

## POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN ROMANIA

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**Abstract:** Sustainable rural development is a concept which was discussed in the scientific and academic for a long time, but while studies conducted on this topic have been more or less theoretical, not including concrete measures without clearly defined SMART objectives. Studying Romanian Government Programs in recent years, the National Rural Development Programme 2007 - 2013, National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Romania and other programmatic documents of national and / or regional level, we found only formal statistics, SWOT analysis and action formulated generalized general objectives. At this moment, to talk of sustainable rural development of Romanian rural space must identify concrete solutions viable development programs to develop "personalized" at least at the county level, to realize and implement socio-economic development models to local level, including through the implementation of pilot projects. This paper is a review of the results of numerous fundamental research and exhibition of original ideas on solutions for sustainable rural development in Romania.

**Key words:** rural development, sustainable development, Romanian rural space.

### INTRODUCTION

Currently, our country is at the stage of finding new solutions for sustainable development of rural areas. Perhaps the most serious current problem is the inexistence of Romanian rural specialists who work both in the public and in the private sector. Exodus young population, especially to urban labor migration to EU countries and beyond, as well as the refusal of young professionals (university graduates and postgraduate) to return to rural areas, are some of reasons for Romanian rural human resources are mostly old, no education and a poor training. At the national level, there are numerous studies and research on sustainable rural development, but there are relatively few studies on regional level and we believe that it is necessary deepening in socio-economic studies on rural development solutions in Romania.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

In preparing this paper were established a number of major objectives and hypotheses, which have been the main points of the research. *The main objectives of the research* were: emphasize aspects that characterize this moment Romanian rural communities and values that can be promoted and developed through the process of sustainable development determinants of rural economic development, identify potential solutions and alternatives viable local sustainable rural development.

Preparation of this article was based on national studies, programs and strategies regarding sustainable rural development in Romania and the results of research carried out for the development thesis "Integrated economic development in Romanian rural communities. Case Study on Macro-region 2", author Vergina Chiritescu.

### RESEARCH RESULTS

Currently, the Romanian rural approach should be performed on at least three levels of integrated, namely: economic, social and environmental. Romanian rural importance could not and can not be challenged by anyone, given that it represents over 87% of the country where they live and 50% of the country's inhabitants. Also, more than 56% of the

population of the 27 European Union member states live in rural areas, which cover 91% of European territory, it makes rural development policy is an area of vital importance.

In the current stage of national development, Romanian village (rural community in Romania) passes both through the economic crisis - acute social and a crisis "identity". In this context, it is necessary to find *alternatives for development* starting from the structure, size and specific economic and social - each village separately. These rural communities apparently homogenous are actually represented some distinct entities, private, very different. Romanian rural area we can say that there is "unity in diversity".

It is widely accepted by specialists and non-specialists that the basic cell of the world and the rural economy is the common, namely *rural community* as administrative - territorial unit and entity socio - economic well defined, located in rural areas and many of the economic, social cultural, urban, ecological, etc. In this context, the study of all alternatives for rural community development is a hot topic and always necessary.

Based on the concept of the private economy as a way of managing resources and limited resources and multiple uses (alternatives) for unlimited needs of people, we can say that *the Romanian rural economy should be seen as an alternative amount of the allocation of these resources to ensuring sustainable development*. In other words, based on the facts existing resources, means of production are close at hand and the social indicators - economic current Romanian rural communities, have found alternatives for local and regional development that lead to real increases in economic performance areas.

Statistics on the number, size and farm performance, but also on Romania's rural development are alarming, given that all indicators followed by European statistics after EUROSTAT methodology, we place most often the last places. If we want to truly integrate economic structures - the EU social partners making them, we must consider the European model of sustainable rural development and apply it.

As a result, in Romania, have created alternative rural development so that local economies have become multifunctional, being able to strike a balance in the restructuring of individual holdings. Is imposed, creating new activities, diversification of food products and increase their recovery, development of services downstream and upstream agricultural activities and develop non-agricultural activities in order to capitalize on local resources.

