

APPROACHES ON EU-28 SOCIAL AGRICULTURE MODEL

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Abstract

In a sustainable economy, agriculture is a sector with strong economic potential that needs to be higher valued by the proper use of tools and available leveraging. The approach of EU-28 social agricultural model highlights some of the converging elements or, where appropriate, divergent, at promoting social agriculture for community space and for Romania in particular. In this context, the main objective of the paper was to analyze some of the major transformations of national agricultural sector and the possibility of promoting social agriculture confronting with achieving convergence with the requirements of the European agricultural model.

Keywords:

Social agriculture, rural development, sustainability, sustainable economy

Introduction

The agriculture sector and agriculture in general, as an economic activity, experienced significant changes, the primary role of ensuring food production to the safety net for the rural population or space for complex, complementary activities, becoming multifunctional. Although agriculture continues to be a fundamental branch in modern economies, it begins more and more to acquire social issues, becoming social agriculture. Thus, agriculture brings together the concept of multifunctional agriculture and social protection in rural areas. Starting from the premise that agriculture is a highly important and determinant activity in rural areas (Badea and Mieila, 2008; Andrei and Ungureanu, 2014; Andrei and Popescu, 2014), it must provide equally to the needs and tools to ensure a decent standard of living in rural area and social protection for farmers.

Agriculture has a multiple role in the contemporary economies, managing to become, at least in the last decade a growth factor for the rural communities. Numerous studies analyze the role and impact of agriculture but pay minor attention to the social aspects of the agriculture. Different aspects are also considered.

As for example Adrian, (2015) argues the importance of Romanian mountain tourism for the national economy, Sima and Gheorghe, (2015) identifies some of the challenges and the possible opportunities of computing and analyzing the ecological footprint in case of Romania and (Andrei et al., 2013) use the dynamic programming method in case of a sheep holding for optimizing an investment for improving the agricultural potential valuing.

Burja and Burja, 2014 reviles some of the challenge for Romania for achieving the sustainable development of rural areas. On the other hand, (Lazăr and Lazăr, 2016) write an analysis regarding the trends in the evolution of Romania's agricultural resources in the context of sustainable development. Social development of agriculture in the community area is associated with deepening poverty level threshold and in rural areas (Mathijs, 2003; Alston, 2004), which made it more than necessary to develop a new integrated approach between agricultural practices and the need for social safety as (Macias, 2008; Warner,

2007) remarked in their studies. Social agriculture brings together both concept and practice of social security imperatives multifunctional agriculture, coupled expansion of production experience. Thus, the rural population, especially the poor one, could be having access to a new opportunity to increase economic security.

Individuals who are experiencing financial difficulties or social exclusion threshold may establish individual activities of agricultural production, thereby increasing the social wealth. Social agriculture extend the scope of the classical methods of agricultural production, offering farmers the possibility to diversify incomes and living standards in rural areas, to the extent that they fail to provide social services to improve scripting access to existing ones, hence generating added value to local community level.

Understanding the social role of agriculture at European level, the implications and effects of this type of cross that agriculture can generate makes it increasingly difficult to define and extend the assessment area concept. But when discussing the concept of social farming, there are three main approaches: (European Economic and Social Committee, 2012):

- First is the institutional approach, centered mainly on the dominant public institutions / health (such as in some countries like Germany, France, Ireland, Slovenia);
- The second approach is a private type, particular, usually associated with the establishment and operation of farms with therapeutic means that is prevalent in the Netherlands and Belgium / Flanders;
- The third approach, namely the mixed one, which combines features of the two mentioned above based on cooperatives and private farms, as happens in Italy.(European Economic and Social Committee, 2012)

In the EU-28, funding arrangements, instruments for the realization and implementation of social agriculture differs from country to country, each of them providing an experience framework or a general work place. However, as shown in (European Economic and Social Committee, 2012), the main terms of financing agriculture in social European space refers to facilitating direct access to food markets for products and ethical direct selling of these products, as is done in countries such as: France and Italy and the start of public projects and charity based voluntary associations, specific to countries like Italy, France and in social cooperatives in Italy or allocation of public funding of health, care and education budgets for the public structures profile: Germany, Ireland, Slovenia, agricultural holdings in the Netherlands or, as appropriate, social cooperatives in Italy or through rural development policy, which had provided specific tools for financing and supporting the initial development and social farms during 2007-2013.

