

CONSIDERATIONS ON AGRI-TOURISTIC POTENTIAL OF CARASU PLATEAU FROM SOUTHERN DOBROGEA

POPESCU MARIUS*¹

¹ *Transilvania University of Brasov, Romania*

*Corresponding author's e-mail: mpopescu74@gmail.com

Abstract: *The aim of this paper is to define the agri-touristic specific of Carasu Plateau, which through the optimal recovery it would contribute to sustainable socio-economic development of this territory, mainly rural. Research methodology consisted in field research, the list of resources with agri-touristic potential, their mapping and proposing solutions of sustainable rural management. Villages with natural and cultural heritage and specific agricultural activities represent the optimal resources for tourism in various forms: ecotourism, cultural tourism, ethno-gastronomic tourism, leisure tourism. Optimizing the management of specific activities and resources from Carasu Plateau is a premise for the development of agri-touristic villages, which can be integrated into a touristic route and will be a solution of sustainable development of this rural area.*

Key words: *agri-tourism, Carasu, management, optimization, sustainable*

INTRODUCTION

The Carasu Plateau is located in North-Central part of Southern Dobrogea, it is enclosed between Danube to West, the seaside Navodari-Constanta to East, Casimcea Plateau to North-East, Cobadin Plateau and Oltina Plateau to South. This area of study includes 18 administrative-territorial units (ATU) - Murfatlar town and 17 communes, not included Cernavoda and Medgidia urban areas [10]. Natural environmental conditions and traditional activities of the inhabitants of the Carasu Plateau, with diverse natural and cultural resources is the basis of development of agri-touristic activity, which it is less exploited [9]. This study aims to reveal the touristic specific of the Carasu Plateau, through inventory of touristic resources and traditional agricultural activities, providing a solution for sustainable socio-economic development of local rural communities.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research methodology is represented by bibliographic and cartographic documentation, field research, to identify the distribution of touristic and agricultural resources with agri-touristic potential in the administrative-territorial units (ATU) from the Carasu Plateau. Analysis of territorial distribution of touristic resources, linking them with activities and traditions [2,8], their mapping will highlight possible touristic villages and agri-touristic routes [9], as a solution of local development, for medium and long term.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The Carasu Plateau represents Northern part of Southern Dobrogea located along the Carasu valley (actually the Danube-Black Sea Canal), consists of a series of tablelands whose altitude decreases slowly, from 130 to 30 m, to the Danube-Sea Black Canal and the Danube. By its geographical position, it appears as a depression area, limited by high slopes with altitudes between 70 and 100 m, as the lowest plateau in Romania, but very fragmented of valleys that introducing a specific note on the geographical landscape. Climatic, this area belongs to temperate-continental zone, the annual average temperature of 10.0-11.0°C, and rainfall under 500 mm annual. Vegetation is typical of steppe and forest steppe zone, developed on chernozems and white soils, for this reason the natural vegetation has been replaced largely by crops. The hydrographic network is made up of small rivers that flow only temporary seasons of high rainfall [3]. In order to preserve the landscape and elements of scientific importance, several areas have been declared as nature

reserves (*Fântânița-Murfatlar, Valu lui Traian, fossil points of Cernavodă, Seimenii Mari and Topalu*) [7].

Villages from Carasu Plateau are generally large, with adequate structures and more complex functions than the rest of Southern Dobrogea Plateau. The population of 108,205 inhabitants of the Carasu Plateau is grouped into 18 administrative-territorial units (ATU): 1 town (Murfatlar) and 17 communes (Castelu, Crucea, Cumpăna, Cuza Vodă, Lumina, Mihail Kogălniceanu, Mircea Vodă, Nicolae Bălcescu, Peștera, Poarta Albă, Rasova, Saligny, Seimeni, Siliștea, Topalu, Tortoman, Valu lui Traian), a predominantly rural area (89%), with a surface of 1,628 km².

Rural environment of Southern Dobrogea is important because of the high agricultural potential, and cultural-ethnographic values from this area. The specificity of this geographic rural area is *the ethnic mosaic*, the entire area is a *model of interethnic and cultural cohabitation*, caused by the presence of other ethnic groups that living with Romanians: Turks and Tatars (Castelu, Valu lui Traian, Cumpăna, Lumina, Mihail Kogălniceanu, Murfatlar, Siliștea), Aromanian (Mihail Kogălniceanu, Lumina, Cumpăna, Poarta Albă, Castelu, Valu lui Traian), Rromas (Cuza-Vodă), other ethnics (Lippovans, Germans, Bulgarians, Greeks etc.) [1,5,10].

