

THE ROLE OF FAMILY FARMING FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN ROMANIA

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Abstract

Family farming is an important element for the entire economy because its' ability to reduce poverty and also to provide food safety. As a business model of the European Union, family farm is a complex structure that reunites economic and social values, contributes to preserving the traditions and rural development. These are the reasons for which 2014 is officially declared the International Year of Family Farming. The article aim is to investigate using secondary data, the family farming situation in Romania, meaning number of farms by utilized agricultural area and also by age of holder. The article is considered the starting point for a complex research conducted among Romanian family farms.

Key words: family farming, rural development, food safety

INTRODUCTION

Family farming is nowadays considered to be the key element in solving major global issues like reducing poverty and improving the global food security (IFAD, 2014). Because of the central role of the family farming within the global economy and the sustainable rural development, the year 2014 is declared the International Year of Family Farming (Master Plan IYFF, 2013). At the FAO Regional Conference for Europe which took place in April 2014, Bucharest, Romania, participants discussed the necessity of establishing a favorable environment for family farms by offering financial, legal and educational support (FAO, 2014). Teagasc et Hennessy (2014) highlight that the family farming is the business model in the European Union, that is why the Pillar 2 from the new CAP is addressing mainly to the challenges faced by these farms.

The term of family farming is very complex and covers a wide range of sociologic and economic elements like: family values, tradition, entrepreneurial skills, management, risk and labor. Family farming is associated to a specific lifestyle which contributes to preserving rural traditions and environmental sustainability of rural areas (European Commission, 2014). Brookfield (2008) consider that a family farm is the specific farm which uses only family labor even if there are some specific moments during the year when the owner employs casual labor or contractors for specific tasks. Hertz (2007) considers family farming as the

main source of income for the majority of the world's poor. However, there is not a general accepted definition for family farms and the meaning vary depending the country.

IFAD (2014) considers that family farming is important for several reasons, mainly because of its' ability to generate food for millions of people including the poor ones, to create jobs within the family farm or related to the food chain, provides sustainable food production, food security and environmental preservation.

Lowder et al. (2014) refers to family farming as a mean of organizing agricultural, forestry, fisheries, pastoral and aquaculture production, owned and managed by a family. The family farming is based on family members labor both women's and men's. The main aspect is represented by the strong connection between the family and the farm which combines different functions (economic, environmental, social and cultural).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The aim of the article is determine the general situation of family farms in Romania comparing to the European Union because of their major role within the national and global economy and their functions which contribute to a proper rural development. The present article represents a starting point for a future research and consists in analyzing secondary data regarding the evolution of family farming in Romania, based on the Agricultural Census from 2010 and also data from the European Commission-Agriculture and Rural Development. The analysis followed aspects like: number of agricultural holdings and the structure by age of holder. These data are starting key-points in offering a real image of the family farms in Romania and their contribution to the rural development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In Romania the structure of family farms evolved from 2003 until 2010 in terms of utilized agricultural area, but their number reduced from 4484910 farms in 2003 to 3859030 farms in 2010. The small agricultural holdings of less than 2 ha and 10 ha diminished their number comparing to 2003 while the bigger holdings (more than 10 ha) increased in 2010 (Table 1).

Table 1

Structure of agricultural holding by utilized agricultural area in Romania

Year/ surface	< 2 ha	2-5 ha	5-10 ha	10-20 ha	20-30 ha	30-50 ha	50-100 ha	>100 ha	Total
2003	3252680	952400	218880	37410	5530	3950	3790	10270	4484910
2010	2866440	727390	182440	43610	9730	8210	7480	13730	3859030

Source: processing after http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/statistics/factsheets/pdf/ro_en.pdf and Agricultural Census, 2010

Regarding the structure of agricultural farming by age of holder, it can be observed that the agricultural holdings are usually in possession of people older than 64 years, while people younger than 35 years manage a reduced number of farms.

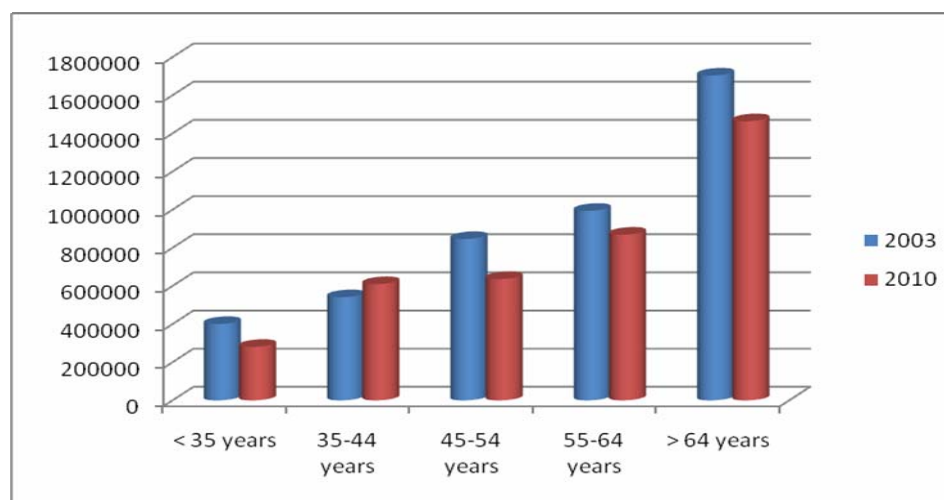


Fig. 1 Structure of agricultural holdings by age of holder

Source: processing after http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/statistics/factsheets/pdf/ro_en.pdf and Agricultural Census, 2010

It can be argued that in Romania the major problem regarding family farming is related to the lack of youngsters involved in agricultural activities and also regarding the small size of the agricultural holdings. The future of family farming in Romania depends on the ability of young people to manage the holdings which now are in possession of the elders and to continue their development.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the concept of family farming is relatively new in Romania, but the opportunities offered by the European legislation

are very attractive. Family farming represents the business model of the European Union and also the pillar for the rural development. The present article represents a starting point for a future research which will approach aspects related to the family farms in Romania such as: traditions, entrepreneurship, values and labor.

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