Preface

Recent changes in the management of the agricultural holdings and their connection to the business environment as a result of changes in the current policies’ trends raised questions about evolution of the ownership structures, agricultural exploitation, and production in agriculture. The content of this volume is the result of an original research project. The focus is to evaluate agriculture’s responsiveness to the policy instruments in the context of the green economy constraints as well as to suggest new lines of future development, for a functional development.

As a result of the post-communist Romania’s inclusion in the European Union, the need to adapt to the existing economic and social European structures constituted in a significant challenge for the Romanian agriculture. Thus, to the existing targets for the Romanian agriculture—consolidating the land ownership, improving farmers’ living conditions, and improving performance in production and economy—were added new ones, like enhancing market relationship and increasing the satisfaction of the Romanian consumers.

The Romanian agriculture is centered on two organizational structures. These are the so-called “small, family farms” and the “big, commercial farms” (Popescu, 2013, 2014).

The small family farms with 3.5 hectares per holding own around 55% of the entire arable land and represent over 3.7 million units. The historical becoming of these farms overlapped the Romanian economic industrialization; this process started one-and-a-half centuries ago and is ongoing. During this period five reforms happen in which the land ownership transfer from the big farms, of landowning or commercial farm type and cooperatist or state owned type, towards the small peasant property (Popescu 2014).

These small farms are known in the scientific literature under its historic name peasant-household. In these entities, the traditional agriculture system was dominant, the production rationale being insuring the self-consumption of farmer’s family. In these circumstances, the production efficiency is not one of economic nature, because the social issues are predominant. The most important problem for these entities is their ability to ensure the food for entire family unit. Through this structure, the peasant households proved their strength over time, going through all the historical stages and political regimes, from state establishment of our country in the year 1859 (Popescu 2013).

The second category, big commercial farms, are over 31 thousand units, each of them with 264 hectares per unit as medium size and account for 45% of the entire arable land of the country (INS, 2011). Starting with 2014, the medium size of this entity moved up constantly because it intensified the purchase of agricultural land from the small landowners. This category of farms recorded an accelerated dynamic concerning all criteria that characterize them: medium size, the weight in the arable land at national level, number of new entities, results, respectively performance in returns, production, and profitability.
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For adjustment of the Romanian agriculture to intensive or ecological systems, it is necessary to apply a superior management to the small holdings, in terms of performance in production and efficiency. Furthermore, by the Common Agricultural Policy are sustained investments especially for this type of farms, because they have the capacity to develop the most modern production techniques and technologies. But in Romania, both types of farms, mentioned above, small and big ones, have common problems, which make their management even more important, in increasing their performance processes.

The first category of common problems, concerns the consolidation of land ownership, referring to land register, land books, land market, land consolidation, land economic evaluation and others.

Land register and land books, as defining structural parts of land publicity or real estate, represent major shortcomings, with deep historical roots, relevant in the field of Romanian agricultural management. It is recognize that presently, in the land books, less than 50% of the arable land is found (Popescu, 2013). Obviously, this major shortcoming draws other social and economic risk factors and even extra policies on the stability and economic growth, within the branch.

Concerns and attitudes in the field of agrarian policies are several, aimed at towards promptly solving in national interest and particularly for the farmers, of these issues, have been numerous and multiple solving solution. It is recognized that land register works, but also those of effectively writing in the land books are expensive in terms of finances. In fact, it exceeds the capacity of the landowners, especially those from small and medium farms, to support from their own pocket these costs. Financing solutions for the land register and land book, identified by law, were not able to solve this issue.

Related to the issue regarding the land plot consolidation, it is important that the scientific level realized the necessity to identify concrete measures to increase the size of the land plots. The consolidation is an action with deep implications on the production performance plan, but also in the related economic, social, and even political issues. The severity problem is very big! In the Romanian agriculture, there are over 15 million land plots, which means up to 5 plots per farm (INS, 2011), with a very small medium size, respectively of 4500 square meters! It is a high fragmentation of agricultural land that positions Romania on the bottom second place in EU28 (Popescu, 2013).

In this moment, solving solutions must exceed the competence of agricultural administrative structures. As such, the process demands a democratic approach, bottom up, in which landowner decisions should be placed in the core mechanism of concentration of countryside. So any interference in landowner decisions should be categorically eliminated. Regarding the land market, the sale actions are essential; through them, the agrarian structures will be redefined, as size: the small ones, as the main exponents of the land supply, and the great ones, which will define the demand for this economic good. But in this moment the land market is restricted in its operating processes and its enhancing is due to lack of register book and of land book. Also, to these realities on can add the excessive fragmentation and extremely low average size of existing land plots.

