

Access to professional training for persons engaged in agriculture

Contents

Introduction	2
Method and definition of concepts	3
Research design	3
Definition and operationalization of concepts	4
Analysis method	7
Data collection	7
Common Agricultural Policy and farmer's access to training	8
CAP – evolution from 1962 to 2007	8
CAP post-2013	14
European legal framework concerning farmers' access to professional training	16
National policies and practices concerning the training in agriculture	17
National measures for agriculture	17
Main measures defined by the national policies	18
Specific measures concerning farmers' access to professional training	20
Proactive national employment policies and their impact on the labor market in the agricultural sector	22
Trade unions in agriculture	24
Characteristics of the agricultural sectors - a comparative analysis	26
Share of agricultural land as percentage of the total area of the country	27
Number and structure of farms	28
Employees in the agricultural sector	30
Productivity of the agricultural sector and farmer's access to training	34
Productivity of the agricultural sector	34
Farmers' access to professional training	37
Conclusion	44
References	47
Annexes	49

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

Introduction

By its Common Agricultural Policy, the European Union places agriculture at the core of the European policies, as it has enjoyed by far the largest funding from 2007 through 2013. The reason is intuitive and is related to food security. Nevertheless, the structure of the national agricultural policies of the member states differ and so do the structures of the agricultural sector, the workforce structure and the ability to improve productivity in the agricultural sector in general.

The enlargement of EU in 2004 and 2007 substantially changed the agricultural map of the Union. Agriculture represents 2% of GDP in the old member states, 3% in the new ones and over 10% in Romania and Bulgaria. In the new member states, the workforce in agriculture is three times larger (12%) than in the old member states (4%) and much larger in Romania and Bulgaria.¹

Considering these circumstances, the European agricultural policy has undergone successive reforms. The workforce in agriculture becomes the target of these reforms, as there is an obvious need for farmers to adapt to the dynamics of global market, to the technological advancement and, in the recent years, to the global economic crisis.

This report analyzes the agricultural sector in five European countries, focusing on farmers' access to professional training. The goal is to identify the dynamics of the agricultural sector in Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy and Romania from the perspective of mutual influences between the extent to which farmers benefit from professional training and the performance of the agricultural sector as a whole.

Furthermore, this report is the outcome of the project "Farmers' access to education and training activities" financed by the European Commission through the DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. The project will be implemented over a period of 11 months, from October 01, 2012, to August 31, 2013, by Agrostar Federation, as promoter, in partnership with the European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions **EFFAT**, **Industriegewerkschaft Bauern-Agrar-Umwelt (IG BAU)** from Germany, **Associazione Lavoratori Produttori Agroalimentari (ALPA)** from Italy, the **Federation of Independent Agriculture Trade Unions (FNSZ/FITUA)** from Bulgaria and **CFE CGC Agro** (France).

¹ Council Decision of 20 February 2006 on Community strategic guidelines for rural development (programming period 2007 to 2013), (2006/144/CE), available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32006D0144:RO:HTML> last accessed on 10.03.2013
last accessed on 10.03.2013

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

The general objective of this project is to improve the ability of the agricultural trade unions to adapt the social dialog to the developments in the employment area by promoting the benefit and importance of investments in human resources in the agricultural sector.

