
YOUTH AND AGRICULTURE IN ROMANIA

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Abstract: *Young people and agriculture after the year 2000, these terms did not really come together, because young people always wanted to go to urban areas, which offered better living conditions, better paid services, safety and peace. All this to the detriment of agriculture and rural development, the land remained uncultivated, the villages became unpopulated and the livestock decreased considerably. The European Union has brought an improvement in Romania in this direction, the common policies established by the community legislation planned to attract young people to the rural area, to return those who went abroad and to revitalize the entire Romanian rural space. For paying agencies in Romania, young farmer means a person up to 40 years old who is active in the agricultural field.*

Key Words: *agriculture, funding, reforms, rural, strategies, youth*

JEL Classification : *O00, O10, O13.*

Introduction

A lot of evidence shows that agriculture offers a viable way to succeed in a sustainable future. In terms of the flourishing of human civilization in the past, agriculture is also important for future development. When it comes to combating poverty, agriculture is more efficient than any other sector. Given this goal, agriculture can be a gold mine for young people who can contribute to the production of a sufficient amount of nutritious food for the rapidly growing population through the use of new modern agricultural technologies.

This research shows the importance of young people for the economic development of the rural area in Romania, the method of accessing non-reimbursable European funds and the compensatory amounts granted by the payment agencies in Romania.

Young farmers represent an important category for the development of the agricultural sector in Romania. In recent years, local and government authorities have encouraged the activity of young farmers and facilitated their access to financing and training programs. The authorities also provide support for the training and professional training of young farmers, so that they can face the specific challenges of the

agricultural field. In this regard, multiple seminars, conferences and modification and training programs have been organized. Also, young farmers can benefit from subsidies to improve productivity, to use new technologies and to protect the environment and environmental aephoria. In addition to all this, young farmers in Romania are also actively supported by agricultural organizations, which offer assistance in various issues, especially those related to business and marketing. These young people are followers of sustainable agriculture and understand the need to be able to adapt and innovate to remain competitive in a constantly changing environment. Although there are many challenges for young farmers who want to establish themselves in the agricultural field, they remain optimistic and determined to follow their dreams and contribute to the development of the agricultural sector in Romania.

Research methodology

Today's young people welcome modernization, innovation and technology, and experts say it could also be the key to bringing the younger generations closer to agriculture. Precision farming systems are already an important part of new farming methods: for example, drones can gather real-time data for better planning of agricultural practices. The agriculture of the future will see a wide range of applications, for example FAMEWS, a system of data collection and sharing designed to combat the spread of the autumn army worm, which has already caused massive crop damage in sub-Saharan Africa. Small-scale fishermen can use the Abalobi app, which allows them to record data on caught fish and earnings, helping these communities become more resilient and cope with global challenges, such as climate change. Finally, but only in order of launch, there are several applications that provide real-time information on the risks to crops related to the weather, the availability of raw materials on the market or the demand for certain agricultural products, ie how to produce, preserve and consume food. nutritious. Because digital skills, almost by definition, belong to younger people, this suggests that only the younger generations will be able to successfully take on the leading roles in the agriculture of the future.

Romania is a country with a lot of agricultural potential, it has large stretches of arable land, possibilities to install irrigation systems and a temperate climate suitable for many crops. The problems facing the country are related to the lack of infrastructure, the lack of investment and the disinterest of the population in this sector.

Figure 1 shows the number of young people in Romania, decreasing from 6.534.521 in 2014 to 5.971.731 people in 2018. The rural area has a decrease in the number of young people from 2.820.626 in 2014 to 2.640.015 people in 2018. The causes of this decrease are migration young families to more developed countries and their settlement there and higher incomes possible in other fields or in other countries. The aging of the rural population is not beneficial for Romania's economy, but it is a reality that cannot be neglected.

