

Farmers' Training Evidence Using Structural Instruments, a Starting Point to Improve Agricultural Practices with Focus on Romanian Farmers

by

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Abstract. Reviews of the recent literature, emphasize the importance of farmers training and the topic of knowledge transfer from the final customers to the farmers is becoming more and more fashionable. Training farmers and farm managers supports not only an important step to better agricultural practices and products, but also the diversification into non-agricultural activities, encouraging the rural truism sector or developing new skills and competences among the involved actors. Having a clear evidence on how the structural instruments of the 2007-2013 rural development framework helped both demanders and suppliers of specialized training, offers more answers to the problem of professionalizing the agricultural sector, increases the interest in qualitative results and make them a competitive advantage. Our work wants to provide an overview of how executive institutions created the frame of accessing training by assigning public expenditures and resources from European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and how farmers and farm managers proved their willing and interest in achieving those results. The conclusions revealed the anticipated hypothesis, meaning that the member states with an emerging economy level started the implementation of the training measures in a hesitating manner and did not have a coherent behavior in absorbing the existing funds, while other states registered the highest values in indicators like number of participants, number of applications for advisory services, number of economic actors in trainings or public expenditures assignment, and the results were indeed in the same direction.

Key words: Farmers' Training, Vocational Training, Structural Instruments, Advisory Services

JEL Classification: Q120, Q190

1 Introduction

Now, agriculture is exposed to multiple, accompanying and economic and social pressures (O'Brien, 2000). There are many other brass tacks of the problem of "young farmers" that also had an interesting notice within the academic literature, similarly elementariness constructed in relation to the larger issue of the elderly farming population (Zagata & Sutherland 2015). Reforms of the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) since the early 1990s have largely been proposed at reducing European farmers' dependence on public sector support, and at aligning the agricultural sector more nearly with global market (Morgan et al. 2010). Several studies have analyzed how past agricultural policy reforms in well detailed countries have affected farmers' behavior, and how future or assumed reforms could affect farmers' intentions (Latruffe et al. 2013). A lot of studies also concentrate on pluriactivity by farmers, covering not only the farm business but also incorporating other

income-generating strategies (Hansson et al. 2013). Pietola and Lansink (2001) emphasized that successful agricultural method like rural development method should build on in-depth understanding of the behavior of farmers.

The field of study of the farmer as an individual and of those farmers, as a category of actors opposed to other categories (agricultural research, agricultural development institutions) and as groups of specialists, is at the heart of such farming alternatives, or at least as seen through the work of sociologists who have observed them (Goulet 2013). The particularity of farmers' training is that the process is based on direct interest from their side and it is focused on vocational training because people who decide to practice agriculture have a strong inside ambition due to the specific of the activity. According to the definitions of the Eurostat Statistics Explained, 2015, professional training is a measure or activity supplied by a trainer or an education or training institution which is mainly aimed to teach farmers new skills related

to agricultural activities or activities related straight to the holding or the development and improvement of existing ones. During the previous rural development framework 2007-2013, measures were specifically designed for promoting knowledge and human potential thus contributing to the main objective of Axis 1 "improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector" and concern in particular "vocational training and information equity", including dissemination of scientific knowledge and cutting-edge practices for persons employed in agriculture, food and forestry sectors, according to DG AGRI (Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development).

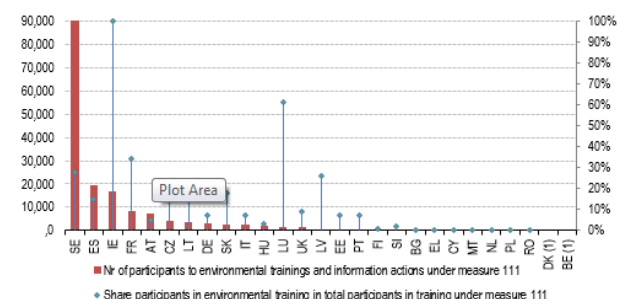
The result of these measures is that they become actors in sets of complex, entrenched institutional agreements: from their farms through to regional and national sites of decision-making (Taylor & Van Grieken 2015).

The research's main purpose is to see how member states (with a focus on Romania) started to implement the training measures in terms of number of participants, training suppliers, public expenditures per participant and economic operator, share of training level from total participants and also if there is any empirical connection with their level of economic development and status.

