

THE HIERARCHIZATION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSULTANCY CONCERNING THE MAIN TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES AT THE LEVEL OF THE AGRICULTURAL EXPLOITATIONS IN OLT COUNTY

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Abstract

Although the information sources became more diverse, the agricultural consultancy activities remain an important resource for modern agriculture. This one has its role, within which the technological changes became so frequent. To these ones, the climatic changes are added, that assume a vast experience in the field of plant culture. The study aims to highlight the interest of agriculturists by the consultancy that has been offered to them, according to the activities they deploy: development of investment projects, plant protection, procurement of fertilizer, procurement of agriculture machineries, livestock, marketing of agricultural production, and association in various forms. For comparison, they were analyzed according to the farm size, to the geographical (mountain, plain, meadow) and administrative (village area) location. The study revealed the influence of the locality surface, which had a very significant power over the consultancy offered to the activities under analysis.

Key words: rural consultancy, locality surface, dimension of the agricultural exploitation, geographic areas

INTRODUCTION

Located in the South of the country, between the Danube and the Getic Piedmont and axed on the inferior course of the river having the same name, Olt County occupies approximately 2.3% of the country surface. It has a surface of 5,507 km², being, according to the dimension, the 24th county of Romania. [4]

At the level of Olt County, most of the localities have surfaces framed between 3,001ha and 5,000ha (62.25 %). The agricultural farms detain the majority, in the localities with surfaces over 3,000ha (3,001-4,000 ha: 21.6%; 4,001-5,000 ha: 17.7%; over 6,001 ha: 26.8%) [7].

The average size of the agricultural exploitation in 2012 used to be 4.56 ha, where prevail the farms under 3 ha (39.7%), between 5-7 ha (30.1%), and those between 5-7ha (14.2%). *The vegetal and animal products in Olt County* were based on the changes interfered in the property system that had and

still has a direct effect on the decisions of allotting landed resources, on the conservation and protection of the soil. In Olt County, there are few zootechnical specialized farms, and most of the livestock are bred in personal households and used in order to provide a minimum standard of living [7].

In terms of localities, the biggest average surface on an agricultural exploitation is in Redea, having 8.16 ha and the smallest one has 0.54 ha in Vulpeni [10].

In 2012, the number of APIA (Agency for Payments and Intervention in Agriculture) eligible farms was 43,761 (48% out of the total) with an agricultural surface of 333.6 thousand ha (81% out of the total). In terms of relief areas, 81.1% out of the total number of exploitations are in lowland, 14.4% in hilly areas and 4.5% in meadow areas.

In Olt County, only 3,049 of the total number of agricultural exploitations have a legal form, which represents 3.38%. [7]

Different studies approach the issues presented in this article. The study [12] at

page 35 reminds of the different occupations for the unemployed in the rural areas, such as “they are open-minded for professions with local specific, buildings, public catering, services, IT initiation or foreign languages”, without reminding the livestock, the development of vegetable- or fruit-growing. Another study analyzes the situation in Romania, that currently has no agro-alimentary distribution chains and without them, the country cannot have food safety and will always depend on the outward for food supply [2] (p.14); the current politics help foreign agricultural business develop in Romania, and render Romania more and more dependent on external food sources, that must be transported in Romania [5] (p. 14); that the lack of credit institutions in Romania, that be willing to grant loans to farmers [5] (p. 5), renders the level of credits in France 40 times major, in Germany 32 times major and in Spain 24 times [3] (p. 139); that the problem of endowment of the Romanian farms with tractors cannot be efficiently solved but by increasing the dimension of the exploitation [6] (p. 74); that in the rural area exists a poor information of the producers’ associations, confirmed by other studies as well, that assert that “only 6% know about these associations” [12] (p. 24). A comprehensive study was made by ASE Bucharest, *Establishing the socio-economic potential of rural areas* [1], that hierarchizes the localities within the country, in order to determine the development potential according to five groups of indicators, specifically: endogenous potential (5 indicators), physical-geographical characteristics (4 indicators), human capital (6 indicators), economic activities (6 indicators), technical urbanistic endowment (4 indicators) [6] (p. 74).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study aimed a correlative thoroughness of the relationship given by the consultancy activities as regards the size of the localities, the relief area and the dimensions of the farm. The time duration provided was framed as: very long; long; medium; short; very short. The date were collected from the level of Olt

County, by the agricultural consultants, in 2013. [8]

The assessment of the results was performed with the test χ^2 . There were taken three significance degrees for the probabilities of: 0.001 (if $t_{cal} > t_t$: very significant significance ***); 0.01 (if $t_{cal} > t_t$: distinctly significant significance **); 0.05 (if $t_{cal} > t_t$: significant significance*) and if $t_{cal} < t_{t0.05}$ (insignificant). Pearson correlation coefficient has been calculated in order to find the intensity of the studied correlations. Bibliographic studies that analyze rural development in general terms and rural development in Olt County or within Oltenia South-West development region have been used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The projects accessed during the period 2007-2013 were mainly SAPARD projects that had as objective the increment of competitiveness of agricultural and silvic sectors. In Olt County, the investments in vegetable production were supervised, in order to ensure some farms that be viable, by means of: mechanization of the vegetable sector farms, by endowing them with tractors, combines and farm equipment, irrigation plants and by storing the agricultural products produced within the farm.