Traditional activities are mainly agricultural, in the *structure of the farmland*, together with cereal, occur as frequency and importance, vineyards and orchards. The land use (fig. 1) is the 162,872 ha, of which: 3,677 ha - *lakes and wetlands*, 6,796 ha – *forest area*, 136,860 ha - *farmland*. Possible resources as a support for agri-tourism, the agricultural area comprising 85% *arable land* (especially for crops), 8.6% *pastures and hayfields* (for livestock), 5% *vineyards* (6,800 ha, Murfatlar vineyard), 1.4% *orchards* (1,900 ha, predominantly apricot trees, peach and nectarine trees, cherry trees, plum trees, apple trees) [10].

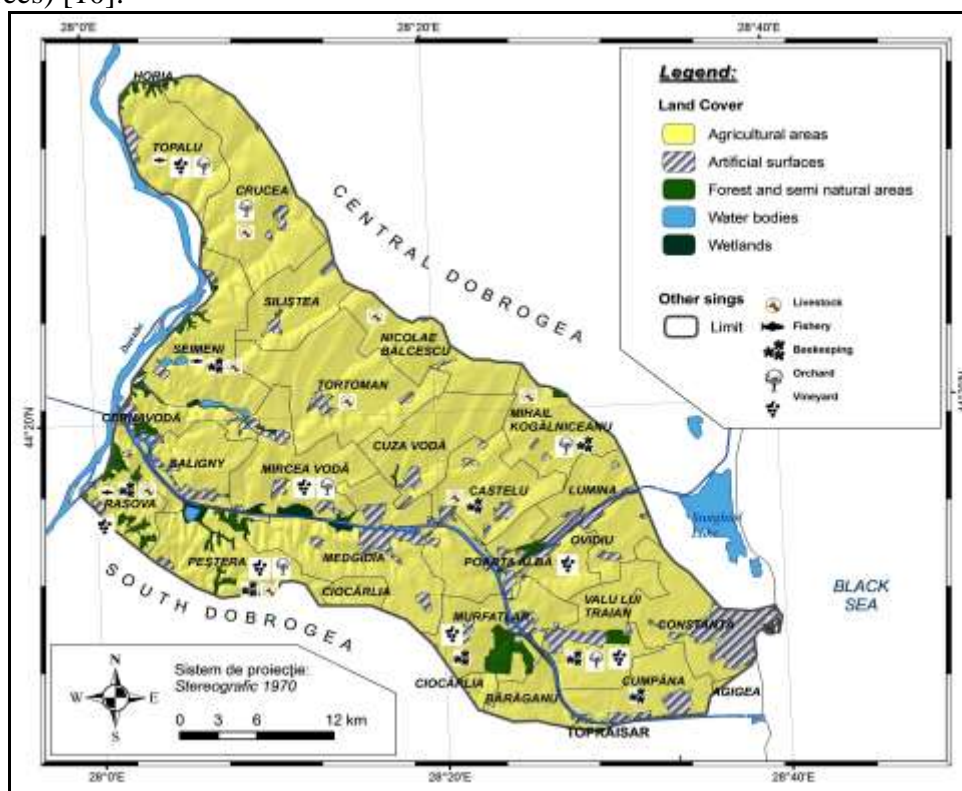


Figure 1. Land Use and Agricultural Map of Carasu Plateau

Regarding *agricultural activities* (fig. 1), with potential for tourism are represented of viticulture (Murfatlar - where is a Viticulture Research Station, Mircea Vodă, Poarta Albă, Rasova, Topalu, Valu lui Traian, Peștera), fruit-growing (Crucea, Mircea Vodă,

Topalu, Valu lui Traian - where is a Fruit-growing Research Station, Mihail Kogălniceanu), beekeeping (Cumpăna, Murfatlar, Peștera, Valu lui Traian, Seimeni, Rasova, Castelu, Mihail Kogălniceanu), sheep breeding (Mihail Kogălniceanu, Peștera, Seimeni, Castelu, Crucea, Rasova) and goats (Mihail Kogălniceanu, Peștera, Seimeni, Crucea, Rasova, Nicolae Balcescu, Tortoman) - with potential, and numerous livestock, but untapped in agri-tourism (only supplier to catering establishments of the seaside), fishery (traditional activity in the villages along Danube) [10].

