

MAIN MEASURES FOR SMALL FARMS AFTER THE ACCESSION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION THROUGH THE NATIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

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Abstract

The small family farm is recognized, both in the literature and at the level of European and national decision-makers, as a main actor in supporting the vitality of rural areas and rural economies, being treated prioritarily. This paper aimed to present the main measures addressed to the small farms after the accession to the EU through the National Rural Development Programme (NRDP) in Romania. For this purpose, it was used a methodology based on the collection of information from the literature, as well as from the European and national reports on small family farms in Europe and in Romania. After the accession to the European Union, Romania has constantly supported the small/semi-subsistence farms through a set of measures from National Rural Development Programme NRDP2007-2013/NRDP 2014-2020 and from the National Strategic Plan 2023-2027 that is under implementation at the moment. These measures mainly aimed at the market orientation of small/semi-subsistence farms, yet this support was not sufficient to contribute to farm consolidation. To reverse this situation, a national strategic vision is needed, with a national budget, supplemented by EU funding.

Key words: rural development, small family farm, NRDP

INTRODUCTION

If small family farms were analyzed only in terms of agricultural production, this would reveal a number of drawbacks: they still largely use traditional technology, they use limited resources inefficiently, have insufficient (poor) financial resources, have low efficiency and productivity, are poorly integrated in the market – which would reinforce the idea that the small farm is not a competitive agricultural structure and it would be inefficient and irrelevant to modern agriculture. However, it should not be overlooked that almost 50% of the world population lives and works in the rural areas and on small family farms, which provides them an important social role. Rural population density and thus rural viability/sustainability depend on small farm viability [1].

Researchers have found that there is a direct link between the number of small farms and the degree of rural depopulation, which can be explained through the following causality phenomenon: as the number of small farms decreases, the agricultural labour force that is

not absorbed by large-scale agriculture also decreases, as large-scale agriculture is highly specialized, much more mechanized and needs less labour; it is not absorbed by the non-agricultural sector either, thus leading to unemployment and rural migration implicitly [2].

Researchers highlight the role of small farms in economic growth, in poverty alleviation and food security, mainly in the developing regions of the world. At the same time, they suggest that an increase of small-scale agriculture would have greater multiplier effects than any other sector [8], [17].

Small family farms have a high level of resilience, and thus producers can survive in difficult and risky conditions [5]. Small farms also play an important role in the creation and protection of cultural and natural heritage.

Last but not least, small-scale agriculture is considered to be more environment friendly, as it offers a number of benefits, such as biodiversity conservation, limiting the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides and guaranteeing animal welfare. For a long period of time, small-scale family farms were

disadvantaged as compared to large (industrial) farms; yet, with the increasing awareness of the important role of small family farms in promoting sustainable agriculture, in the sustainable development of rural areas, there have been a change of paradigm according to which the role of these small-sized farm entities is not limited to the production of foodstuffs, but they also contribute to the supply of public social and environmental goods [4], [7], [16]. This is the reason why the economic viability of farms cannot be measured according to economic principles (income, income or value added and production costs, as well as indices of efficiency, profitability, liquidity, stability, productivity and investments [6], but it should also take into consideration social aspects (aimed at empowerment, equity and inclusion) and environmental aspects (natural resources, pollution and biodiversity) that the household farm provides.

Globally, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) [3] underlines the importance of family farming in alleviating hunger and poverty and for improving food security and living standards in rural areas, while protecting environment and biodiversity. The social, economic and environmental importance of family farming [3] is also highlighted by the fact that the year 2014 was declared by the United Nations as the “International Year of Family Farming”, and the period 2019-2028 as the “International Decade of Family Farming”. Even though family farming has been the key element of the European Model of Agriculture since 1997 (European Council in Luxembourg), for many years the small family farm was “neglected” by the Common Agricultural Policies, by the NRDP respectively, which has favoured the category of large farms in terms of absorption of EU funds, for the modernization and development of farm businesses. At EU level, recently, there have been an increased criticism of the ineffective policies supporting family farms, a great number of these farms disappearing from the European rural landscape; to keep the countryside “alive” particular attention should be paid to small farms. Researchers suggest that

encouraging/supporting small farms would have greater multiplier effects than any other sector.