1. From the assessment of the importance of projects elaboration, especially SAPARD, the following are ascertained: the highest number of elaborated projects was registered for the localities whose size was between 2,001- 5,000 ha, 61 % of the total number of projects.

Table 1. Assessment of the importance of “projects elaboration”, using the test χ^2 , in Olt County, during the period 2007-2013

Level	MU	Significance χ^2	
	n°	χ^2 cal.	37.5**
Locality size	%	χ^2 (0.01)	40.08; r=0.54
Geographical area	n°	χ^2 cal.	10.7; N
	%	χ^2 (0.5)	15.5; R=0.31
Dimension of the exploitation	n°	χ^2 cal.	31.4*
	%	χ^2 (0.1)	37.57; r=48

The importance given to SAPARD projects, according to the locality size, is statistically justified as distinctly significant (**) (Table 1, Fig. 1).

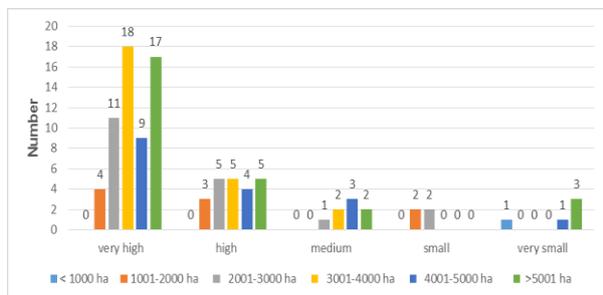


Fig.1. Repartition of agricultural exploitations according to the locality size, regarding the importance of "project elaboration"

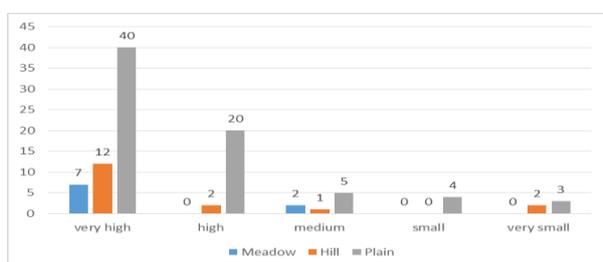


Fig.2. Repartition of agricultural exploitation according to the geographical area, regarding the importance of "projects elaboration"

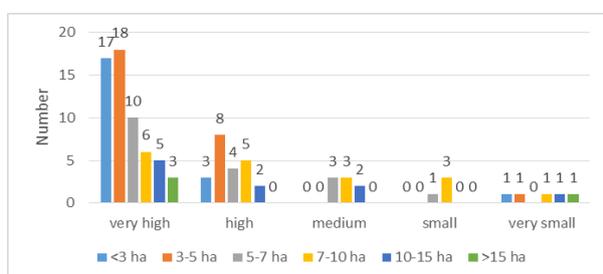


Fig.3. Repartition of agricultural exploitations according to the dimension of the exploitation, regarding the importance of "projects elaboration"

From the analysis of the importance of projects elaboration according to the relief area, the following were determined: the importance of elaborating the projects is high, even predominant in the plain areas (72 % of the total number of localities situated in these areas), and the cumulated level of 82.65 considered as very high and high, shows the importance of projects elaboration (Table 1, Fig. 2).

The assessment of the importance of projects elaboration according to the farm surface, highlights the following: a special interest for

projects elaboration is manifested in the case of exploitations having surfaces between 3-5 ha (27% of the localities); it indicates the existence

of some significant differences in assessing the importance of SAPARD projects (χ^2 calculated of 30.0 > 31.41 theoretic).

2. Assessment of the importance of plants protection in the consultancy activity

Starting from the premise that about 1/3 of the potential agricultural production is destroyed by diseases and pests, together with the diminution of quality, the plants protection has a special importance for the managers of the agricultural exploitation.

According to the surface of the locality, the assessment of the importance of consultancy in plants protection is highlighted by the following (Table 2, Fig. 4); from the total of the 98 localities, for the size groups between 2001 ha and 5000 ha, the importance is significant (62.25 % of the total numbers of localities); regarding the trust degree, a very significant can be ascertained (for the risk level, which is 0.001, χ^2 calculated of 62.6 > 45.3 theoretic).