Is imposed, creating new activities, diversification of food products and increase their recovery, development of services downstream and upstream agricultural activities and the development of non-agricultural activities in order to capitalize on local resources. To achieve these goals, there is need for that at farm level to produce profound structural changes in order to improve all economic and social indicators. Also need regular updating programs and local and regional development strategies in light of changing socio - economic regional, national and even international.

At present, the specific economic activity in most villages in Romania Macro 2, but not only is still defined and semi-subsistence agriculture, local development level is generally very low, due to lack of markets for agricultural products of vegetable and animals, low purchasing power locally to rural areas characterized by mono-activity etc.

Note dominant in many Romanian rural communities (especially in the North - East, regarded as the poorest region in Europe) is poverty and underdevelopment. Also, the state of agriculture in Romanian rural areas is often poor in terms of restricting domestic agricultural market, a decline in production, reduce living standards, rising inflation, excessive fragmentation of property, reduced production potential from livestock, lack of irrigation etc. However, agriculture is one of the areas that influence a good measure of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and national macro level. For example, growth in 2011 of 2.5% was mainly driven by developments in agriculture, with a plus of 11.3%, and the

industrial sector which registered an advance of 5%, according to data published by National Institute of Statistics of Romania ([www.insse.ro](http://www.insse.ro)).

In Romania, currently, holding individual prevails as a form of organizing agricultural production in Romanian countryside. With a share of 99.4% of agricultural structures (according to the General Agricultural Census in 2002), it is easy to understand the importance that is given to this form of organization of agricultural production. They use 55.3% of the total land area of the country, hence an average of 1.73 ha / farm. This average is still a concern for policy makers and in the field, especially since most of these farms (76.7%) produced entirely for consumption.

In these conditions, which have not changed significantly since 2002, it is clear that these individual farms must restructure, meaning to find an industry that can work in terms of economic efficiency. This is especially important given that the economic support of national and European funding is and will be directed mainly to those farms with commercial activity, producing partly or entirely to the market.

The immediate prospect holders and small farms producing for self-consumption will have to understand that they are vulnerable, and if they do not join, they can not hold out in a competitive market such as the Single Market.

**The solutions** for these farms could be: the opportunities linked annuity; radical restructuring of the organization and production; specializing in new areas or activities with tradition; giving up agricultural production and indirect exploitation of agricultural land; development of alternative agriculture (agro-tourism, crafts etc.); transformation holdings high integration of upstream and downstream activities of agriculture etc.

Based on the assumptions set out above, taking into account the development potential of the Romanian rural area and given the European trend on sustainable rural development, we can say that in Romania, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive *program of investment in agriculture, rural development and improvements land*, both financed own funds (national) and with funds raised (external European).

Also need *special programs for small farms, subsistence and semi-subsistence*, covering early retirement and life annuity system, supporting young people in the rural setting and starting businesses, establishing direct payment scheme by considering the EU recommendations Only then we can talk in the future about modern agriculture and the sustainable development of rural Romanian real.

**The main solutions for achieving real sustainable development in Romanian rural space** can be represented by:

- Reducing the number of farms, by association, fusion and so on;
- Farm specializing in the production;
- Increasing average yields per hectare and per animal and the total output;
- Increase the capacity of processing and agricultural commodities;
- Improve the quality and competitiveness of products produced on farms;
- Reducing the share of employment in agriculture;
- Diversification of the agricultural holdings by practicing alternative activities and developing rural services, including integrating labor surplus resulting from the restructuring of agriculture;
- Implementing landscaping policies in rural areas should allow sustainable development in agriculture, forestry, aquaculture and fishing, crafts, industry, tourism and services sector, both safeguarding the natural space, life and systems;
- The return of young professionals in rural areas;
- Scientific approach to sustainable rural development, which is essential in the current context of Romania as EU country;

- The general welfare in rural areas, taking into account not only economic growth but also the quality of life;
- Pollution control, resource management and broader considerations of quality of life;
- Creating effective institutional framework for the formulation and implementation of environmental policies;
- Promoting technological progress in the economic growth "rehabilitated";
- Wider use of economic instruments, which more accurately reflects the relative scarcity in order to provide market signals concerning environmental protection etc.

