

SHORT ASSERTIONS ON SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT AS WELL AS MULTIFUNCTIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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We proposed that in this short paper we make a brief analysis of rural development. We started from its definition as a process, as a direction of action and as a phenomenon, reaching its 3 plans (economic, social and ecological), as well as the 2 main forms of rural development, namely sustainable and multifunctional. The two forms of rural development are complementary, sustainable development being the qualitative side, having as object the definition of the rules to be followed on the use of resources and the direction of present activities, so as not to prejudice the interests of future generations in their use. Multifunctional development refers to the quantitative side, ie the generation of multiple activities, in compliance with the criteria imposed by sustainable development, as well as obtaining income from them, which should be an alternative to traditional income-generating activities.

Keywords: *sustainable rural development, multifunctional rural development, green consumption, principles of sustainability*

Classification JEL: *R11, R58*

1. Introduction

The contemporary evolution of the world economy, the changes in the realities of social life have also required the development of the conceptual system with which social sciences operate. Thus, after the Second World War a new type of economic development was shaped and developed, which, in its essence, is called to ensure the optimal satisfaction of the present demands of consumption without compromising or prejudicing the demands of future generations. In terms of theory and economic policies, the concept of economic growth has emerged, which highlights essential aspects of the development of the contemporary economy. In this context, the process of economic growth has become a kind of panacea of the economic difficulties faced and still faced by the countries of the contemporary world.

The concept of sustainable development belongs to the new theory of economic development, itself being a relatively new branch of general economic theory, which broke off and individualized as an autonomous theoretical body at the level of the 50s-60s. Synthetically, the main terms with which it operates in this field are: expansion, growth, progress, development, underdevelopment [6].

2. Literature review

In contrast to expansion, economic growth is a phrase more commonly used in current language as an increase in absolute dimensions of the macroeconomic indicators "national income" or "global product". The long-term increase in production capacity or production volume or economic potential usually gains the same significance as economic growth. When the increase in absolute value of macroeconomic indicators is reported and viewed in a relative way, depending on the dynamics of the population, another concept comes to help to explain what is happening in the economy and in society, namely economic progress.

The indicators that highlight economic growth are mainly aimed at the quantifiable side of economic activity, being oriented towards the quantifiable side of economic phenomena and processes, leaving aside the qualitative aspects and structural changes produced with economic growth. For this reason, the term development is more used, even if the opinions of those concerned with the analysis of this phenomenon differ, however the unanimous opinion is that development is a multidimensional concept.

The concept of sustainable development first appears in 1987 in the report entitled "Our Common Future" (also known as the "Brundtland report") of the UN World Commission for Environment and development. The definition given in this report calls sustainable development as "that development that meets the needs of current generations, without prejudice to the interests of future generations". As defined by CMED [8], sustainable development implies that the total volume of capital, consisting of physical capital (cars, roads, hotels, etc.), human capital (people's health, knowledge and qualification) and natural capital (forests, air, water and fertile soil), remains constant or increases over time. The definition of sustainable development induces the idea that its realization becomes feasible only in the conditions in which, between generations and within the same generations, an associative spirit of tolerance, solidarity and mutual care is manifested, by virtue of which the good and well-being of one must not, in any way, affect the happiness of another[6].

According to the dictionary of Nita Dobrota: "sustainable development means economic growth ... in consonance with the requirements of ecological balance ... and with all human development, which means taking into account all aspects of progress in Man and for Man – culture, science, civilization, equality, equity between people, ethnicities, Nations and peoples"[4].