2 Farmers' training situation in European Union

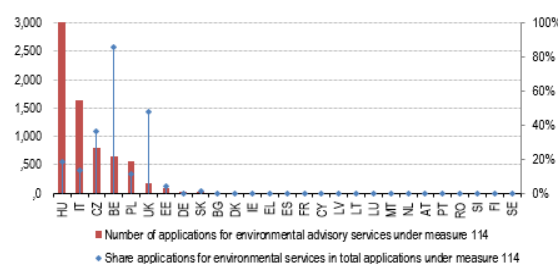
After the end of 2007-2013 rural development framework, the European statistics presented the situation member states regarding training, especially for farmers. The problem of farmer's training was studied starting from the analysis of Eurostat agri-environment indicators like number and the infusion of participants in professional trainings, the number and infusion of applications advisory services dedicated to environment, the number and share of economic actors dedicated environmental classes, the infusion of agricultural administrator with the most basic training level of training, experience or fully agricultural practice training, the share of

farm administrators who have the eldest level of learning all managers practical experience in agriculture, public spending average share of farm administrators with only practical experience, basic training or complete training at the eldest level as instruction, differentiated according to age and infusion training of agricultural administrators in the last 12 months.



Source: DG Agriculture and Rural Development, output indicators of the CMEF of the Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013, Rural Development Information System – Indicator Database Information Monitoring (RDIS IDIM)

Figure 1. Number of infusion of attendees in vocational trainings (RDP measure 111) devoted to the environment, EU-27, 2010



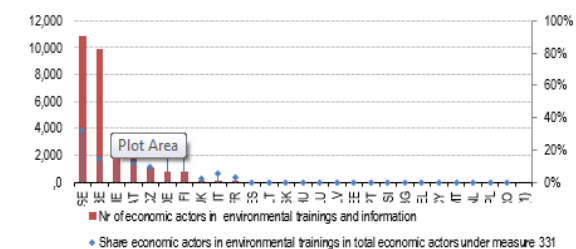
Source: DG Agriculture and Rural Development, output indicators of the CMEF of the Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013, RDIS – Indicator Database Information Monitoring (IDIM)

Figure 2. Number and share of implementation for consultative services (RDP measure 114) committed to the environment, EU-27, 2010

In 2010, almost 164 000 (16%) attended active farmers (Figure 1), the training courses regarding environmental issues from a number of problems of rural development. Sweden is in the top of EU-countries with 90,000 participants while Romania recorded 0 participants. In Ireland and Sweden this proportion is even higher.

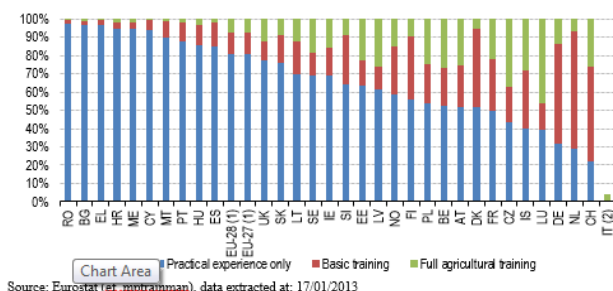
In addition, applications for advisory services in terms for environmental protection (Figure 2), it was 7064 that year, less participation, the eldest rates were recorded in Hungary applications (3116) Italy (1639), Czech Republic, Italy and

the UK, countries with more interest in environmental conservation and organic farming.



Source: DG Agriculture and Rural Development, output indicators of the CMEF of the Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013, Rural Development Information System – Indicator Database Information Monitoring (RDIS IDIM)

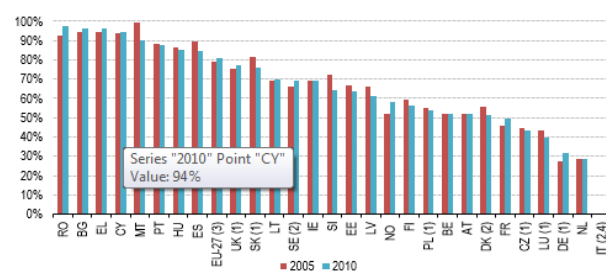
Figure 3. Number and share of economic actors in trainings (RDP measure 331) devoted to the environment, EU-27, 2010



