

ABSTRACT

The doctoral thesis entitled “**THE AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION IN ROMANIA AND IN EUROPEAN UNION’S COUNTRIES, AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR**” is structured in 4 chapters, besides the introduction, conclusions and recommendations, annexes and bibliography. The paper covers 331 pages, including 87 tables and 29 figures/ graphs.

Within the **INTRODUCTION** is briefly presented the history of cooperation in the agriculture from western countries and the main organisational systems on which is based the modern cooperation and the practical ways of setting-up western European agricultural cooperatives, in the same time being presented the initiators of the cooperative movement in our country, as well as their contribution to the development of cooperation in Romanian rural environment. It is highlighted the fact that the term of „cooperation” term and the institution itself were not the invention of communism, because they have been created and supported by great economists from western Europe since the last century, and the cooperative phenomenon in the Romanian agriculture appeared and developed as a further continuation of some old traditions of mutual assistance, work and association within the human communities.

It is shown, also, that the interruption of the natural evolution of Romanian agricultural cooperation, caused by the process of forced collectivization and the implementation of communist politics on agriculture put on the terminology related to cooperation and cooperative a complete negative image that represented - during the period of transition to the market economy after the year 1989 – an important obstacle in the promotion and development of the genuine forms of cooperation, able to solve the problems of rural areas. The restructuring processes of the Romanian agriculture and the consolidation of land private ownership that had started after the year 1989 determined the disorganization of agricultural sector and the over-crumbling of agricultural ownership and holdings, fact that required the setting-up of a cooperative system based on competitive economy principles, leading to the establishing of a moderne and competitive agrarian structure, convergent with the EU agrarian structures.

The first chapter, entitled „**RESEARCH STAGE. RESEARCH MATERIAL AND METHOD**”, covers four sections within two subchapters, namely: the first subchapter refers to the stage of researches carried out up to now on agricultural cooperation in Romania and some other EU countries, while the second subchapter is focused on the research material and method used in the present study.

The first section presents a short history of researches accomplished in our country, regarding the agricultural cooperation before 1989, being displayed the most relevant concepts from interwar Romania concerning the agricultural cooperation before the Second World War, as well as the main themes in the field approached by agricultural experts and researchers, during the communist regime: optimal size and sociology of agricultural cooperative of production, the „made-up” description of the way in which the agriculture collectivization occurred in different regions of the country, CAP’s possibilities of development, the organization, planning, and leadership of the socialist agricultural units etc. In the same time, the interest of the Romanian researchers focused also on the presentation of the forms of association and cooperation in the agriculture of capitalist countries.

In the second section of the first chapter we get acquainted in more detail with the research stage of agricultural cooperation in Romania, during the period of transition to the market economy, the topics of these studies being very diverse. Thus, some researchers studied the evolution of the agricultural associations and societies appeared in Romania after 1990, being underlined the economic advantages of the different forms of agricultural cooperation, being analyzed the sphere of action related to the agricultural cooperatives, being presented some aspects concerning the state of cooperation in developed European countries and insisting on the application and compliance with the principles of moderne cooperation. In the same time have been made proposals to set-up a legal framework favourable for the development of some viable and competitive agricultural holdings, pointing out the necessity to adopt suitable laws for the settlement of the way of organization related to agricultural cooperatives, and it was insisted on the necessity of assuring state support for the rural development and the setting-up of a viable cooperative system in Romanian agriculture, considered to be the only solution able to solve the great problems facing the contemporary Romanian agriculture. It hasn’t been forgotten, also, the experience of the precursors of the Romanian school of agrarian economy, being analysed diverse theories concerning the association and the cooperation in agriculture appeared during the interwar period, during the period before the First World War and even the origins of cooperation in our country.

The third section concerns the research stage in the field of agricultural cooperation in EU countries, being underlined some theoretical or practical aspects, attentively analyzed by the western researchers. It is shown that their concerns aimed to define the concept of agricultural cooperative and the typology of the agricultural cooperative within the European rural area and are studied the main cooperative principles and the manner of compliance with them in practice; also it have been approached the relationships between the agricultural cooperatives and the public politics, the theme on self-financing of agricultural cooperatives or that of the destiny of the

agricultural cooperatives of production from the eastern Lands of Germany etc. Some authors focused on the analysis of the evolution in time of agricultural cooperative or on the description of the processes that characterize the contemporary agricultural cooperation in the EU states, being studied problems related to the strengthening of the strategy for the processing of agricultural products, to the expansion of the cooperative businesses and the upward evolution of cooperative internationalization, decreasing of the influence of national factors on the agricultural cooperative movement etc.

In the last part of the chapter I, entitled *Research material and method*, it has been described the way in which have been designed all phases of the present research, starting with the bibliographical information and material gathering up to the its processing, being presented the main methods and proceedings used in the unfolded analyzis and ending with the enunciation of concluzions and recommendations.