The book aims to provide both theoretical frameworks and the latest applied and empirical research findings in the area of agricultural and landowner structures, of holdings and agricultural production, with highly and competitive findings in order to improve the general information about Romania. It provides a full platform debate with several points of view and it try to explain some limits and delivers argue, sometimes avoided to be clearly presented in such approaches.

It intends to join in a new manner all these aspects. Having as contributor personalities in this field, heads of research institutes and departments, and practitioners, it provides both international visibility of this issue and a real and well-documented analysis. This book presents the new perceptions in the field of agricultural economy, well-debated matters, and some practical case studies form emerging economies.
The main aim of the book is to develop a new approach in understanding the evolution of the agricultural management strategies in a changing economy, by revealing the major axis of evolutions in connection with restrictions regarding sustainable development. It developed an integrated strategy in acquiring the chapters’ contribution in order to set up a scientific content and a practical involvement.

The book starts with a major analysis regarding a multi-criteria approach of the regional development disparities in agriculture and rural development, where is stated in a very intuitive manner the importance of a phenomena that have influence to the spending of the EU funds received by Romania during 2007-2013 and their degree of absorption. The first chapter is written by Popescu and Bara.

The second chapter of the book is dedicated to an analysis regarding the territorial-based marketing strategies for emblematic agro-food products in order to raise some of the best practices linked to the communication of intangible concepts as of the representative product, such as credibility, authenticity, warranty, and preservation of social and economic values. Authors of this chapter Begalli, Capitello, and Agnoli have large capability in this field.

The third chapter is concerning about the influence of Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) on development of the agricultural production structures in Romania and EU28 and represents a good way of explaining some of the major discrepancies taking into account that Romania represents the seventh major country in the European Union. The authors (Andrei, Mihai, and Smoleanu) put in evidence, on the one hand, the importance of farms as a very important links in valorization of agricultural potential for European area and for national one and, on the other hand, their economic models with wider cultural influences.

The fourth chapter contains a significant analysis regarding the Current state of fish production on carp farms in Serbia, starting from the premise that the fish production in a such specialized ponds has the most important place within the Serbian sector. The authors (Čanak, Subić, Jeločnik) compute several performance indicators of production for all carp farms, and the analysis carried out shows that by the point of view of intensity concerning this individual production, Serbia is well positioned in Europe.

Chapter 5 contains a straight analysis regarding the reform of EU Economic Governance, by Popescu, who argues that his objective are to explore and describe the EU’s management of the economic and financial crisis, the leading role of the European Council in economic governance, the governmental and parliamentary institutions involved in EU28 economic governance, and presentation of democratic nature induced by the new economic governance system, by applying innovative conceptual and methodological approaches.

Chapter 6 is dedicated to the influence of the soil moisture as one of the limiting factors in the production of therapeutic plants. The authors of this chapter have analyzed some of the most important medicinal plants (marshmallow - Althaea officinalis L., peppermint - Mentha Piperita L., valerian - Valeriana Officinalis L., lovage - Levisticum Officinale Koch, lemon balm - Melissa Officinalis L., ribwort plantain - Plantago Lanceolata L., marigold - Calendula Officinalis L. and basil - Ocimum Basilicum L.) taking into accounts their importance for production sector, and their needs in different circumstances: drought and irrigation.

Chapter 7 contains an analysis regarding the Romanian Rural Tourism in the Context of Sustainable Development. The authors (Zaharia, Gogonea, Enachescu) have as aim of their research to assess the evolutions of touristic infrastructure in time and in terms of regional distribution. To view to estimate the tourism supply the authors use as statistical indicators the number of agro tourist houses, the existing accommodation capacity and the ones in function, the territorial concentration of agro tourist houses, and the way in which the main results of rural tourism can be used as strategic tools in Romanian regional development.
Chapter 8, written by Tataru, Alexandra, and Nedelcu, is focused on the analysis of qualitative and quantitative indicators that reflect the current state of land resources and their evolution. The authors try to explain how the current status of the land resources from Vrancea County influenced the progress of the local economy.

Chapter 9 studies the changing consumption patterns in the conditions of green economy expanding. The authors (Sima and Gheorghe) have analyzed the recent changes occurring in consumer behavior, aiming to highlight the main issues appeared during transition to green economy, respectively to the new models of consumption.

Chapter 10 presented a case of rural entrepreneurship developed in Portuguese small-scale farms which was promoted through the European Project PROVE. This entrepreneurial solution was spread to different regions in Portugal and also in other Member States and remains as positive reference beyond the end of the European project.

