ANALYSIS OF IMPORTANT FACTORS OF ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE SALONTA AREA, BIHOR COUNTY

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Abstract
This article aims to analyse the main factors that can contribute to economic growth in the area bordering Salonta municipality in Biho rcounty, Romania, with the intention of transforming this area into a centre of polarisation in the economic and investment fields for the localities bordering Salonta municipality: Avram-Iancu, Ciumeghiu, Batăr, Tulca, and Mădăras. In this context, the existing development resources in these communes are analysed, respectively the analysis of human resources and soil resources. The research results provide valuable information that can support the development of efficient solutions and programs for administrative and political decision-makers. Thus, the research can contribute to the identification of best practices and measures for the consolidation and valorisation of the potential of these communities, ensuring a balance between economic, social development and environmental protection in the sustainable context in the area bordering Salonta municipality – the communes of Avram-Iancu, Ciumeghiu, Batăr, Tulca, and Mădăras.

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INTRODUCTION

To ensure a sustainable and equitable development of the rural area bordering Salonta municipality, it is essential to consider the use of available resources and labour force, which is why we have taked into account the analysis of available resources and existing labour resources in the bordering area of this locality. The studies conducted allow the identification of effective means for increasing the attractiveness and interest of the factors involved in promoting the development directions of rural communities. (Cristina et al, 2015; Mateoc -Sîrb et al, 2024).

The results of the research obtained can support the development of solutions and programs useful to administrative and political decision-makers, facilitating the design of a clear strategy for the promotion of rural communities. Thus, these efforts can contribute to strengthening the role of rural communities as essential elements of sustainable development policy, promoting the balance between economic growth, environmental protection, and social cohesion in rural areas. (Man et al, 2007; Mateoc -Sîrb et al, 2013).

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The analysis of the main factors of economic growth in the research area, namely, population dynamics and the evolution of land as a source of agricultural development can contribute to economic growth in this area.

The study was conducted based on data published by official data sources (INS), and the main methods used consist in quantitative and qualitative analysis, analysis based on the system of statistical indicators (multicriteria analysis), and field research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Population growth, combined with efficient management and modernisation of the

land fund, can generate a favourable environment for the sustainable development of agriculture and, implicitly, for economic growth in the research area. These factors need to be supported by appropriate policies, investments, and innovation to maximize the benefits for the entire area.

Changes in the demographic structure (e.g. urbanisation, rural-urban migration) can affect the availability of labour and may require adaptations in production methods (Mateoc-Sîrb *et al*., 2018). Population, as the available labour resource, represents one of the main factors that can significantly influence the development of areas. Therefore, we considered it essential to analyse the evolution of the population at the level of the communes in our study, because the availability of human resources directly contributes to their involvement in the implementation of investments and activities in the area. This analysis allows to better understand of the development potential and identify any opportunities or challenges related to the available labour force in each commune.

Table 1.

Population dynamics in the neighbouring communes of Salonta municipality

Locality	Number of people		2022 / 1992
	1992	2022	%
Avram Iancu	3 441	3 375	-1,92
Batăr	5 560	5 655	+1,70
Ciumeghiu	4 571	4 614	+0,94
Mădăras	3 033	2 854	-5,90
Tulca	3 059	2 704	-11,60
Municipiul Salonta	21 075	18 319	-13,08
Total	**40 739**	**37 521**	**-7,90**

Source: Own processing based on INS, Tempo online, Population by residence, 2023.

According to the statistical data in the Table 1 regarding the evolution of the population in the localities under study, we found that, during the analysed period, there was a decrease in the population of 3,218 people, which represents a share of -7.90%, from **40,739** people registered in 1992 to **37,521** people registered in 2022. The largest population decreases during the period 1992-2022 were recorded in **Salonta -13.08%**, **Tulca -11.60%**, **Mădăras -5.90%**, and **Avram Iancu -1.92%**. Population increases were recorded in the communes of **Batăr** +**1.70%** and **Ciumeghiu** +**0.94%** respectively.

Table 2.

