

REFORMS OF THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY - FROM ENSURING FOOD SECURITY TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The article is a challenge in trying to capture the changes that the Common Agricultural Policy has undergone throughout its existence, the successive restructuring caused by the changing European reality, the need to ensure the Community's food security, competitive pricing policy and the importance of the growing role of rural development in both the CAP and other European Union policies, interconnected to ensure sustainable rural development. Thus, this article makes the transition from the theoretical-methodological aspects of rural development to the reality of this development, as designed jointly (in a unitary way) by the countries that were from the beginning members of this organization. It will present, in a summarized form, the conception and pragmatism of the European Union in the issue of rural development, considered as an inseparable part of the broad process of sustainable development. Based on this premise, important aspects will be reflected, such as: the characteristics of the European rural area, the content and evolution of the common agricultural policy, the new CAP reform which expands its scope and introduces the concept of common rural development, the diversity of rural areas in the countries of the European Union, the European model of agriculture, the transformations that have taken place in the financing mechanisms of agriculture and rural development.

Keywords: Common Agricultural Policy, rural area, competitive price, rural development, reforms.

Clasificare JEL: F15, F20

1. Introduction and context of the study

The Common Agricultural Policy has been and is one of the basic objectives of European construction, it has been, moreover, one of the most difficult chapters of the economic integration process.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is the exclusive prerogative of the European Union and is the first policy developed by this supranational integrationist economic organization, being considered "the driver of the unification of the European space". In essence, the CAP is a "set of principles, methods and means of action by which the objectives of the European Union in the field of agriculture are achieved" [1].

The general terms of the common agricultural policy were specified in the Treaty of Rome by establishing the essential objectives: increasing productivity; ensuring a fair standard of living for producers; market stabilization; guaranteeing security of supply; reasonable prices for buyers. In the mid-1950s, 17.5 million people participated in the agriculture of the founding countries of the European Community (EC - France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg), representing 33% of Italy's active population. % of France and 10% of Belgium. About 85% of farms in Italy, 55% of those in Germany and about 35% of companies in France had, on average, areas between 0.5-5 ha. When GDP was formed, the contribution of agriculture ranged from 8.4% in Belgium to 23% in Italy. With a production per hectare 2.5 times higher than in Italy, the Netherlands and Belgium recorded the highest values [2].

Although there were significant gaps between the Member States of the European Community in terms of the level of development and the systems of agricultural production, between them there is the advantage of the complementarity of agriculture, especially between France, which had surplus cereals and Germany, deficient in food, as well as Luxembourg; Italy

had comparative advantages over Mediterranean products; Belgium and the Netherlands had a developed zootechnical production sector. Following the subsequent enlargement of 6 to 11 Member States, the advantage of the complementarity of Community agriculture was maintained, with the situation changing under the conditions of EU enlargement. to Central and Eastern Europe, which required the practice of new agricultural policy mechanisms, compared to those used, both for the stage of creating the CAP and for the next decade.

Based on these realities, from the fact that agriculture was a strategic sector in the founding Member States, due to its essential role in food, in April 1956, after the Messina Conference, the Spaak Report explained that by establishing the Common Market envisaged by the six founding states cannot exclude agriculture, including this economic sector among the provisions of the Treaty of Rome (1957), by setting flexible objectives aimed at:

- increasing productivity in the field of agriculture by promoting technical progress, ensuring the development of agricultural production and the optimal use of production factors in the foreground being the human factor;
- ensuring a decent, fair standard of living for the Community's agricultural population, in particular by increasing the individual incomes of agricultural producers;
- price stabilization;
- ensuring a constant supply of consumers with agri-food products, at reasonable prices.

It is observed that these objectives aim at developing and modernizing the agriculture of the member countries, both by ensuring their supply of agricultural products and by raising the competitiveness of community agriculture, in relation to non-EU competition [3].