Chapter 11 analyzed the solar energy potential as support for the future sustainable development of Romanian economy. The author, Dusmanescu, presents a methodology regarding the evaluation of the solar energy potential in Romania. In the context of accession to the EU, Romania adopted the EU directives for environmental protection and reduction of the emitted quantities of CO2. Main conclusion of the author is that for Romania the solar energy can be a viable alternative for a partial reduction of fossil fuels, in conditions of technical progress applying.

Chapter 12 is called “Population Number and Consumer Income and Expenditure Dynamics: An Analysis of World Countries.” The author (Stancu) analyzes the population according to consumer income and expenditure. The dynamics and disparities among countries regarding population, income, and expenditure were studied from different points of view. One main conclusion is that, in the near future and on medium-term, the biggest danger for world food consumption will come from China and India.

Chapter 13 is dedicated to a very interesting issue, combining organic agriculture and recreation – evidence from Italy. In this chapter, Privitera argues that its aim is to understand the dynamic of agrotourism in Italy, to evaluate the local impacts. Much of debate is focused on the manner in which one can build linkages between organic agricultural production and tourism consumption, of both food and rural location, and how one can generate interest for farmers and for agricultural sector as a whole.

Chapter 14 contains an analysis of the Romanian rural education: an issue of the reform and foreign language teaching. It is written by Presada and Badea. This chapter is a summary of the Romanian rural education system with emphasis on the projects put into practice in the rural areas, foreign language teaching being a major part of these projects. It analyzes different shortcomings including the negative influence of a lack of qualified teaching staff.

In Chapter 15, Nica makes an analysis regarding the correlation between green economy and sustainable development. The author presents its research on alleviation and adjustment costs to climate change and necessary investments, the negative influence of agriculture on the environment, and the complex character of the connections between development, poverty, and environment. The results of the current study converge with prior research on the sound performance of the Earth’s ecosystems, and sustain the necessity for policies that encourage a greener growth.

Chapter 16 shows how in studying the future of food and farming scientists have called for sustainable intensification to simultaneously raise yields and increase efficiency in the use of inputs and reduce the negative environmental effects of food production. Sustainable intensification requires sustainable agricultural techniques such as improved water management practices that result in higher, stabilized, and diversified agricultural production, and greater resilience to climate change without the deterioration.
of natural resources and the environment. This chapter is devoted to the role of irrigation development in Serbian agriculture and its contribution to the development of the green economy in the Republic of Serbia.

Chapter 17 written by Paul and presents a comparative study of two Romanian Local Action Groups (LAG), having in view that this subject was not much more presented till now, and this issue represents a new instrument for the local management in the rural environment. It is also argued that LAGs represent a strong driving engine for progress in the rural areas, and the strong involvement of all LAG responsible factors is essential for a good and authentic local development.

The book Agricultural Management Strategies in a Changing Economy represents by itself an important scientific step in providing some answers to a complex problem regarding the current evolutions of the Romania agriculture. In the context of the global concern for sustainable economic development, agriculture in every country constitutes a major player. As the Romanian economy has undergone significant changes in a short timeframe, articulating functional agricultural management strategies both at a theoretical and at a practical level can provide an integrative approach of environmental issues and enhance the future research in the field.

The evolution of the agricultural structures in the context of a fast transition from the state to market economy including specific examples concerning the Romanian context, with a highlight of the goods and the bad practices in financing policy, farm management practices holding agricultural policies, reflect both general and specific treats of the European space and builds this book, in the general context of the already similar ones published by IGI Global as a significant reference.

This book has the advantage that it includes not only a wide variety of practical approaches of the domain but it is interconnected with different theoretical aspects based on the experiences of contributors, and this represents an authentic asset.

We hope that this volume will become a reference for this field and it will bring a new performance in understanding the evolution of agricultural production structure, of landowner’s behavior, of agricultural policy, and of other related themes concerning the European area in the years 2000.

The main topics of this volume are widely recognized in the domain and were centered on the following issues:

- Agricultural economics and production;
- Agriculture and energy;
- Agriculture and environmental policy;
- Environmental economics and sustainable development;
- Farm management and agricultural business;
- Management of production structures;
- Natural resources management;
- Rural and agricultural economics.

Aiming at filling a gap between the research and the practical understanding of policy concepts as solutions, this book is useful to both researchers and professionals. University teachers and students also can benefit of the wide range of examples regarding specific issues in the green economy and sustainable policies matters.
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The editors are confident that this volume will stir a scientific interest for understanding the complex European rural space diversity through chapters highlighting similarities and differences for specific issues.

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REFERENCES


