by the population of the country and the needs of the internal market. So it is necessary to market agri-food products on foreign markets, based on national interest [7].

Export of agri-food products

Exports of agri-food products shrank from \$ 584.7 million in 1996 (Table 2) to \$ 291 million in 2000 or 2 times, then rises to \$ 1,056.4 million in 2014 or 3.63 times, and slightly decreases to 945.6 in 2016 or 10.5 percent.

The share of agro-food products exported in total exports in 1996 was 73.55%. and in 2016 - 46.25 percent.

This situation is largely due to the tensioned relationship on the foreign market generated

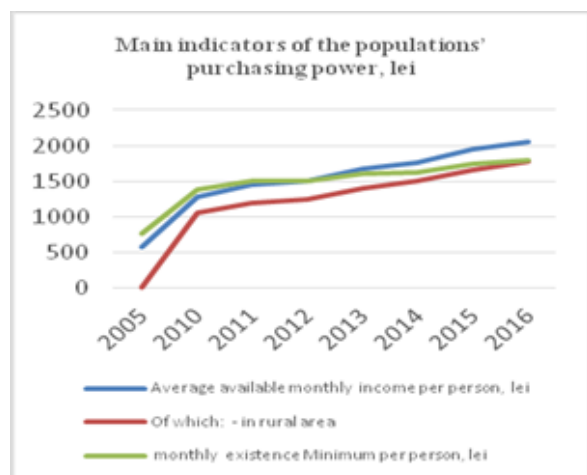


Fig. 3 Main indicators of the populations' purchasing power, lei

Table 2. External trade of agri-food products, million \$

	1996*	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Export, total	795.0	471.5	1,090.9	1,541.5	2,216.8	2,161.9	2,428.3	2,339.5	1,966.8	2,044.6
Of which: food products	584.7	291.0	582.9	732.2	917.1	878.9	1,015.5	1,056.4	914.5	945.6
Import, total	1,072.3	776.4	2,292.3	3,855.3	5,191.3	5,212.9	5,492.4	5,317.0	3,986.8	4,020.4
Of which: food products	142.9	109.6	279.6	591.4	687.8	743.3	783.8	719.3	586.6	608.0
comercial balance	+441.8	+181.4	+303.3	+140.8	+229.3	+135.6	+231.7	+337.1	+327.9	+337.6

Note: information on foreign trade is missing until 1996

Source: Author's calculations based on the information on www.statistica.md, [2,9]

by the endless embargoes of the Russian Federation for agri-food products in our country.

Imports of agri-food products increased from \$ 142.9 million in 1996 to \$ 783.8 million in 2013, then fell to \$ 608 million in 2016. The share of imported food products in total imports slowly increased from 13.33% in 1996 to 14.27% in 2013 and to 15.12 percent in 2016.

The trade balance of agrifood products fluctuates between +135.6 million dollars in 2012 and +441.8 million dollars in 1996, reaching \$ 337.6 million in 2016.

For any country, including the Republic of Moldova, it is extremely important to orientate the export of agri-food products to

countries that guarantee favourable customs tariffs and the highest incomes obtained from marketed agri-food products. Article 143 of the Association Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova specifies "The Parties shall progressively establish a free trade area ...". Moreover, the first paragraph shows that "each party reduces or eliminates customs duties on goods originating in the other ...".

Exports of live animals and their products range from \$ 17.2 million in 2005 (Table 3) to \$ 59.7 million in 2014. In 2005, exports of live animals and their products accounted for 2.95% of total agri-food exports, 5.65% in 2014 and 2015 - 4.1 percent.

Table 3. Trade of live animals and their products (million \$)

	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Export total, of which:	17.2	27.0	38.0	37.8	37.2	59.7	37.5	-
- CIS countries	3.4	14.0	27.9	26.9	25.0	43.3	12.5	18.3
- UE-28	5.8	0.2	0.8	1.8	2.9	9.3	8.7	8.4
Of which export of meat	1.9	10.23	21.55	21.55	18.77	35.30	8.89	-
- CIS countries	1.81	9.70	21.51	21.55	17.29	34.98	5.88	7.55
- UE-28	0.09	-	0.002	0.004	-	0.001	-	0.01
Import total, of which:	57.2	94.7	107.8	130.3	146.8	158.8	99.9	-
- CIS countries	9.6	21.7	34.6	39.1	45.7	55.0	26.4	24.7
- UE-28	16.1	35.7	35.2	47.7	56.2	65.5	50.5	57.6
Of which import of meat	32.15	27.56	30.83	41.77	45.57	54.25	26.15	-
- CIS countries	0.08	3.26	10.35	13.63	18.04	33.25	9.87	7.87
- UE-28	7.42	11.45	12.41	17.68	15.08	13.76	13.58	14.24