Social agricultural development was achieved as a reaction to increasing social insecurity of the population in rural areas. Emphasizing a social dimension in rural economies as the indicator of people at risk of poverty/social exclusion reveals, it imposed on the one hand the diversification of multifunctional agriculture and on the other side of the fence identifies solutions in increasing recovery of rural and agricultural potential by expanding activities in the sphere of social protection and inclusion.

In this context developing a social change in the agricultural sector represents a great challenge both for policymakers and for rural investors. McMichael, (2016) offers a global perspective in development and social change. Rhoades and Aue, (2010) collects and argumentations regarding the multi-dimensions of the social agriculture approaches in social media.

1. Social agriculture and the risk of poverty or social exclusion

Social agriculture represents a useful instrument in promoting both rural developments by a great degree of integration of the rural population in the rural activities, beyond the multifunctional agriculture. In table 1 are presented the numbers of peoples at risk of poverty /social exclusion, in some of the EU-28 countries, in 2014.

Table 1 People at risk of poverty or social exclusion, 2014

	MS	Thinly- populated areas	Intermediate urbanized areas	Densely- populated areas
Bulgaria	40.1	51.4	40.5	30
Czech Republic	14.8	15.2	15.4	13.9
Denmark	17.8	14.7	14.3	24.2
Germany	20.6	18.8	18.7	24.1
Estonia	26.0	26.5	27	25
Ireland	27.4	27.4	29.2	26.3
Spain	29.2	34.8	29.1	26.2
France	18.5	16.3	20.6	19.6
Italy	28.3	33.7	26.8	27.8
Latvia	32.7	38.6	31.6	26.5
Lithuania	27.3	32.4	27.1	21.8
Hungary	31.1	36.5	31.2	23.7
Austria	19.2	14.1	16.9	28.3
Poland	24.7	31.2	22.8	17.8
Portugal	27.5	30.9	25.3	26.8
Romania	40.2	55.0	31	27.9
Slovenia	20.4	21.6	19.1	20.2
Slovakia	18.4	20.8	17.8	15
Finland	17.3	17.8	17.4	16.6
Sweden	16.9	18.1	15.4	17.5
UK	24.1	20.4	20.0	27.0
EU-28	24.4	27.1	22.3	24.3

Source: author's calculations based on European Commission, 2015

Data presented in Table 1 provides an illustrative situation regarding the situation of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, in some of the EU-28 countries in 2014, which is the year at the beginning of the new European budgetary framework. Romania and Bulgaria offer the highest values for this indicator both for thinly- populated areas and for dense ly-populated areas. The existence of populations at risk of poverty or social exclusion, which are more and more numerous, emphasize the need of involvement and enhancement of agricultural ways to reduce the size of this indicator.

The contribution of social agriculture to reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion default will be also decisive by achievement tools and what measures can be taken. Therefore, to social farming can be assigned four application areas (European Economic and Social Committee, 2012):

- educational and therapeutic activities developed in rural areas;
- employability and social inclusion of rural population;
- didactic and pedagogical activities in rural areas;
- personal care services in rural areas.(European Economic and Social Committee, 2012).

Implementing social activities specific to agriculture may increase the degree of insertion of the rural population in paid agricultural activities, making it more than necessary to rethink the notion of subsistence farming and whether it can be transformed into social farming. Subsistence holding can be perceived as a substrate in the early forms of agriculture achieving social being equally necessary for its implementation and material support in unlocking the potential. Reorientation of activities to agriculture and social support to allocating funding will help expand the concept and scope of achievement, especially as rural areas face large structural imbalances and agriculture in its classic form no longer manages to cover and reduce these more obvious gaps.

Globalization of the economy, border movement of production, labor migration, particularly of skilled one, reducing the role of agricultural activities in rural areas itself, its large technologization are factors that further accentuates the pressure on rural areas. Industrialization of agriculture forms a large part of the rural labor force to be excess. Identifying of certain permeable activities, including additional and complementary economic resources, is a major objective in reducing, both the disparities and poverty risk in European rural areas. The technological development of agriculture makes a large part of the rural labor force to be excessed. Identification of relevant activities for this additional economic resource is a major objective in reducing disparities and poverty risk in rural areas. Therefore, for Romania we believe that social farming can be a viable tool in increasing the recovery of the rural area and reduce the number and share of poor and, at risk of exclusion, by promoting the expansion of activities by the social character.

