

## EVOLUTION OF THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY IN ROMANIA BETWEEN 2014-2020

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### *Abstract*

*This study follows the evolution of the implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in Romania between 2014-2020, wishing to highlight the characteristics and the results obtained so far. Official documents and reports of the organizations of the European Union, the Ministry of Agriculture and other authorized institutions are analyzed that reveal a series of inconsistencies between what was expected and what is happening in the economic reality of rural areas. Between 2014-March 2018, Romania managed to absorb only 16.1% of the allocated funds, the data from September 2019 show an absorption rate of 32%. The payments made to the beneficiaries of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development registered in the first part of 2019 an increase of the absorption of European funds up to 36.2% compared to the first part of 2016. The structural problems of the Romanian agriculture, numerous small farms, labor in this sector, inadequate and bureaucratic internal administration of funds, the structure of the CAP, made it difficult to better absorb the funds available through CAP.*

*Key words:* evolution, PAC, investment, absorption rate

### INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is not only a means of food production and is not one of the important contributors to the GDP of the European Union. It means much more: it develops rural communities, protects natural resources, preserves the specific lifestyle. Many of the jobs are in this sector, and a large part of the population lives in the rural area.

A main objective of the EU has been to increase agricultural productivity to ensure sufficient supply of food. In this algorithm, farmers are the first to provide the basis of the whole system. A coherent policy to support farmers is desirable.

A common policy at European level imposes common rules on a single market, protects progress, facilitates a common commercial policy and contributes to the economic development of rural areas [13].

The study was conducted to observe the current situation of absorption of funds that are made available to Romania through the CAP. These funds represent an important development factor for the entire economy.

Direct payments for farmers provide a certain stability to their incomes which are

experiencing significant price and production volatility, and financial support can provide them with a decent minimum income that will contribute to the development of the rural communities in which they live.

The implementation of the CAP requires joint decisions at European level supported by those at national or regional level. The objectives envisaged for Romania such as increasing the productivity of agriculture by promoting technical progress, ensuring the rational development of agricultural production, optimal use of production factors especially of the labor force, ensuring a fair standard of living for the agricultural population, stabilizing markets, guaranteeing security of supply, ensuring reasonable prices for products delivered to consumers are those that can be achieved through the proper functioning of the mechanisms, instruments and institutions made available through the CAP.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper analyzes the evolution of PAC in Romania between 2014-2020. The information base of the research was statistical and analytical materials of national and

international databases based on Eurostat, the European Union through cohesion reports, Eurostat, the Ministry of European Funds, the Ministry of Agriculture. Difficulties were due to data lagging behind too many indicators and sub-indicators. Some of them are sent late, others are missing, and some are poorly correlated, the correct centralization of data is difficult.

The researches and conclusions of the specialists in the specialized work on this topic were also taken into account. The main methods of research was comparison, factor analysis, grouping of data regarding the evolution of the CAP in Romania. Taking into account the evolution of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF), the absorption of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

European Union (EU) statistics show that agriculture and forestry occupy 84% of EU territory. As one of the major importers of goods and an exporter of agricultural and food products the EU has a say in global food systems.

The single European market has evolved due to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Through the CAP the agricultural field makes an important contribution to the satisfaction of the citizens in terms of food safety, security, quality and sustainability. The other side are problems related to low profitability, high production standards, high costs with production factors. This sector is an important competitor in the world market in terms of prices, has a high quality and diversity of products and exports the largest volume of agri-food products.

The CAP was created since 1962, and has tried to establish a partnership between agriculture and society. The CAP is one of the common European policies with an important impact, both from the budgetary point of view, in 2014-2020, 39% of the total EU budget was

allocated, but also from the social point of view with a strong role in the EU cohesion.

After cohesion policy, the CAP is the second important common policy. The mechanisms by which the CAP is structured, are summarized in two important pillars: pillar 1 refers to the granting of revenues and involves measures to help the market, and pillar 2 deals with rural development. Market development strategies and income support received funding only from the European Union budget. Concerning rural development, it is considering to be co-financed by the Member States.

Steps have been taken with visible progress, but there are still many problems to be solved. Direct payments have contributed to the survival of 7 million farms, covering about 90% of the agricultural land. These farms represent 46% of the revenues of the EU agricultural community, their percentage being much higher in many regions and sectors [6]. Based on the experience of the CAP from 2007-2013, a common monitoring and evaluation framework (CMEF) is established [7]. The objectives to achieve the CAP performance are:

- viable food production, taking into account agricultural incomes, agricultural productivity and price stability;
- sustainable management of resources and actions to combat climate change, paying special attention to greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity, soil and water;
- balanced territorial development, paying special attention to employment in rural areas, economic growth and poverty in rural areas. as shown in EU Regulation no 1303/2013, and "Technical handbook on the monitoring and evaluation framework of the CAP 2014-2020" from 2015 [14].