According to the relief area, the assessment of the importance of plants protection, according to the substantiation values represented in Table 2, Figure 5, the following can be highlighted: for the plain area, the importance given to plants protection is much higher than the one given in the hill and meadow areas (73.47 % and respectively 17.35 % and 9.18 %).

Table 2. Assessment of the importance of „plants protection” using the test χ^2 , in Olt County, during the period 2007-2013

Level	MU	Significance χ^2	
	n°	χ^2 cal.	62.6***
Locality size	%	χ^2 (0.001)	45.31; r=0.62
	n°	χ^2 cal.	9.2; N
Geographical area	%	χ^2 (0.5)	15.5; r=0,29
	n°	χ^2 cal.	22.4; N
Dimension of the exploitation	%	χ^2 (0.5)	31.4; r=0.43

It appears, for the same plain area, to be significant the high importance with a percentage of 33.6 %; the significance threshold is insignificant, resulting that the

consultancy demand is relatively the same (χ^2 calculated of $9.2 < 15.5$ χ^2 theoretic, for a risk of 0.05%).

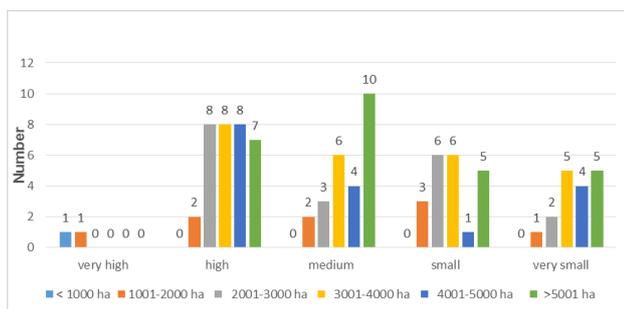


Fig. 4. Repartition of agricultural exploitations according to the locality size, regarding the importance of "plants protection"

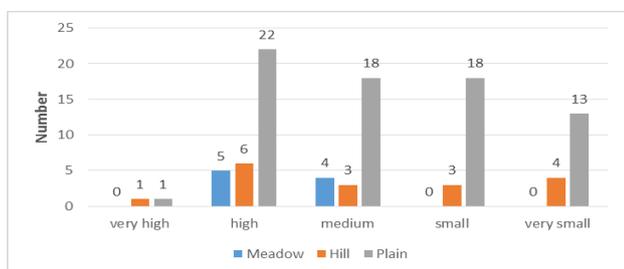


Fig. 5. Repartition of agricultural exploitations according to the geographical area, regarding the importance of "plants protection"

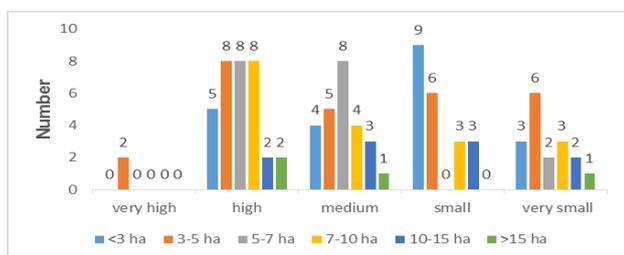


Fig. 6. Repartition of agricultural exploitations according to the dimension of the exploitation, regarding the importance of "plants protection"

In relation to the exploitation surface, regarding the importance of plants protection (Table 2, Figure 6) the following were determined: the most receptive exploitations are those whose dimension is between 3-5ha (27.5%); in this, framing, according to the appreciation scale, the percentage is estimated "high" with 33.67 %, after which, in-sequence, there are exceptions registered; from the analysis of the significance threshold, it can be ascertained that the importance of plants protection activities is uniform, not dealing with significant abnormalities (χ^2 calculated of $22.48 < \chi^2$

theoretic of 25.04 for a risk of 0.052 %).

3. Assessment of the importance of fertilizer procurement in the consultancy activity

The fertilization of cultures and the principles of a rational fertilization represent one of the permanent preoccupations in any of the practiced agricultural systems. The correct knowledge of the management and use of fertilizers is an essential preoccupation in order to obtain high harvests.

According to the locality surface, the importance of chemical fertilizer procurement, represented in Table 3 and Figure 7, highlights the following: the localities having surfaces between 2,001 and 5,000 ha cumulated have the highest percentage of procurement importance (of 62.2%) with a maximum situated in the interval of the surfaces between 3,001-4,000 ha; the importance of fertilizers procurement as regards the locality surface is appreciated as uniform, as there are no significant abnormalities between the localities groups (χ^2 calculated of $18.02 < 22.76$, for a risk of 0.05).