3. Rural sustainable development plans

Dezvoltarea rurala poate fi descrisa ca un proces în care comunitatea este implicata în mod activ, în scopul mobilizarii tuturor initiativelor pentru valorificarea resurselor proprii, disponibile, în beneficiul social, economic si ecologic al comunitatii:

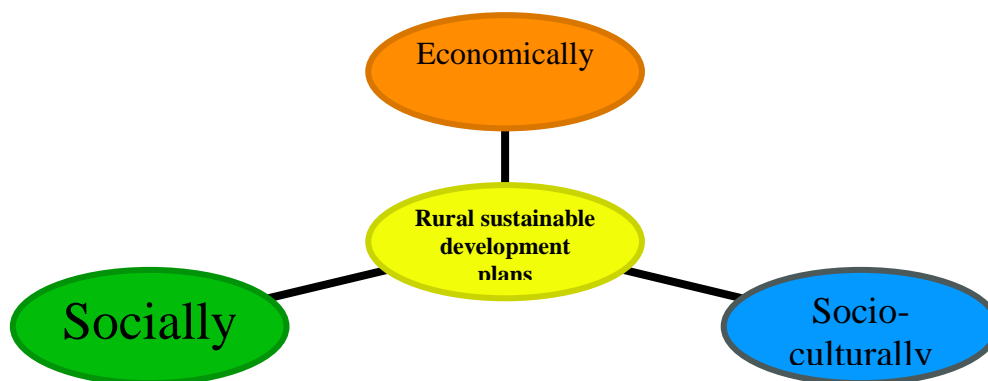


Figure 1 - Rural sustainable development plans

Source: author's contribution

- Economically

The economic development must aim that any action and activity undertaken is carried out in conditions of profitability at the level of production entities and to act in all ways to make them viable. The share of the rural population working in agriculture is the largest, relative to the other areas of activity of the rural area. So, agriculture is the determining activity and the basic pillar around which the economic activities of the rural area must revolve. The basic cell of Rural Development is the viable agricultural holding, and the existence of viable agricultural holdings leads to the vitalization of rural economic life.

The diversity of the farm is given by the spectrum of the diversity of the sectors of the manufacturing plant and animal capable of this work, to provide the products fresh and high-quality raw materials for the industrial sector of the food industry, or the industry of textile, leather, or other industries that use raw materials, agricultural products; it is the engine of motivation and attraction of investments in the rural areas and the diversification of their generating alternative forms of income for the rural population, thus ensuring the stability and prosperity of the latter.

An important and at the same time determining factor in the activity of an agricultural holding is the vocation. This can be defined by vocation in specialization and vocation in technical production capacity. The vocation in specialization is given, in general, by the skills and knowledge that the farm manager has and his ability to apply them in order to obtain the best results. The vocation in the technical production capacity represents the technical equipment available to the holding to best perform the activity that holds the largest share in the total activities it performs.

It should also be mentioned that, in addition to the vocation of farm managers, there is also the vocation of the area, which translates into all the natural and/or anthropic factors that influence or could influence an economic activity (present or future).

By combining the two types of vocations, in specialization and in technical capacity, we can appreciate the viability of an activity carried out by an agricultural holding. Thus, we can have a holding whose manager has vocation in a particular field, but will have difficulties if he wants to practice such activity in a region where it is not suitable and vice versa.

Although from a strictly economic point of view practicing an activity in an area without vocation would be unprofitable, however, due to the new guidelines existing in different countries of the world, external support (mainly from the respective national authority) is granted in the form of subsidies, tax facilities, etc., so that the activity will become profitable..

- *Socially*

The principles of environmentally sustainable development must be consistent with the economic and social development of the rural area and ensure that environmental degradation is avoided. Environmental Protection is the fundamental element of sustainable development and must be consistent with the principles of sustainable agriculture.

Currently, most cultivated agricultural land receives a certain dose of pesticides and chemical fertilizers in order to increase yields per hectare.

Modern technologies practiced in agriculture and offered as alternatives agriculturists are very diverse and with different environmental influences.

The more technology aims to increase production per unit area, by stimulating the soil with fertilizers and combating pests with chemicals, the more negative effects are recorded on the environment and on natural ecosystems. In the current economic conditions, it is necessary to find an optimal ratio between the technologies applied, the productions obtained and the ecological restrictions.