The reality of our days places the future of family farm in front of a new challenge that they have to face, namely the new requirements with regard to the sustainable farming practice that lies at the core of several European strategies and policies from the European Green Deal.

In this context, the purpose of this study was to present the main measures addressed to the small farms after the accession to the EU through the National Rural Development Programme (NRDP) in Romania.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the present paper, the main working hypothesis is that sustainable agriculture is the core subject of several European strategies and policies, generating additional requirements for Romania’s agriculture, for small family farms. The transposition of objectives from the European strategies and policies on agriculture is achieved through the National Strategic Plan for the period 2023-2027.

For the purpose of this paper, a methodology based on the collection of information from the literature (online scientific papers – Researchgate, Google Academic, Academica.edu etc., various scientific journals, specialty books) was used, as well as from the European and national reports on the role of small family farms across the world and in Europe; the analysis of the new NSP 2023-2027 applicable in Romania in terms of the new perspectives opened for the farms in our country was also used. This literature review aims at achieving an overall picture and understanding the processes that take place with regard to the approached thematic.

The paper will also make an analysis of effects at the level of small farms in Romania in the period of the two programming periods, NRDP 2007-2013 and NRDP 2014-2020; as well as an analysis of these agricultural units in demographic, social, cultural and environmental terms, on the basis of available statistical data from the National Institute of Statistics (Tempo-online, Farm Structure

Survey, Population censuses), as well as from Eurostat database.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Support to small family farms through NRDP 2007-2013

The NRDP 2007-2013 measures which were directly aimed at supporting the restructuring and modernization of agricultural holdings were the following: Measure 141 “Support for semi-subsistence agricultural holdings”, Measure 112 “Setting up of young farmers”, Measure 121 “Modernization of agricultural holdings”, Measure 123 “Adding value to agricultural and forestry products”.

Table 1. NRDP 2007-2013 – Main measures aimed at small farmers

Measure	Allocated funds – total cost (thou. euros)	Number of contracts (no.)	Financial execution rate (%)
M112	303,913.97	12,700	98.27
M121	1,531,325.19	2,787	87.74
M123	1,786,571.13	518	76.78
M141	359,568.42	50,486	92.73

Source: [10].

In the period 2007-2013, the small farm targeted by the NRDP was the semi-subsistence farm that produced mainly for self-consumption but also sold part of its production. The semi-subsistence farm size was 2-8 ESU. The beneficiaries could be natural and authorized natural persons up to 62 years of age, who presented a Business plan for the restructuring of agricultural holding.

In the case of Measure 121, small farmers had co-financing problems (non-refundable aid amounting to 40-70%), which limited the access of potential beneficiaries that would have been interested. Starting from the eligibility conditions specific to this measure, it can be noted that the segment of agricultural holdings that already have a high competitiveness level has received support, while small and medium-sized holdings are self-excluded due to their low ability to provide co-financing. A similar situation was found in the case of Measure 123, where the co-financing rate was even higher (50-80%), and

small processors’ access even more difficult [9].

These two measures (M121 and 123) were allocated the largest amounts, but they were accessible only for those agricultural holdings that already had a high development level. At the same time, small farmers (M141) and setting up of young farmers (M112) received significantly lower public resources.

In conclusion, the NRDP 2007-2013 measures did not positively influence the consolidation of small farmers, as these received insufficient financial support for this purpose, while the large and competitive farmers continue to receive significant support.

Support to small family farms through NRDP 2014-2020

NRDP 2014-2020 came with a set of measures meant to improve the general performance of small-sized agricultural holdings; to increase market orientation, job opportunities and incomes of small-sized agricultural holdings; to encourage small farmers association and small farm transformation. The following measures directly targeted small farms: sM4.1 Investments in agricultural holdings, sM6.1 Support for setting up of small farmers, sM6.3 Support for the development of small farms, sM6.5 "Small Farmer Scheme".