2. Inclusion of agriculture in the Treaty of Rome

The inclusion of agriculture in the Treaty of Rome was highly discussed in the 6 founding countries, the important economic and social structures, along with government interventions, analyzing agriculture through the prism of their national interests. Export-oriented countries (France and the Netherlands) promoted strategies to keep prices low, while other countries, such as Germany, adopted systems that placed more emphasis on the protectionist side. In Germany and Italy, small-scale farms predominated, while in other countries high-capacity farms had a larger share.

Thus, the principles of the Common Agricultural Policy were defined, which, over time, were perfected, adapted to the new realities. These principles refer to:

1. Gradual liberalization of the movement of agricultural products between member countries and their marketing at single, Community prices: in principle, it has been established that Community prices represent the arithmetic average of national prices in EEC member countries;
2. Preference by Member States for Community agricultural products. Those countries that would like to buy cheaper agricultural products from countries outside the community, will bear the price difference by imposing levies;
3. Compensation for losses resulting from exports of available agricultural products from member countries outside the European Economic Community if these exports were made at lower than Community prices; the compensation of these prices is achieved through the system of so-called refund taxes (these being direct export subsidies);
4. Protecting the agriculture of the member countries from extra-community competition through a very wide system of commercial, tariff and non-tariff policy measures, and its restructuring in order to increase the degree of self-supply with agricultural products;
5. Community financing of agricultural policy measures through a specialized Community body called the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF).

3. CAP reforms - between the legal framework and institutional reform

During its evolution, the Common Agricultural Policy has undergone several reforms aimed at achieving new objectives generated both by EU enlargement and by deepening the integration process:

- improving the competitiveness of EU agricultural products by lowering prices;
- guaranteeing food safety and quality for consumers;
- improving the production system by protecting the environment;
- integration of environmental components into the instruments and objectives of the common agricultural policy;
- the introduction in the CAP of a distinct policy, rural development, which would allow to ensure a stable income and a fair standard of living for the population employed in agriculture;
- simplification of legislation;
- flexibility in the allocation of Community financial support in the Member States [4].

When it was created in the 1960s, the common agricultural policy aimed at supporting countries that they were facing food shortages; therefore, production-based targets dominated. Since then, agriculture has declined as an economic activity, while other issues have emerged, especially in the post-Agenda 2000 period, such as food security and environmental protection, defining the issues of future agricultural and rural policy.

In order to meet the new objectives of the CAP, Agenda 2000 proposed the formulation of two interdependent policy areas considered as the two pillars of the CAP: (a) market-oriented agricultural policy (first pillar) and (b) rural development policy (second pillar). This reform involved a shift from a sectoral to a spatial policy, which was believed to reconnect agriculture with the local community, opening up the prospect of "regionalization" or "territorialisation" of rural policy. Moreover, it has meant a shift in focus on agricultural subsidies from price support to a more integrated approach which, however, treats agriculture as an essential and integral part of rural areas. The shifting focus towards "integrated" rural development at EU level has been reflected in subsequent CAP reform proposals.

The European Commission considers that significant progress has been made in the past since the Brussels Agreement of 1962 in the implementation of the common agricultural policy, but that there have been many dysfunctions and contradictions, especially as regards intra-Community relations in relation to financing, agricultural expenditure and income guarantee.

If initially the main instrument of the common agricultural policy was the price guarantee system for an unlimited agricultural production, the objective being to increase the supply of the population with agricultural products from its own production, it was found in the following stages that this instrument was no longer in use. meet the requirements of Community agricultural producers. Surpluses of agricultural products that had to be stored or exported outside the Community began to appear, often at lower export prices than in the Community. All these expenses had to be borne by the EAGGF, which required a continuous increase in the agricultural budget. Thus, the need arose for new measures, which led to the need to reform the Community's agricultural policy.

a) The first step taken in the reform of the Community agricultural policy was to reduce the costs of agricultural production by maintaining guaranteed prices only for a limited quantity of agricultural products, a quantity set annually by the agriculture ministers of the Community countries. This measure should lead to a decrease in stocks and a reduction in exports outside the Community to a range of agricultural products at lower prices than in the Community and, consequently, to a reduction in the costs of the Community's storage and export subsidy policy.

b) The second measure consisted in aligning agricultural production with certain products nominated at the level of Community demand in order to reduce subsidies to exceed planned production.

c) The third measure consisted of the annual approval of a maximum expenditure ceiling for agricultural policy, the rate of which could no longer exceed the rate of growth of the Community's GDP.

d) Fourthly, the European Commission has decided to move to the establishment of a competitive pricing policy, which will face both domestic and international competition.