Population in Salonta municipality by age category

Age	Number of people	[%]
0- 14 years	2 101	11,47
15-24 years	2 022	10,66
25-64 years	10 846	59,20
65+ years	3 419	18,67
TOTAL	**18 319**	**100,0**

Source: Own processing based on INS, Tempo online

According to the population analysis of **Salonta** municipality, (Table 2) people aged 65+ represent 18.67% of the total population, pointing to a significant share of the elderly. At the same time, the age category 0-14 years has a share of 11.47%, suggesting a lower proportion of children and adolescents compared to the elderly population. These data highlight an aging trend of the local population which may have implications for social, health, and urban planning policies.

Table 3.

Population in Avram Iancu commune by age category

Age	Number of people	[%]
0- 14 years	650	19,26
15-24 years	454	13,45
25-64 years	1 826	54,10
65+ years	445	13,19
TOTAL	**3 375**	**100,00**

Source: Own processi
ng based on INS, Tempo online

In **Avram Iancu** commune, located in the immediate vicinity of Salonta municipality, the analysis by age group highlights that the population aged 65+ accounts for 13.19%, while the population in the 0-14 age range accounts for 19.2% (Table 3).

Table 4.

Population in Batăr commune by age category

Age	Number of people	[%]
0- 14 years	1 211	21,41
15-24 years	899	15,90
25-64 years	2 868	50,72
65+ years	677	11,97
TOTAL	**5 655**	**100,00**

Source: Own processing based on INS, Tempo online, 2025

The population analysis of **Batăr** commune, (Table 4) shows that 11.97% of the inhabitants are aged 65+, while 21.41% belong to the 0-14 age range. This points to a relatively balanced distribution between young and elderly people, suggesting that there is a sufficiently young people to support the commune's active workforce in the future. This demographic structure can be considered favourable for local development, as young people represent the potential for economic growth and long-term sustainability.

Table 5.

Population in Ciumeghiu commune by age category

Age	Number of people	[%]
0- 14 years	985	21,35
15-24 years	633	13,62
25-64 years	2385	51,79
65+ years	611	13,24
TOTAL	**5 655**	**100,00**

Source: Own processing based on INS, Tempo online, 2025

In Ciumeghiu commune, the population analysis by age groups highlights that the population aged 65 and over 65 occupies a share of 13.24% while the population in the 0-14 age category holds a share of 21.35%. This fact indicates that in Ciumeghiu commune there is a young population capable of replacing the active labor force of the commune (Table 5).

Table 6.

Population in Mădăras commune by age category

Age	Number of people	[%]
0- 14 years	480	16,82
15-24 years	340	11,91
25-64 years	1 569	54,97
65+ years	465	16,30
TOTAL	**2 854**	**100,00**

Source: Own processing based on INS, Tempo online, 2025

The analysis of the population of **Mădăras** commune by age groups reveals a relatively balanced distribution between the population aged 0-14 (16.82%) and the population aged 65+ (16.30%). This distribution suggests a possible continuity in the labour force and human resources of the locality, given that the young population is large enough to replace the active labour force, which represents 16.30% of the total population. Although, in 2022, the population of the commune decreased by 179 people, which represents a reduction of 5.90% compared to the 1992 level (Table 1), the demographic situation points to a certain stability in the structure by age groups, which may have positive implications for the sustainability of the locality in the long term, (Table 6).

Table 7.

Population in Tulca commune by age category

Age	Number of people	[%]
0- 14 years	450	16,64
15-24 years	353	13,05
25-64 years	1 475	54,55
65+ years	426	15,76
TOTAL	**2 704**	**100,00**

Source: Own processing based on INS, Tempo online, 2025

The analysis of the population of **Tulca** commune by age groups highlights a relatively balanced structure between the young and the elderly population. Thus, the percentage of the population aged 65+ represents 15.76%, while the population in the 0-14 age category has a share of 16.64%, (Table 7). This distribution suggests a relatively balanced distribution of the population by age categories, which may point to a potential for the replacement of the active labour force by the young population.