Table 3. Assessment of the importance of "chemical fertilizers procurement" with the aid of the test χ^2 , in Olt County, during the period 2007-2013

Level	MU	Significance χ^2	
Locality size	n°	χ^2 cal.	20.92; N
	%	χ^2 (0.5)	31.42; r=0.42
Geographical area	n°	χ^2 cal.	18.0 **
	%	χ^2 (0.01)	16.8; r=0.39
Dimension of the exploitation	n°	χ^2 cal.	25*
	%	χ^2 (0.5)	26.7; r=0.42

The importance of consultancy in fertilizers procurement as regards the location area of the farms, Table 3, Figure 8, highlights the following: in the case of the localities, the „medium" procurement has a percentage of 50.00 %; the importance of chemical fertilizer procurement has a significance degree distinctly significant of 0.01 % (χ^2 calculated by $18.00 > 16.61$, for a risk of 0.01%).

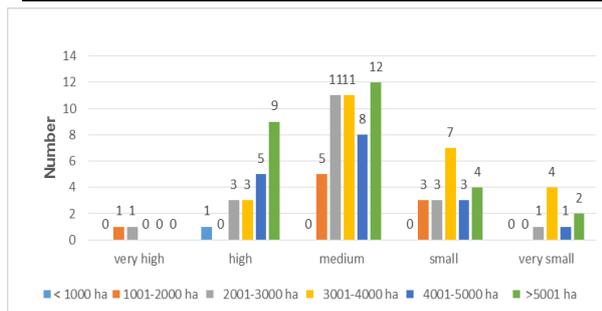


Fig. 7. Repartition of agricultural exploitations according to the locality size, regarding the importance of "chemical fertilizer procurement"

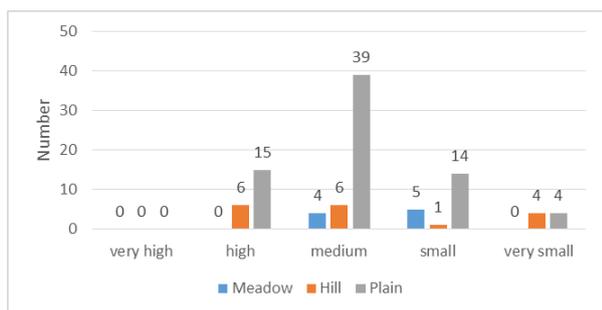


Fig. 8. Repartition of agricultural exploitations according to the geographical area, regarding the importance of "chemical fertilizer procurement"

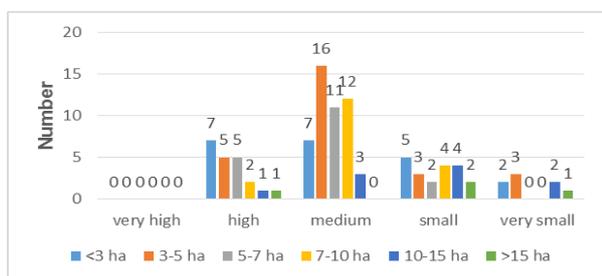


Fig. 9. Repartition of agricultural exploitations according to the dimension of the exploitation, regarding the importance of "chemical fertilizer procurement"

The farm surface is considered to be a fundamental element in appreciating the importance of consultancy in fertilizers procurement, and the levels represented in *Table 3 and Figure 9*, highlight the following aspects: the exploitations sized up to 10 ha manifest a high receptivity in fertilizers procurement (the maximum in the case of exploitations sized 3-5 ha (27%)); the appreciation of the farms considered as "medium" (50.00 %) has a significant significance (χ^2 calculated of $26.27 > 25.00$, for a risk of 0.05%).

4. Assessment of the importance of agricultural machines procurement in the consultancy activity

Agricultural machines represent a major importance element in any of the agricultural production systems. Knowledge of the interest in agricultural machines procurement was based on the territorial aspects of the locality, area and agricultural exploitation (farm).

The spatial level of the locality influenced the importance of consultancy in agricultural machines procurement, is represented in *Table 4 and Figure 10*, from which the following result: the predominance of the interest is situated at the classes of sizes between 2,001 and 4,000 ha (62.25 %); in the structure of qualitative hierarchization, category "small" occupies 44.90 % of the total number of localities.

