

ASPECTS REGARDING ASSOCIATION AND COOPERATION LEVEL IN AGRICULTURE OF NEAMȚ COUNTY

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Abstract

Association and cooperation of agricultural farmers are the optimal solutions for producing and capitalization of agricultural products and also land lease for establishment of strong agricultural exploitations because land merging assure better agricultural productions and remove their splitting. Studies from the current paper are referring at particularities of agriculture during period 2009-2011, in Neamț County which is situated in the North-East part of Romania. Processing of these data had as a main purpose to enlighten the tendencies from agricultural private sector of Neamț County, following the agriculture evolution and identification of advantages which could be offered through association in agriculture in the present days.

Key words: association, cooperation, agricultural exploitations, Neamț County

MATERIAL AND METHOD

For the current paper was utilised a case study, as a main research strategy, and for presenting the importance of association and cooperation in agriculture were cited different studies from literature. For gathering and analysis of data were utilised techniques and methods specific to quantitative analysis, were analysed documents and statistical situations from DADR Neamț.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In agriculture, cooperation has a very old tradition, and together with association was very necessary in agriculture more than in any other domain of human activity.

„Cooperation in agricultural production represent, in essence, *strategic option for establishing in a planned way of production relations, on a long term, between an agricultural exploitation with a high level of specialization degree and other economical agents specialized in obtaining of some certain production factors or in processing and capitalization activities of agricultural products*” (Brezuleanu S., 2009).

Necessity of cooperation concept appeared due to summing all the aspects which reduce the margins of decisions in an agricultural exploitation for farmers or its managers.

Cooperation in agricultural production is in the fact the option of establishing of some

production relations on regular basis, between an agricultural exploitation and other economical agents specialized in obtaining of production factors or in processing and capitalization activities of agricultural products.

National programmes or the ones supported by European funds in the last 20 years had limited results. At this moment association is based very much on interpersonal relations and frail trust capital from a community, without being implemented a contractual approach.

Today's farmers argue that remembrance of collectivization doesn't represent an obstacle for association, at least from the point of view of middle aged farmers, whom are active and able for an economical development, but in the fact that the future of cooperation is not in the production but in selling together their obtained production.

Weak development of associative forms in agriculture is due to low social capital, insufficient advertising of those type of initiative, but also to a lack of vision related to support offered to the associations which need it (consultancy, organizational development, business planning).

In according with the actual legislation, in agriculture are the following forms of association: agricultural societies and other forms for association in agriculture (Law nr. 36/1991), associations (Governmental Order nr. 26/2000 regarding associations and foundations, approved with modifications and additions by Law nr.

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246/2005) and agricultural cooperatives (Law of agricultural cooperation nr. 566/2004).

Having in view the provisions of GO nr.37/2005, regarding the recognition and function of groups and organization of producers for selling of agricultural and forestry products, the above mentioned associative forms could be recognized as producers groups.

Association and cooperation influence the price level of agricultural products and services, defends competition and oriented the agricultural market, things which not could be done by the small isolated agricultural producers.

Cooperation in agriculture production represent, in essence, strategic option for establishing in a planned way production relations, with a long term, between an agricultural exploitation with a high specialization degree and other economical agents specialized in obtaining of production factors or in processing and capitalization activities of agricultural products (Ciurea I.V. et al., 2005).

An agricultural cooperative is an organization of independent private farmers, which try to gain advantages for its members, both for them as individuals and also for their households, assuring organization of production, selling, capitalization and services. Cooperative is owned and lead by its members whom are at the same time co-owner, co-managers and co-workers, for their own benefits. Distribution of results is made proportionally with members' participation in cooperative activity.

In according with article 2 from Law 566/2004: Agricultural cooperative represents an autonomous association of physical and/or juridical persons, after case, being a private juridical person, established on the basis of expressed consent of the parties, for promoting the interests of cooperative members, in according with cooperative principles, which are organized and function in according with the provisions of the current law. Agricultural cooperatives are established and function with a minimum number of 5 persons (article 5, Law 566/2004).