Infrastructure of communications from Carasu Plateau (fig. 3) is diversified and well represented, because of the position of transit to the Black Sea Coast: *The Sun Highway* (linking Bucharest and Black Sea Coast), *140 km of national roads* (Constanța - Murfatlar to Ostrov and Cernavodă, Hârșova - Constanța on limit of North-East of the region), *160 km of county roads* (Topalu - Cernavodă - Rasova, along Danube, Medgidia - Mihail Kogălniceanu, Medgidia - Peștera to Ostrov), and several *local roads*, that provide connections between all villages of plateau; *the railway* Cernavodă – Medgidia - Constanța, *Danube-Black Sea Canal* and *International Airoport* Mihail Kogălniceanu [3,9].

There is a diversity of landscapes: typical landscape of the plateau, the Danube, the Danube-Black Sea Canal, lakes, natural protected areas, rural settlements with cultural resources and specific socio-economic activities. Agri-touristic potential resulting from traditional farming activities (viticulture, fruit-growing, fisheries, beekeeping, sheep and goats breeding), associated with the presence of cultural, historical, religious sights and multicultural local customs [2,4,6].

Natural touristic resources (fig. 2) are represented by:

- The picturesque landscape of the contact area Plateau - Danube or Danube-Black Sea Canal, wetland of Danube, *Allah Bair Hill*;
- *Danube Valley* between Rasova and Topalu, *lakes* (Țibrinu, Domneasca, the lake in chalk from *Murfatlar*), *Danube-Black Sea Canal*, swamps along Canal (Faclia);
- *Natural protected area* (*Fântânița-Murfatlar* forest - 83 ha, of which 67 ha scientific area, *Valu lui Traian* botanical area - 5 ha, *Allah-Bair* botanical, geological and paleontological area - 10 ha, *Topalu* NeoJurassic Shelf - 21 ha, *Movila Banului* fossil point from *Seimenii Mari* - 11 ha and *Cernavodă* fossil point - 3 ha);
- Scattered patches of forest (Mihail Kogălniceanu, Castelu, Cuza Vodă, and patches along Danube-Black Sea Canal) [7].

Cultural touristic resources are represented by:

- Archaeological sights: *Axiopolis* and *Capidava Fortress*, *Painted Tomb of Hinog Hill*, Cave complex in chalk from *Murfatlar*;
- Monuments and historical sights: International Honorary Cemetery *Mircea cel Bătrân* and Monument of *The 1st World War* (Mircea Vodă); *Straja* Monument, on the right bank of Danube-Black Sea Canal, higher than 50 m;
- Religious sights: *Izvorul Tămăduirii* Monastery (Crucea), *Înălțarea Domnului* Monastery (Mircea Vodă), *Sf. Teotim* Monastery (Murfatlar), *Adormirea Maicii Domnului* Catholic Church (Oituz), *Sf. Anton* Catholic Church (Mihail Kogălniceanu), mosques in villages with Turkish and Tatar communities (Murfatlar, Valu lui Traian, Castelu, Peștera, Cumpăna, Lumina);
- Museum collections: *Dinu și Sevasta Vintilă* Art Museum (Topalu), *Gh. Celea* Aromanian community Museum (Mihail Kogălniceanu), *Ing. Anghel Saligny* Museum collection (Saligny), Wine Museum (Murfatlar);
- Ethnographic centers (crafts, tissues, folk costumes): Rasova, Topalu, Cumpăna;

- Local traditional events during the year: *Feast of Acacia Flower - Sărbătoarea Florii de salcâm* (Peștera), *Sheep out to pasture - ieșirea oilor la pășunat* (Valu lui Traian), *Kureș - Tatar fighting* (Murfatlar), *Harvest Day* (autumn, in every village), *Villages Holidays, customs and manners of winter or spring Holidays*, Celebrations of Turks, Tatar and Aromanian communities, *Inter-ethnic Feast of Culinary Art*, *Dor de cântec românesc Folk Music Festival*, *Delfinul de Mare Pop Music Festival*, Festival of Winter Traditions *După datina străbună* (Cumpăna), „*Saramura de vadivită*” - fishing event and „*Gustul mustului pe malul rasovean*” - autumn when grape are harvested (Rasova) [8,9].

