ASPECTS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES IN ROMANIAN RURAL COMMUNITIES

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Abstract
Currently, the Romanian rural approach should be performed on at least three integrated levels, namely: economic, social and environmental. Importance of Romanian rural area could not and can not be challenged by anyone, given that it represents over 87% of the country, where they live 50% of the country's inhabitants. The main objectives of the research were: exposure coordinate sustainable development of the Romanian rural in actual socio-economic context, identifying the determinants of sustainable development of rural communities and the potential effects of implementing sustainable development models, highlighting aspects that characterize this since Romanian rural communities and values that can be promoted and developed through the process of economic, social and ecological, identifying motivations of the Romanian rural community members to apply sustainable development models, identify potential solutions and alternatives to local sustainable development Romanian rural communities.

The importance of this scientific approach is given by the certainty that the integrated sustainable development of Romanian rural environment, including agriculture and non-agricultural activities around the area will have to be carried out in accordance with the values, traditions and precepts global (economic, environmental, social, cultural).

Key words: sustainable rural development, rural community, Romania.

JEL Classification: O10, O12, O18, O21, O47, Q01, Q18, Q50, R13.

1. Introduction and background to study

It is widely accepted by specialists and non-specialists that the basic cell of the world and the rural economy is the common, namely rural community as administrative - territorial unit and entity socio - economic well defined, located in rural areas and many of the economic, social cultural, urban, environmental, etc. In this context, the study of all alternatives for sustainable development of Romanian rural communities is a topical always warranted.

In the current stage of national development, Romanian village (rural community in Romania) passes both through the economic crisis - acute social and a crisis "identity". In this context, it is necessary to find alternatives for development, starting from the structure, size and specific economic and social - each village separately. These rural communities apparently homogenous are actually represented some distinct entities, private, very different. Romanian rural area we can say that there is "unity in diversity". [2]
Based on the concept of the private economy as a way of managing resources and limited resources and multiple uses (alternatives) for unlimited needs of people, we can say that the Romanian rural economy should be seen as an alternative amount of the allocation of these resources to ensuring sustainable development. In other words, based on the facts existing resources, means of production and the current level of social - economic indicators in Romanian rural communities, have found alternatives for local and regional development that lead to real increases in economic performance areas. Statistics on the number, size and farm performance, but also on Romania's rural development are alarming, given that all indicators followed by European statistics after EUROSTAT methodology, we place most often the last places. If we want to truly integrate in EU economic and social structures becoming their partners should consider the European model of sustainable rural development and apply it. In conclusion, we can say that in Romania have created alternative rural development so that local economies have become multifunctional, being able to strike a balance in the restructuring of individual holdings. Is imposed, creating new activities, diversification of food products and increase their recovery, development of services downstream and upstream agricultural activities and develop non-agricultural activities in order to capitalize on local resources.

This scientific approach includes the results of a series of exploratory research that followed both fundamental research aimed at acquiring knowledge and concepts specific to the study of phenomena and processes, stating assumptions, ideas and paradigms known in the art and so on, as well as research applied, based on case studies conducted on site with specific research tools, original hypothesis formulation, extraction of synthetic conclusions and making personal recommendations. The main resource was the basis for this study was the PhD thesis “Integrated Economic Development in Romanian rural communities. Case Study on Macregion 2”, author Vergina Chirîtescu.

2. Profile of Romanian rural communities

At present, the specific economic activity in most villages in Romania, not only is still defined and semi-subsistence agriculture, local development level is generally very low, due to lack of markets for agricultural products of vegetable and animal, low purchasing power locally to rural areas characterized by mono-activity etc. Note dominant in many Romanian rural communities (especially in the North - East, regarded as the poorest region in Europe) is poverty and underdevelopment. Also, the state of agriculture in Romanian rural areas is often poor in terms of restricting domestic agricultural market, declining yields, reduce living standards, rising inflation, excessive fragmentation of property, reduced production potential from livestock, lack of irrigation, etc. However, agriculture is one of the areas that influence a good measure of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and national macro level. For example, growth in 2011 of 2.5 % was mainly driven by developments in agriculture, with a plus of 11.3 %, and the industrial sector which registered an advance of 5%, according to data published by National Institute of Statistics of Romania (http://www.insse.ro).