Table 2. NRDP 2014-2020 – Main measures dedicated to small farmers

Measure	Allocated funds (thousand euros)	Number of contracts (ongoing and completed)	Financial execution rate (%)
sM4.1	1,601,904.55	3,028	60.50
sM4.1 ITI	33,000.00	49	55.92
sM4.1a	325,435.04	564	66.74
sM4.1a ITI	5,000.00	6	66.77
sM6.1	466,843.87	10,704	93.41
sM6.1 ITI	10,000.00	201	81.32
sM6.3	241,633.56	13,730	84.96
sM6.3 ITI	5,000.00	187	55.54
sM6.5	6,000	3	54.16

Source: [12].

The support provided through *Sub-measure 4.1 “Investments in agricultural holdings”* was addressed to all agricultural holdings, to small farms inclusively. The investment had to be made on a farm with a minimum economic size

of 8,000 SO (standard output). This sub-measure received a significant financial allocation that represented 12.4% of total public allocation of NRDP. For small farms, the problem was limited access to financing as these did not meet the economic farm size criterion. Small farms would have had access to this type of funding if they had been members in an association, but there were very few cooperatives in Romania (230 active cooperatives and 1,000 non-active cooperatives in the year 2018).

The interest for *Sub-measure 6.1 "Setting up of young farmers"* was quite significant, sM6.1 led to the establishment of 10,228 new farms, through the financial support to setting up of young professional farmers who operate 65,557.40 hectares. By rejuvenating the managerial body and its professionalization, Sub-measure 6.1 has contributed, at least indirectly, to innovation, as the young farm owners/managers supported through NRDP have a higher level of knowledge and technical skills. As a result, an increase of productivity can be noticed in the case of farms that receive financial support through sM6.1 [11].

The high interest of beneficiaries to access *Sub-measure 6.3 "Support for the development of small farms"*, revealed by the great number of submitted applications, points to the need to continue to support farm structural changes, farm production diversification and its market orientation.

According to the On-Going Evaluation Study of NRDP 2014-2020, the sM6.3 support contributed to the diversification of production oriented towards consumer needs, to the increase of sales and better access to the market; but the greatest contribution is that it reduced land abandonment, in mountain and marginal areas in particular, by creating new opportunities in agriculture [13].

The effect on the farms supported by sM 6.3 was not sufficient to produce obvious structural changes, due to the low value of financial allocation dedicated to small farms and the low value of supported projects.

The high interest of potential beneficiaries in accessing *Sub-measure 6.5 "Small Farmer Scheme"* can be seen in the high value of submitted applications (63,296 euros) as

compared to the allocated amount (6,000 euros). Yet it is considered that there is a low access to this measure, and among the factors that contributed to this we can list the following [14]: i) reluctance of small agricultural land owners to permanently transfer their land; ii) relatively small value of support (120% of the support previously received under the Simplified Small Farmer Scheme from Pillar I) and the relatively short period – of 5 years – for which the support is provided, compared to a permanent transfer (or a minimum 20-year lease); iii) problems concerning the cadastre of agricultural land in Romania, in the conditions when in some situations the ownership of the land or the physical boundaries of land into ownership could not be proven otherwise than by Land Book documents; iv) the condition of prior registration at APIA is not justified and the measure might be also applied to applicants who have not benefitted from any other support from EAFRD; v) the persons who previously received support under the Simplified Small Farmer Scheme from Pillar I for holdings consisting partly of land into ownership and partly of leased land were excluded from eligibility for funding. Also excluded from eligibility for funding were the persons who wished to transfer only part of the holding for which they had previously received support.

In addition to these, there are also problems in relation to the administrative conditions for financing, out of which: a) the caravans for information and communication to potential eligible beneficiaries of Sub-measure 6.5 about this funding opportunity were not sufficient, and the target group was informed only to a low extent; b) beneficiaries did not know when to submit the application and how to formulate it so as to meet the eligibility condition for the transfer of the holding and not lose the payment related to the year in which the funding application was submitted; c) potential eligible beneficiaries of transfers are informed on the availability of funding only directly, and consultants are not financially motivated to provide advice for this measure; d) potential eligible beneficiaries have no experience in writing projects and no digital skills to complete the funding application online,

neither legal knowledge necessary to verify the submitted documents and the contractual provisions necessary to be inserted in the legal documents related to the transfer of holding; e) misunderstanding the conditions regarding the land lease period, namely the land lease contract had to be concluded for a period of minimum 20 years, starting with the year when the funding application was submitted, but many applicants concluded the contract for 20 years from the date of signing the contract, thus losing days or weeks compared to the minimum period and thus became non-eligible. After Romania's accession to the EU, our country's agriculture modernization through the utilization of European funds became noticeable. Romania has benefitted from more than 15 billion euros from EAFRD managed under AFIR for the implementation of the two National Rural Development Plans, as well as over 19 billion euros from EAGF – for direct payments managed by APIA.