The activity of the producers group is to assure the production schedule and its modification in according with the demand, in quality and quantity conditions, to promote the supply of the products on the market, decreasing production costs and stabilization at the prices at the producers, to promote cropping technologies and management techniques of waste materials, especially for protection of water, soil and environment quality and biodiversity maintain.

Surface of Neamț County is of 397,700 ha, representing 2.5% from Romania surface.

A good opportunity for valuable and profitable economical activities in different domains from rural economy of Neamț County is represented by the variety of usage of land fund. In according with the data collected from Neamț Agricultural and Rural Development Department, the structure of land fund in Neamț County in period 2009-2011 is presented in *table 1*.

Table 1

Structure of land fund in Neamț County in period 2009-2011

| Neamț County | | Total surface (ha) | Non-agricultural surface (ha) | Agricultural surface (ha) | From which, on usage categories for agricultural surface: | | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|---|---------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| | | | | | Arable | Meadows | Hayfields | Vineyards | Orchards |
| 2009 | | 589614 | 306430 | 283184 | 168851 | 69936 | 40230 | 579 | 1725 |
| 2010 | | 589614 | 306680 | 282934 | 169760 | 68222 | 40618 | 571 | 1645 |
| 2011 | | 589614 | 308261 | 281353 | 168996 | 68064 | 40664 | 571 | 1608 |
| Dynamic index % | 2010/2009*100 | 100.00 | 100.08 | 99.91 | 100.54 | 97.55 | 100.96 | 98.62 | 95.36 |
| | 2011/2009*100 | 100.00 | 100.60 | 99.35 | 100.09 | 97.32 | 101.08 | 98.62 | 93.22 |

After calculation of dynamic index we notice a small increase of non-agricultural surface with 0.08% in 2010 and with 0.60% in 2011 face to 2009 and a low decrease of agricultural surface from one year to another.

Are recorded increases of 0.54% in 2010 respectively 0.09% in 2011 face to year 2009 in case of arable surface. In the case of meadows could be observed a decrease during the studied period.

Index had an increasing trend at hayfields being recorded an increase of 0.96% in 2010 and with 1.08% in 2011 face to year 2009. In the case

of vineyards and vine nurseries could be observed that in 2009 the surface was with 1.38% greater face the years 2010 and 2011 when the surfaces were the same.

Surface with orchards and tree nurseries recorded a continuous decrease respectively in 2010 with 4.64% face to 2009, and in 2011 with 6.78% face to 2009.

Table 2

Agricultural surface of Neamț County, 2009-2011

| Utilisation category | Surface | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| | 2009 (ha) | % from agricultural | 2010 (ha) | % from agricultural | 2011 (ha) | % from agricultural | DI (%) 2011/2009 *100 |
| Agricultural, from which: | 283184 | | 282934 | | 281353 | | 99.35% |
| Arable | 168851 | 59.63% | 169760 | 60.00% | 168996 | 60.07% | 100.09% |
| Meadows | 69936 | 24.70% | 68222 | 24.11% | 68064 | 24.19% | 97.32% |
| Hayfields | 40230 | 14.21% | 40618 | 14.36% | 40664 | 14.45% | 101.08% |
| Vineyards | 579 | 0.20% | 571 | 0.20% | 571 | 0.20% | 98.62% |
| Orchards | 1725 | 0.60% | 1645 | 0.58% | 1608 | 0.57% | 93.22% |

From the calculation effectuated for period 2009-2011 results that arable surface had the greatest rate from the total of agricultural surface even if it observed a low decrease from one year to another. An important rate from the total agricultural surface is represented also by the meadows which varied from 2009 till 2011 respectively from 69,936 ha to 68,064 ha.

The lowest surfaces in agricultural total are represented by orchards and vineyards. In according with the data gathered from Agr. 2 B from Neamț Agricultural and Rural Development Department, the structure of mean and total production in Neamț County in period 2009-2011 is presented in *table 3*.