The principles of action are known, both of alternative agriculture and of sustainable agriculture, which have in mind the practice of a performing agriculture, in balance with nature. The result of the integrated action of the principles of alternative agriculture and sustainable agriculture leads to the definition of a new model of modern agriculture based on:

- ✓ the use of varieties of high productivity and suitable for local conditions;
- ✓ increasing mechanisation;
- ✓ irrigation and drying;
- ✓ intensive fertilization with natural fertilizers;
- ✓ the use of pesticides to combat pests.

The practice of sustainable agriculture will contribute to the development of plant and animal production and will lead to economic and social development, ensuring rural communities:

- meeting human requirements; improving the quality of the environment and the natural resource base;
- use with maximum efficiency of partially or hardly renewable and non-renewable resources;

- it's improving the quality of life.

- *socially and culturally*

Sustainable social development must be conceived as a guarantee of ensuring living conditions at the level of the human condition, for all localities and regions where human activity is present. It is known that not all regions offer the same conditions of economic and social development, differing both according to natural conditions and according to the evolution of the level of development of the region from an economic point of view.

In general, the social development of a region starts from the level of economic development of that region and is in a dependent relationship with it. Thus, the more economically prosperous a region is, the less negative effects that lead to social regression are recorded.

The sustainable rural development must be understood as a logical mechanism that must act in orienting the evolution of the economic and social phenomena of the rural area towards individual and community development, leading to the improvement of the level of rural welfare and the maintenance of environmental balances. The increase in rural welfare is perceived when there are positive effects compared to the economic and social phenomena that have dominated and still dominate the countryside, such as (the principle was enunciated by Gunnar Myrdal, Nobel Prize Laureate for Economics, according to which rich countries are getting richer and those are getting poorer):

- ❖ stopping the migration of the population from the village to the city, by creating alternatives that motivate their existence and stimulate their initiative of action to ensure the necessary living;
- ❖ combating poverty;
- ❖ stimulating and diversifying services;
- ❖ equity of chances;
- ❖ the right to a better life, the right to health, education and security.

Trying a brief conclusion of what has been formulated so far, it is necessary to specify that a sustainable development of rural regions cannot be conceived without considering the finding of viable solutions to the multitude of problems identified in the social plan.

4. What do we understand by multifunctional development?

Multifunctional development is considered the second dimension of the analysis of the development of a sector. This concerns horizontal development, that is, it deals with the analysis of development possibilities by finding new activities that ensure:

- a "different" use of available resources (preferably higher than that available at the time);
- an increase in the existing income of the actors involved, through a diversification (in the sense of alternative income) of them;
- an increase in the number of people employed (locally), due to the emergence of new areas of activity (both related to existing and new areas).

It can be appreciated that we are dealing with a multifunctional development if the new activities meet at least one of the three characteristics mentioned above.

But when we talk about multifunctional agriculture, we can say that it is the model of Agriculture that is aimed at the future. According to the European Commission, multifunctional agriculture is defined as a competitive agriculture, which will have to compete, progressively, on the world market, without excessive subsidies; to use environmentally friendly production methods; to produce quality products that meet the expectations of society, but maintain the diversity of the landscape, as well as an active rural world, keeping existing jobs and generating new ones. This concept also includes the need to promote the 3 functions of Agriculture: Food Security, respect for the environment and the maintenance of rural society.

The multifunctional development of the rural area refers to the development (encouragement) in the rural area of various activities, with a view to the employment of the rural

population and in areas other than agriculture itself. The premises of the emergence of the concept of multifunctionality are related to the three fundamental functions of the rural space, the rational exploitation of what they offer. In this context, we can define multifunctional rural development as a model for the development of the rural space that seeks to exploit to the maximum the fundamental functions of the rural space and the available resources under the conditions of compliance with the sustainability criteria.