Table 4. Assessment of the importance of "agricultural machines procurement" in the consultancy activity, with the aid of the test χ^2 , in Olt County, during the period 2007-2013

Level	MU	Significance χ^2	
Locality size	n°	χ^2 cal.	13.7; N
	%	χ^2 (0.5)	31.4; r=0.35
Geographical area	n°	χ^2 cal.	13.7; N
	%	χ^2 (0.5)	31.4; r=0.35
Dimension of the exploitation	n°	χ^2 cal.	26.1*
	%	χ^2 (0.5)	25.0; R=0.46

Regarding the significance threshold, it is insignificant, showing a "medium" interest for agricultural machines (χ^2 calculated of $13.7 < 31.4$ χ^2 theoretic, for 0.05 and r=0.35).

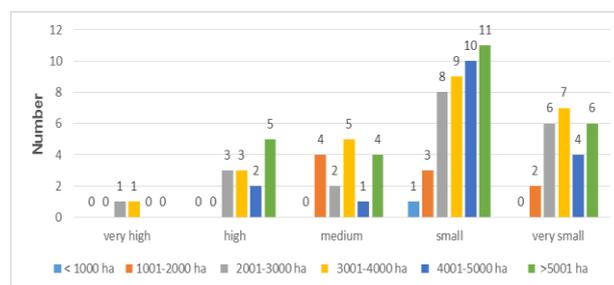


Fig. 10. Repartition of agricultural exploitations according to the locality size, regarding the importance of "agricultural machines procurement"

According to the geographical area (meadows, hills, plains), the importance of the consultancy regarding the procurement of agricultural machines, *Table 4, Figure 11*, the following result: the importance appreciated

for the “small” category holds a percentage of 44.9% of the total number of localities; the degree of trust is insignificant, appreciating an medium interest level for agricultural machinery procurement, (χ^2 calculated that is of $13.7 < 31.4 \chi^2$ theoretic, for the risk of 0.05 and $r=0.35$).

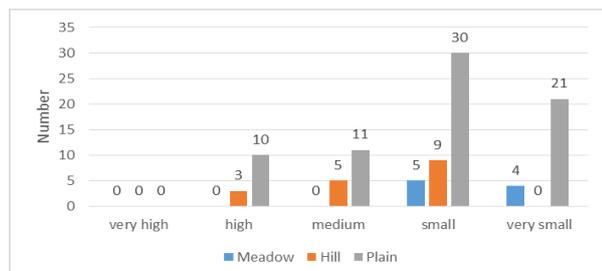


Fig.11. Repartition of agricultural exploitations according to the geographical area, regarding the importance of ”agricultural machines procurement”

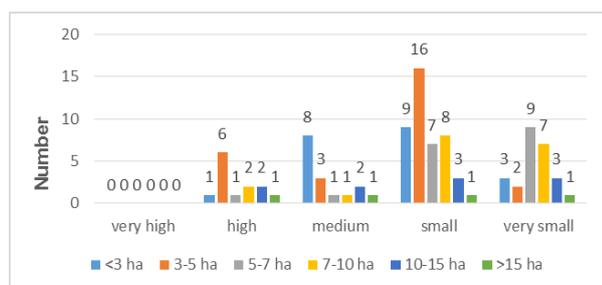


Fig.12. Repartition of agricultural exploitations according to the dimension of the exploitation, regarding the importance of ”agricultural machines procurement”

The correlation between the exploitation surface and the interest for agricultural machinery procurement, represented in *Table 4 and Figure 12*, highlights the following: the predominance over the agricultural machinery procurement is framed at exploitations of 3-5 ha (de 27 %); the importance of agricultural machinery procurement is framed at “small”, the percentage being of 44.90 %; The correlation between the exploitation surface and the interest for agricultural machinery procurement, represented in *Table 4 and Figure 12*, highlights the following: the predominance over the agricultural machinery procurement is framed at exploitations of 3-5 ha (de 27 %); the importance of agricultural machinery procurement is framed at “small”, the percentage being of 44.90 %; from the analysis of the significance threshold, a connection is ascertained at medium level,

significant between the two variables (χ^2 calculated of $26.1 > \chi^2$ theoretic of 22.3, for a risk of 0.05%).

5.Assessment of the importance of livestock in the consultancy activity

The consultancy provided in livestock represents, in a way, something new for the zootechny of the last decades, when livestock diminished at all animal species and the specialists in this field, in consultancy field, are very few.

The assessment of the importance of consultancy in the field of livestock according to the locality surface, represented in *Table 5 and Figure 13* highlights the following: the localities whose territorial area is between 2001-5000 ha also have the highest percentage in the assessment of the importance of consultancy in livestock activities (62.25 %); the assessment of the importance is given by a maximum of the percentage appreciated as “high” (of 27.55 %), and afterwards, there is a successive decrease until the category “small” (that reaches 15.31 %); the test χ^2 is insignificant (χ^2 calculated is of $26.5 < \chi^2$ theoretic of 29.5, for a risk of 0.05% and $r=0.46$), that means a uniform interest in the consultancy for livestock.