Source: Authors calculations based on [http:// ec.europa.eu/](http://ec.europa.eu/) and www.statistica.md, [2,8,9]

If in 2005 dominated the export of live animals and their products to the EU-28 countries, then in the other years indicated in the table - to the CIS countries. import of live

animals and their products has steadily increased from \$ 57.2 million in 2005 to \$ 158.8 million in 2014 or 2.78 times, then decreases to \$ 99.9 million in 2005 \$ million

in 2015 or about 37 percent. In 2005 the import of live animals and their products exceeded their export by 3.33 times, and in 2015 - by 2.66 times. Except for the years 2013 and 2014, the import of live animals and their products from the EU Member States - 28 dominated. In 2005 the import of live animals and their products from the EU - 28 Member States dominated the CIS countries from 1.68 times in 2005 to 2.33 times in 2016.

Total exports of plant kingdoms grow from \$ 131.8 million in 2005 (Table 4) to \$ 549.7 million in 2014, then decreases. If the export of vegetable products to the CIS countries decreased from \$ 158.7 million in 2013 to \$ 68.1 million in 2016 or 2.33 times, then in EU member countries it increased from \$ 198.2 million to \$ 343.2 million or 1.73 times.

Table 4. Vegetable products trade, (million \$)

	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Export, total	131.8	340.7	471.0	360.5	507.0	549.7	501.7	-
Of which:								
-CIS countries	43.1	136.9	189.8	149.9	158.7	138.40	102.5	68.1
- UE-28	65.5	127.9	219.9	141.1	198.2	247.6	309.4	343.2
Of which:								
a. fruits & nuts	60.9	167.6	187.0	202.3	203.0	194.0	194.7	-
-CIS countries	23.1	104.7	112.5	98.6	104.0	73.9	79.1	52.4
- UE-28	33.5	49.2	58.9	73.2	86.8	101.3	96.4	85.0
b. cereales	43.2	71.0	72.0	36.5	120.8	181.2	113.9	-
-CIS countries	12.6	6.9	11.4	7.2	8.8	20.8	9.5	7.3
- UE-28	15.8	39.0	47.5	14.5	38.5	70.9	69.1	101.7
c. oleaginous seeds and fruits	21.5	90.4	181.5	99.9	166.6	154.2	178.2	-
-CIS countries	4.9	16.3	41.9	25.8	32.4	29.7	5.9	3.7
- UE-28	13.1	37.6	107.7	50.2	71.6	71.6	139.9	152.2
Import, total	65.0	168.9	199.1	204.6	203.5	195.4	194.2	-
Of which:								
-CIS countries	12.0	34.5	48.7	47.4	46.3	35.2	41.5	44.6
- UE-28	31.0	72.3	69.9	86.3	83.2	90.3	61.5	72.4
Of which: a. fruits & nuts	17.7	58.0	68.4	68.7	67.0	65.5	74.6	-
-CIS countries	1.32	1.63	2.97	1.18	3.83	4.38	6.21	2.71
- UE-28	9.77	33.13	28.89	32.64	25.95	28.75	13.92	16.85
b. cereals	3.59	9.71	10.09	12.57	12.68	15.63	14.05	-
-CIS countries	0.43	2.42	4.68	5.16	4.15	1.52	0.91	2.38
- UE-28	0.43	2.34	2.88	5.97	6.47	10.18	8.90	10.55
c. oleaginous seeds and fruits	8.78	26.60	19.96	22.92	26.16	27.72	30.63	-
-CIS countries	0.92	2.68	0.97	1.34	1.55	2.01	5.10	4.80
- UE-28	4.76	10.46	11.92	13.37	15.41	17.23	12.24	21.02

Source: Authors calculations based on [http:// ec.europa.eu/](http://ec.europa.eu/) and www.statistica.md, [2,8,9]

The total imports of plant kingdom products grow from \$ 65.0 million in 2005 to \$ 204.6

million in 2012, then slowly but steadily declining.

Exports of vegetable products exceeded their import twice in 2005 and 2.58 times in 2015. It dominated the import of vegetable products from the EU Member States. in relation to the CST countries.

Exports of vegetable products also show edible fruits and nuts even if their share in total decreases from 49.7% in 2005 to 38.8% in 2015. By 2013 the export of edible fruits and nuts to the CIS countries dominated, then the situation was reversed. The largest export gap between EU Member States and CIS countries recorded oilseeds and fruits, which in 2005 recorded the ratio of 2.17 to 1 and in 2016 - 41.14 to 1.

