

THE MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN AGRICULTURE AND THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF THE POPULATION IN ROMANIA

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Abstract

The present paper represents an analysis of the labor force management in agriculture, but also a synthesis of the socio-economic structure of the population involved in agriculture in Romania. Agriculture has been and remains the most powerful balancing factor in harmonizing the development of any economy state, including our country. It is known that the involvement of the population in agricultural activities contributes significantly to the standard of living. Improving economic performance and market access of farms, for the purpose increasing their competitiveness, represents an essential component for revitalization rural areas. The level of agricultural development of our country, indisputably, is dependent on natural and material resources which are valued by the available human potential. During the research, there were analyzed the data provided by the European Commission, Agriculture in Romania is one of the important branches of the Romanian economy and is constantly expanding. A percentage 11% of the active population is employed in agriculture in 2022, in Romania, according to the research. Depending on gender, there are 417.900 men and 205.200 women. 23% of the workforce in Romania is employed in agriculture, which is the highest percentage of people employed in agriculture in the EU. Romania is also one of the countries with the highest share of farmers aged over 65 (44.3%).

Keywords: agriculture, development, rural population, professional status.

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INTRODUCTION

The labor force in agriculture represents one of the three resources fundamentals (along with the lands agricultural and production machinery) which decisively influences the results of production. The agricultural sector in Romania has suffered in the last 15 years for several reasons, and here the labor force crisis played an important role. Although, from the point of view of technology, agriculture in our country is evolving, the lack of labor is causing great losses to farmers (Ciulinaru, 2019). They invest more and more in state-of-the-art equipment, but they cannot find qualified personnel to work with this equipment. Many farmers and agricultural land owners face major difficulties in finding labor. Whether it is sowing, harvesting, animal care or repairing agricultural machinery, the lack of personnel is a constant problem and increasingly affects the smooth running of agricultural activities. For many years, agriculture in Romania has been going through a major crisis in terms of the available workforce. This crisis is fueled by

several factors, such as labor migration abroad in search of a better life, declining interest in agricultural work, and an aging population in rural areas. This problem adversely affects the productivity and economic growth of our country's agriculture (Buliga, 2020). This migration of young people from Romania to foreign countries has led to a drastic decrease in the labor force available in agriculture. Mostly, the youth who opt for work in foreign countries do so because of the lack of opportunities in the agricultural sector in our country. Another reason that has caused this exodus of young people to foreign countries is the unfavorable working conditions in agriculture, lower wages compared to those offered in other countries, poor infrastructure, insufficient subsidies, and aversion to association among farmers. These problems have contributed to the decrease in productivity in Romanian agriculture, and thus the agricultural sector has become less attractive for young people (Miron & Beleniuc, 2013). Young people are less and less interested in agriculture and work in this field. One of the reasons relates to the movement of the

population from the rural areas of the country to the cities. Here, young people perceive more favorable job opportunities and the lifestyle is more comfortable than country life. Another factor relates to the harsh working conditions that agriculture provides. This field involves a rather difficult work environment with a variable schedule, working in extreme weather conditions or on rough terrain. These working conditions, especially compared to the working environment in urban areas, have over time demotivated young people to opt for work in agriculture (Nica, 2007). Nor is the educational system in our country a factor that motivates young people to choose agriculture. Young people in Romania are not educated to see the advantages of a career in agriculture, and the training of young graduates does not meet the standards needed to perform in agriculture (Alec, 2006). Training in agricultural technologies has remained at the level of the previous decade, meaning that young people are not getting the degree of qualification needed to operate farm machinery or work on a farm (Vasilescu, 2015). Thus, many young agricultural workers who see a modern tractor for the first time will not know how to use it. Farmers in Romania are increasingly forced either to work with unqualified personnel or to hire workers from abroad who have a better degree of qualification. Those who choose to employ personnel without training in this area risk compromising their work and damaging their machinery, because an operator who is not thoroughly trained will not have the necessary knowledge to use such equipment correctly (Dămășaru & Crăciun, 2016). To counter the effects of the labor force crisis in agriculture, it is necessary to see more initiatives from the Romanian state. Unfortunately, one of the negative effects of the generous welfare system has been a decrease in the labor force in many fields, including agriculture. Climate change, technological progress and labor mobility have profoundly transformed the field of agriculture. Agricultural machinery is becoming more and more efficient, and computers are increasingly important in agricultural processing technologies, but physical labor in agriculture is not going away anytime soon. In recent years, farmers in the European Union have faced a labor shortage, partly offset by a migration of workers from Eastern European states. At the