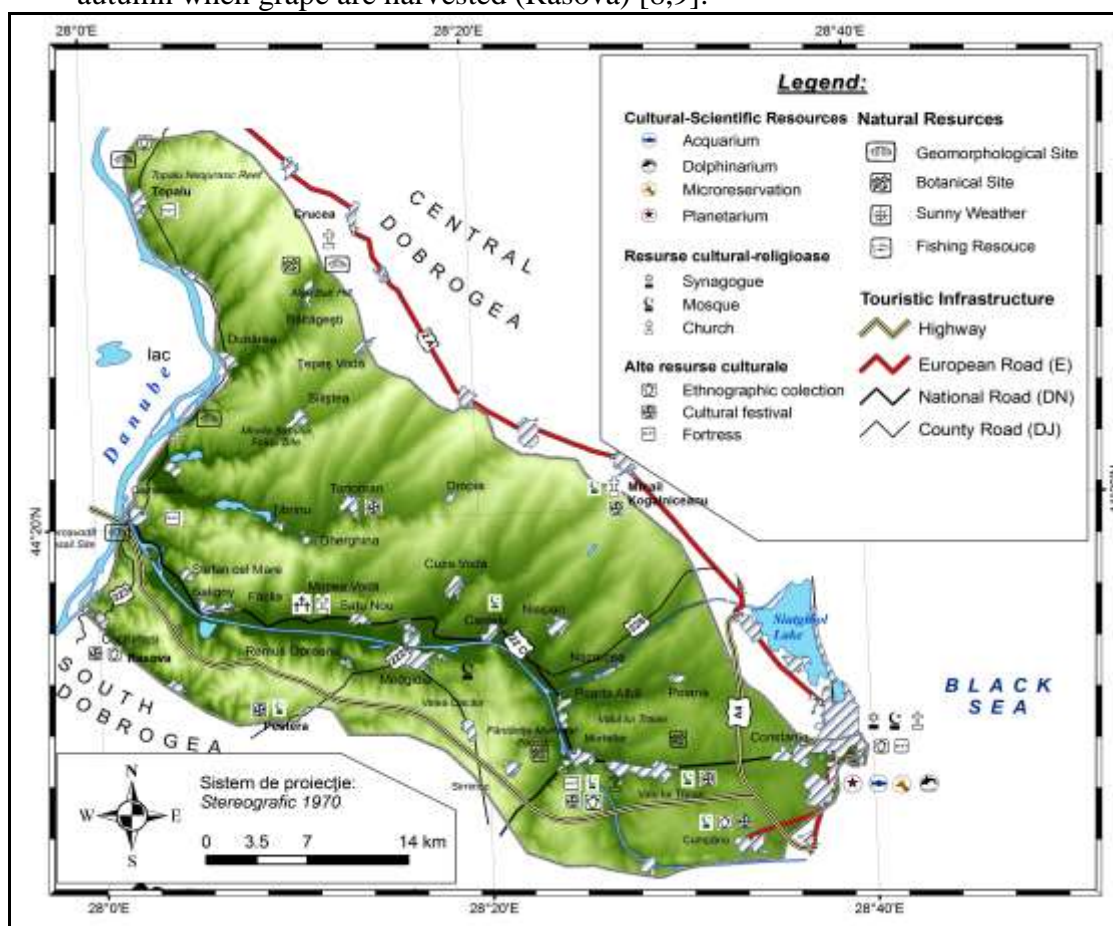


Figure 2. Touristic Resources of Carasu Plateau

Between **traditional farming**, viticulture occupies an important place, by the presence of vineyards, that benefit of bio-pedo-climatic along Danube-Black Sea Canal (Podgoria Murfatlar - 6,800 ha) and Danube's terraces. The main wine centers are Murfatlar, Cernavodă and Medgidia, but are wineries that offer the possibility of visiting and tasting wine (Viticulture Research Station, *Domeniul Vlădoi* Wine Cellar, *MI* Wine Cellar, *Atelier* Wine Cellar - Murfatlar, *Hinog* Wine Cellar - Cochirleni, *Alira* Wine Cellar - Rasova, *Darie* Wine Cellar - Topalu).