Obviously, the European funds allocated through EAGF and EAFRD were not the only funding sources for agriculture development. Many agricultural entrepreneurs, especially the owners of large and very large farms, have chosen in recent years to reinvest the profit obtained in the modernization of their own business. The problem of Romanian agriculture is that we can count such farms on the fingers of our hand, and there are very many small and very small agricultural holdings with no access to modern equipment and technologies and no noticeable concern to improve their performance. There is an excessive polarization, with a few very large “high-tech” farms, and with hundreds of thousand “low-tech” farms.

The main objective of Romania regarding agriculture is the consolidation of small and medium-sized farms according to the new National Strategic Plan for the next period.

Support to small family farms through the National Strategic Plan 2023-2027

The support to small and medium-sized farms and generational renewal in farms are priority objectives of the new financial programming period 2023-2027, and there are specifically designed interventions to help these farms, under both Pillar I and Pillar II.

In the case of direct payments, the most important contribution for small farmers comes from the PD-02 intervention in Complementary Redistributive Income Support for Sustainability (CRISS), with a total allocated amount of 978.8 million euros, representing 10.00% of the amount allocated for direct payments. Another important intervention is PD-05 – Environment-friendly agricultural practices on small farms (traditional household farms), with a total allocated amount of 478.5 million euros (4.89%). The support provided to young farmers through interventions from Pillar I has a relatively low share, i.e. 0.69%.

From Pillar II, 1.84% of the allocated amount goes to small-sized farms (DR-14) and 4.27% to setting up of young farmers (DR-30), and 2.89% to the consolidation of farms with recently set-up farm heads (DR-12).

The new NSP 2023-2027 comes with a novelty regarding the support to small farms, targeting the farms with an area of 1-50 ha – which represent the large majority of farms in Romania and are the key elements of EAFRD funding, contributing to the balanced structural development desideratum and reducing structural disparities.

Under Pillar 1, funds specially allocated to small farms (1-50 ha) are provided under the form of PD-02 “Complementary Redistributive Income Support for Sustainability” (CRISS) to contribute to supporting the rural area vitality. In addition to the aid granted, this support also comes with a series of environmental conditionalities that generate certain difficulties for farmers.

The CRISS is also addressed to farmers with very small areas, taking into consideration the fact that these will no longer benefit from “Small Farmer” payment, as this support proved to be non-attractive for them in the CAP programming period 2014-2020; yet these farmers are the most important vectors of the short supply chain and environment-friendly farming practice. The CRISS aims to directly contribute to the diminution of income disparities between the agricultural sector and other sectors of national economy, thus leading to the diminution of rural-urban migration of rural youth and of external migration.

In the year 2020, according to APIA, the farms with a physical size between 1 and 50 hectares represented 758,512 farm beneficiaries. The support provided to these farms (with 1 to 50 hectares) is a guarantee to support food and social security and to increase the environmental ambition of the Union [15].

These farms, although representing most farmers registered in the Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS), i.e. 97.1% of total farmers, use only 3,748.473 ha (39% of total IACS area, with an average farm size of 6 hectares), in the context of accelerated concentration of agricultural areas by the categories of medium and large-sized farms, in Romania's agrarian structure.

Box 1. PD-02 – Complementary Redistributive Income Support for Sustainability (CRISS)

For the CRISS, Romania allocates 10% of the direct payments ceiling, respectively 978.7 million euros for the period 2023-2027, of which: 189.7 million euros in 2024, 192.8 million euros in 2025, 195.2 million euros in 2026, 198.0 million euros in 2027 and 203.0 million euros in 2028.