level of the European Union, the deficit cannot be compensated because the labor force in agriculture registers a decline, from year to year (Toader & Roman, 2011). The labor force crisis in the agricultural field is one of the main problems that farmers are currently facing, in the context in which many residents of rural areas prefer to live on social assistance, granted without being based on rigorous social surveys, agricultural producers pulling a alarm signal that people are thus encouraged not to work. The internal migration of young people from the rural to the urban environment, as well as the migration abroad, is another cause that has a negative impact on the labor force in agriculture, most of the agricultural land being in this period left in the care of elderly farmers.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The data provided by the European Commission and Eurostat were statistically processed, regarding the structure of the population employed in agriculture, by age groups, professional status, gender, forms of ownership, the number of vacant jobs as well as the structure of the rural population. During the research, there were used descriptive statistics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In Romania, more than one in five people (23% in 2022) worked in agriculture, the sector representing a particularly large share of total jobs. The share of agriculture in the total employed workforce was also relatively high in Bulgaria (15.5%) and Greece (9.9%). In contrast, it represented less than 1% of total employment in Luxembourg and Malta (both 0.7%). In 2022, the share of agriculture in total employment fell in every EU Member State. At EU level, 8.7 million people worked in agriculture in 2020, equivalent to 4.2% of all jobs. As the number of agricultural holdings in the EU has declined over time, so has agricultural employment. The share of agriculture in employment in the EU fell from 5.6% in 2021 to 4.2% in 2022. Regarding the structure of the population, on the main activities of the national economy, it can be observed that the highest percentage is recorded in the field of services, 55.75, and in agriculture a percentage of only 11% is recorded (Figure 1).

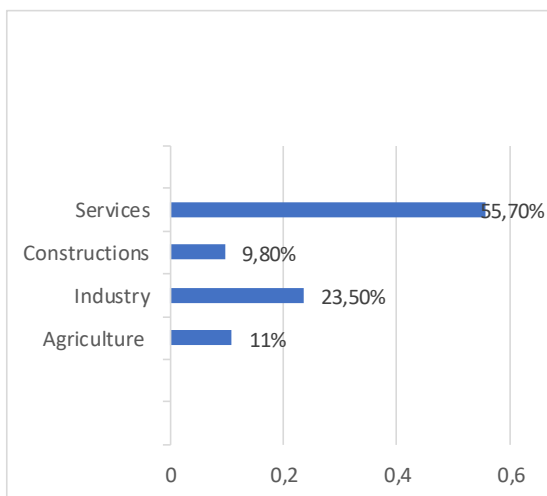


Figure 1. Population structure, based on the main activities of the national economy, in 2022

In the year 2022, in rural areas, a percentage of 72.4% of the total population is represented by employees, 1.2% are employers, 19.7% are self-employed workers in the agricultural field and 6.7% are family workers unpaid (Figure 2).

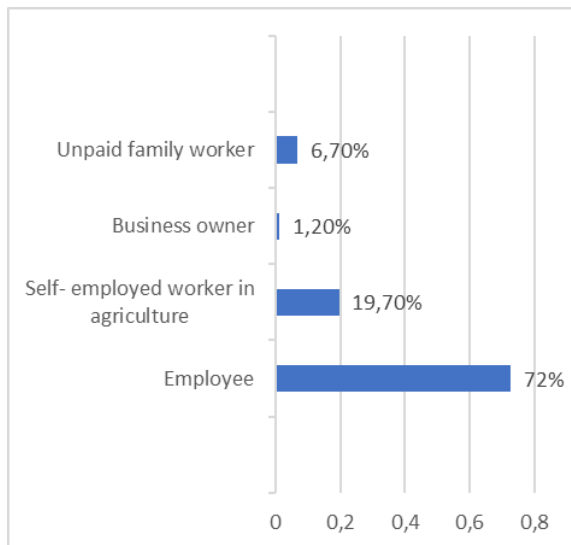


Figure 2. The structure of the rural population, in 2022

Regarding the structure of the population by age groups, out of the total population of 878,400 people employed in agriculture, the largest percentage, 29.3%, is represented by

people between the ages of 45 and 54. The lowest percentage, 5.0%, is occupied by people over 65 years (Figure 3).

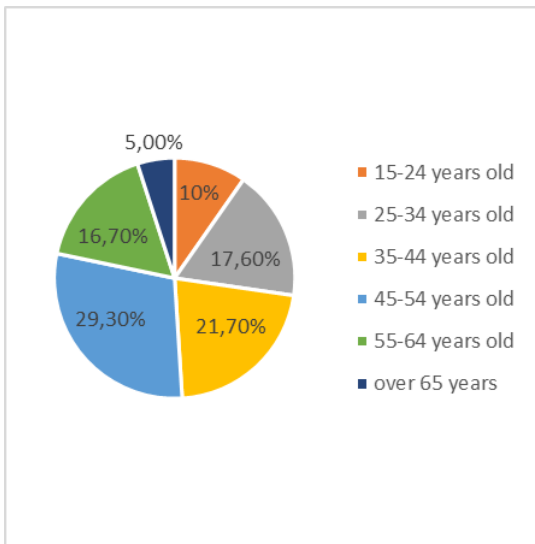


Figure 3. The structure of the population employed in agriculture, by age group, in 2022

Of the total number of people employed in agriculture, a percentage of 32.7% is represented by women. Of this total, 10.4% are between 45 and 54 years old (Figure 4).