The integrated sustainable development in Romanian rural areas and communities can not be addressed as homogeneous entities as the numerous features on historical factors and the emergence of local development potential of local and regional natural resources, population structure (including ethnic) and employment its traditions, customs and culture, economic development, social and technical etc. Sustainable development of Romanian rural communities must be based on the introduction and implementation of integrated economic systems, regardless of development alternative adopted. Regarding integrated development alternatives of Romanian rural communities, they can follow, on the one hand, the economic criterion, on the other hand, the social criterion. Both options will take into account the environmental factors (environmental criterion). Romanian rural area, at the beginning of the third millennium, population mobility and employment, education and research, the use of resources, modernization of agriculture and rural communities, cultural heritage and environmental protection, streamlining administrative act, etc. should become permanent subject in focus of all local actors (authorities, residents, businesses, NGOs, professional associations, etc.).

Specifically, the Romanian rural area consists of the administrative area of the 2,860 communes, which includes 12 956 villages, according to data published by the National Institute of Statistics of Romania (http://www.insse.ro).

Caught in an economy system with deep structural change, Romanian rural communities are spaces of institutional uncertainties, risks and social crises. Romanian rural pronounced diversity requires the need for local sustainable development approach, in terms of modernizing farms to overcome predominantly subsistence and semi-subsistence nature, involving local people in the rural development, extrapolation initiatives in rural actors at community development strategies appropriate to the actual local policies and adequate institutions to encourage sustainable development etc. [3]

3. Integrated rural development

In the context of integrated development, rural areas are perceived and analyzed as a "sum" of rural communities, differentiated in terms of economic, administrative, social, cultural and environmental, but with certain prospects for sustainable development. When people in general and scientists in particular have realized that the Earth's
To capture the complexity of social and economic processes and phenomena taking place in the Romanian rural area requires analysis of a set of indicators huge and highly heterogeneous, which take into account the physical - rural geographic, demographic composition, structure rural economy and its production, economic and social infrastructure, habitat and way of living, technical equipment housing, social and environmental issues, income levels and population of expense, consumption structure of rural populations, total regional GDP per capita and etc.

Romania has favorable conditions for agricultural activities, it featuring an agricultural area of 14.8 million ha (about 0.65 ha per capita), structured as follows: 63.2 % arable land, vineyards and orchards 3.2%, 33.6 % pastures and hayfields (Romanian Statistical Yearbook, 2010). Romania ranks 7 in the EU27, after France, Spain, Poland, Germany, Italy and the UK, accounting for 8% of total agricultural land in Europe. In these circumstances, it is undeniable importance of agriculture in the Romanian economy, which has become increasingly significant in recent years.

According to the National Institute of Statistics of Romania in the period 1990 - 1996, the contribution of agriculture to GDP has varied between 18-21 %, and between 1999 to 2002 the same indicator decreased, reaching values between 10-13 %. Since 2003, the trend was decreasing, while the modern market economies reorganize and tended to decrease in the contribution of agriculture to GDP. [13]

Integrated rural development first appeared in concerns FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), who define it as represented by "all assembly steps, governmental and nongovernmental organizations, which aim dissemination modern techniques among rural populations and facilitating their adoption by those interested. These techniques aim: increasing production, productivity and income; raising the standard of living in economically and socially; use, development and environmental protection in order for it to provide living and working places agreeable and permanent; training rural people to participate fully and actively with townspeople at the social, political and economic development of the country". [12] [4] Subsequently, issues of integrated economic development of rural communities have emerged and concerns of other international bodies such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, World Bank, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, etc.

Integrated economic development as a component of sustainable development, including social, economic and environmental therefore evaluating sustainable development integrated approach requires the evaluation of all these areas, the various types of capital - economic, environmental, human, and the degree to which people have access to the capital. Thus the set of indicators to be used for analyzes of integrated economic development should include indicators in all these areas and related indicators. In economic activity interested indicators such as: the level of real GDP (GDP expressed in current year prices corrected price changes), GDP growth rate, GDP/capita (indicator of economic welfare) etc. In the social field is necessary to determine the GINI coefficient for income dispersion, poverty index, population, etc. structure of consumption. Environmental indicators are taken into account and environmental quality indicators for integrating environmental concerns into economic and social sector etc.

In other words, integrated economic development requires a systemic research. In this case, the study of integrated economic development requires addressing Romanian rural communities in terms of economic systems, with the foundation analyzing the relationship between inputs (inputs) - own reality - actual (specific indicators of rural communities) - outputs (effects results). Systemic approach integrated economic development of rural communities Romanian consider all the elements that compose these economic systems, taking into account the interrelationships between elements of the system, system interrelationships with the environment (natural, economic and social) and systemic reactions to external factors.

Also in this case we are dealing with a multi-disciplinary research based on statistical calculations, analysis and surveys sociological, economic and eco-economic analysis, mathematical models, etc. On the basis of such complex studies can sit and SWOT analyzes, analyzes input - output, regional benchmarking and etc.