The second chapter - entitled “**SHORT OVERVIEW REGARDING THE AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION IN ROMANIA AND IN SOME EU COUNTRIES, DURING THE PERIOD BEFORE THE YEAR**” – includes three subchapters.

The first subchapter presents in detail and chronologically - after a short description of the agrarian reforms from 1864, 1921 and 1945 – the development of the processes of collectivization and establishment of the state ownership in Romania’s agriculture. The main agrarian problems before the Second World War – e.g. the advanced splitting of agricultural areas, insufficient tehcnical endowment of the agricultural holdings, their focus mainly towards self-consumption due to the very small sizes – determined the initiation of numerous proposals and projects aiming the agricultural relaunching, some of them being mainly related to the agricultural cooperation. After the year 1945, the governing of the communist regime determined the seeting-up of the „kolkhoz-type” cooperatives of production, through the land deprivation of peasants and the reducing of private ownership to only 6% of the agricultural total. The colectivization has been prepared by the promotion of some simple forms of association (groups for mutual support in labor, splitting of agricultural land in plots, associations of specialized agricultural producers, cooperative sheepsfolds, agricultural parterships) and its evolution has been supported through political propaganda, use of mandatory quotas and high taxes on agricultural income, diverse legal documents, means of physical repression etc.

In the second subchapter it is shown that, after the year 1945, while in the western European countries took place the decrease of the active agricultural population and of the agriculture’s contribution to the National Gross Product, as a result of the more rapidly expansion of industry, the importance of this sector in Romania within the national economy increased, and the share of agricultural population within the total populaiton of the country was about 3 times

higher than the average of the CEE countries. In some western European countries, the dynamics of the agricultural holdings by size categories indicates the amelioration of agrarian structures through merging and increasing of the average areas of agricultural holdings, being promoted the farm of medium size. In order to present the cooperative system from some EU states, are enunciated the principles of classic agricultural cooperation, are offered informations about the origine, organization and working of cooperatives from some EU countries up to the 60's (Federal Republic of Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands, Greece), are described by sectors of activity the most spread types of agricultural cooperatives from these countries, illustrating that these had a large diversity in: supply with factors of production, supply of loans, gathering of agricultural products and their storage, processing, packing and trading.

The last subchapter points out the most important elements making the difference between the new way of organization of the Romanian agricultural cooperation and that from the western European countries, founded on the practical compliance with the freedom of association and with the democratic leadership. It is shown that, up to the year 1949, the Romanian agricultural cooperation followed the western model; afterwards, this has been replaced by force with the inefficient system of agricultural cooperatives of production controlled by state, fully unlike the classic European cooperation, based on the family-privat holding and mainly focused towards the activities from downstream and upstream of primary agricultural production.

The third chapter, entitled “**AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION IN ROMANIA AND IN EU COUNTRIES, DURING THE PERIOD 1962-1989**”, is structured in four subchapters and presenting the description of changes occurred in Romania's agriculture during the period of socialist agriculture, the relations of cooperation established among the agricultural cooperatives of production and between these and the state-owned agricultural units, the leadership bodies of the cooperative agricultural system and, finally, some aspects concerning the agricultural cooperation in some other EU states.

It is described, in detail, the evolution of the most important elements characteristic for the Romanian agricultural units during the mentioned period, such as: total and average agricultural and arable areas; average number of employees by IASs and SMAs, as well as the average number of cooperative members; value of fixed funds and investments by 100 ha agricultural land within the socialist agricultural units; technical endowment of SMAs and the volum of works accomplished by them; financial status of the state-owned agricultural and cooperative units etc. In the same time are highlighted the technical-economic changes occurred during the period 1962-1989 with the aim to contribute to the development and strengthening of IASs and CAPs, being presented: dynamics in the ownership's structure of agricultural land by categories of use, dynamics of the livestock number and structure by ownership forms, evolution

of total and average agricultural productions accomplished within the different categories of agricultural units and the comparison of average productivity in Romania's agriculture with the production level recorded in other European countries.

The presentation of the stage of Romanian agricultural sectors tackles also the working and organization of the agricultural cooperatives of production and of the management's structure within CAPs, establishing of economic relations among CAPs under the form of Inter-Cooperative Economic Associations and the cooperation between the cooperative units and SMAs or other state-owned agricultural units, with the setting-up of the State-Owned Economic and Cooperative Associations and of the State-Owned Unique Agroindustrial and Cooperative Councils, which - together with the representative structures of CAPs at county level (UJCAP) and national level (UNCAP) – represented the concret manner in which the state undertook a rigorous control upon the cooperative ownership.

The analysis of the cooperative phenomenon in the agriculture of some western EU countries – Federal Republic of Germany, Austria, Great Britain, Ireland, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Greece, France – includes informations about: types of agricultural cooperative working within the territory of these states, during the period 1962-1989; manner of organisation of the cooperative system and its members, by fields of activity; recorded economic results expressed in turnovers and the national market shares for the main agricultural products; some legal aspects and particularities of organization and working.