However, we need to also take into account the demographic context: in 2022, the population of the commune registered a significant decrease of 355 people, which represents a decrease of approximately 11.60% compared to the level in 1992. This considerable decrease may have long-term implications on the labour force, social services, and sustainability of the local population. In conclusion, although the age structure currently appears balanced, the population decline in recent years points to a need for policies and measures to counteract demographic decline and ensure a sustainable balance in the long term.

The analysis of land resources, both agricultural and non-agricultural land reserves, is an essential element for assessing the development potential of the agricultural sectors, namely the crop and livestock sectors,

in each locality of the area delimited for research. Comparing the structure of the land fund in 1992 with that of 2014, we can notice the evolution and trends of change in land use, as well as the potential for expansion or limitation of agricultural activities.

This analysis has the following main objectives:

Identifying available resources

Determining the proportion of agricultural and non-agricultural land in the land fund structure for each commune and highlighting the basic resources for the development of the crop and livestock sectors.

Assessing change trends

Comparing data from 1992 and 2014 to identify the increase or decrease in agricultural and non-agricultural areas, as well as possible land transfers between these categories.

Supporting the development strategy planning

Guiding the decisions of local authorities and factors involved in the sustainable development of the area based on the information thus obtained to use land resources efficiently.

For a full interpretation, detailed analysis of data specific to each locality is necessary, as well as the identification of factors that have influenced changes over time. Thus, a clear picture can be built on the potential for agricultural and zootechnical development, in accordance with the available resources and the evolution trends of the land fund.

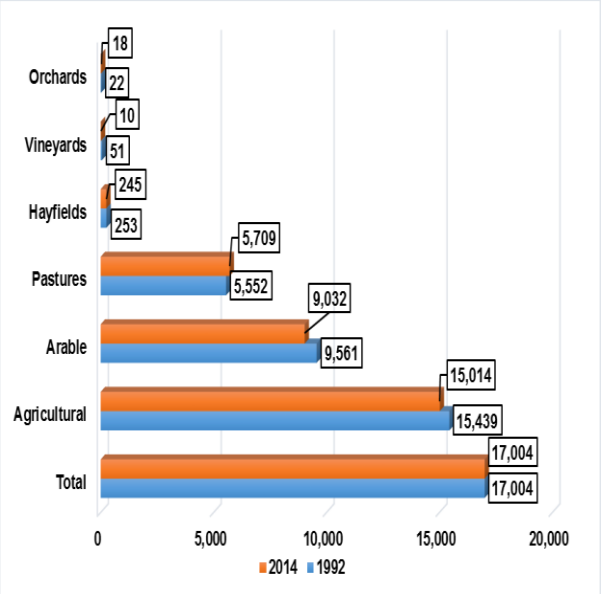

Figure 1. **Land dynamics in Salonta municipality**

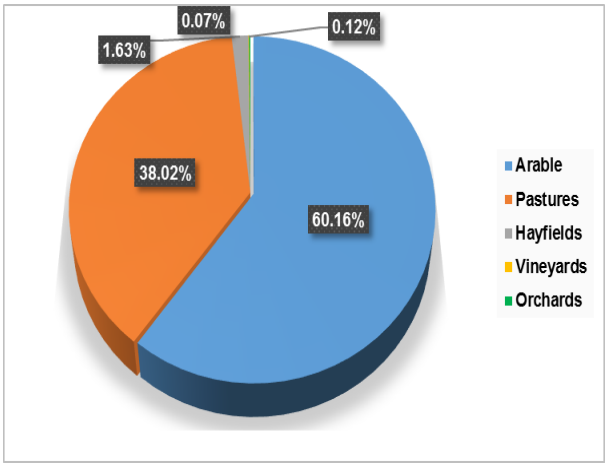

Figure 2 **Structure of land use categories, Salonta**

According to statistical data provided by the INS, the municipality of Salonta has a total area of 17,004 ha. In 1992, the agricultural area was 15,439 ha, but this decreased by 425 ha, reaching 15,014 ha in 2014. This means that agricultural land represents approximately 86.8% of the total area of the municipality. Of the agricultural land, over 60.16% is arable land, and 39.65% is pasture and hayfields. In addition, the areas of vineyards and orchards share a very small proportion of the total agricultural land (Figure 1 and 2).