Table 3

Structure of mean and total productions at main crops in the agriculture of Neamț County in period 2009-2011

| Crop | Year 2009 | | | Year 2010 | | | Year 2011 | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| | Cropped surf. (ha) | Mean prod. (kg/ha) | Total prod. (t) | Cropped surf. (ha) | Mean prod. (kg/ha) | Total prod. (t) | Cropped surf. (ha) | Mean prod. (kg/ha) | Total prod. (t) |
| Wheat-rye-triticale | 23380 | 2975 | 69550 | 21916 | 2953 | 64727 | 22186 | 3826 | 87099 |
| Winter barley | 1517 | 2057 | 3120 | 933 | 3327 | 3104 | 1270 | 3798 | 4823 |
| Winter two-row barley | 1798 | 2647 | 4760 | 755 | 2616 | 1975 | 753 | 3498 | 2634 |
| Spring two-row barley | 5620 | 1787 | 10043 | 4479 | 2061 | 9232 | 2443 | 2392 | 5843 |
| Oat grains | 8132 | 1635 | 13296 | 7921 | 1691 | 13397 | 6312 | 1950 | 12307 |
| Corn grains | 51198 | 3791 | 194079 | 54933 | 4096 | 225004 | 56620 | 5216 | 295031 |
| Sun flower | 8985 | 1745 | 15676 | 10552 | 1375 | 14512 | 10755 | 1861 | 20012 |
| Rape | 9027 | 1545 | 13950 | 4946 | 1671 | 8264 | 8425 | 2384 | 20085 |
| Soy bean | 1007 | 1320 | 1329 | 1685 | 2318 | 3906 | 1517 | 2038 | 3091 |
| Sugar beet | 2141 | 30881 | 66116 | 2613 | 39476 | 103150 | 2341 | 37352 | 87440 |
| Potatoes | 8388 | 15191 | 127418 | 8289 | 11982 | 99321 | 8098 | 16584 | 134301 |
| Vegetables total | 5307 | 12717 | 67488 | 4760 | 11535 | 54908 | 4982 | 13924 | 69368 |

For improving rural area and to develop agriculture farmers from Neamț County reaches the conclusion that the single durable modality to fulfil this aims in agriculture is association. Through this way could be solved more easy different problems regarding supply, selling and agricultural works, especially at mechanized works or at the ones which requires a great volume of handcraft labour.

A special role is destined to agricultural consultant from the local consultancy centres, who guide farmers to collaboration and to organization in associative forms because in agriculture, association, offer wider possibilities of increasing the profit of each farm.

The aim of establishing an agricultural association is represented by: aim to fulfil a general, local or group goal; facilitate the access of associations and foundations to private and public resources; partnership between public authorities

and private juridical persons without any patrimonial purpose; durable development of agrifood production; correlation of production level and products' quality with market demands; increasing of production; improvement of informational system regarding supply and demand; development of agri-food markets and entrepreneurial skills; promoting the agri-food products on domestic and foreign market; protecting the interests of the members in their relation with governmental organisms and state administration; promoting of practices and technologies which will assure the environment preservation.

In according with the data collected from Neamț Agricultural and Rural Development Department, agricultural associations in vegetal domain are in number of only three, having the business activities presented in *table 4*.

Table 4

Agricultural associations in vegetal domain, Neamț County

| Nr. | Agricultural association | Activity | Locality |
|-----|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Agricultural association „Ceahlăul” | Cereals and technical plants growing | Bahna, Neamț County |
| 2 | Association of potato growers | Potato growing | Girov, Neamț County |
| 3 | Association of sugar beet growers | Sugar beet growing | Roman, Neamț County |

The same situation is met also for in Neamț County (*tab. 5*).
agricultural cooperatives from vegetal domain

Table 5

Situation of agricultural cooperatives in Neamț County

| Nr. | Cooperative name | Locality |
|-----|---|--|
| 1 | Agricultural cooperative Agricop | Zănești village, Zănești community |
| 2 | Agricultural cooperative Apisslavia | Răucești village, Răucești community |
| 3 | Agricultural cooperative Agrodava Nemțană | 9 Fermelor str., bl. F1, sc. A, ground floor, Piatra Neamț |

Situation of agricultural producers groups from Neamț County at 21.05.2013 in according with the data from D.A.D.R. Neamț is shown in *table 6*.