Table 5. Assessment of the importance of “livestock”, with the aid of the test χ^2 , in Olt County, during the period 2007-2013

Level	MU	Significance χ^2	
		n°	χ^2 cal. / 26.2; N
Locality size	n°	χ^2 cal.	26.2; N
	%	χ^2 (0.5)	31.4; $r=0.46$
Geographical area	n°	χ^2 cal.	5.7; N
	%	χ^2 (0.5)	15.5; $r=0.37$
Dimension of the exploitation	n°	χ^2 cal.	16.3; N
	%	χ^2 (0.5)	31.4; $r=0.38$

Analyzing by relief areas the importance of consultancy in the field of livestock, a maximum level for the “high” degree of the importance, and afterwards, a successive decrease, at 27.5% for medium and at 15.3% for small); a percentage of 43% for the exploitations in the plain areas, for the levels “high” and “medium”; the test χ^2 , indicates a level of interest equal for all the relief areas

(χ^2 calculated of $15.7 < \chi^2$ theoretic of 15.5, for 0.05 and $r=0.37$).

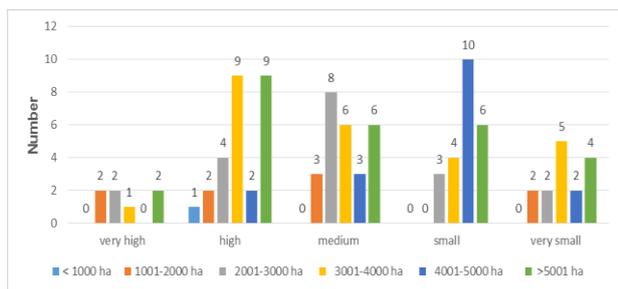


Fig.13.Repartition of agricultural exploitations according to the locality size, regarding the importance of "livestock"

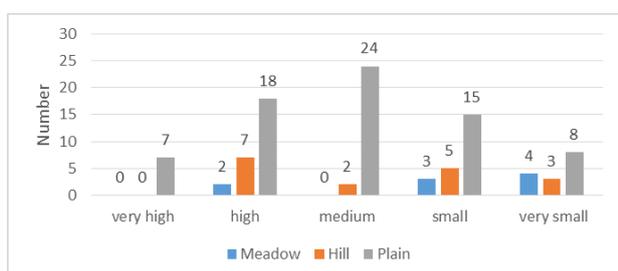


Fig.14.Repartition of agricultural exploitations according to the geographical area, regarding the importance of "livestock"

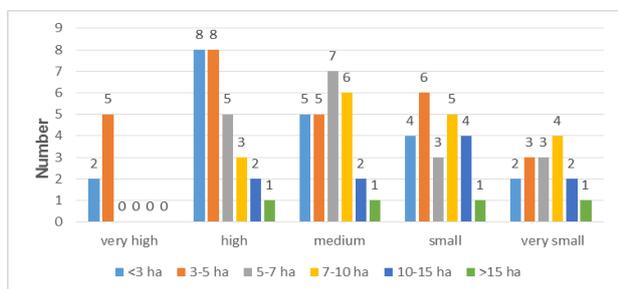


Fig.15. Repartition of agricultural exploitations according to the dimension of the exploitation, regarding the importance of "livestock"

From the analysis of the exploitation and the correlation with the consultancy for livestock, represented in *Table 5 and Figure 15*, the following aspects result: for an increment up to 10 ha, the cumulated percentage is of 85.7%; on appreciation degrees, there is a relatively uniform repartition ascertained, resulting that there are no significant differences in terms of consultancy provisions; the test χ^2 is insignificant, because χ^2 calculated is of $16.3 < \chi^2$ theoretic is of 25.0 and $r=0.38$.

6.Assessment of the importance of marketing of agricultural production in the consultancy activity.

The consultancy activities in marketing of agricultural production aim knowing both the market forms (in time and space), as well as the structure of the producers group. An association of agricultural producers has as purpose, in this respect, the identification of markets, and, on the other side, the adaptation of the production according to the market necessities. In Olt County, the consultancy forms in the field of marketing of agricultural production are adapted to the agricultural producers, and it has been aimed at the level of the territorial area of localities, landforms and agricultural exploitation.

The assessment of the importance of consultancy according to the locality surface is represented in *Table 6 and Figure 16*, from where the following result: the communal areas between 2,001-5,000 ha have the highest percentage in terms of assessment of the marketing of agricultural production (of 62.2%).