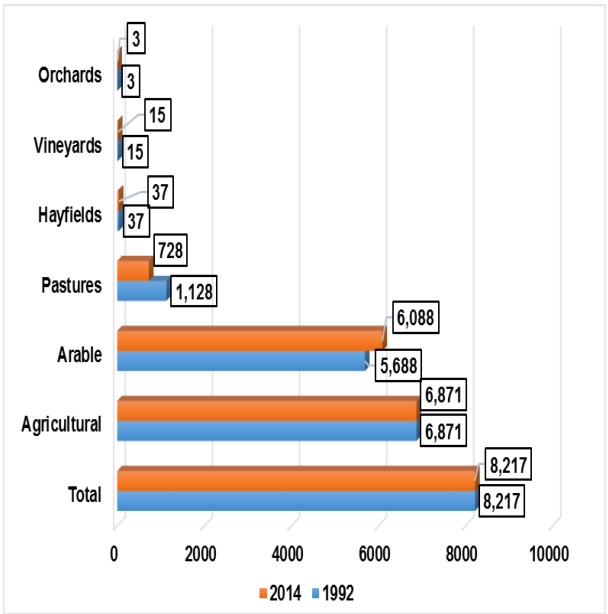

Figure 3. **Land dynamics in Avram Iancu commune**

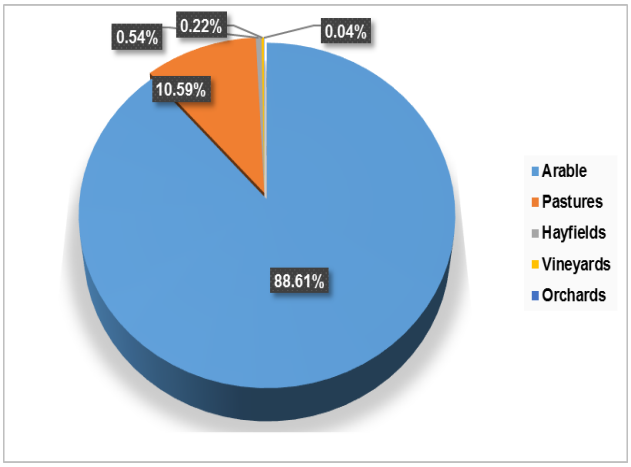

Figure 4 **Structure of land use categories, Avram Iancu commune**

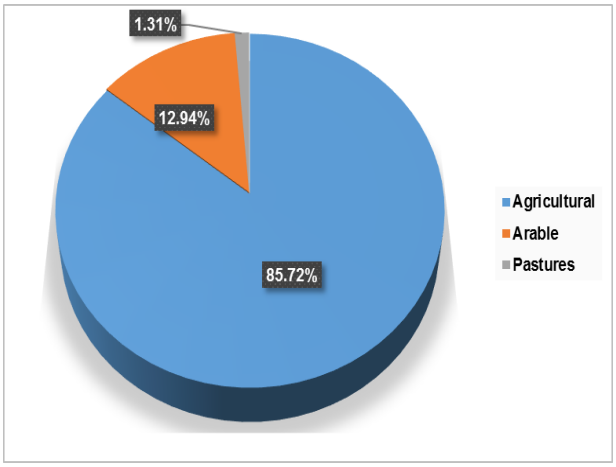

Figure 6 **Structure of land use categories, Batăr commune**

According to statistical data provided by the INS, the commune of Avram Iancu has a total area of 8,217 ha. In 1992, the agricultural area of the commune was 6,871 ha, a figure that remained constant until 2014, representing a share of 83.61% of the total area of the commune. Of this agricultural area, over 88.61% is arable land, and 11.13% is pastures and hayfields (Figure 3 and 4).

The commune of Batăr has a total area of 12,649 ha. In 1992, the agricultural area was 11,447 ha, a value that remained unchanged in 2014, thus representing 90.50% of the total area of the commune. Of this agricultural area, 85.72% is arable land, 14.24% are pastures and hayfields, while the areas of vineyards and orchards share an insignificant proportion. This distribution points to a predominance of arable land dedicated to plant cultivation (Figure 5 and 6).