At the beginning of the 90s, the need to continue with more vigorous reform of the common agricultural policy was increasingly imposed due to internal constraints (because price policy has not stopped rising prices and reducing budget expenditures), but also constraints externally, alignment with GATT requirements [5].

The reform proposed in 1992 by Ray Mac Sharry focused mainly on plant cultivation and animal husbandry for the sale of beef. The proposed reform was based on the following principles: the progressive decrease of the prices of surplus products, the obligatory annual abandonment of a part of the cultivated land, the compensation of losses by direct payments to the producer and the application of a new rural development strategy to protect the environment. encourage rural activity.

The proposed reform was called for by the need to reduce very large expenditures on surplus storage, by international pressure to align agricultural policy with GATT requirements, and by increasingly pressing environmental issues.

The purpose of the reform is to:

1. bringing the Community agricultural production closer to the level of the real demand for agricultural products, which would allow the regulation of the product supply through market-specific mechanisms;

2. reduction of budget expenditures;

3. decoupling subsidies from production dimensions;

4. generalization of the "production quotas" system (ie limitation by previously established production quotas of subsidies granted);

5. substantial reduction of administered prices, which will lead to the provision of support depending on the area and head of the animal);

6. Encouraging farmers to remain on their land, not to abandon agricultural activity and to migrate to cities through the "rural development" policy;

7. Particular emphasis was placed on the ecological dimension of agriculture, with the reform also proposing measures to ensure the protection of the environment;

8. EU participation in the completion of the GATT negotiations on trade in agricultural products, with the common agricultural policy in line with the requirements of the world agricultural market;

9. Gaining the EU's leading position on the world market for agricultural products both in the production and export of such products, by increasing the competitiveness of Community farmers on the world market [6].

In conclusion, by applying the provisions of the 1992 Reform, the transition from a price guarantee system through the Community trade policy to a system involving the guarantee of prices at a lower level, by granting direct payments and establishing measures in rural development. This Reform has had positive effects and has made it possible to correct previous shortcomings induced by the CAP and which consist of absorbing significant agricultural surpluses, improving farmers' incomes and ensuring consumer protection, which have benefited from some price reductions supported by the EAGGF, making the market much more controlled and more predictable.

However, even greater regional and producer disparities persisted, as a result of disproportionate support for richer regions benefited from stronger support to the detriment of less-

favorable areas and producers. Also, for some products (beef, cheese and milk powder) the surpluses were maintained.

Under these conditions, taking into account the new WTO negotiations, new adjustments to the CAP were required, in line with the requirements of the world market and, above all, of the USA, but also of the prospect of EU enlargement in Central and Eastern European countries. As a result, in July 1997, the European Commission proposed, in Agenda 2000 (completed in 1998, adapted in 1999 and implemented since 2000), the continuation of the 1992 Reform to meet the new challenges posed by the globalization of international trade, the increased demands for Agri-food quality, environmental protection and the EU enlargement process, and through its content, the new agricultural policy deepened and broadened the 1992 Reform main support for strengthening the agricultural sector and improving competitiveness in rural areas, environmental conservation and cultural heritage. Thus, together with the first pillar of the CAP - the Common Market Organization, the new rural development policy has become the second pillar of the CAP, an inseparable part of the European development model, defined by the EU Council and characterized by Alexandri, C., & Davidovici, G. I. [9].:

- competitiveness and friendly attitude towards the environment in the EU, including in those areas that face specific difficulties;

- acquiring the capacity to maintain the vitality of rural areas and orienting towards meeting consumers' expectations regarding the quality and variety of products.