Extremely few vegetables are exported, with only 4.8 thousand 2005 and \$ 9.2 thousand in 2015.

Exports of fats and oils to CIS countries decreased from \$ 27.4 million in 2005 (Table 5) to \$ 0.5 million in 2016 or about 55 times. Exports of fats and oils to EU-28 countries increased from 9.7 millions in 2005 to \$ 86.4 million in 2012, then fluctuating, with a tendency to decrease to \$ 36.8 million in 2016.

Fats and oils are products that can be successfully exported to the EU market.

Table 5. Fats and oils trade, (million \$)

	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Export total	37.8	47.6	77.5	89.7	44.0	77.5	72.0	-
Of which: -CIS countries	27.4	11.8	3.1	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.5
- UE-28	9.7	34.2	72.4	86.4	43.5	72.5	68.1	36.8
Import total	9.89	19.29	25.06	28.38	30.02	25.58	20.29	-
Of which: -CIS countries	3.10	12.89	16.16	19.12	17.46	16.38	11.66	16.52
- UE-28	3.96	3.24	4.03	3.89	4.44	4.36	4.42	5.39

Source: Authors calculations based on [http:// ec.europa.eu/](http://ec.europa.eu/) and www.statistica.md, [2,8,9]

Table 6. Food, alcohol and non-alcoholic beverages, millions of dollars

	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Export, total	395.9	316.9	330.6	390.9	427.3	378.4	303.3	-
Of which: -CIS countries	348.4	231.8	208.6	229.3	212.6	185.9	123.5	87.0
- UE-28	39.7	55.6	89.3	110.4	135.0	111.9	102.1	149.5
Of which: a. sugar and sugar products	7.5	29.1	14.6	35.0	30.5	55.8	38.5	-
-CIS countries	1.7	25.3	3.3	5.1	2.8	42.0	31.4	0.73
- UE-28	5.8	3.2	10.9	29.5	26.9	13.1	6.5	42.5
b. cereals based products	2.8	7.3	11.5	13.4	17.6	17.2	13.4	-
-CIS countries	1.1	0.4	0.9	0.7	1.3	1.6	0.7	3.2
- UE-28	1.4	5.7	9.2	11.2	14.3	13.8	11.1	11.3
c. fruits and veges products	46.5	52.3	68.8	60.4	76.1	59.7	49.9	-
-CIS countries	29.5	33.9	35.1	27.7	24.5	19.2	13.0	12.4
- UE-28	15.8	17.6	33.1	31.4	50.2	37.5	35.2	27.9
d. non and alcool beverages	314.5	178.2	181.3	215.0	252.3	193.7	160.0	-
-CIS countries	302.1	144.9	140.0	161.5	164.7	108.2	75.2	67.2
- UE-28	10.7	22.0	25.6	25.3	33.4	35.7	40.7	53.3
Import, total	147.5	308.6	355.8	380.1	403.5	339.6	272.3	-
inclusiv din: - țările CSI	81.9	181.2	208.7	209.3	230.2	177.2	143.4	161.69
- țările UE-28	54.63	93.95	102.86	120.85	123.94	110.56	95.60	114.51
Of which: a. sugar and sugar products	6.8	12.5	23.0	30.8	37.7	17.5	13.1	-
- CIS countries	2.66	6.36	15.30	20.18	31.84	7.23	5.16	15.22
- UE-28	3.57	4.83	4.97	8.23	3.59	5.18	6.06	10.26
b. cereals based products	12.21	33.96	41.56	43.06	48.04	44.80	33.12	-
-CIS countries	9.17	22.56	25.24	27.10	30.18	27.24	20.65	21.12
- UE-28	2.85	9.12	11.81	11.39	13.13	12.81	9.91	9.64
c. fruits and veges products	13.60	22.72	25.12	24.43	26.26	21.79	16.82	-
-CIS countries	5.61	8.46	8.84	8.86	9.68	6.94	4.62	4.82
- UE-28	4.94	9.03	10.76	10.73	11.35	10.60	8.67	9.37
d. non and alcool beverages	34.02	44.95	50.29	68.28	76.07	57.80	40.01	-
-CIS countries	10.91	24.91	26.20	29.90	29.23	25.15	16.59	21.48
- UE-28	22.71	16.65	20.38	32.81	39.32	25.73	18.02	23.22

Source: Authors calculations based on [http:// ec.europa.eu/](http://ec.europa.eu/) and www.statistica.md, [2,8,9]

In the export of agrifood products with 395.9 million dollars (67.92% of the total) in 2005 (Table 6), 427.3 million dollars (42.08% of the total) in 2013 and 303.3 million dollars (15.53% of total) in 2015 dominated food, and without alcohol.