Multifunctional development represents the natural evolution and at the same time the direction of orientation that the political authorities must induce, in the context in which food security is ensured, and at this moment there is a need for a polycalification of the farmer, which materializes in the support and diversification of his activity in the context in which he has not only the role of producer of goods, but also air and water quality, etc.

Multifunctional rural development is dependent on the size and evolution of living standards. The positive evolution of the indicators that define the standard of living creates opportunities for multifunctional rural development. The higher the income, the greater the possibilities for the development of communal household services, the improvement of working and rest conditions, living conditions, etc.; savings are created that can be invested by community members, and that can generate the prerequisites for sustainable and multifunctional development. Every household is eager to improve its working and rest conditions when it has an available financial resources, when the standard of living increases. Investments can also be made to protect the environment, diversify its activities, etc.

The standard of living is not always related to the household in general. This can also be the prerogative of the entire community. In order to accomplish the investment, which are related to development in general, and of the multi-purpose, in particular, to households and rural areas, it is necessary and an adequate infrastructure, in particular roads, water supply, sewerage, etc., So by investing in the infrastructure to be used for the local authorities, who need to be aware that by making investments in infrastructure, which may increase the standard of living of each and every member of the community.

At present, the standard of living of rural households is reduced. From the analysis of family budgets at the level of 2020, it follows that members of rural communities (rural population), through their own sources, do not have the capacity to produce substantial mutations in the plan of rural multifunctional development.

5. Conclusion

Sustainable rural development refers to an activity or group of activities, for which it is necessary to take into account the principles and requirements of sustainability. In other words, if the activity is old, as a result of the application of the requirements and principles of sustainability, several hypostases can be met:

✓ the activity evolves, but it does not turn into a new activity, we are really dealing with a sustainable development. For example, in its evolution, classical agriculture develops in accordance with the principles induced by sustainability, by decreasing the quantities of pesticides and fertilizers used. Thus, we can say that classical agriculture migrates to a semi-ecological or totally ecological one; but as long as the three activities (classical agriculture, semi-ecological agriculture and ecological agriculture) remain independent, with different principles, we can say that we are dealing with a sustainable development of agriculture;

✓ the activity migrates to or transforms into a new activity we are not dealing with a sustainable development, but, eventually, with a multifunctional one.

✓ the activity migrates to or transforms into an already existing activity, whose sustainable principles are known - we are dealing with the "death" of that activity, because this does not imply a development, in the proper sense.

✓ the activity merges with one or more old activities, after applying the principles of sustainability applicable to each, together they give rise to a new sustainable activity hitherto unknown - we are dealing with sustainable development, even if it has materialized through an (r)evolution.

It should be emphasized that sustainable development refers to a generic activity, which can mean the transition from a single activity to an entire economic field, but the wider that field of activity, the longer the term of sustainable development of that field has. a more abstract meaning and this is not the ultimate goal. Therefore, it is more than necessary to start in the analysis of sustainable development having as subject unique activities or groups of related activities, given the fact that each of them has specific features, which may be incompatible in a sustainable sense with other areas.

Unlike sustainable development, which, as I said, refers to a generic activity, multifunctional development refers to finding new activities that can be developed in a sustainable sense. In the case of multifunctional rural development, it starts from the economic, socio-cultural and ecological functions of the rural area and seeks new solutions to exploit them. The multifunctional development strategy must respect the principles of sustainable development, and in this context it is necessary to emphasize that for each component of it there must be a plan for the use of resources according to the principles of Rural Development. We deduce from this that we are dealing with a unique relationship, due to the fact that:

- multifunctional development involves a set of activities that will be carried out (or developed) each according to its own sustainability criteria;
- sustainable development only involves a generic activity, so it does not involve multifunctionality.

In other words, we can say that multifunctional rural development always implies sustainability, while sustainable rural development does not imply multifunctionality, due, in particular, to the area of action of each of those listed above.

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