In this respect, the implementation of Agenda 2000 aims to achieve the following issues:

- the progressive reduction, in the period 2000-2006, of the intervention prices, the decrease partially compensated by the increase or allocation of some amounts to benefit the farmers, especially those who practice an extensive agriculture;

- elaboration of new mechanisms in the field of market management;

- compliance with the conditions for the preservation of the environment that are in line with the support provided (cross-compliance).

As a result, the main objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy based on the provisions of Agenda 2000 are:

- continuity of the reform processes started in 1992 by reducing the prices and increasing the size of the direct, compensatory payments;

- increasing the competitiveness of products in the U.E. by decreasing costs as a result of increasing productivity achieved by applying technical and technological progress;

- security and quality of food offered to consumers, by improving and improving the marketing of agricultural products;

- integration of the natural environmental factor, in the instruments and objectives of the CAP;

- developing and implementing a complex rural development policy, first-rate components of the CAP, to ensure a stable income for the population and a decent, fair standard of living for the population of rural communities, including farmers, creating new opportunities and alternatives for employment of farmers and their families;

- simplification of the legislative framework in terms of common market organizations and regulations in the field of rural development and CAP financing;

- flexibility in providing CAP support in the Member States [2].

The set of measures provided for in AGENDA 2000 leads to the shift from agricultural policy to rural development policy, focused on the conservation and protection of the environment and the cultural landscape, in order to ensure economic and social cohesion, essential features of the future European space. At the same time, the processes of improving the CAP also take into account the increasing role of adapted adjustment measures in the process of accession of Central and Eastern European countries in the economic and social structures of the EU, which are characterized by compared to the existing situation in the EU.

Faced with new challenges related to the WTO negotiations and the enlargement of the Community space, the European Union had new reasons for improving and continuing the CAP.

As such, in July 2002, the European Commission discussed a set of proposals to adjust the CAP reform: simplifying, making more flexible and better market-oriented agriculture, while improving the quality of agricultural products and food security for the population, and compliance with environmental standards and animal welfare.

The main objectives of this set of measures relate to:

- the orientation of the agricultural production towards those products and services demanded by the market and the community subsidies not to artificially stimulate the production of other products and services;
- full integration of food security of the population;
- ensuring the support and stabilization of agricultural incomes and a decent living for farmers by continuing to apply direct payments;
- better support of the two pillars of the CAP (interventions / direct payments and rural development), in order to ensure a proper balance with them, and the CAP to better respond to the quality requirements of food, agriculture and rural development;
- budgetary stability remains a basic principle for the implementation of the CAP;
- ensuring the simplification of community legislation and their implementation mechanisms;
- 5% reduction in intervention prices for cereals and oilseeds starting with the 2004-2005 agricultural campaign.

In the field of market policies, the new CAP adjustment aimed at:

- lower institutional prices, to stimulate competitiveness;
- an acceptable standard of living for farming communities;
- strengthening the U.E. position in international trade;
- quality orientation;

Overall, CAP adjustments take into account the convergence between the expectations of farmers, consumers, taxpayers and public authorities. By their implementation it is considered that they will have the following effects:

- internally:
 - decoupling aid will allow farmers to better target the products that bring them the greatest financial satisfaction;
 - the dynamic modulation of aid will provide the means to sustain quality and provide the possibility to achieve a social balance;
 - in combination with the proposed adjustments the modulation will complete the reduction of prices and products;
 - for consumers, adjustments are an important step towards a better understanding of food security and food quality in the CAP;
 - more rational use of public money;
 - the adoption of adjustments will guide the public administration towards the substantial simplification of the provisions related to the application and control of the new decoupled aid.
- externally:
 - easier integration of the new Member States into the CAP, payments to support farmers' incomes, significant simplification of procedures for beneficiaries;
 - the adjustments are in line with EU commitments. within the WTO and ensures coherence between domestic policy and the 2001 Doha Agriculture Agenda. Direct payments will continue to be practiced, but they will have a much smaller impact on trade.