Table 2 Share of agricultural area managed by farms with low/medium/high input intensity per hectare (33)

Country	UAA managed by farms with low input intensity per ha	UAA managed by farms with medium input intensity per ha	UAA managed by farms with high input intensity per ha
Bulgaria	53.5	44.8	1.7
Czech Rep.	24.2	42.2	33.6
Germany	4.6	22.2	73.2
Estonia	56.8	37.8	5.4
Spain	25.4	14.8	59.7
France	2.5	26	71.5
Italy	73.4	19.2	7.4
Latvia	66.9	27.2	6
Lithuania	66.7	21.8	11.5
Hungary	64.6	28.5	6.8
Poland	44.8	37.9	17.3
Portugal	80.6	9.3	10.1
Romania	87.6	8.9	3.5
Slovenia	48.4	27.7	23.9
Slovakia	34.9	46.2	18.9
EU-28	41.3	29.2	29.5

Source: author's calculations based on European Commission, 2015

From Table 2, farm input intensity can be easily remarked that, in the EU-28, the largest share is held by UAA managed by farms with low input intensity per ha with 41.3%, followed by UAA managed by farms with high input intensity per ha and UAA managed by farms with medium intensity input per hectare with similar percentages, 29.5% and 29.2%.

The distribution of three categories depending on the farm input intensity describes a fair situation of the level of technological equipment, explaining largely agricultural productivity moving across borders within the European community.

Agriculture industrialization of the developed EU-28 countries leaves little space for maneuver in the development, promoting the use of agriculture farms as social tools. Therefore from the data analyzed in Table 1, it is found that in the EU-28 comes first UAA managed by farms with low input intensity per ha due to the use in most cases of an oversized labor force existing in rural areas, which facilitates these activities.

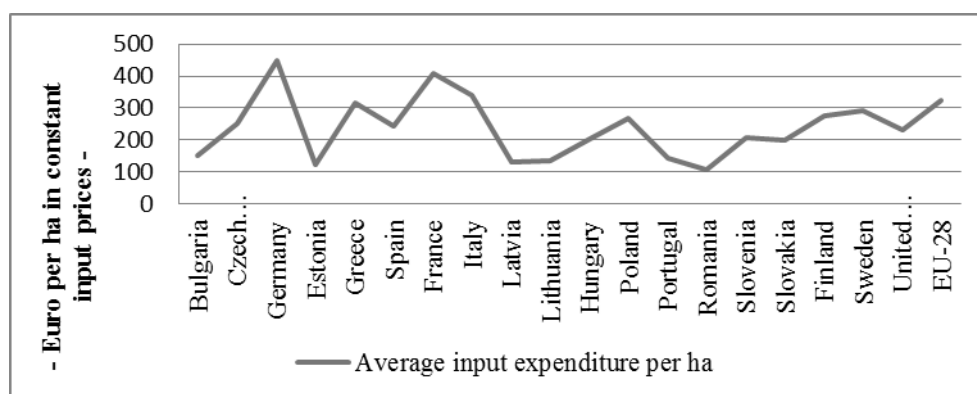
From this observation it can be argued that an usage with low input intensity per ha will be able to generate the necessary conditions but not sufficient to promote social agriculture based on ecological agriculture much less aggressive with the environment, but able to mobilize and absorb the surplus of rural labor, reduce the degree of social and economic insecurity and the number of people at risk of social exclusion. So if we consider Romania, the highest value is recorded as 81.6%, followed by Portugal with 80.6%. At the opposite side are the highly developed countries, such as Germany with 53.5% for the prevailing UAA managed by farms with high input intensity per ha with 73.2% and France by 2.5%, which also prevailing UAA managed by farms with high input intensity per ha by 71.5%.

In literature it is often considered that most times any issues aimed at improving either quality or quantity and promote competitiveness can be solved by some kind of training and mobilization of resources.

In the case of social agriculture it can lead however to the extent or even the proliferation of quantitative side, and less to the quality and punctuality in making the substrate of social agriculture, which often does not respond adequately to any concrete needs of the rural area or the national economy in general.