Table 6. Assessment of the importance of "marketing of agricultural production", with the aid of the test χ^2 , in Olt County, during the period 2007-2013

Level	MU	Significance χ^2	
		n°	χ^2 cal.
Locality size	n°	χ^2 cal.	59.7***
	%	χ^2 (0.001)	45.3; $r=0.62$
Geographical area	n°	χ^2 cal.	8.65; N
	%	χ^2 (0.5)	15.5; $r=0.23$
Dimension of the exploitation	n°	χ^2 cal.	13.6; N
	%	χ^2 (0.5)	31.4; $r=0.35$

In the structure of the appreciation level, the highest level of the percentage corresponds for "high" with 43.8%; the analysis of the trust threshold with the test χ^2 shows that there is a very significant difference between the appreciation of consultancy (χ^2 calculated of $62.6 > \chi^2$ theoretic of 51.1 and $r=0.62$).

According to the relief area, the assessment of the importance of marketing of agricultural production, represented in *Table 6 and Figure 17*, highlights the following: the assessment of the importance of consultancy regarding the marketing of agricultural production in the plain area is of 21% for "very high" and of 32% for "high"; the "high" level is predominant (with 43.88 %); the test χ^2 shows us that the

appreciation of the importance of “marketing of agricultural production” was made uniformly within the county (χ^2 calculated of $8.6 < \chi^2$ theoretic of 11.0 and for $r=0.23$).

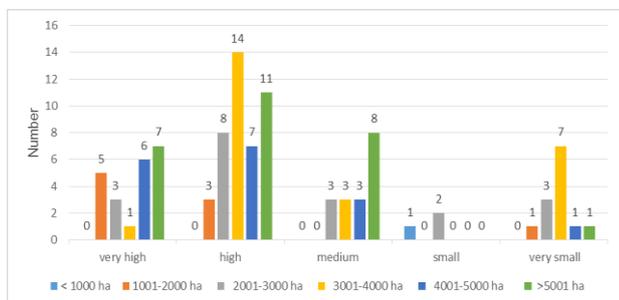


Fig.16. Repartition of agricultural exploitations according to the locality size, regarding the importance of “marketing of agricultural production”

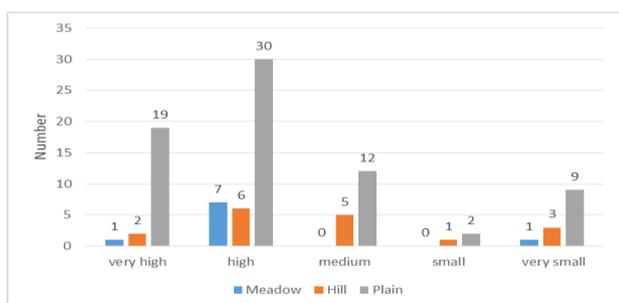


Fig.17. Repartition of agricultural exploitations according to the geographical area, regarding the importance of “marketing of agricultural production”

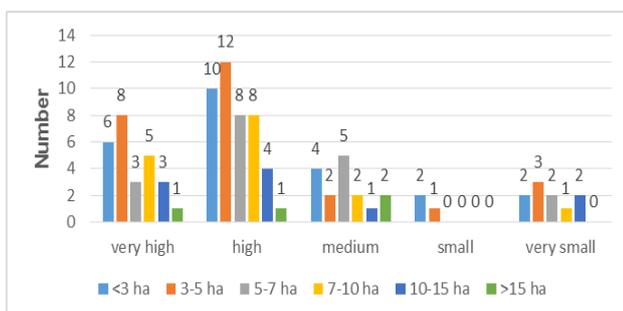


Fig.18. Repartition of agricultural exploitations according to the dimension of the exploitation, regarding the importance of “marketing of agricultural production”

According to the dimension of the exploitation represented in *Table 6 and Figure 18*, the following result: agricultural exploitations whose size is <10 ha frame the highest percentage in the assessment of consultancy (cumulated is of 95.9 %); the importance of the assessment is significant for the situation “high”, the percentage having a maximum level of 43.88 %; the test χ^2 shows us that there are no significant differences between the modalities to provide consultancy

(χ^2 calculated of $13.6 < \chi^2$ theoretic of 25.0 and $r=0.35$)

7. Assessment of the importance of the association on various forms in the consultancy activity

The importance of the consultancy activity for the initiation of some association forms from agriculture represent a way in solving many issues, especially for the exploitations that have small surfaces of agricultural terrain.

From the analysis of the importance of consultancy according to the locality size, represented in *Table 7 and Figure 19*, the following aspects result: the importance of association consultancy for the localities ensemble by the expression “very small” is of 55.1% from the exploitations and of “small” of 22.3% from the exploitations, manifesting a lack of interest in respect to various forms of association; the test χ^2 is very significant (χ^2 calculated of $128.8 < \chi^2$ theoretic of 45.3, for 0.001 and $r=0.75$), which shows us great differences between the levels of qualitative appreciation.