For the farms with areas of 1-50 ha, respectively 3,748,473 ha, in the year 2023, the annual planned unit amount is 50.61 euros/ha in 2024, 51.42 euros/ha in 2025, 52.08 euros/ha in 2026, 52.82 euros/ha in 2027 and 54.16 euros/ha in 2028.

This support is complementary to other forms of support also from Pillar 1 Direct Payments, such as BISS – Basic Income Support for Sustainability, eco-schemes for the crop production sector or coupled support schemes for the crop and/or animal sector.

Source: [15].

The agricultural pattern represented by the farms with 1-50 ha also directly contributes to the objectives of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (sustainable development objectives: 2, 3, 12 and 13), and to achieve the objectives from the EU Farm to Fork Strategy by developing the sustainable food production across the country.

Another intervention benefitting small farms also under Pillar I is *PD-05 – Environment-friendly agricultural practices on small farms (traditional household farms)*, which is an eco-scheme addressed to small-sized farmers (1-10 ha). This eco-scheme represents a uniform annual payment rate per eligible land area, supplementing BISS.

The purpose of this eco-scheme is to encourage traditional household farms, with an area up to 10 ha, to apply environment-friendly farming practices and continue the traditions of rural areas in agriculture. At the same time, the eco-scheme also helps small farmers by maintaining rural area vitality, protecting natural capital and maintaining biodiversity.

Mandatory requirements for this eco-scheme are the following: a) the farmer must own, in addition to agricultural land, a number of animals from the following species: sheep, goats, cattle, buffaloes, equids ranging from 0.3 to 1 LLU/ha, registered in the National Database of ANSVSA and ANZ, as appropriate, for a period of minimum 6 months (according to SMR 11); b) in the case when the farmer operates arable land, this must cultivate at least 10% of the area with: leguminous, nitrogen-fixing crops, which are rich in plant protein, according to phyto-technical and agricultural technology practices.

Box 2. PD-05 – Environment-friendly farming practice on small farms (traditional household farms)

Indicative annual financial allocation (total public expenditure) 478.5 million euros of which: 2024 (91.3 million euros), 2025 (93.7 million euros), 2026 (95.7 million euros), 2027 (96.5 million euros) and 2028 (101.3 million euros).

The planned unit amount for the period 2023-2027 is 76 euros/ha. The maximum amount is 98.8 euros/ha. The minimum amount is 64.60 euros/ha.

Source: [15].

Thus, the cultivation of these protein-rich species improves the sustainable cycle of nitrogen and organic matter in soil, being good precursor crops. By adding nitrogen to soil, the application of chemical fertilizers will be reduced.

One of the following specific conditions add to the above-mentioned requirements: a) Farmers must plant at least 2 trees per ha, at farm level, each year. For grassland areas, only this variant is applied. This requirement contributes to crop protection, halting and reversing biodiversity loss, improving eco-system services and conserving habitats and landscapes that can be a refuge for birds and animals. On medium term, this requirement also contributes to the reduction of soil erosion, to the reduction of soil temperature in the areas in the proximity of

farm, also having a slight influence on the capacity to retain water in soil and carbon sequestration; b) Farmers are obliged in the period June 15 – October 15 to keep the land covered on at least 85% of the arable area of holding, respectively on at least 75% of land covered with permanent crops, thus exceeding the environmental target imposed by GAEC 6 of 80% for arable land and 50% for permanent crops respectively.

On the basis of the experience in implementing Sub-measure 4.1 “Investments in agricultural holdings”, the intervention of *DR-14 Investments in small farms* is a useful tool meant to determine the structural change and opening to the market of small farms with potential to become viable agricultural holdings, as well as to increase the capacity to identify new opportunities to valorize the production of these farms.

Box 3. DR-14 – Investments in small farms

Indicative annual financial allocation (total public expenditure) 108 million euros, of which: 81.0 million euros in 2025 and 27.0 million euros in 2026.

Maximum non-reimbursable public support 15,000 50,000 euros.

The investment must be made on a farm with an economic size ranging from 4,000 to 11,999 SO, respectively 2,000 to 11,999 SO for the livestock farms populated with native breeds; no decrease of the economic size under this threshold will be accepted.

