STUDIES REGARDING THE SITUATION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN PRAHOVA COUNTY AND THE MANAGERIAL MEASURES WHICH NEED TO BE TAKEN

Florin PAUN

University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Bucharest, 59 Marasti, District 1, 11464, Bucharest, Romania; Phone: 0727 292 614 email:catalinflorin83@yahoo.com
Corresponding author: catalinflorin83@yahoo.com

Abstract

The paper is an analysis of the situation of rural development in Prahova county in all fields and aspects: agriculture and food industry, forestry, infrastructure, tourism, law and legislation, regional and government support towards rural entrepreneurs and inhabitants, rural life, customs and traditions, but also the impact of the European Agricultural Policy . The quantity analysis is based upon statistical data retrieved from Romanian statistical yearbook, while the quality analysis is based on discussions with the main actors and stakeholders in order to determine the managerial measurements that need to be taken.

Key words: analysis, measures, Prahova county, rural development, rural space

INTRODUCTION

Taking into consideration that over 56% of the population in the 28 Member States of the European Union is living in rural areas, which cover over 91% of the territory[3], rural development has become a vital policy. Moreover, Europe possesses a great regional diversity of landscapes ranging from mountains to plains, from impenetrable forests to steppes. Also at budgetary level there is a shift from Market support policy to the rural development aiming at diminishing the intervention mechanisms and stirring the economic, social and environmental development in the countryside [2].

However, with all its importance for the rural areas and the necessity of a strong policy regarding rural development, European consumers and tax payers have raised a series of concerns. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is considered by most Europeans too expensive (with over 45 % of the European budget allocated) and its application nontransparent.[6]

With the beginning of the negotiations for Romania's joining the European Union, a new topic has entered the attention of the public – the situation of the rural development in the country. The Romanian rural areas were leaving the 45 years of communism and collective farming that it imposed only to enter a transition period just as difficult. The law 18 passed on 1991 was giving back the confiscated land to the former owners or their descendents, but plunged them into the whirlpool of Market economy. The 1st of January 2007 marked the integration of Romania into the European Union, but found the rural areas totally unprepared for what was to come.

SAPARD (Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development) was meant to prepare the rural areas for the upcoming integration, but it didn't have the desired results [6]. Romania entered the EU with 4 million farmers, the vast majority being

unprepared to face the harsh realities of the European Agricultural Markets.

Another challenge awaits the rural inhabitants with the liberalization of the Arable Land Market starting the 1st of January 2014. From that date any European citizen will be able to purchase land freely.

Even though that Prahova county is known for being one of the most well developed in Romania, the future of the CAP will have without any doubt a great impact on its future. European, national and regional intervention

and support will be vital to strengthen the rural areas, to keep alive the local economy but also to preserve the traditions, customs but most of all the environment and wildlife[5].

This paper wants to be not only a simple presentation, but a work aiming at revealing the main challenges and drawbacks that the Prahova region faces and finding the best measures that need to be applied.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The data needed for the completion of this paper has been collected from the Romanian National Yearbook, but also from documents and reports issued by the regional authorities responsible for agriculture and rural development in Prahova county.

The analyzed period so far is 2006 – 2011. The data is being statistically processed and interpreted in order to establish the trend line and set the forecast for the years following the analyzed period.

In order to characterize the evolution of the rural space, mainly its agricultural side, several components have been presented and analyzed:

-allocation of agricultural real estate by category of usage

-the evolution of the surface cultivated with the main crops

-production of the main crops

-the evolution of the animal husbandry sector

In this paper, time series have been used regarding the evolution of the main components of the agricultural sector[1]. The interpretation of the statistical data in order to determine the dynamic of the analyzed components has been made using fixed based indicators, the reference year being 2006.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the evolution of the analyzed components in the period spanning between 2006 and 2011.

The table below shows main components of the agricultural real estate for the period between 2006–2011 and their evolution in time. As the table shows the main components are the arable land and forests.

Table 1. The allocation of agricultural real estate by category of usage between 2006-2011 (Ha) [6].