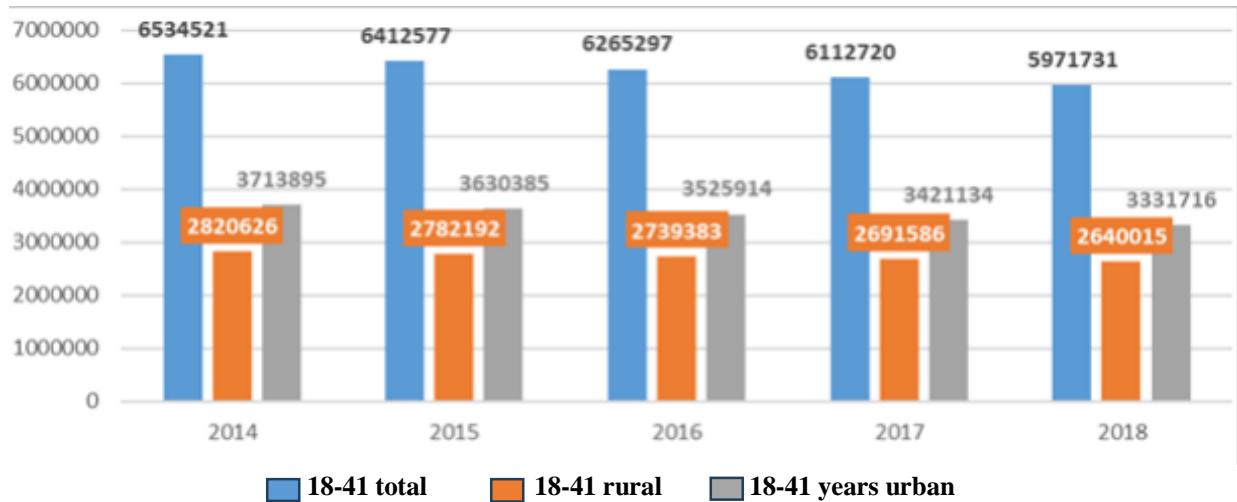


Fig. 1. Evolution of the 18-41 age group total/urban/rural 2014-2018 [4]

The number of young farmers (under the age of 44) decreased from 3.3 million in 2005 to 2.3 million in 2013 [1] and the number of young farmers in Romania is very small, much lower than the European average. The European Union supports young farmers through the implementation of specific programs, the common agricultural policy, through the paying agencies APIA and AFIR, projects for beekeeping, the vegetal and livestock areas.

The causes that led to the decrease in the number of young people active in the agricultural field are:

- Difficulties in accessing European funds;
- Little education and knowledge for village dwellers;
- Prejudices related to hard country work;
- Little investment;
- Old and non-performing equipment;
- Lack of infrastructure;
- Low income for those working in agriculture;
- The departure of families from rural areas abroad;
- Few development opportunities;
- Lack of successful models in the agricultural sector;
- Migration of families with children to rural areas;
- Lack of water and sewage systems;
- Lack of gas and energy installations;

- The cultural and social area is almost non-existent.

Romania's accession to the European Union caused young families from Romania to leave in large numbers in search of a better life, their children quickly integrated into the European educational system and thus they cannot easily return, especially in rural zone. The young people who remained in the country were not stimulated in any way to work in the rural sector, and were even discouraged by the low incomes that could be obtained in this sector.

The European agricultural policy established measures for the revitalization of this rural area and through European funds tried to bring young people to this economic sector.