Small farmers will have to prove the commercialization of their own production in a percentage of at least 20%.

Source: [15].

The small farms taken into consideration in this intervention are those agricultural holdings with an economic size ranging from 4,000 SO to 11,999 SO. These represent 12.45% of total farms and 81.53% of farms with an economic size over 4,000 SO (NIS 2016), being an important segment of farms in Romania that have a primordial role in ensuring food security and resilience and in promoting extensive environment-friendly farming practices.

Romania’s new NSP provides support to small-sized/subsistence farms through DR 14 “Investments in small farms”, promoting, on the basis of selection criteria, digitalization/precision farming actions at the level of investments proposed by these.

In the NPS 2023-2027, there are a series of actions generally targeting small and medium-sized farms (through DR 12 Consolidation of holdings of newly set up farmers, DR 20 – Investments in the livestock sector, DR 30 Support for setting up young farmers).

Box 4. DR-12 Investments in consolidating the holdings of already set up and newly set up farmers

Indicative annual financial allocation (total public expenditure) = 169.5 million euros (of which 67.8 million euros in 2025 and 101.7 million euros in 2026)

Maximum value 200,000 euros per project.

Eligible beneficiaries: Young farmers who have completed the implementation of business plan under Sub-measure 6.1 of the NRDP 2014-2020, transition included, or farmers who have set up no more than 5 years before submitting the application for support for this intervention, up to 45 years old at the moment of submitting the financing request and are farm heads.

The intensity of non-reimbursable public support will be related to the eligible costs per project and will not exceed 80% of eligible costs for the investments made by young farmers and 65% of eligible costs in the case of other categories of beneficiaries.

The investment must be made on a farm with a minimum economic farm size of 12,000 € SO.

Source: [15].

The DR 30 intervention “Setting up of new farmers” is considered extremely important for Romania through the expected impact on limiting the abandonment of these areas, with environment, social and economic effects, young farmers having high potential for integrating know-how, digitalization/innovation solutions in rural areas.

A problem that is considered very important for the development of the Romanian rural area is generational renewal of farmers; the new NSP encourages already set up farmers to continue to develop their farms. Thus, under CAP Pillar II, the intervention *DR-12 “Investments in consolidating the holdings of already set up or newly set up farmers”*, targeting the modernization, increase in competitiveness and environmental performance for the farms owned by young farmers established through the NRDP 2014-2020 (including the transition period) or young persons established in the agri-food sector in the last five years, which will ensure the consolidation of these farms and management

efficiency increase, in order to increase farm viability. This intervention will support investments in primary production, in production conditioning and/or storage, on-farm processing to add value to farmers' agricultural products.

The intervention will prioritize the projects that contribute to the encouragement and development of holdings managed by young farmers with an appropriate qualification level and their membership in associative structures, the promotion of modern production technologies with low environmental impact, efficient use of natural resources and actions for appropriate risk management on the farm, for encouraging the ownership of the holding. Thus, ensuring the continuity of support provided to this segment also responds to the environmental and social objectives, on the achievement of which the functioning and revitalization of rural areas depend.

Complementary to intervention DR12 "Investments in the consolidation of holdings of already set up and newly set up farmers" is *CIS-YF (30) Complementary income support for young farmers (financed from Pillar I – EAGF)* to encourage and support young people to remain in the rural areas through the improvement of the economic performance of farms.

Box 5. PD-03 Complementary Income Support for Young Farmers (CIS-YF)

The planned unit amount for the entire period is 67.2 million euros of which: 12.9 million euros in 2023, 13.1 million euros in 2024, 13.4 million euros in 2025, 13.7 million euros in 2026 and 14.0 million euros in 2027.

The annual planned unit amount: 46.00 euros/ha in 2023, 47.00 euros/ha in 2024, 48 euros/ha in 2025, 49 euros/ha in 2026 and 50 euros/ha in 2027. Only the first 50 ha are eligible for payment, regardless of the maximum size.

The basic income support for young farmers is an annual payment made to young farmers who are entitled to the basic income support for sustainability and fall into the category of eligible beneficiaries, namely:

- The young farmer is defined according to the specific section from the NSP (chapter 4);
- The young farmer is set up for the first time as head of the holding;
- The young farmer is eligible for BISS payment.