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total surface	471.587	471.587	471.587	471.587	471.587	471.587
Cultivated land	275.244	275.020	274.678	274.525	272.834	272.499
Arable land	145.088	145.652	144.964	145.560	144.267	144.007
Pastures	71.842	70.084	69.279	68.852	71.677	69.606
Hayfield	36.877	38.921	40.127	40.754	38.641	40.658
Vineyards	8.829	8.559	8.572	8.422	8.134	8.100
Orchards	12.608	11.804	11.736	10.947	10.115	10.128
Forests	150.436	150.249	150.314	150.468	151.332	150.846
Wetland	9.061	8.789	8.624	8.427	8.167	8.388
Other surfaces	36.846	37.529	37.971	38.167	39.254	39.854

Taking into consideration these aspects the county has great potential in the production of cereal and oil crops, but also the development of the forestry sector. An important resource is represented also by the extensive surfaces covered by vineyards and orchards, but also the vast surfaces covered with pastures, suitable for the development of the animal husbandry sector.

During the analyzed period the components of the agricultural real estate have remained fairly constant from year to year, suffering very little variation. This fact is beneficial for the general development of the county showing that a balance in the both the agricultural sector and the real estate market has been achieved. Having this potential, the main stakeholders (such as farmers, entrepreneurs and people who dwell in the countryside) can focus on exploiting these resources to their maximum yield.
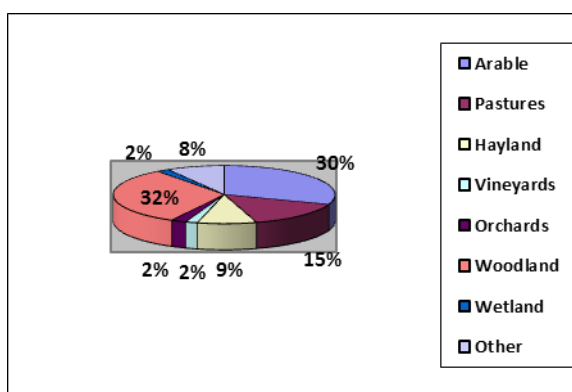

Fig 1. The repartition of agricultural real estate at the end of 2011

The chart above shows the repartition of the main components of the agricultural real

estate at the end 2011, highlighting the percentage allocated to each category.

Table 2. The main crops cultivated between 2006-2011 (Ha) [6]

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Cereal crops (total)	96.195	98.263	100.778	103.257	97.688	100.224
Wheat	33.559	25.637	34.569	36.935	34.930	36.120
Barley	2.326	3.050	3.467	5.372	5.171	4.464
Oat	380	340	752	669	857	715
Maize	59.920	69.183	61.805	60.018	56.459	58.442
Sunflower	10.748	7.762	8.202	9.153	10.688	13.703
Rapeseed	1.676	4.697	5.054	5.918	6.355	5.706
Sugar beat	353	14	-	-	-	-

Having 31% of its surface covered with arable land, the cereal and technical crops are predominant. The cereal crops have peaked during the years 2008, 2009 and 2011 which have been good in terms of precipitation enabling high yields. A drawback is the fact that the surfaces covered with sugar beats have diminished by 2521% from 2006 and 2007, being completely abandoned in the years coming after. However there has been a constant increase in the cultivation of sunflower and rapeseed which in the Romanian agriculture have become "cash crops" due to the steady demand and price.

The surfaces allocated to wheat and maize have remained constant during the whole period suffering small variations from year to year.
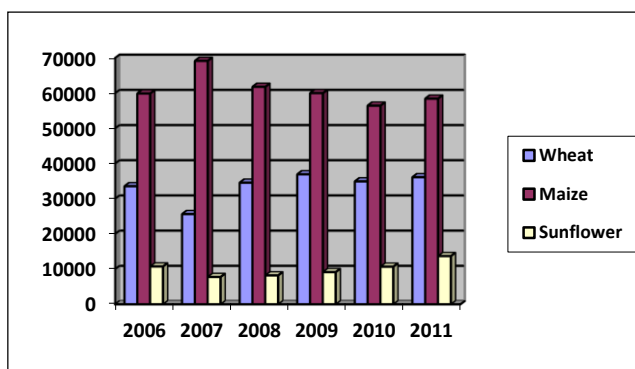

Fig 2. The evolution of the surface cultivated with the main crops between 2006-2011

As the chart above shows, maize (58% of the total cereal crops) and wheat (36% of the total cereal crops) have shown little change during this period, the constant increase being in the cultivation of sunflower. Although the crop

has decreased in the year 2007 (which was characterized by a severe drought), it has increased overall in 2011 compared to 2006 by 27.4%.