Characterization level integrated development of rural regions is achieved by using a complex index of economic and social development, calculated using data available at the sub-regional (county) for a range of relevant
indicators such as life expectancy, level of urbanization, the share of employment in non-agricultural activities, the share of the labor force in the total population, the share of modernized roads, the number of SMEs per 1,000 inhabitants, the ratio of export revenues SMEs etc. Aggregation of these indicators is accomplished through factor analysis, multiple regression calculations respectively. Index corresponds to a one-dimensional factorial score and correlated with social indicators such as infant mortality, mean foreign capital subscribed / capita, the development of sewerage networks, etc.

As a result of such an analysis, in our country can be distinguished employment distribution by the seriousness of the problems facing the developing regions. According to this criterion, the structure of counties is: 14 counties (33.33%) with high degree of seriousness of the problem; 10 counties (23.81%) with a high degree of seriousness of the problem; 9 districts (21.43%) with average degree of seriousness of the problem; 9 districts (21.43%, including Bucharest) low-severity problems. [5]

In terms of the analysis of the eight development regions currently existing in Romania, a critical situation stands in Region 1 North - East, which includes the counties of Bacau, Botosani, Iasi, Neamt, Suceava and Vaslui, followed by Region 3 South Muntenia, which includes the counties of Arges, Călărași, Dâmbovița, Giurgiu county; Prahova and Teleorman and region 4 South - West Oltenia, including Dolj, Gorj, Mehedinți, Olt and Vâlcea.

**Dynamic rural economy** was assessed by reference to indicators that reflect the performance and results of its quantitative, qualitative and structural. In the period 1990 - 2012 in Romania have been made numerous attempts to support the process of sustainable rural development and farm relief. Unfortunately, a number of measures adopted or proposed had no purpose or have not achieved their objectives. For example, individual farm subsidies for the purchase of inputs (seeds, fertilizers, etc.) were found to actually be a source of funding for their work in these farms. Moreover, these subsidies were masked welfare policy, without leading to a strong and sustainable farm concerned. If we look at developments in recent years (2007 - 2012) Romanian government policy of supporting farmers, we conclude that these policies were unstable without specific legislation was based. Policies to encourage small farms were often circumstantial reasons of economic or political strategy (rather, lack of strategy), so they have failed to modernize the countryside, but had only weak welfare effects.

In Romania, currently **individual agricultural holding** prevails as a form of organizing agricultural production in Romanian countryside. With a share of 99.4 % of agricultural structures (according to the *General Agricultural Census* of 2002), it is easy to understand the importance that is given to this form of organization of agricultural production. They use 55.3 % of the total land area of the country, hence an average of 1.73 ha / farm. This average is still a concern for policy makers and in the field, especially since most of these farms (76.7%) produced entirely for consumption. In these conditions, which have not changed significantly since 2002, it is clear that these individual farms must restructure, meaning to find an industry that can work in terms of economic efficiency.

This is especially important given that the economic support of national and European funding is and will be directed mainly to those farms with commercial activity, producing partly or entirely to the market. The immediate prospect holders and small farms producing for self-consumption will have to understand that they are vulnerable, and if they do not join, they can not hold out in a competitive market such as the Single Market. The solutions for these farms could be: the opportunities linked annuity; radical restructuring of the organization and production; specialization in new and traditional activities; waiver of agricultural production and indirect exploitation of agricultural land; development of alternative agriculture (agro-tourism, crafts, etc.), transformation in systems with high integration of upstream and downstream activities of agriculture, etc.

Statistics on the number, size and farm performance, but also on Romania's rural development are alarming, given that all indicators followed by European statistics after EUROSTAT methodology, we place most often the last places. If we want to truly integrate economic structures - the EU social partners making them, we must consider the **European model of sustainable rural development** and to work towards reducing the number of farms, by association, fusion and so on; farm specialization in terms of production; increase in average yields per hectare and per animal and the total output; growth and development of processing capacity of agricultural raw materials; increase the quality and competitiveness of products produced on farms; reducing the share of labor in agriculture; diversification of farm work activities alternative / non-agricultural and rural development services, including integrating labor surplus resulting from the restructuring of agriculture.

Based on the assumptions and de facto realities stated above, given the growth potential of the Romanian rural area and given the European trend on sustainable rural development, we can say that in Romania, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive program of investment in agriculture, rural development and land improvements, funded both from own funds (national) and with funds raised (external European). Also need special programs for small farmers, subsistence and semi-subsistence, covering early retirement and life annuity system, supporting young people in the rural setting and starting businesses, establishing direct payment scheme by considering the EU recommendations. Only then we can talk in the future about modern agriculture and the sustainable real development of rural Romanian.