Recently, various projects have been launched in Romania to attract young people to agriculture:

- **Sub-measure 6.1 - Support for the installation of young farmers, granted through AFIR** : the installation of young farmers is one of the most popular investment sub-measures with European funds in the National Rural Development Program (PNDR), granted through AFIR. Thanks to this line of financing, thousands of Romanian farmers managed to set up at the head of a farm and modernize it, in order to become much more competitive on the market. Submeasure 6.1 is a measure financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (FEADR) and has the general objective of supporting the development of skills and competences of young people in rural areas. This support scheme for young farmers can reach up to 50,000 euros and its main goal is to attract young people to this economic sector. The main purpose of sub-measure 6.1 is to create opportunities for the personal and professional development of young people in rural areas, through innovative and entrepreneurial projects and by encouraging their leadership and creativity. The specific objectives of sub-measure 6.1 include supporting young people who want to develop their skills and competences in the field of entrepreneurship and innovation, promoting the economic and social development of rural areas, as well as creating new jobs in these regions. Beneficiaries of sub-measure 6.1 are young people between the ages of 16 and 40, who live in the rural area or in a small village or community. Also, non-governmental organizations and other entities that carry out activities for the benefit of young people can benefit from funding under this sub-measure. To be eligible for funding under sub-measure 6.1, applicants must meet certain eligibility criteria, such as being young people with entrepreneurial potential or who want to develop skills and competences in this field, have an innovative and sustainable project idea, meet the requirements related to the project budget and present a coherent and viable business plan [3].

- **Scheme for young farmers, granted through APIA** : this involves granting an annual payment to young farmers who are entitled to the single area payment. The aim of this scheme is to support the establishment of young farmers and the sustainable development of the agricultural sector in the countryside. This is done by providing grants and low-interest loans to finance the projects of young farmers. The beneficiaries of this scheme are young farmers between the ages of 18 and 40, who have no experience in the agricultural field or who have graduated from an agricultural education institution. They must present a coherent and viable business plan to be eligible for funding. The conditions to access this

scheme include obtaining a non-refundable grant of up to €50,000, low-interest loan and a maximum period of 5 years for business development. The objectives of this scheme include increasing the number of young farmers in rural areas, developing the agricultural sector through innovation and technology, as well as increasing competitiveness on the European market for agricultural products. The Young Farmers Scheme offered by APIA aims to support young farmers in the development of their agricultural businesses and the sustainable growth of the agricultural sector in rural areas by providing grants and low-interest loans [2]. The value of the Program for 2019 was 30 million lei and aims to provide financial support to employers of farmers in agriculture, aquaculture and food industry, in order to hire young beneficiaries of the Program for a fixed or indefinite period, but not less than 12 months, full time.

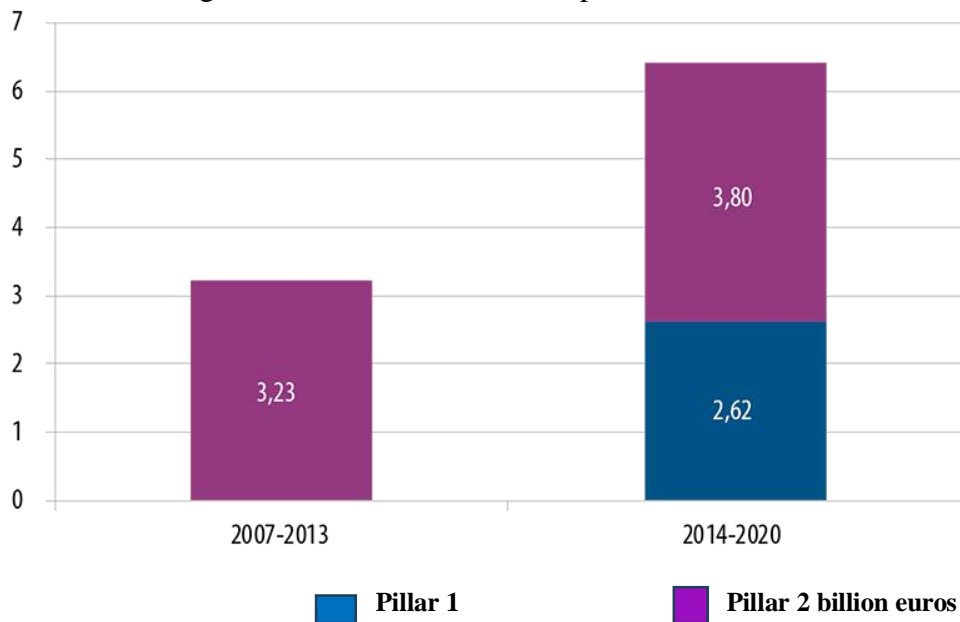


Fig. 2. The budget allocated by the EU to support young farmers under pillar 1 (EGF) and pillar 2 (EAFRD) in the programming periods 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 [1] .