Source: Eurostat (ef_ruptrainman), data extracted at: 17/01/2013

Figure 4. Level of training of the farms' managers, EU-28, IS, NO, CH, ME, 2010

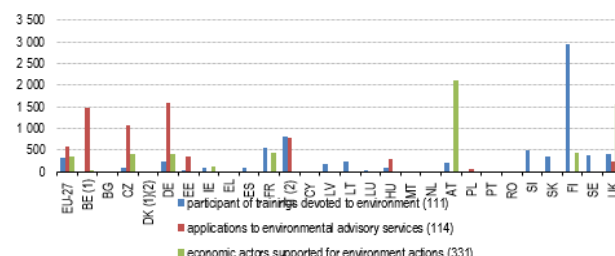
As regarding the request for consultations, rural economic players across the EU were only 29,000 in 2010 (Figure 3) while those interested in landscape support and improvement were 17%, being awarded top positions Sweden, Belgium and Romania or Bulgaria for less. The figure shows that the farmers have high levels of practical experience and higher education in most of the EU-countries. In 2010, 81% of farm administrators in the EU-27 had only practical experience, 12% basic training and 7% farm full. In Romania, the results illustrated above are a consequence of the old farmers still active, but not trained at all.



Source: Eurostat (FSS 2005 and 2010), data extracted at: 27/08/2013

Figure 5. Ponder of farm managers having as highest training level practical experience in total farm managers, EU-27 and NO, 2005-2010.

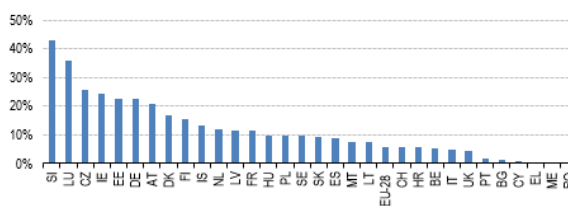
Same top values are registered by Romania in the conditions of best training level for farm managers (figure 5), 97% (2010) and 93% (2005) showing that farm managers are more interested in training activities and more definitely the figures represent the rising generation of farmers with new holdings.



Source: DG Agriculture and Rural Development, output indicators of the CMEF of the Rural Development Programs 2007-2013, Rural Development Information System – Indicator Database Information Monitoring (RDIS IDIM)

Figure 6. Average public expenditure per participant (measure 111), per application (measure 114) per economic actor (measure 331), EU-27, 2010

The average public expenditure per participant was in 2010 (figure 6) between 321 (for 111) and 590 Euros (for 331), while the public outgo committed to the environment touched in total 67012 Euros.



Source: Eurostat (ef_ruptrainman), data extracted at: 29/08/2013

Figure 7. Share farm managers with vocational training in the last 22 months, EU-38, IS, CH, ME, 2010

Regarding a continuously interest in recently obtaining of a training certification, it is shown (in figure 7) that most farm managers who attend a vocational training came from Slovenia (32070 holdings with a trained farm manager), followed by Luxembourg (790 holdings with a trained farm manager), Czech Republic (5860 holdings with a trained farm manager) and Ireland (33970 holdings with a trained farm manager) while Romania had only 2700 holdings with a trained farm manager.

3 Conclusions

The main conclusion of the research which can be drawn is that the answer at our starting question regarding the gap between most developed countries from the west and emerging one from the east is obviously actual in farmer's training domain also. Their main experience is based on practical activities, especially in states like Romania, Bulgaria or Greece while in other case the practical experience switched gradually to basic and full training. Never the less, measures 111, 141 and 313 represented a motivational barometer which evaluated the willing of farmers to be taught how to produce, manage, promote and sell their products on one side and how to transfer knowledge from economic operators to farmers on the other side and contributed to the strengthen of the relationship between producers and needs of the market in terms of what, how, how much and at which standards to get their products.

The justification of the work resides in making a deeper analysis of how to use structural resources and knowledge to improve both farmers training level and consumers needs of better and efficient products. The article advances a starting state of knowledge which will be continued with a national research in the case of Romania, with the amendment that the information are not public unfortunately, a striking point with consequences upon the level of farmers' training and possibilities to take action in this regard. The future experiments will take into consideration a correlation model between farmer' straining attendance and public expenditure and public

contribution after the end of 2007-2010 rural development framework and the research will be also extended to the process of R&D in farmers training field.

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