The structures of agricultural production, especially social operators involved cannot create participatory strategies for sustainable development and social inclusion of individuals in rural areas. From this perspective, to increase social dimension of agriculture and the social sector consolidation in agro-rural sector, it requires labor and trained social entrepreneurs. Training individuals and familiarizing citizens with the specific activities of rural social farming is not often enough for immediate improvement and quality of work, of the activity and life if structures and services in rural areas are missing.

To better understand the above, in Fig.1 is presented the expenditure average input expressed in Euro per ha in case of constant input prices in European countries.



Source: author's calculations based on European Commission, 2015

Fig.1. Average input expenditure per ha in some EU-28 countries, 2014

In Fig. 1 it can be remarked that the highest level of average input expenditure per ha expressed in Euro per ha in constant input prices in some European economies is recorded in the agricultural sector, mostly labor intensive. The intensity of inputs costs per ha can be considered not only an exclusive indicator of economic efficiency, but also a marker of possibilities for reorientation of agricultural activities in the member state concerned to social agriculture. Given that most often prohibitively expensive labor in rural areas is significantly lower than those in urban areas, promoting activities specific to social agriculture can significantly increase the income of farmers, at least from the perspective of the development of products, services and for the other related activities is through social farms, more effective from this perspective than subsistence farms. Another essential aspect for understanding the necessity of promoting social agriculture may be the age structure of farm managers. From this perspective is presented in Table 3 the age structure of farm managers in case of some member state of UE-28, in 2014.

Table 3 Age structure of farm managers

Country	Number of farm managers less than 35 y.o.	Number of farm managers from 35 to 54 y.o.	Number of farm managers 55 y.o. or over
Bulgaria	16 300	80 680	157 430
Czech Rep.	1 200	10 120	14 920
Germany	19 520	162 070	103 430
Estonia	1 440	7 730	10 020
Spain	35 700	364 530	564 780
France	41 640	244 740	185 830
Italy	45 680	328 210	636 430
Poland	173 560	770 940	484 500
Portugal	6 510	63 150	194 760
Romania	171 960	1 119 360	2 338 340
Slovenia	3 470	29 520	39 390
Slovakia	1 910	9 500	12 160
EU-28	644 270	4 085 260	5 954 010

Source: author's calculations based on European Commission, 2015

From the data presented in Table 3 could be concluded that the EU-28 farm managers over the age of 55 are the majority, which reflects the fact that agriculture continues to be an activity practiced mostly by the elderly and the young are turning to activities far less demanding. Therefore it can be seen that most farm managers have ages that fall into the age category of 55 y.o. or over, (5.954. 010), followed by those with ages 35-54, 4.085.260. Very few farm managers are young, only 644.270 in the EU-28. Considering Romania, it can be noticed that most farm managers belong to the age category of over 34 years. The highest number was recorded in the case of farmers aged 55 and over, with 2.338.340, followed by farmers of 35-54 years old, 1.119.360. In the case of young farmers aged less than 35 years, it recorded the highest number with 45.680 in Italy and France with 41.640. Dispersion according to age of farm managers confirms that agricultural activities and agriculture as economic branch has become a sector with deficiencies in terms of promoting managerial skills of young entrepreneurs, thus, social agriculture can constitute in this sense a means of recovery and reconfiguration of multifunctional agriculture activities. Building effective social agriculture depends heavily on the situation and status of sectorial policies in the different fields of economy.

Agricultural economy and hence economic policy in agriculture plays a key role in reshaping contemporary society, becoming the decisive factor in ensuring the functionality of rural areas. From this perspective it can turn social agriculture in the cornerstone of success or failure for the rest of fundamental policies promoted in rural areas and in finding out the financial well-being and comfort of the citizens of rural areas. Social agriculture brings together within it a wide range of policies and measures, starting with educational, health and social services, cultural, environmental, technological innovation policies and measures and ending with reducing the risks of social and financial insecurity. An essential role in supporting and promoting social farming is the system of financing of this sector. The funds, either from community or national budget is defining the objectives of agricultural tools. Therefore, the evolution of national budget and European funds for Romania 2011-2014 is presented in Table 4.