Producers groups are juridical persons with lucrative aim and private economical administration, are farmers associations which sell in common their obtained products. Producers'

groups could be agricultural cooperatives or agricultural associations.

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, through its technical department, is the state competent authority for recognition of producers' organizations.

Situation of agricultural producers groups from Neamț County is presented in *table 6*.

Table 6

Agricultural producers' groups from Neamț County

| Nr. | Name of producers group | Locality | Activity |
|-----|---|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. | S.C. Agroteculei Grup | Roman, 276 Ștefancel Mare street, Neamț County | Oleaginous plants |
| 2. | S.C. ACSZR GRUP S.R.L. | Roman, 268 Ștefancel Mare street, Neamț County | Cereals |
| 3. | S.C. TAZ GRUP NEAMȚ S.R.L. | Izvoare village, Dumbrava Roșie community, Neamț County | Poultry meat and eggs |
| 4. | Agricultural cooperative Agrodava Nemțană | Piatra Neamț, 9 Fermelor street, bl. F1, sc. A, ground floor, Neamț County | Cereals and oleaginous plants |

By restructuring and reorganization of agriculture, husbandry exploitations from Neamț

County suffered modifications both in form and also in the number of exploited individuals (*tab. 7*).

Table 7

Associative forms of animal breeders legal established and functional in Neamț County

| Nr. | Name of associative form (association, cooperative, federation, group of producers) | Activity | Members' number | Animal flock |
|-----|---|-----------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. | County association of cattle breeders "Petrodava"-56 local branches | Cattle breeding | 6000 | 14000 |
| 2. | County association of sheep breeders "Miorița"-35 local branches | Sheep breeding | 640 | 80000 |
| 3. | County association of bee breeders | Bee breeding | 471 | 15302 |
| 4. | Agricultural cooperative Apisslavia | Beekeeping | 17 | 2200 |
| 5. | S.C. TazGrup S.R.L., Piatra Neamț | Poultry and eggs production | 5 | 90000 |
| 6. | Association of Aberdeen Angus breeders Neamț | Angus cattle breeding | 7 | 50 |
| 7. | Association of sheep and cattle breeders "Floare de colț"-Ceahlău | Sheep and cattle breeding | 20 | 334-sheep 10-cattle |
| 8. | Association of animal breeders "Corlate"-Piatra Neamț | Animal breeding | 73 | 1136-sheep 273-goat 123-cattle |
| 9. | Association of goat breeders "Capriprod" | Goat breeding | 22 | 1800 |
| 10. | Association of sheep and goat breeders "Genu-Oglinzi" | Sheep and goat breeding | 19 | 2415-sheep 92-goat |

Situation regarding the dimensional structure of animal farms on sectors, at 30.04.2010 respectively 30.04.2011 is presented by Neamț

Agricultural and Rural Development Department (fig. 1).