Source: [15].

The Complementary Income Support for Young Farmers (CIS-YF) is a payment decoupled from production per eligible hectare declared by the young farmer. The CIS-YF intervention contributes to the increase of farmers' incomes after the setting up period.

The young farmers who apply for CIS-YF in the CAP programming period 2023-2027 have a payment request deadline of maximum 24 months from setting up as young farmers in the rural area (farm establishment), with the cumulative compliance of eligibility conditions mentioned above.

In continuity with the previous programming period, the farmers who benefitted from full payment, in the CAP programming period 2014-2020, can no longer apply for the complementary income support of this intervention in the period 2023-2027. But, if small farmers did not benefit from full payment of support, on the basis of programming period 2014-2020 and during the transition to the new CAP 2021-2022, are entitled to the payment of support in the programming period 2023-2027, until the deadline of the 5 years foreseen, with the maintenance of eligibility conditions provided at the time of granting the support. The number of years that have passed since the first submission of the request for support for young farmers is deducted from the period for which this support is granted.

Box 6. DR 30 – Support for the setting up of young farmers

Indicative annual financial allocation (total public expenditure) 250.7 million euros of which: 2024 (131.6 million euros), 2025 (56.4 million euros), 2026 (43.8 million euros), 2027 (18.9 million euros).

Maximum non-reimbursable public support 50,000 70,000 euros

For the farmers up to 40 years of age with maximum 24 months since they set up as young farmers and who have not benefitted from support under the NRDP 2014-2020 or NSP.

Eligible farmers must propose a Business plan for an agricultural holding in use with an economic size of minimum 12,000 SO, respectively 8,000 SO in the mountain area and maximum 100,000 SO.

The guideline is basically the same as that of Sub-measure 6.1

The support rate is 100%.

Source: [15].

The DR-30 intervention for the setting up of young farmers aims to improve the age structure of farmers and will contribute to generational renewal. Young farmers with appropriate training level and skills for an efficient management of farm will be encouraged, who will promote modern production technologies and techniques, and these in their turn will contribute to resilient farming practices, to competitive agriculture, with low environmental impact. All these will also have a beneficial effect in the consolidation of the socio-economic structure of rural areas.

The Complementary Income Support for Young Farmers (PD 03 CIS-YF) and the Support for the Setting Up of Young Farmers (DR-30) directly contributes to the achievement of SO7 Attract and sustain young farmers and other new farmers and facilitate sustainable business development in rural areas. The target value for R.36 generational renewal is 36,000 young farmers in the period 2023-2027.

CONCLUSIONS

The resilience of small farms is recognized in the literature and by the European political decision-makers, resilience being the result of their multi-functionality; but in order to maintain small farm resilience, increasing the attractiveness of the agricultural sector for young people must be taken into consideration. For this purpose, integrated policies are needed (demographic, social, economic, cultural, ecological, technological) that take into consideration the increase of agricultural incomes, the improvement of professional training, ensuring minimal conditions regarding healthcare services, increasing the social appreciation of farmers, etc.

The future of family farming does not depend only on farmers' adaptation to change, but mainly on the intention of young members of the family to continue the farming activity in the future. Hence the importance of appropriate training of the new generation of farmers, so that they can cope with innovative and sustainable strategies.

In recent years, the development of large farms has been encouraged, to the detriment of small farms; in the areas where the large farms were successful in Romania, mainly in the South, South-West, South-East and North-East regions, very small farms disappeared, no other employment opportunities existed, which resulted in deeper rural poverty in these areas. The new NSP comes with a series of opportunities for modernization and increase of small farmers' incomes, but also with a series of challenges for the environmental objectives that Romania has assumed. For Romania, the environmental and climate objectives proposed by the NSP 2023-2027, which overlap the EU targets, seem difficult to achieve, due to complex requirements, and the financial support is not correlated with the level of losses suffered by farmers, even though the environmental effects are positive. On the other hand, our country has a good level of environmental indicators, and the decrease of the current level of chemical inputs used in agriculture would lead to reducing land productivity, jeopardizing food security implicitly.

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