The integrated sustainable economic development perspective, Romanian rural areas and communities can not be addressed as homogeneous entities as the numerous features on the factors local historians emergence and development potential of local and regional natural resources, population structure (including ethnic) employment and its traditions, customs and culture, economic development, social and technical etc.

***Sustainable development of Romanian rural communities*** must be based on the introduction and implementation of integrated economic systems, regardless of alternative development adopted. Regarding alternatives integrated development of Romanian rural communities they can follow, on the one hand, the economic criterion, on the other hand, the social criterion. Both options will take into account the environmental factors (environmental criterion).

Romanian rural area, at the beginning of the third millennium, population mobility and employment, education and research, the use of resources, modernization of agriculture and rural communities, cultural heritage and environmental protection, streamlining administrative act etc. should become permanent subject in focus of all local actors (authorities, residents, businesses, NGOs, professional associations, etc.).

Caught in an economy system with deep structural change, rural communities are Romanian space institutional uncertainties, risks and social crises. The responses of these communities to adapt to an evolving system are manifested in the emergence of empirical functional in different spatial - economic contexts.

Romanian rural pronounced diversity requires the need for local sustainable development approach, meaning: modernization of agricultural holdings to overcome the predominant character of subsistence and semi-subsistence; involvement of local populations in the rural development; extrapolation initiatives in rural actors at the community level; developing appropriate strategies real local needs; encouraging sustainable development policies and adequate institutions etc.

Romania has favorable conditions for agricultural activities, it featuring an agricultural area of 14.8 million ha (about 0.65 ha per capita), structured as follows: 63.2% arable land, vineyards and orchards 3.2% 33.6% pastures and hayfields (Romanian Statistical Yearbook, 2010). Romania ranks 7 in the EU27, after France, Spain, Poland, Germany, Italy and the UK, accounting for 8% of total agricultural land in Europe.

In these circumstances, it is undeniable importance of agriculture in the Romanian economy, which has become increasingly significant in recent years. According to the National Institute of Statistics of Romania in the period 1990 - 1996, the contribution of agriculture to GDP has varied between 18-21%, and between 1999 to 2002 the same indicator decreased, reaching values between 10-13%. Since 2003, the trend was decreasing, while the modern market economies reorganize and tended to decrease in the contribution of agriculture to GDP.

In the European Union in 2001, the share of agriculture in GDP was only 1.7%, while employment in agriculture of 4.2% (EUROSTAT data). EU countries with large agricultural areas (France, Italy etc.) have higher values of these indicators.

In the period 1990 - 2012 in Romania have been made numerous attempts to support the process of sustainable rural development and farm relief. Unfortunately, a number of measures adopted or proposed had no purpose or have not achieved their objectives.

For example, individual farm subsidies for the purchase of inputs (seeds, fertilizers etc.) were found to actually be a source of funding for their work in these farms. Moreover, these subsidies were masked welfare policy, without leading to a strong and sustainable farm concerned.

If we look at developments in recent years (2007 - 2012) Romanian government policy of supporting farmers, we conclude that these policies were unstable without specific legislation was based. Policies to encourage small farms were often circumstantial reasons of economic or political strategy (rather, lack of strategy), so they have not led to modernize the countryside, but had only weak welfare effects.

## CONCLUSIONS

The importance of this scientific approach is given by the certainty that sustainable development and integrated rural Romanian, including agriculture and non-agricultural activities around the area will have to be carried out in accordance with the values, traditions and precepts global (economic, environmental, social, cultural and so on).

It is known, that the practical realization of sustainable economic development requires a transition period in which both the ruling political class and the population to reassess goals and aspirations, to redefine standards on social success and to adapt the work and leisure, use a new set of values and principles that aim to prosperity and protection of future generations, but a Romanian rural area this transition seems endless. Moreover, in some areas of rural development as though it stalled.

In Romania, it is necessary to reactivate the process of sustainable rural development and finding a way to reconcile the interests of economic development with social and environmental issues. In this respect, based on the formalization and then take action, stimulated by national legislation, regional and international.

Amid the common elements, the strategy of sustainable development becomes operational by appropriate national policies, able to achieve compatibility systems are interrelated in time and space, collaboration and cooperation with regional or international.

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