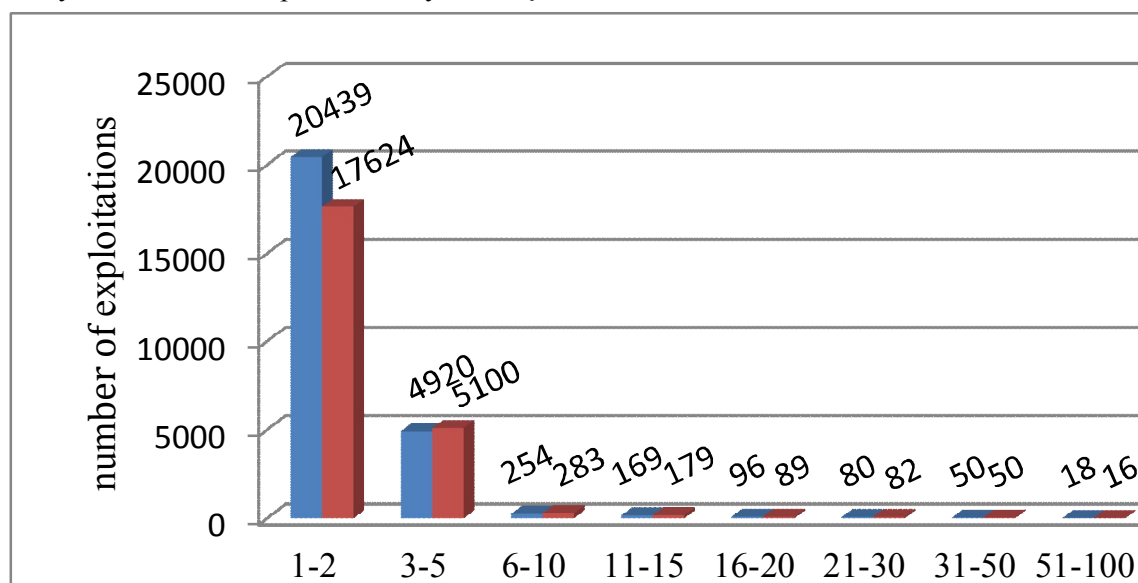


Figure 1 Evolution of the number of dairy cows exploitations in period 2010-2011 function of their size

From figure 1 we could observe that the evolution of number of dairy cows exploitations during 2010-2011 fluctuates no matter of their size. In 2010 were recorded 20,439 exploitations (with 1-2 heads), with 2,815 more than in 2011. In the case of exploitations with 3-5 heads, 6-10 heads, 11-15 heads and 21-30 heads could be observed a small increase of their number in 2011 face to 2010. Also in the case of exploitations with 16-20 heads and 51-100 heads could be noticed a small decrease of their number in 2011 face to 2010. In the case of the largest exploitations (over 100 heads) the number remains the same as in the case of exploitations with 31-50 heads.

CONCLUSIONS

In nowadays conditions from Neamț County, when a small subsistence exploitation may not be viable, association and cooperation represent fast ways and less expensive for society in recovery of agriculture.

Operating on market principles, rural cooperation could be organized in various domains aiming primary production, supply, processing, storage and selling of agricultural products as well as loans for agriculture.

It is important to be applied a perspective programme regarding the future development of Romanian agriculture, which must take in account the economical effects given by the reform measures on a long period of time.

Organization of agricultural exploitations must lead to a change of different associative forms in viable economical units, connected with a strong cooperative sector on the agricultural products connection.

In other words must be facilitating the exploitation process of the land owned by elder persons by younger and more efficient farmers, through lease, selling.

For vegetal production requires a better crop zoning and territorial representation, a better structure for crops. Small farmers with an exclusive agricultural job could increase their yearly incomes by animal breeding.

In Neamț County agriculture is characterized by a very strong dual structure of exploitation of agricultural surface: on one hand the great number of peasant households, which have and work small land areas, and on the other hand a quite small number of agricultural exploitations with large surfaces, but which use almost half of the counties' agricultural surface.

Regarding agricultural cooperatives, organizing of agricultural producers' in associative forms offers new opportunities for economical development by achieving of some local, area and regional advantages and using the collective strength aiming to increase the prosperity of the members, their families and their communities.

In the last period, in Neamț County, due to the concentration strategies or development strategies, farmers need to take a fundamental strategic decision, which is how to act better in uncertain situations for realising viable and

profitable agricultural exploitations which must be strong regarding concurrency, with selling markets and efficient in accessing financial funds.

As alternative, farmers realise diverse associative forms, and from those ones are enlightened cooperatives, producers groups and producers associations.

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