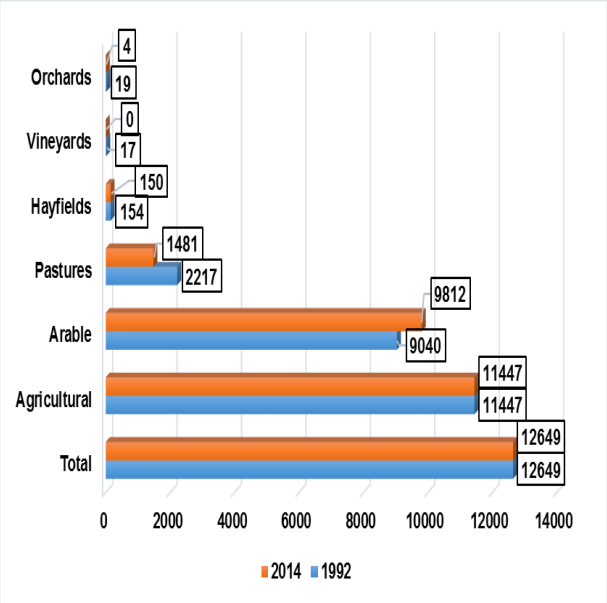

Figure 5 **Land dynamics in Batăr commune**

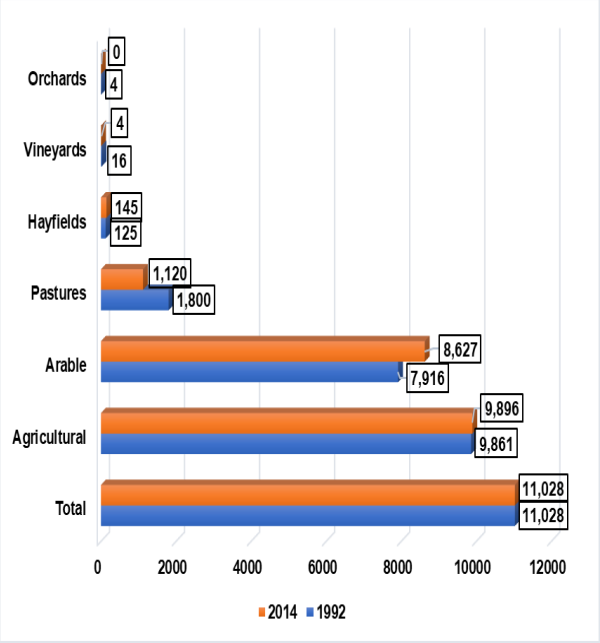

Figure 7. **Land dynamics in Ciumeghiu commune**

Ciumeghiu commune has a total area of 11,028 ha. In 1992, its agricultural area was 9,861 ha, and this area increased by 35 ha, reaching 9,896 ha in 2014. Currently, agricultural land represents approximately 89.74% of the total area of the commune, which points to a predominance of agricultural land in the local landscape. Of the available agricultural land, 87.17% is mainly intended for arable land, while 12.79% is pastures and hayfields. The areas occupied by vineyards and orchards are negligible, while, in 2014, the areas of orchards have completely disappeared, pointing to a decrease or abandonment of these crops in recent years (Figure 7 and 8).