Table 4 The evolution of national budget and European funds for Romania in 2011-2014 (mil. Euro)

Budget	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total budget for Rural Agriculture and Development	3.165	3.195	3.668	3.929
Of which Total state budget allocated to competent ministry	1.285	1.209	1.021	833

Source: author's calculations based on MADPR, 2015

As it can be seen from Table 4, the national and European budget funds evolution in 2011-2014, despite the fallings of budget funds allocated to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in the analyzed period from 1285 mil.Euro in 2011 to 833 million Euro 2014, the budget for Agriculture and Rural Development has been increasing. Thus, there is an increase of 764 mil.Euro from 2011 until 2014, starting from a budget of 3165 mil. Euro, and reaching an allocated budget of 3929 mln.Euro. This increase is due to increasing interest in the rural development through the application of correct and efficient CAP funds. As it stands in some European documents (European Economic and Social Committee, 2016), recent developments in agriculture and especially that of agricultural markets reveals clear evidence of existential imbalances potential caused not only by the existence of excessed production but also politically motivated bans from former export markets. Agriculture in this context enables social diversification and enhancing the role of agriculture in the rural communities achieves innovative financing and building systems revenue assurance and promotion of rural potential capitalization and market management.

Table 5 Support from the national budget for transitional national aids, 2014-2020

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
% compared with 2013	-	0.8	0.75	0.7	0.65	0.6	0.55	0.5	-
Transitional national aid in the plant sector	175.3	140.2	131.5	122.7	144.0	105.2	96.4	87.7	797.7
Transitional national aid in Animal Husbandry	270.8	216.7	203.2	189.6	176.1	162.5	149.0	135.4	1.232,5

Source: authors based on MADPR, 2015

Regarding the transitional national aid granted in Romania, as it can be ascertained from the data presented above, in the period 2014-2020, compared to 2013, funds that have been allocated and which are to be allocated by 2020 regarding the ANT support are and will be continuously decreasing, by 0.05% over 2013 every year. It is also worth noting that more

support was allocated in the animal husbandry sector, even dropped, it topped vegetable support in field, reaching a total of 1.232,5 versus 797,7 in the vegetal areas.

Although there is a downward trend in the funds for agricultural sector, it still registers significant shares. Starting from the characterization of social agriculture, based on a concept quite widely accepted, that of blending collaborative between the principles of economic efficiency and social protection – enables defining and its construction of a functional model of agriculture based on some type of economic and specific relations it differentiation between activities related to actual specific agrarian economy, and as such should receive special treatment, in achieving rural agricultural policies. Therefore as is found in (European Economic and Social Committee, 2015), "it requires an integrated vision that would restore confidence in the welfare of rural areas who rely on green growth, to promote circular economy on a better understanding of collective needs and support services smarter. " (European Economic and Social Committee, 2015)

This objective can be achieved by promoting and implementing social tools specific to agriculture. In rural areas it is found increasingly emphasized the need of a regulatory succession of generations planning in rural areas, of the specific activities so that the social agricultural economy to be accessible and equitable in terms of economy and efficiency and to stimulate financial, production and education transfers.

Conclusions

Social agriculture is a complex concept, ample in understanding current affairs transformations that marked the agri-food sector both in the European community, and in Romania. Programs promoted through social agriculture aim not only in achieving a consistent level of rural development and sustainability of complementary policies but it must also play a key role in ensuring the sustainability of cultural landscapes of rural communities in their entirety, by focusing activities on individuals, thus, making an elementary contribution to developing a valuable mosaic of economic and social policy. The rural communities are vital centers in achieving a high level of community solidarity and the multifunctional development of villages should be done by encouraging small businesses and social enterprises, supported by complementary activities specific to social agriculture.

Social agriculture and the promotion of specific principles involved promoting entrepreneurship spirit locally as an essential element in ensuring economic sustainability of agricultural space. Also, social farming, by definition, should be oriented towards providing products and services that contribute to the common good of society and rural communities and mobilize resources available in rural areas to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion. Promoting social agriculture may represent a determinant element in valuing the agricultural potential. In this context agriculture becomes a support for social activities, contributing in valuing the complementary economic activities in the rural communities. Social agriculture could be understood as an extension for the multifunctional agriculture dimension.

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