3. **Integrated economic development alternatives in Romanian rural communities**
Countryside (rural space) evolution is one of the most important national issues, as it requires a balance between the requirement of conservation of rural economic, environmental and social modernization logical trend of rural life. The evolution of rural areas in these coordinates is influenced by urban sprawl, sometimes aggressive industrialization, lack of permanent and consistent environmental health etc. Also, the evolution of human society (local populations) resulted in profound structural and functional changes of the rural area highlighted by the appearance and development of agricultural activities and the general trend of urbanization and modernization.

The recent research, have shown that the theoretical models - empirical rural development are focusing increasingly more on involvement in development strategies. One of the assumptions that support these initiatives is the relationship causal proximity between natural resources and economic and entrepreneurial behavior, human capital, etc. of the area. In these terms the reality perceived by decision makers need to integrate all the concerns regarding local or regional development based on economic diversification, supported by the human resources of rural communities. [3]

The overall objective of sustainable rural development strategies must represent a significant increase regional GDP, on the basis of growth rates above the national average, increasing the long-term competitiveness and investment attractiveness of the region, the environmental heritage, creating new employment opportunities and improve working conditions for the people.

Macro policy for sustainable integrated economic development must take into account the fact that economic growth and social cohesion are mutually reinforcing and reducing regional disparities pave all regions and social groups to participate in global economic development and benefit from the effects thereof. Also, bear in mind that cohesion policy is an integral and means of achieving national and regional development programs.

Unfortunately, in Romania in 2012, three-quarters of the rural population lives in poor conditions, and 37%, which means over a million people are unpaid family workers, i.e. without any form of salary or payment in kind for farming performed. However, over 36 % of the rural population has professional status of self-employed. People living in rural areas still depend largely on agriculture activity but can not provide a decent living , given the low productivity and limited access to markets for Romanian farmers. A solution for those working in agriculture can be the development and implementation of programs to help farmers' associations to strengthen and capitalize properly. This would be a solution for increasing productivity, namely the Romanian agriculture to transform into a sector that contributes effectively to the national budget. [8]

In this highly heterogeneous landscape of Romanian rural areas, and in the context of many factors favorable and unfavorable influencing sustainable development of these areas, the solution seems to be represented by the implementation of economic development models to integrated, multifunctional, multi-activity and solidarity. It is not enough to address the integrated economic development model of rural areas only in terms of the amount of "nature + people + money" but necessary effort of all actors of regional and local rural economies to support and implement this new development. [2]

Thinking of a model for sustainable development of rural Romanian community and a set of alternatives for its implementation must consider: upgrading the institutional capacity of government of the communes; development and creation of rural partnership forms; supporting the local business environment by continuing to provide them with incentives to investors in terms of its benefits to the local budget and the nature of the activity; development of advanced and diversified agricultural sector; forestry development based on sustainable forest management; promoting local industries and crafts; development and modernization of local rural; modernization and development of rural infrastructure component, namely: road technical - municipal, communication, education, public health and social; improving care and social protection; improvement of public services and civil protection; reduction and prevention of environmental pollution , etc. [7] [2]

4. Conclusions

In the context of Romania - member state of the European Union is imperative that all stakeholders align to the European model of sustainable rural development, adopting measures and following the directions of action of this model. Socio - economic development of Romanian rural communities while was influenced primarily by demographic developments of a society in the process of modernization and transformation. Thus, the decline in rural population was one permanent migration amid rural - urban (attenuated since 2008), the natural increase of population, the high proportion of infant mortality etc.

Seen in a not too distant economic development can be integrated into a genuine scheme approach framework surrounding reality, and the relations between human society and the environment. In the future, this concept provides a balance between the legitimate economic and social needs of populations and environment. Full understanding of the economic and social phenomena of rural Romanian, due to their complexity, their quantification requires a synthesis of results obtained through quantitative statistical indicators reflecting each economic phenomenon - social in terms of composition, structure, the change in time and reciprocal relationship with other phenomena.
In Romania, have created alternative rural development so that local economies have become multifunctional, being able to strike a balance in the restructuring of individual holdings. It requires the creation of new activities, diversification of food products and increase their recovery, development of services in the downstream and upstream agricultural activities and the development of non-agricultural activities in order to capitalize on local resources. To achieve these goals, there is need for that at farm level to produce profound structural changes in order to improve all economic and social indicators. Also need regular updating programs and local and regional development strategies in light of changing socio-economic regional, national and even international.

6. Bibliography

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