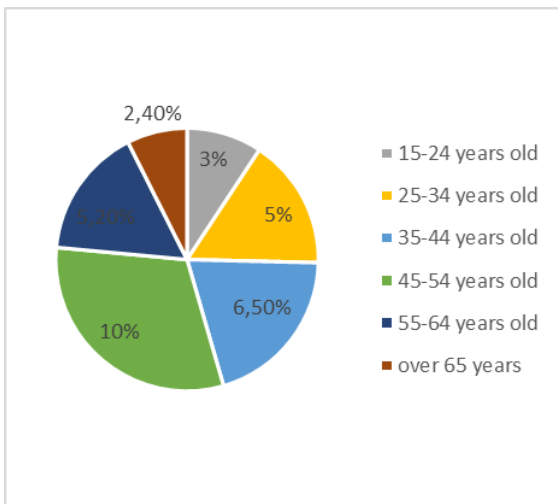


Figure 4. The structure of the female population employed in agriculture, by age group, in 2022

Depending on the professional status, out of the total of 878,400 people employed in agriculture, the largest percentage, 53.2%, is represented by self-employed workers. The lowest percentage, 0.7%, is represented by employers (Figure 5).

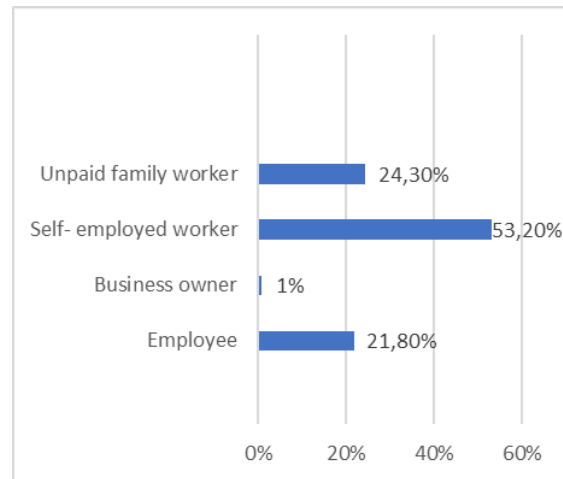


Figure 5. Employment structure in agriculture, by professional status, in 2022

Of the total number of women employed in agriculture, 32.7%, 4% are employees, 0.1% are employers, 12.6% are self-employed and 16% are unpaid family workers (Figure 6).

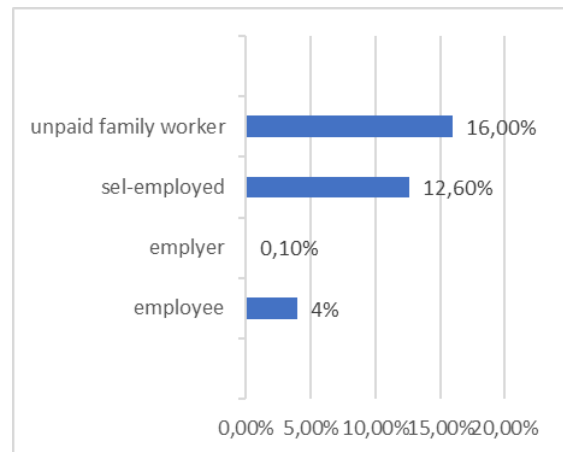


Figure 6. The professional status of women employed in agriculture, in 2022

CONCLUSIONS

The forecasts regarding the labor force crisis in Romanian agriculture are not exactly favorable for the coming years. However, solutions must come from both farmers and government institutions to find mutually beneficial solutions. In the agricultural and forestry sectors, there is a major imbalance between women and men in the context of professional status. For example, the number of male managers is more than four times higher than the number of female managers, while unpaid family workers are predominantly female (over 60%). The authorities should offer facilities, which could be granted to female persons, would ensure equity between men and women, considering the reluctance of women to manage businesses, especially in the rural environment and in the agricultural sector, an aspect that could explain this imbalance reflected by statistics. For the labor shortage in Romania, tangible solutions should be found, which could help employers to continue the economic development of their businesses and represent a solution for the context they are

facing, namely offering a package of competitive bonuses and some programs to increase the level of employee retention. Another option could be recruiting from among students or non-specialized people, whom they can train internally.

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