In relation to AGENDA 2000, the main proposal of the European Commission is the decoupled production payments, an element meant to ensure the consolidation of the EU position. in the WTO negotiations, as well as the long-term maintenance of direct payments in exchange for

giving up export subsidies, considered the most controversial issue in relations on the world agricultural market.

However, the new CAP improvement measures did not meet the interests of some Member States, in particular Germany and the United Kingdom, which called for a radical overhaul of the CAP. The European Commission's proposals are still based on the principle of separation between the CAP and EU enlargement, and although they also refer to the new Member States, which have budgetary implications, the approval of the Community budget for 2007-2013 has become a hotly contested issue. .

The EU has undertaken the most important reform in the history of the common agricultural policy, based on the following principles:

- a single farm payment for EU farmers, independent of production, so as to guarantee farmers' incomes and enable them to determine their production according to market needs and consumer demand;

- payments should be granted only if the rules on the environment, food safety, animal and plant health are complied with;

- a new rural development policy through investments in upstream and downstream activity;

- a reduction in direct payments to large farms in order to finance the new rural development policy;

- a new financial discipline mechanism to ensure compliance with the agricultural budget.

Based on these principles, the European Commission established in 2005 a new legal framework for financing the common agricultural policy by creating two new funds: the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

The need to create a new framework to support community farmers and rural development was also imposed by the new challenge that agricultural policy had to face, that of EU enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe. The integration of the new Member States into the common agricultural policy led the European Commission to draw up a forward-looking program until 2013, in which measures to support the market share of organic farming in the new Member States and the suspension total export subsidies by 2013 and halving customs duties on imported products from 23% to 12%.

With the reform of the common agricultural policy, rural development began to play an increasingly important role in the regions, out of a desire to enable them to cope with economic, social and environmental problems at the beginning of the 21st century.

Rural development has now become extremely important for the European community, as around 60% of the EU's population lives in rural areas, which account for 90% of the Union's territory.

The economic diversification of rural communities, land use planning and natural resource management are closely linked to agriculture and forestry and therefore rural development policy has now become a general EU priority.

The legal basis of the Community's rural development policy is based on the EU's strategic guidelines for rural development and the existence of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

If so far the common agricultural policy has placed a special emphasis on the first pillar (market organization policy) the common agricultural policy for the period 2007-2013 places a special emphasis on the second pillar (rural development), focusing on three aspects: agri-food economy, environment and rural population.

The programs financed from the EAFRD in the period 2007-2013 aimed at: increasing the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sectors, improving the environment and the natural landscape, improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging the diversification of the rural economy.

The European Commission has warned EU countries that the EAFRD must be seen as a complement to national, regional and local action and contributes to community priorities. The Commission and the Member States must respect the principle of coherence between the assistance provided from this fund and that of the national states, as well as with the measures financed by the EAGF.

In essence, the new reform set three major objectives - sustainable food production, sustainable management of natural resources and climate action, and balanced territorial development, to be achieved through the two pillars (pillar 1 - direct area payments and measures). market management and pillar 2 - rural development). An element of novelty was the fact that the aim was to increase the links between them, in order to offer an integrated and comprehensive approach. Specifically, the 2013 reform aimed to transform this policy into a more equitable one (within but also between Member States) and more environmentally friendly, while ensuring a simple, competitive and efficient policy. Proposals included: more sustainable direct payments, more equitably distributed and targeted at active farmers; simplification of financial management; the introduction of new tools to help farmers cope with price and income volatility; increasing competitiveness and development in rural areas [10].

Due to the extremely changing geopolitical context and the economic and social challenges, the CAP has required constant modernization and adaptation to the complexities of the enlargement process, the doubling of the agricultural population at European level and the emergence of new challenges such as climate change, food security. and sustainable management of natural resources. This policy has thus had to go through several reforms, the last and most relevant in the current context being the "Cioloș Reform 2013", which had to take into account the diversity of agricultural structures and the priorities of the 27 Member States.