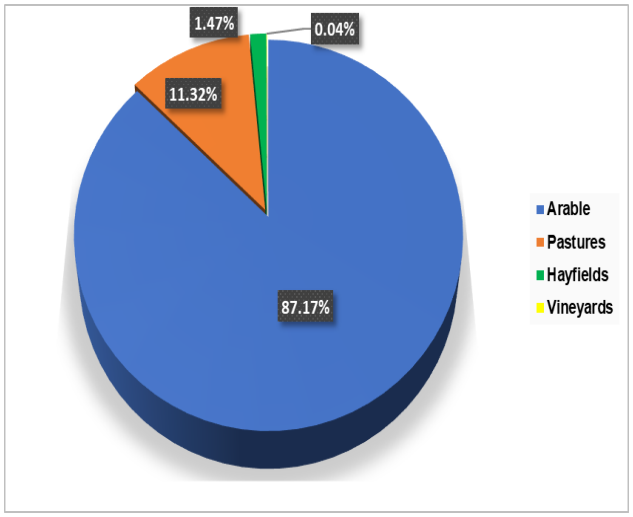

Figure 8 **Structure of land use categories, Ciumeghiu commune**

Mădăras commune has a total area of 9,275 ha. In 1992, its agricultural area was 8,189 ha, but this decreased by 7 ha, reaching 8,181 ha in 2014. Currently, agricultural land represents approximately 88.20% of the total area of the commune. Of this agricultural land, 74.43% is arable land, while 25.48% is pasture and hayfields. The area intended for vineyards and orchards has an insignificant share, and in 2014, the vineyard areas were completely removed. This availability of arable land, pastures, and hayfields highlights a significant potential for the development of agriculture in the commune of Mădăras, either for growing plants or for raising animals.

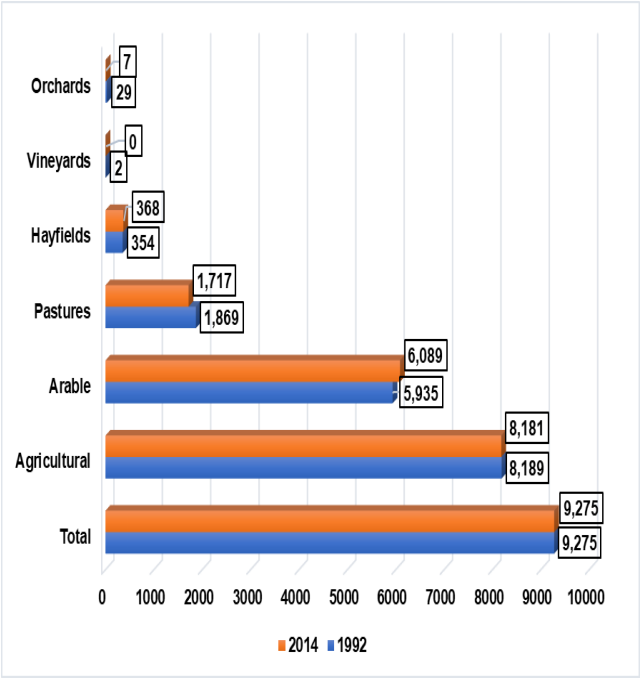

Figure 9. **Land dynamics in Mădăras commune**

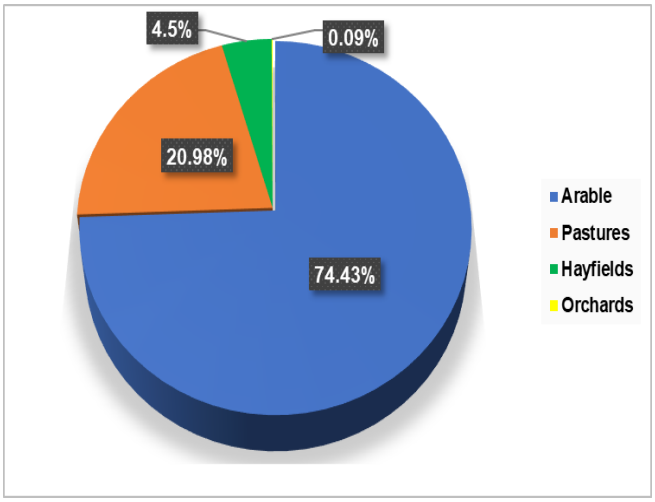

Figure 10 **Structure of land use categories, Ciumeghiu commune**

Tulca commune has a total area of 5862 ha, of which 5495 ha are dedicated to agricultural land, representing a very large share of 93.16% of the commune's total area (Figure 1 and 2).