Also, the Carasu Plateau has fishing potential (in villages along Danube), beekeeping potential, sheep and goats breeding, but still untapped for agri-tourism.

The infrastructure of food and accommodation in rural areas includes several guesthouses: *Domnească* Guesthouse (accommodation, fish and venison dishes, equitation) - Seimeni, *Fântânița* Guesthouse (accommodation, restaurant) - Murfatlar, *Mocanului* Inn (accommodation, restaurant) - Mircea Voda, *Valu lui Traian* Inn, *Emi* Guesthouse

(accommodation, restaurant), *Kartali Motel* (accommodation, restaurant) - Mihail Kogălniceanu and *Mosorel Guesthouse* - Pestera.

The diversity of natural and cultural resources, agricultural activities (especially wine and fisheries), ethnic cultural traditions and local cuisine are factors that highlight *thematic touristic routes*: *Wine Road* (in Murfatlar vineyard), *Fish Road* (along the Danube), *ecotouristic trails* (protected areas) or *cultural-historical routes* (archaeological sights).

By their integrating will result **two main touristic routes**, with **polyvalent** character, *first along the Danube-Black Sea Canal* between Constanta and Cernavoda (protected areas, historic and religious sights, leisure tourism, enotourism, apitourism), and the *second along the Danube*, between Topalu and Rasova (picturesque landscape, protected areas, archaeological sights, rural folk art, enotourism, api-tourism, fishing) (fig. 3).

Other dispersed sights may be integrated in thematic touristic circuits (historical - cultural tourism, religious-cultural tourism, scientific tourism) in Southern Dobrogea territorial system or Constanta County.