Table 7. Assessment of the importance of “association on various forms”, with the aid of the test χ^2 , in Olt County, during the period 2007-2013

Level	MU	Significance χ^2	
Locality size	n°	χ^2 cal.	128.8***
	%	χ^2 (0.001)	45.3; $r=0.75$
Geographical area	n°	χ^2 cal.	5.72; N
	%	χ^2 (0.5)	15.5; $r=0.28$
Dimension of the exploitation	n°	χ^2 cal.	14.3; N
	%	χ^2 (0.5)	31.4; $r=0.35$

The correlation of consultancy at the level of the exploitations with the landforms, represented in *Table 7 and Figure 20*, represents the following: the association form “very small” has the highest percentage of 53.1%, followed by “small” with 19.8%; the significance threshold is insignificant (χ^2 calculated of $5.72 < 15.5$ theoretic, 0.05 and $r=0.28$), showing that the relief area has no influence on the consultancy on association issues.

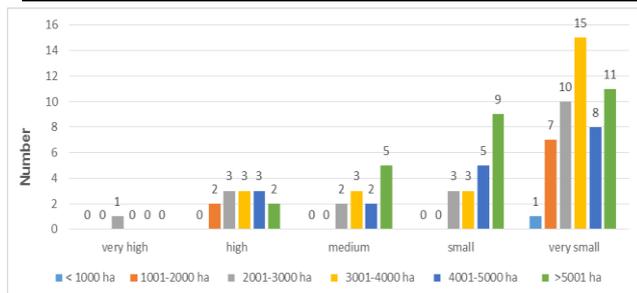


Fig.19. Repartition of agricultural exploitations according to the locality size, regarding the importance of "association on various forms"

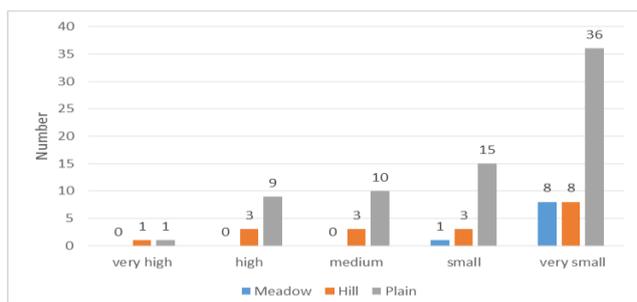


Fig.20. Repartition of agricultural exploitations according to the geographical area, regarding the importance of "association on various forms"

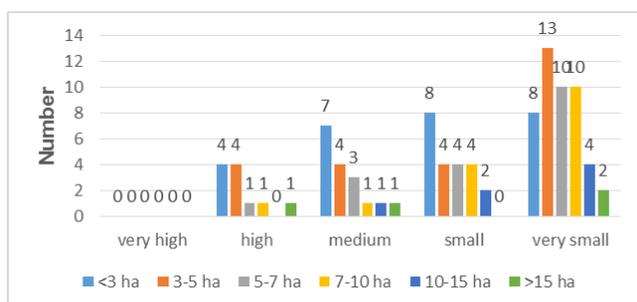


Fig.21. Repartition of agricultural exploitations according to the dimension of the exploitation, regarding the importance of "association on various forms"

Analyzing the relation between the consultancy regarding the association in agriculture and the size of the agricultural farm, represented in *Table 7 and Figure 21*, the following result: for the ensemble of agricultural exploitations, the level "very small" has a percentage of 55.10 %, "small" of 26%; the size of the exploitation does not influence the level of consultancy, due to the fact that χ^2 is insignificant (χ^2 calculated of $14.3 < \chi^2$ theoretic of 41.4, 0.05, $r=0.35$).

CONCLUSIONS

The study comprised the highlighting of the influence level of the size of localities, relief

areas and agricultural farms (exploitations) sizes, on the consultancy provided on the main consultancy activities: projects elaboration, mainly SAPARD projects, plants protection, chemical fertilizers procurement, livestock, marketing of agricultural production and association on various forms

In the consultancy activity, the size of the locality has a very significant influence on the importance of consultancy on issues regarding projects of investment in production farms, of plants protection, of chemical fertilizers procurement, of livestock, of marketing of agricultural production and association in various forms and a significant influence on the agricultural machines procurement. It has no influence on the consultancy level in the field of plants protection and livestock.

The relief area and the dimension of the agricultural exploitation have no influence on the consultancy level given for the analysed issues.

The study highlights the fact that in the localities having a smaller dimension, the consultancy is provided at an inferior level as regards the localities with larger surfaces. This applies due to the small number of consultants and to the difficulty to reach the smaller localities (damaged roads and few transport means).

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