The 2014-2020 programming period "is characterized by some important changes in policy terms, such as the connection between rural development and the structural funds within a single common strategic framework. In 2014-2020, the CAP contributes to three general objectives, which together contribute to the Europe 2020 goals for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth: sustainable food production; sustainable management of natural resources and climate action; balanced territorial development".

CONCLUSIONS

Both pillars of the CAP "contribute to these general objectives, broken down into specific objectives (priorities) and some of which are common to the pillars, while others are linked to either Pillar I or rural development. More specifically, Pillar II contributes to ensuring sustainable food production by improving the viability of the farm and the competitiveness of all types of agriculture (priority 2), as well as by promoting the organization of the food chain (priority 3). At the same time, the sustainable management of natural resources and climate action are pursued by restoring, conserving and consolidating ecosystems related to agriculture and forestry (priority 4), together with promoting resource efficiency and support for low carbon and a resilient economy. climate change in the agriculture, food and forestry sectors (priority 5).

In order to achieve a balanced territorial development, Pillar II focuses on the multifunctional objective of promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas (priority 6). To this end, Pillar II sets out a cross-cutting objective to encourage knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas (priority 1). Thanks to this common logical framework, for the first time, the monitoring and evaluation system covers the entire CAP, respectively both pillars [11].

For the period after 2020, the Commission's legislative package "consists of three proposals:

- a regulation covering the architecture and rules of the National Strategic Plans (NSPs) and the types of interventions to be implemented by the Member States;

- a regulation on the common organization of the market;
- a horizontal regulation on the financing, management and monitoring of the CAP;
- the reform package is accompanied by an impact assessment." [12]

These proposals hope to make the CAP more responsive to current and future challenges, such as climate change or generational renewal, while supporting European farmers for a sustainable and competitive agricultural sector. We remind that, for the first time, the two CAP pillars work together with a real, complementary approach, under a single strategic framework, focused on three general objectives, nine specific objectives and one horizontal (agricultural knowledge and information system) [13].

Based on this approach, complemented by new CAP instruments, the European Commission considers that the CAP reform proposal is compatible with the Green Agreement. In this dialogue, the CAP's strategic plans are aimed at paying particular attention to and reflecting the objectives of the European Green Agreement. Thus, based on territorial diagnosis and needs assessment, Member States will have to make the appropriate choices so that the NDP can contribute effectively. The European Commission will check the coherence of the strategic plans with the aggregate objectives of the Green Agreement, but progress towards the objectives of the Green Agreement will be monitored through the indicators already proposed for the future CAP [14].

The draft regulations indicate a new model of governance and division of responsibilities between the Union and the Member States [15], in order to increase simplification and flexibility. The Commission proposal is intended to shift the focus of the CAP from meeting rigid requirements to achieving established results, but with stronger common performance elements, namely the use of an implementation mechanism to improve the transition from a compliance-based to a performance-based system [16].

Analyzing the prospects of the CAP 2021-2027, according to the new thinking of the European Commission in relation to the European added value that the funding objectives provide, it is considered that the CAP offers the following solutions to the current challenges of the EU27:

- ensuring a single market and a level playing field;
- strengthening the resilience of the EU agricultural sector.

CAP 2021 - 2027 is defined by "nine objectives:

- (1) supporting reliable revenues,
- (2) increasing competitiveness,
- (3) rebalancing power in the food chain,
- (4) combating climate change,
- (5) promoting the sustainable use of natural resources,
- (6) biodiversity protection,
- (7) supporting the renewal of generations,
- (8) promoting employment and growth and;
- (9) ensuring high food quality.

These are complemented by the cross-cutting objective of modernizing the sector by stimulating and sharing knowledge, by promoting innovation and digitalization in agriculture and rural areas and by encouraging the adoption of these measures". [17]

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