The World Bank highlights the fact that the CAP really helps to reduce the differences between the incomes obtained in the agricultural sector and those obtained in other sectors.

Based on previous experience, the multiannual financial framework (MFF) on agriculture sets the final financial value within the CAP as follows: OCP market measures hold 4.3%, i.e. 17,453 billion euros from the total budget 2014-2020, direct payments have 71.3% , ie

291,273 billion euros, and the rural development measures are 99,587 billion euros, so 24.2%, the total 2014-2020 CAP is 408,313 billion euros. Regarding the EAFRD, Romania is one of the main beneficiaries receiving, for example 14.1% of the actual payments in 2017 [12].

Over the years there has been a decrease in CAP allocations from the EU budget [2]. The decrease is 28.2% if you take into account the percentage from 2020 compared to 1980. A decrease is also visible in agricultural expenditure compared to the EU's gross national income, which is 0.20% in 2020 compared to 1990.

During 2014-2020, the CAP support is over 20 billion euros, of which 11,35 billion in Pillar 1 (EAGF) and 8,12 billion in Pillar 2 (EAFRD). The effects of using these funds to change the quality of life and well-being of farmers and the rural population are a matter of debate, and some conclusions are based on the proposals for better repatriation of subsidies under the CAP, for the period 2021-2027. At European level, in terms of Implementation Progress (total cost) for European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, at present the situation is this according to Fig. 1.

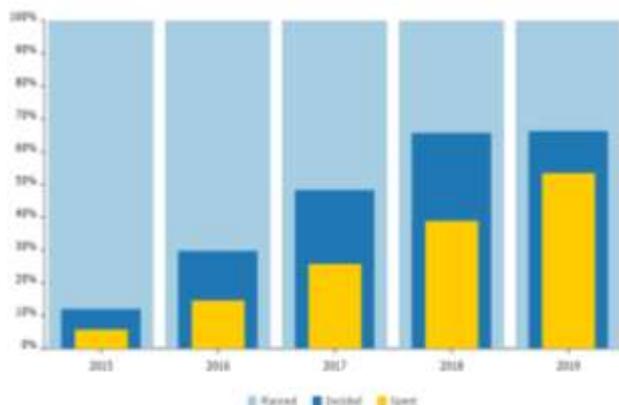


Fig. 1. Implementation Progress (total cost) for European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development  
 Source: EAFRD, European Structural and Investments Funds, Europa EU,  
<https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/funds/eafrd#top>,  
 Accessed on Feb. 20, 2020 [5].

Evolution is positive, in 2015 - 6% of the planned funds were spent in 2016 - 14%, in 2017 - 26%, in 2018 - 39%, and in 2019 - 53%. In Romania, agriculture is an important factor of the Romanian economy, coming with 7% of

the gross domestic product. But Romanian agriculture faces a number of structural problems, among which we list:

- a polarized structure of the farms, 7% of the medium-sized farms manage 70% of the agricultural area. One third of EU farms are in Romania, and half of them are small and very small. This is also explained by Romania's opposition to cap proposals that would leave many farms out:
- the preponderance of vegetable production over animal production
- low level of integration on the value chain
- little organization and representation of farmers (small and very small farms are poorly organized and represented, the bargaining power and the position of farmers requires consolidation, including through accessible consulting services)
- sustainable use of natural resources
- adaptability to climate change and the application of measures to combat them
- depopulation of villages and urgency of generational renewal
- Slavic local governance and administrative culture [4].

For 2018 at European level, 156.1 billion EURO commitment loans are foreseen, of which 58.1 billion euros are for the CAP, which means 37.6%. Direct payments were worth 40.1 billion Euros, ie 26%, rural development measures were 14.3 billion Euros, or 9.1%.

In order to implement the CAP, a complete land register and a well-developed payment system are required. In Romania there are small farms, which raise a number of difficulties in their eligibility to access European funds. Only large farms will access these funds [8].

Romania applies a level of CAP decoupled aid per hectare below the European average. The EU allowed the minimum area to access the 0.3 hectare funds, but Romania decided this minimum area to be one hectare which led to almost half of the number of Romanian farms cannot access these funds.