The export of food, alcoholic and non - alcoholic beverages to CIS countries has a clear tendency to reduce from \$ 384.4 million in 2005 to \$ 87.0 million in 2016 or 4.42 times.

Exports of these products to the domestic market of EU Member States increased from \$ 39.7 million in 2005 to \$ 149.5 million in 2016 or by 3.77 times.

Even if the value of non-alcoholic alcoholic beverages and vinegar declined from \$ 314.5 million in 2005 to \$ 160 million in 2016, they remain the most exported products in our country. A significant reduction in the export of alcoholic beverages to CIS countries from \$ 302.1 million in 2005 to \$ 67.2 million in 2016 or 4.5 times.

Only after 2013, the year of signing the Association Agreement, so far the export of alcoholic beverages has decreased by 2.45 times due to the embargo imposed by the Russian Federation on the original agro-food products in our country.

But these restrictions have encouraged the export of alcoholic beverages to the European Union's internal market, which rose from \$ 10.7 million in 2005 to \$ 53.3 million in 2016 or five times.

CONCLUSIONS

(i)The development of the agri-food sector of the national Moldovan economy is dependent both on the domestic market and on the foreign market for the original agri-food products in our country.

(ii)The export of agri-food products in the Republic of Moldova dominates low-value products and unprocessed raw materials while in the import of agri-food products dominate the processed ones.

(iii)The situation in the agriculture of our country was considerably influenced by the Association Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States [1] which was signed and launched in 2013.

(iv)Under Article 364 (1), the parties to the agreement "recognize the right of each party to define its own sustainable development policies and priorities, to establish its own levels of national protection ... to adopt or amend ... its own legislation and its own relevant policies". Obviously, the natural question "What needs to be changed in the economy of the agri-food sector of the Republic of Moldova in order to ensure its sustainable development and meets the requirements of the Common Market of the European Union?"

What we recommend:

-To encourage economic association and / or cooperation of agricultural holdings to ensure more efficient use of means of production, technological, economic, legal, etc., business plans, market study, acquisition and processing of agricultural raw materials and supplying farmers with the necessary production factors and others.

-To improve the competitiveness of the national agri-food sector by adjusting the multi-annual sowing and planting structure to the requirements of the internal market of the European Union. In other words, we consider it appropriate to increase the share of vegetable and leguminous crops, and to extend the vineyards and orchards by planting the varieties requested on the market.

Table 7. Investments in fixed capital by types of economic activities (billions lei)

	1995	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Investments in fix assets	0.84	1.76	7.80	13.80	16.45	17.15	19.13	21.2	21.1	19.7
Of which:- agriculture,	0.09	0.06	0.46	1.05	1.82	1.66	1.85	2.33	1.80	1.93
Processing industry	0.16	0.26	1.14	1.43	2.11	2.31	2.87	2.34	2.53	2.50
- comerce	0.04	0.16	0.79	1.52	1.99	2.12	2.22	2.51	2.86	2.37

Source: Authors calculations based on www.statistica.md, [2,9]

To this end, it is imperative at least to double the investments in agriculture.

At present, investments in agriculture, hunting economy and national forestry remain far too high even though they have risen from 0.09 billion in current prices in 1995 (Table 7) to 1.93 billion lei in 2016, 10.7% in 1995 and 10.2% in 2016 of total investments in national capital.

-To increase the share of exports of agri-food products prepared from cereals processed from vegetables, fruits and grapes, especially bottled wines, wines of origin and the reduction of trade with agri-food raw material.

-To support farmers by taking surplus products from agricultural holdings at prices covering costs, storing and / or processing them and selling them in a situation where demand on the market increases.

-To abandon the ex anti / before the production / / and to practice the intervention of the public authorities after the production has been sold, stimulating the farmers to produce the ones requested on the market, in specifically, the external one.

-To encourage the crediting of agricultural producers by public authorities, especially for planting orchards and vineyards, for expanding irrigated areas, for purchasing the means of production and for all that would contribute to the efficiency of this sector.

-To stimulate the export of agro-food products by increasing the exchange rate by 5-10% in relation to the one set by the National Bank and reducing the import taxes on new technologies, which would help the farmers in our country to become more competitive.

-To adjust the training and education system of those who practice agriculture by providing them with innovating, performance and competence qualities to make decisions that are appropriate to the requirements specified in the Association Agreement.

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