The European Union changed the budget given to young farmers, granted additional amounts for pillar 2 and established new payment schemes for pillar 1. Young people dared to approach this sector and the rural area developed visibly. Thus, modern agricultural and livestock farms were established, roads and bridges were modernized, schools and kindergartens were rehabilitated, sewage and drinking water systems were built, rural tourism was developed. The Romanian population has become interested in the rural area, more living space, cleaner air and peace.

The payment agencies in Romania, APIA and AFIR, ran programs and offered significant sums to applicants, European money but also from the national budget.

Conclusions

It is important to emphasize that agriculture can be an important source of income for young farmers in Romania, but this is a sector that requires a lot of work and dedication. In addition, to be eligible for various funding schemes, young farmers must demonstrate their commitment to sustainable agriculture and rural development.

One of the most important schemes available to young farmers in Romania is the FEADR, which provides funding for projects that promote sustainable agriculture and rural development. To be eligible for this scheme, young farmers should be prepared to complete their education in the field and have a viable business plan as well as a clear marketing strategy for their produce. Another important scheme for young farmers in Romania is the PNDR, which provides financing for the modernization and diversification of farms. This scheme should be accessible to young farmers who want to invest in new equipment or technology.

In addition, there are numerous organizations and associations that offer support and assistance to young farmers in Romania. These organizations can provide advice and guidance on managing their farms as well as accessing funding schemes.

As far as Romania's economy is concerned, agriculture can have a significant impact on economic growth and rural development. Currently, there is a great need for quality and sustainable food products, both on the domestic market and on the European market. Young farmers should consider these opportunities and focus on developing quality products that can be marketed locally and internationally.

The government should also provide more support and assistance to young farmers by creating programs to help them develop their businesses and access financing schemes. In this way, agriculture could become an engine of economic growth for the entire country.

Today we have the opportunity to use various modern agricultural technologies that help farmers manage their farm much easier, such as smart sensors that can read everything - from plant health, the need for water from the harvest to the level of nutrients in soil, as well as precision-navigated machines and environmentally friendly agricultural practices that can be integrated and tracked in modern farm management software.

The non-reimbursable European funds accessed and implemented in the rural area have attracted young people to this sector and the rural development of Romania is evident.

Following the research carried out, we outlined some proposals and recommendations:

- creation of an effective monitoring system for evaluating the results of the implementation of european funds;
- uniform distribution of available resources;
- more studies and analyzes to identify specific needs;

- encouraging the development of new activities in the rural area;
- the government should develop mentoring and training programs for young farmers to help them develop their farming skills and learn about best practices. These programs could include training courses, video tutorials and mentoring sessions;
- the government should provide access to finance and tax incentives for young farmers to enable them to start or expand their farming businesses. These facilities could include subsidies for the purchase of agricultural machinery and equipment or low-interest loans for investments in farms and agricultural holdings;
- the government should work with local and international organizations to promote sustainable agricultural practices and identify export opportunities. In this way, young farmers could benefit from new markets and have greater opportunities to develop their businesses;
- measures could also be introduced to encourage young farmers to get involved in organic farming and to reduce the negative impact on the environment. The government could develop better infrastructure to enable young farmers to transport their produce more easily, expand their networks and promote their businesses;

Supporting young farmers is essential for the growth of the Romanian economy. By implementing the above recommendations, the Romanian government could significantly contribute to the success of the country's agricultural economy.

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