Pillar I of the CAP is aimed at developing market and income and is based on direct payment to farmers. A first step used for five years was the Single Area Payment Scheme

(SPUS). This program involves giving a lump sum per hectare, regardless of the farmers' decision to cultivate the land. The responsibility of implementing this program lies with the Agricultural Payments and Intervention Agency (APIA). Direct payments are made to stabilize farmers' incomes and increase the competitiveness and sustainability of agriculture in the EU.

Regarding Pillar I, there is a particular situation regarding Romania. 92.25% of the Romanian farms have less than 5 hectares. In 2018, the number of those who submitted applications for such farms is 73.5%, according to the data from the Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS), managed by the Agriculture Payments and Intervention Agency.

In this respect, the Scheme for small farmers has been applied, which encourages the possession of larger areas of land through additional payments of 5 euros / hectare for the owners of land between 1 and 5 hectares and 45 euros / hectare for those who own land with an area of between 6 and 30 hectares. The simplified scheme for small farmers offers a maximum annual total payment of up to 1,250 euros per farmer and reduces the administrative burden. The need for such a scheme can be seen in the fact that about 80% of the farmers who asked for direct support opted for this scheme, one of the highest rates in the EU [1].

Pillar II of the CAP is aimed at rural development, focusing on support for farmers, environmental measures, developing rural infrastructure. Regarding Pillar II, for the period 2014-2020 there is a decrease of 15% compared to the previous period in respect of all EAFRD actions. 80% confinement for environmental and climate actions, non-productive investments, PEI (European Innovation Partnership), LEADER are maintained. The co-financing is 100% for the activities financed from the funds transferred to the EAFRD from the EAGF [9].

The evolution of the absorption of the funds made available through the CAP is sinuous. It has to be taken into account that in terms of absolute value, the financial allocations for the CAP, especially for the direct payments, have

undergone a constant increase considering the enlargement process in 2004, 2007 and 2013. The money allocated to the CAP has a downward trend in the last years, and this trend will be mainly recorded in the future multiannual financial framework, according to expert estimates [3].

For the period 2007-2013, 8 billion euros were spent for rural development, of which we mention: 299 million euros for 12,700 new farmers, modernization of 2,800 farms for which 1.87 billion euros were spent, support for the restructuring of 52,700 farms of semi-subsistence, improving biodiversity on an area of 3,7 million hectares and aid for organic farming on 85.212 hectares [1].

In 2014, 1.2 billion euros of direct payments were made, having as beneficiaries 1,186,290 agricultural farms. For 2015 measures were taken for the wine sector worth 42 million euros. Also this year it was decided that 219 million euros from direct payments will be used for coupled support measures. This type of support refers to aid for sectors in difficulty. 13% of the EAGF through 19 types of measures were used for the agricultural sectors considered in difficulty [4].

Only in 2015, money was paid from the Fund for Rural Development and Fisheries, and in 2016 they are paid from the EAGF. At mid-2017 the amount that is absorbed is almost 6 billion euros [1].

The direct consequence of the cohesion process was the increase of direct payments by about 15%. In 2019-2020 the payment is 195.5 euros/ha and reaches 1,91 billion euros annually.

In 2014-2020, the N + 3 rule functioned, which implies the loss of the right to reimburse from the humanitarian budget the amounts unspent and undeclared to the Community budget in the next 3 years, which resulted in delays in the implementation of programs with negative influences overall on the EU budget. Also during this period, 1.15 billion euros were forecasted for the aid of areas with natural constraints, which increased by approximately 51% compared to the 2007-2013 financial year. an increase of 25% of the single payment for a maximum of 60 hectares. The organic farming for which the PNDR has allocated 200

million euros, as well as agricultural land worth 909 million euros is taken into account [4].

In the first half of 2018, the European Commission adopted a new multiannual financial framework (MFF) for 2021-2027, but also a proposal for the reform of the CAP. The European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) constitute the CAP budget and comprise 365 billion euros. The 9.1% decrease from the previous budget continues the downward trend and is a consequence of the imminent departure of the United Kingdom, a very important contributor to the Union's net budget.

The difficult absorption in the financial year 2014-2020 had as a cause a number of internal problems such as: the late start of the operational programs, the projects did not have a long-term vision to create new jobs, wrong payment assessments, poor quality of projects, bureaucracy, insufficient information of citizens [1].

For 2019, according to Eurostat statistics, Romania presents the following situation according to Fig. 2.