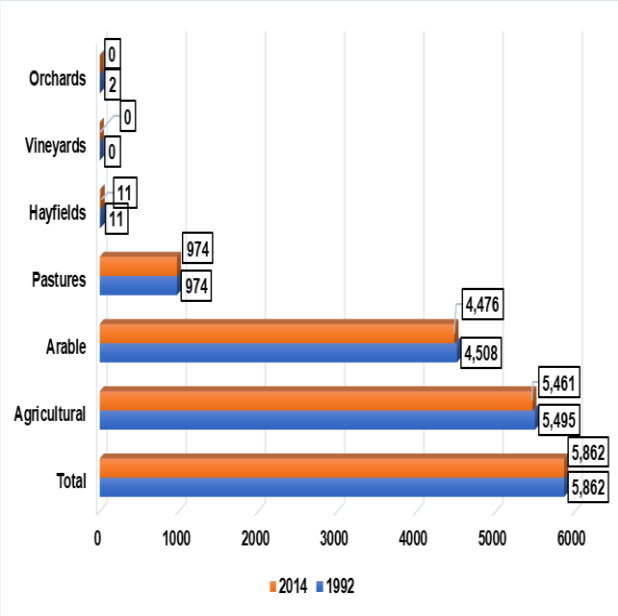

Figure 11. **Land dynamics in Tulca commune**

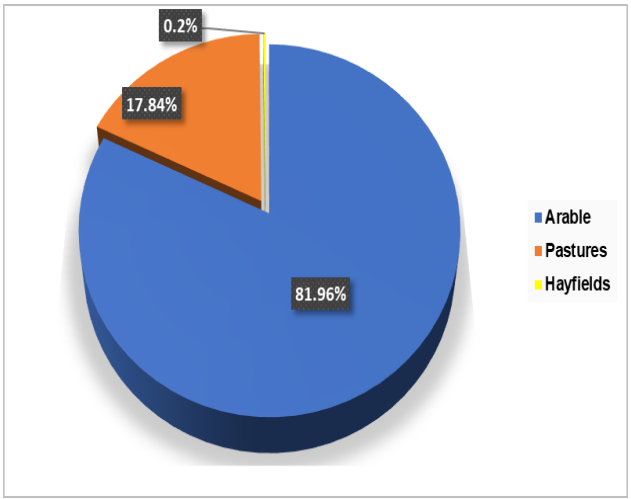

Figure 12 **Structure of land use categories, Tulca commune**

Of its agricultural land, 81.96% is arable land, pointing to a significant availability for agricultural crops, while 18.04% are pastures and hayfields, offering a potential for animal husbandry and fodder production. It is worth noting that the areas of vineyards and orchards have completely disappeared, Tulca commune not having a tradition in the cultivation of vines or fruit trees.

However, the high availability of arable land, combined with the significant proportion of pastures and hayfields, highlights a considerable potential for the development of agriculture, both through plant cultivation and animal husbandry. These aspects can constitute solid bases for agricultural and tourism development strategies in the commune.

CONCLUSIONS

To increase the economy and quality of life, rural communities must take into account the use of available resources when establishing their development plans. In this sense, a development plan, respectively a development strategy for the areas, should include:

- Capitalizing on local agricultural resources by promoting traditional and organic products, participating in fairs, and creating a brand identity.
- Supporting local resource processing activities, such as the manufacture of handicrafts, conservation, and processing.
- Exploiting the tourism potential of the area by developing tourist infrastructure, promoting cultural and natural heritage, and creating attractive tourist packages.

To create employment, the following actions are necessary:

- Creating vocational training programs adapted to the current needs of the labour market, in areas such as modernized agriculture, processing of agricultural products, rural tourism and agrotourism, and traditional crafts and technology.
- Developing initiatives to stimulate local entrepreneurship, including microenterprises and cooperatives, through facilitated access to financing and consultancy to generate stable income.

In addition to these measures to grow the economy and the life quality of residents in rural areas, *investments in infrastructure* are also needed: roads, water supply, sewage, renewable energy, and digitalization to facilitate access and improve living conditions; the development of social and educational services to increase literacy levels and provide opportunities for young people and families; and the promotion of cooperation projects between the community, authorities, and the private sector to attract investments and stimulate innovation.

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