

INCREASING VEGETAL PROTEIN PRODUCTION - AN EUROPEAN PRIORITY

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Abstract

In the last 50 years, meat production in the EU countries increased from 17 to 43 mil. tons. Rations for pigs and poultry are based on cereals and about 2/3 of European grain cereals harvest is used as animal feed. To improve the quality of these feeds are needed proteins. Protein crops (legumes or pulses) are currently grown on 1.8% of the EU's arable land (compared to 4.7% in 1961) and as a result, Europe is dependent on protein imports totaling annually about 20 mil. t of soybean meals and 12 mil. t of soybean grains. Only about 2.5% of soybean meal consumed is produced in the EU. This imbalance between production and consumption creates economic and trade problems; in addition, imported soybean is mostly GM, which is not accepted by many European consumers. Since 2013, the Common Agricultural Policy included as a priority increasing the production of vegetal proteins by subsidies to grain legumes crops (including soybean non-GM), forage crops (alfalfa, clover) and oilseeds (rapeseed, sunflower). In this framework encompasses the initiative Donau Soja (Danube Soya), which promotes the cultivation of conventional soybean in the Danube region and the development of yields processing and valorification network. Romania falls well into these trends by traditions in cultivating soybean (over 500 thou ha before 1990), the favorability of natural conditions, the existence of biological material adapted to the specific natural conditions (varieties developed in ARDS Turda and NARDI Fundulea). Romanian farmers are interested in expanding soybean cultivation for ameliorating soil fertility and as a very good previous crop for winter cereals, but by providing an efficient weeds control, supplying water by irrigation and treating the seeds with bacterial preparations. Also, taking soybean harvest in the food networks involves a very rigorous quality control in terms of avoiding contamination by GMOs. It is estimated that it can reach 700 thou ha with soybeans, which can produce about 0.51 mil. t proteins, which would add about 0.40 mil. t of sunflower proteins (800 thou ha) and about 0.25 mil. t tons of rapeseed proteins (500 thou ha).

Key words: proteins supply, Common Agricultural Policy, protein crops, Romania.