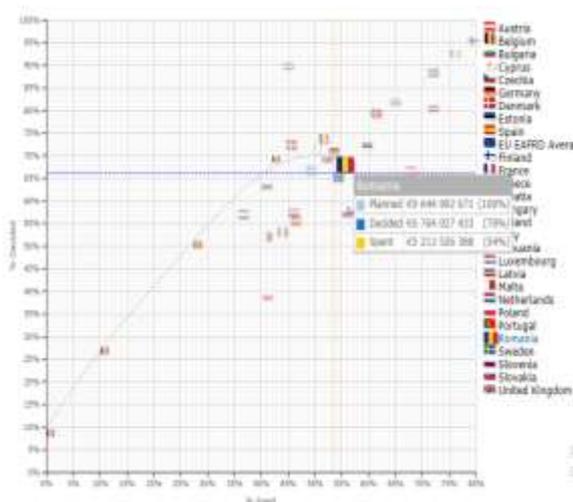


Fig. 2. Implementation by country for European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development – total cost of selection and spending as % of planned  
 Source: EAFRD, European Structural and Investments Funds, Europa EU,  
<https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/funds/eafrd#top>,  
 Accessed on Feb. 20, 2020 [5].

The absorption rate is 16.1% compared to the European average of 18%. Between 2014 and March 2018, our country received 10.2 billion euros from the financial year 2014-2020. Over half of this money is the advances sent ex officio for the beginning of the programming period and direct payments per hectare (EAGF) worth 4.28 billion euros without the need for projects [15].

The data on the absorption of the European refineries, as well as the data on the CAP are constantly updated. The payments made to the beneficiaries of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development registered in the first part of 2019 an increase of the absorption of European funds up to 36.2% to the first part of 2016.

In January 2020 the reports made by the Ministry of European funds showed the following situation:

- 11.69 billion euros European money entered in Romania through the Cohesion Policy and the Agricultural Policy, to which there is also added 7.92 billion euros direct payments to farmers;
- 26.43 billion euros - the total value of the open financing lines;
- 46.75 billion euros the value of the projects submitted for these financing lines;
- 29.4 billion euros the total value of the financing contracts signed.

In Romania, there were allocated 31 billion euros, of which it received from the EU 11.69 billion euros, which means an absorption rate of 38%, given that the average absorption rate at EU level is 41%. If you subtract from these amounts the pre-financing amount is about 9 billion euros, which means an effective absorption rate of about 30%.

The absorption of the European Structural and Investment Funds (FESI) thus shows in January 2020 a total value of 11,697,050,797 euros. Table 1 explains the main operational programs in Romania and their related amounts, being counted and percentage as it means from the total amount available.

Table 1. The absorption of the European Structural and Investment Funds (euro)

Time schedule	Human Capital Operational Program	Operational Program Technical assistance	Operational Program competitiveness	Operational Program Administrative capacity	The large Infrastructure Operational Program	National Program for Rural Development	Regional Operational Program	Operational Program Fisheries and Maritime Affairs	Direct payments to farmers
Value	1.2 billions euro	151.7 millions euro	397.4 millions euro	154.52 millions euro	2.75 billions euro	4.87 billions euro	1.81 billions euro	53 millions euro	7.92 billions euro
Percent	11.33%	1.30%	3.40%	1.30%	24.56%	41.80%	15.55%	0.45%	25.54 % of the total allocated funds of 31 billion euros

Source: data processed by the author after the Ministry of European Funds in Romania, <http://mfe.gov.ro/informatii-de-interes-public/rezultate/>, Accessed on Feb.20, 2020 [11].

As it can be seen, the highest absorption rate is that from PNDR, managed by the Ministry of Agriculture, which demonstrates the usefulness and necessity of these funds for the development of rural areas. To these amounts are added direct payments to farmers worth 7.92 billion euro and represents 25.54% of the total allocated funds of 31 billion euros. In December 2019, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development reported the situation of payments for National Programs for Rural Development (NPRD). In Table 2 we

illustrated the implementing stage for some measures and sub-measures related to NPRD. It is noted that most projects and most payments were made to Measure 13 "Payments for areas facing natural or other specific constraints" with 89%, 6.1 "Support for the installation of young farmers" with 85.79%, 6.2 "Support for setting up non-agricultural activities in rural areas "with 77.62%, at the opposite pole there is 4.2" De minimis schemes "with 1.76%.