Table 3. Productions of the main crops between 2006-2011 (tons) [6]

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Cereal crops (total)	278.186	141.910	294.547	357.200	347.030	402.240
Wheat	76.221	39.918	109.625	104.102	90.780	125.413
Barley	4.331	4.067	11.897	13.806	14.434	13.967
Oat	688	334	1.277	944	1.330	1.233
Maize	196.934	97.502	171.033	237.292	239.604	260.383
Sunflower	11.445	5.054	8.938	16.459	13.588	23.709
Rapeseed	2.553	4.171	8.400	8.063	12.725	11.081
Sugar beat	8.951	7	-	-	-	-

The total production of a crop in influenced by both the surface it covers but also by the agricultural techniques used by the farmers and weather conditions.

As mentioned previously the year 2007 had a massive drought which reduced production by more than 50% compared to the following years.

A year like this may affect the decision to increase/decrease the surface cultivated with a crop but foremost it affects the economic balance of the people involved in agriculture by reducing their income.

After 2007, the increase in production has been constant, not due to the extension of the surfaces occupied by these crops, but mostly due to the improving in the average yields obtained for each crop.

For example the production of sunflower has increased in 2011 compared with 2006 by 207%.
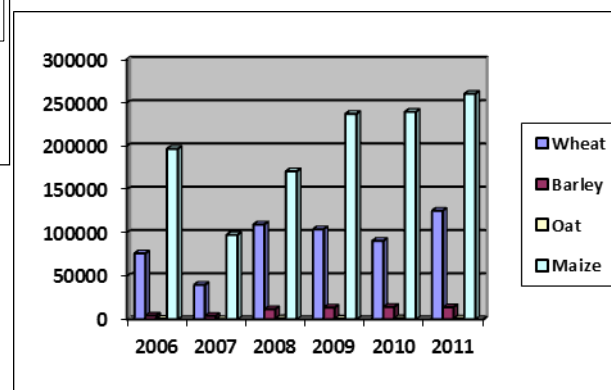

Fig 3. The evolution of production of the main cereal crops between 2006-2011 (tons)

Another important sector of the agriculture of Prahova county is the animal husbandry. The great potential in cereal production, but also the large portions occupied by pastures and hayland have enabled the raising of various species of animals.

Table 4. The evolution of the animal husbandry sector between 2006-2011 (heads) [6]

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Cattle	63.317	50.788	48.085	45.985	35.901	35.500
Pigs	190.842	150.979	164.202	165548	112270	109442
Sheep	129117	116053	143431	177635	151435	162579
Goats	19169	24150	23699	24258	31902	31226
Horses	14524	15784	15822	15426	10775	8521

But compared with the productions in the biological sector, which have increased from year to year, the number of animals raised in the county has had a steep decline. The most notable is the decrease in the number of cattle – the figure went down in 2011 compared to 2006 by 56%. This is not specific to Prahova county, but instead it follows the national trend in cattle breeding.

CONCLUSIONS

Using the 4 components presented above, I was able to make a small analysis in order to characterize the agricultural sector of Prahova county. Even though that in terms of rural development this sector has decreased, it is still the main component and source of income for the rural areas. The repartition of the agricultural real estate by usage, the crops and animals raised may influence the wellbeing of the rural communities. The fact that overall productions have increased as mentioned can be beneficial as an important source of income and taxes. A strong attention however must be direct towards the animal husbandry sector. The sharp decrease in the number of animals raised must attract the reaction of the regional and national authorities in order to take measures to stop this decline. Taking into consideration that the cereal production has grown constantly (one of the most important indicator in animal breeding) , mixed farms can be created with regional financial support in order to have a better use of the biological production, but also improve the efficiency of the farms in economic terms.

REFERENCES

[1]Alboiu Cornelia, Stirbu, R., 2013, The impact of price volatility on the vegetable market chain fragmentation in Romania, University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Bucharest
[2]Belletti Giovanni, 2008, Economia dell' azienda agraria e agroindustriale; Universita di Firenze
[3]Belletti Giovanni,2008, Politiche agroambientali e rurali, Universita di Firenze
[4]Marescotti Andrea, 2008, Economia Rurale, Universita di Firenze
[5]Simoncini Riccardo, 2008, Politiche agroambientali e rurali, Universita di Firenze
[6] Zahiu Letitia, 2006, Agricultura Uniunii Europene sub impactul Politicii Agricole Comunitare, Editura Ceres,Bucureşti
[7]Romanian Statistical Yearbook, 2012