In the forth chapter, entitled “**AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION IN ROMANIA AND IN SOME EU COUNTRIES, AFTER THE YEAR 1989**”, have been tackled within six subchapters, the following aspects: start of the agrarian reform and the evolution of the setting-up and resetting-up process concerning the privat ownership in Romania's agriculture; particularities and evolution of the new forms of association and agricultural cooperation established during the period of tranzition to the market economy; financial and legal intervention of state, aimed for the agriculture's support and for the replacement of the mechanisms characteristic for the communist economy with those of the competitive, free market economy; adjustment of agricultural sector to the requirements imposed by the EU agricultural policy; perspectives for the development of Romanian agricultural cooperation; main characteristics of cooperative system from the EU countries, both western as well as some eastern and central European states (Czech Republic, Poland, Estonia, Slovenia, Hungary).

The first four subchapters, which mainly analyse the setting-up and the development of Romanian agrarian structures determined by the implementation of the Land Fund Law and of the concerned legislation, show that the loses and the distructions of patrimony that occured when CAPs dissolved and the over-splitting of the land fund produced unsatisfactory results in the field

of agricultural production. The new forms of association in agriculture established during the first years of transition (family associations and agricultural associations/companies with legal personality) had no significant success, so the setting-up of the legal framework and the working of the western agricultural cooperatives - completed with some support mechanisms of the cooperative system - offered the farmers a new alternative for the unfolding of agricultural activities.

In the fifth subchapter of the chapter IV – which refers to the agricultural cooperation within the European Union after the year 1990 – are studied, on the whole, the main social and economic indicators of the agricultural cooperatives from the most part of the countries belonging to the EU-15: number of agricultural cooperatives, number of members and employees from the cooperative system, incomes obtained by cooperatives, market shares for the main agricultural products. It can be noticed, that, despite the fact that the number of agricultural cooperatives decreases mainly due to the merging between cooperatives and that this process is accompanied also by the decrease of the number of members from the cooperative system, however, the financial results obtained by the western agricultural cooperatives have a positive evolution.

A special situation is represented by the agricultural cooperation in Germany, where, after reunification, the setting-up and the maintenance within the agricultural sector - besides the classic agricultural cooperatives – of the cooperative structures from the eastern Lands, presented by the old agricultural cooperative of kolkhoz type, required the financial and administrative implication of the German state, aiming the restructuring and the adjustment of these agricultural units to the new economic environment, reason that determined the separate approach of this case.

The characterisation of the current situation of the cooperative movement within the European Union followed two directions: by one side, the highlighting of the essential features of agricultural cooperatives: farmers' association based on free consent, democratic management of cooperative, role and importance of agricultural cooperatives, members' rights and obligations, involvement of cooperation mainly in activities from the upstream and downstream of primary agricultural production, factors influencing the working and the activity's efficiency of the agricultural cooperatives, some fiscal advantages of the agricultural cooperatives from some western states etc.; by the other side, the fact that the EU extension produced a new competitive environment within the European agriculture produced also the description of some tendencies recorded in the development of European cooperative system, like: increase of requirements concerning the quality of agricultural products, multiplication of the operations for the processing of agricultural production and the strengthening of vertical integration of the western European cooperatives within the agro-food chain, increase of the sale by retail chain, speeding of the cooperatives' internationalization process and their development by merging and acquisitions of cooperative and non-cooperative enterprises.

In the last section of this chapter, after a global presentation of the relation existing between the cooperation and the reform of Romanian agriculture, are made appreciations regarding both the further development chances of the associative form within Romania's agriculture, and some directions of cooperation extension and strengthening in the Romanian rural environment.

In the final part of the doctoral thesis, represented by **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**, it is stated that the structures of agricultural production determined by the land reform, in their majority of subsistence type, have a slow rhythm of adjustment to market requirements, have lack of capital for operation and doesn't benefit from a suitable infrastructure for production and trading. The agriculture's evolution in our country took place under three fundamental forms of organisation of the agricultural producers: family agricultural holdings, included within a diversified system of marketing cooperatives, supply with factors of production and agricultural services; agricultural associations and enterprises, formed by the association of small land owners; large trade farms, formed by sale-and-purchase of agricultural land, leasing and granting. It is considered that the development of modern agricultural cooperation in Romania is conditioned by the delivering of a strong state support, and the relaunching of the agricultural sector depends in great measure on the extension of the cooperation of agricultural credit in the rural environment and are made some proposals regarding the improvement of the current legal framework related to agricultural cooperation.

The **BIBLIOGRAPHY** consulted during the study and mentioned within the doctoral thesis covers 278 bibliographic titles, of which 194 (70%) are from the Romanian literature and 84 (30%) are from the foreign speciality literature.