Table 2. The stage of implementation National Programs for Rural Development (NPRD), December 2019

Submeasure/ Measure	NPRD financial allocation 2014-2020	Value Payments made	%
1.1 "Support for vocational training and skills acquisition"	54,191,021.76	3,657,667.23	6.74
4.1 "Investments in agricultural holdings"	844,672,337.89	452,028,487.31	53.51
4.1a "Investments in orchards"	284,356,108.71	78,927,524.05	27.75
4.2 "Support for investments in the processing/marketing of agricultural products"	359,883,695	73,846,093	20.51
4.2 "GBER State aid scheme"	112,500,000	31,966,183	28.41
4.2 "De minimis scheme"	12,500,000	221,184	1.76
4.3 "Investments for the development, modernization or adaptation of agricultural and forestry infrastructure - irrigation"	433,978,719	97,845,867	22.54
4.3 "Investments for the development, modernization or adaptation of agricultural and forestry infrastructure - agricultural access infrastructure"	130,298,233	46,471,651	35.66
6.1 "Support for the installation of young farmers"	426,744,132	366,121,245	85.79
6.2 "Support for setting up non-agricultural activities in rural areas"	106,569,178	82,722,904	77.62
6.3 "Support for the development of small farms"	246,493,158	141,960,907	57.59
6.4 "Investments in the creation and development of non-agricultural activities"	166,503,969	70,919,499	42.59
7.2 "Investments in the creation and modernization of the basic infrastructure on a small scale - road infrastructure of local interest"	1,109,058,285	305,518,853	27.54
7.6 "Investments associated with the protection of cultural heritage"	188,010,999	107,351,983	57.09
Measure 10 "Agri-environment and climate"	1,069,002,274	364,575,062	34.10
Measure 13 "Payments for areas facing natural or other specific constraints"	1,317,643,914	1,172,746,684	89.00
16.4 "Support for horizontal and vertical cooperation between actors in the supply chain"	10,085,582	1,447,780	14.35
19.2 "Support for the implementation of actions within the local development strategy"	495,598,466	165,215,850	33.33
Measure 20 "Technical assistance"	209,099,948	87,415,220	41.80
TOTAL	9,441,583,798	4,360,373,898	46.18

Source: The stage of implementation of PNDR 2014-2020 on 05.12.2019, <https://www.madr.ro/pndr-2014-2020/implementare-pndr-2014-2020/situatia-proiectelor-depuse-2014-2020.html?start=10>, Accessed on Dec. 09, 2019 [10].

But there are also many measures and sub-measures for which no payment was made such as: Sub-measure 1.2 "Support for demonstration and information activities", Sub-measure 3.2 "Support for information and promotion activities carried out by producer groups within the internal market", Sub-measure 7.4 "Support for investments in the creation, improvement or extension of basic local services for the rural population, including recreational and cultural ones, and the related infrastructure", Sub-measure 9.1a "Establishment of producer groups in the fruit sector".

## CONCLUSIONS

Even though official data shows a declining trend for CAP allocations at European level from one financial year to the next, it remains a priority set of measures in the EU budget. Romania is one of the Member States that enjoys generous allocations from the European CAP budget.

For the 2014-2020 financial year, a number of difficulties related to the CAP structure were identified, which created difficulties for Romania, which has a very fragmented agricultural land with many small and very small farms. To this is added an aging population, but with a high percentage of the labor force involved in agriculture and inefficient and bureaucratic administration.

Over time, the CAP has become increasingly complicated and bureaucratized, difficult to understand and implement. In Romania, access to information was difficult at the beginning of the period, and then improved. However, farmers have had to adapt quickly to changes and procedures.

The state of implementation of the National Programs for Rural Development (NPRD) is not a satisfactory one. We are at the end of the financial period 2014-2020, and Romania made payments of only 46.18% for this program. It is necessary to rethink, prioritize, clarify and simplification the measures that will help the absorption of the funds made available by Romania by the EU.

The CAP, especially through the rural development policy, has huge potential for the

prosperity of rural communities, but which has not been used to the fullest by the Romanian authorities. According to the analysis, the funds successfully attracted were those of the National Rural Development Program with over 4.87 billion euros. But the country-wide absorption rate remains below the EU average. Through the measures taken to increase the subsidy per hectare depending on how large the farm is, it is trying to reduce the number of farms and the excessive fragmentation of the farms. In our country, the excess of bureaucracy, the cumbersome and little explained procedures, the insufficient involvement of the local administrations led to the mentioned results.

The direct payments to the farmers have an immediate impact with beneficial effects for them thus leading to the raising of the standard of living, ensuring the minimum incomes of the farmers, reducing the risk of poverty in the rural areas.

The post-2020 period is being announced with major changes in view of the Paris Agreement on climate change, the effects of Brexit and the subsequent reform proposals that are still being negotiated.

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