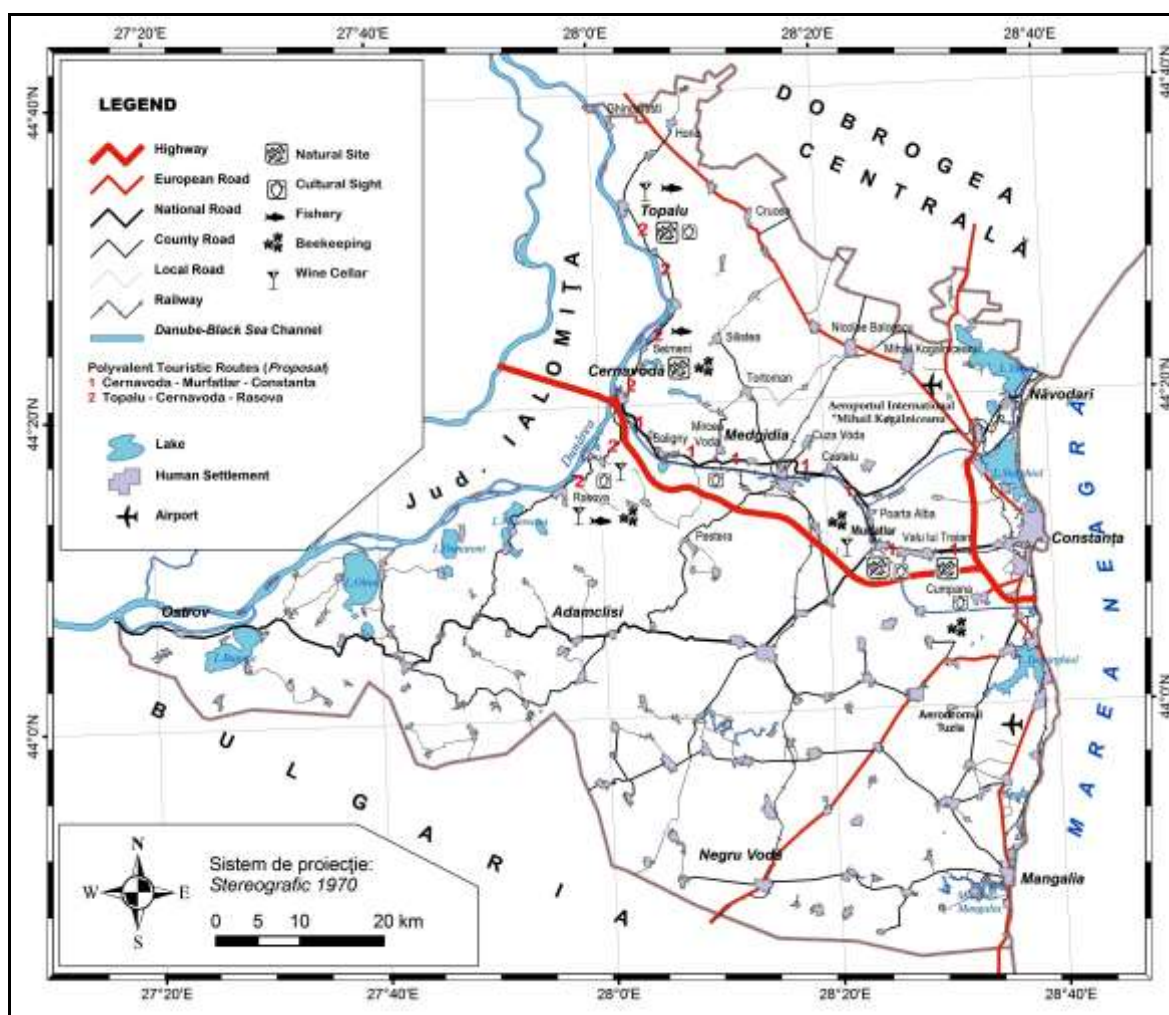


Figure 3. Touristic Routes of Carasu Plateau
CONCLUSIONS

The Carasu Plateau has resources that may highlight the local agri-touristic potential, but the complex strategies are needed to promote natural and cultural heritage, through the creation of tourist information centers and signaling sights and touristic routes

This area offers optimal condition for recovery of agri-touristic resources for organizing of *Dobrogea's traditional guesthouse* and diverse touristic offers: *leisure tourism, ecotourism, cultural tourism, ethno-gastronomic tourism, enotourism* etc

Traditional crafts and revaluation of local agricultural products, by integration in touristic and trade activities, may constitute *the engine* for diversifying of rural economy, dependent on agriculture, contributing to income growth of rural residents.

The efficient management of agricultural, natural and cultural resources from Carasu Plateau will cause some agri-touristic villages, by integrating them into proposed polyvalent touristic routes, can be a solution for sustainable socio-economic development of this area.

REFERENCES

- [1]. **BORDÂNC FLOAREA**, 2008, Analiza spațiului rural dobrogean, Editura Universitară, București
- [2]. **GRUIA R.**, 2013, Green economy and agri-rural tourism. In: Turismul rural românesc în contextul dezvoltării durabile. Actualitate și perspective, Vol. XXIX, 50-57, Institutul de Cercetări Economice și Sociale "Gh. Zane", Editura Tehnopress, Iași
- [3]. **IORDAN I., DOBRE S.** (coord.), 2005, Podișul Dobrogei, In: Geografia României, vol. V, 758-790, Editura Academiei Române, București
- [4]. **MAZILU MIRELA, DUMITRESCU DANIELA**, 2012, Identity and sustainable development in rural tourism. In: Forum geografic. Studii și cercetări de geografie și protecția mediului XI(SI), 7-11, Universitatea din Craiova
- [5]. **NICOARĂ V.**, 2006, Dobrogea. Spațiu geografic multicultural, Editura Muntenia, Constanța
- [6]. **NISTOREANU P.**, 2007, Aprecieri asupra fenomenului turistic rural. In: Journal of tourism Issue 3, 16-23, University "Ștefan cel Mare" of Suceava
- [7]. **POPESCU M.**, 2015, Management of ecotouristic resources in Southern Dobrogea, Romania, In: Journal of Landscape Management, Vol.6(1), 61-65, Mendel University, Brno, Czech Republic
- [8]. **POPESCU M., GRUIA R.**, 2015, Geotouristic study regarding identification of resources with gastronomic profile from Southern Dobrogea and opportunity of their recovery, In: Journal of EcoAgriTourism, Vol. 11(2), 78-85, Transilvania University Press, Brasov, Romania
- [9]. **POPESCU M., URDEA CORNELIA**, 2012, Rolul turismului rural în dezvoltarea economiei spațiului rural dobrogean. In Economia agroalimentară și dezvoltarea rurală în România, 539-547, Editura Academiei, București
- [10]. ***Anuarul Statistic al Județului Constanta, 2015, www.insse.ro