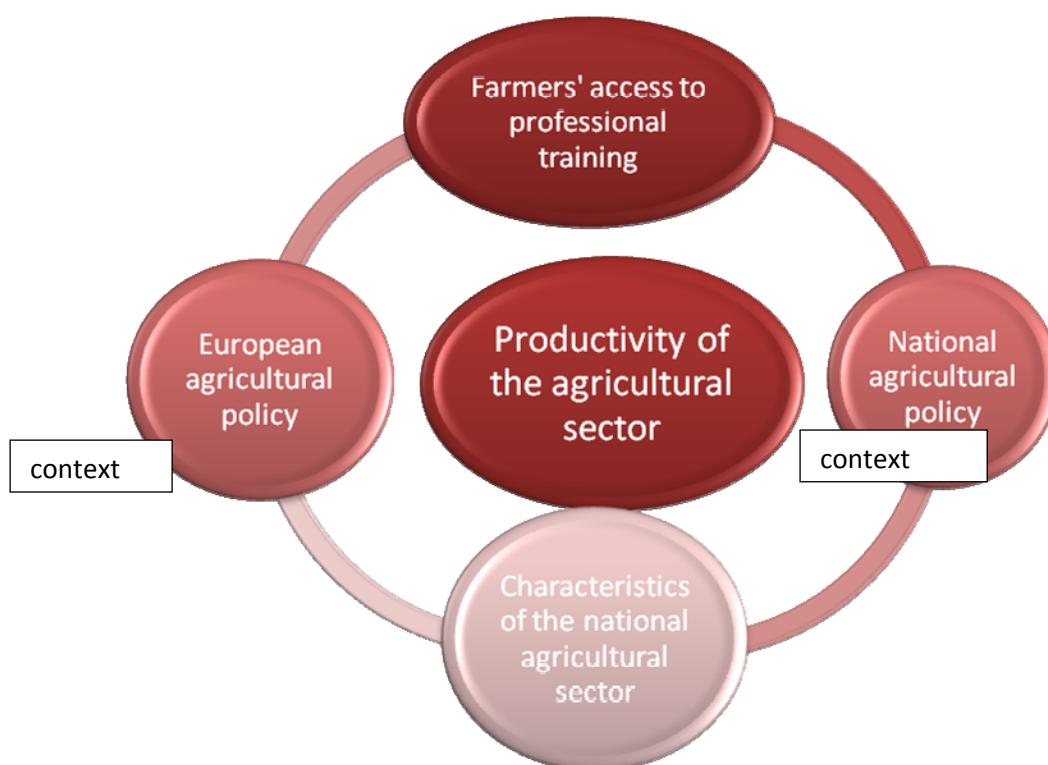
Method and definition of concepts

This paper investigates the extent to which the access of the persons engaged in agriculture to educational and training programs results in an increase in productivity in agriculture. We start from a natural assumption: the more farmers know about agriculture (i.e. specific technological and scientific knowledge relevant for the type of farming they practice, but also management, human resources or business knowledge), the higher the probability that they produce more and better, consequently obtaining higher prices. On the other hand, the role of governments and of the European Union in supporting the agricultural sector and farmers is also relevant. Last, but not least, the characteristics of the agricultural sector play a major role in defining the productivity of the sector. This chapter overviews the research design and concept used, the operationalization of concepts, the analysis methods and the data collection methods.

Research design

The central concept of the research design is the productivity of agricultural sector. The other four identified variables - farmers' access to training, national and European agricultural policies and the characteristics of the agricultural sector - also play a major role in determining the productivity of the agricultural sector. The relations between the five concepts are not necessarily causal, but rather represent correlations or impact of the four variables on the productivity of agriculture. At the same time, the four variables are independent from each other: the national and European policies have a strong impact on the access to training and have had an impact on the characteristics of the agricultural sector in each country. The figure below shows the research diagram. We have the productivity of agriculture as dependent variable and the access of farmers to professional training as primary independent variable. There are two context variables related to the implementation of public policies in agriculture on European and national level. The fourth variable, related to agricultural structures and tradition, is the organization of agriculture on national level, i.e. the characteristics of the sector.

Figure 1. Research design - concepts



As shown in Figure 1, the study analyzes the agricultural sector based on four complex variables: CAP, national agricultural policies, characteristics of the national agricultural sector and farmers' access to training.

Definition and operationalization of concepts

Productivity of the agricultural sector

The productivity of the agricultural sector is, at least intuitively, a matter of production volume, a quantitative concept, if we consider only one type of product. In a global approach, productivity is a notion that means more than just a quantitative measurement. If we consider the "investments" in agriculture - workforce used, various technical tools used to improve productivity, soil productivity, etc. - the productivity of the agricultural sector becomes a complex calculation that aggregates multiple types of measurements. The productivity of the agricultural sector is actually defined by the ratio of the initial investment in agriculture and the final outcome. A common approach is to measure productivity in terms of money, as the value of the entire agricultural output minus the value of intermediate investments in the sector². There are many ways of calculating productivity in

² Zepeda, Lydia, editor - *Agricultural Investment and Productivity in Developing Countries*, FAO Economic and Social Development Paper, 2001, available at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/x9447e/x9447e00.htm>, last accessed 7.03.2013, p. 4

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

agriculture. Productivity in agriculture is a dependent variable. The quantitative indicators used to measure this variable include:

- The share of agriculture in GDP - measuring the net contribution of agriculture to the GDP of a country. It is measured by the "value added by agriculture as a percentage of GDP" and represents the net output of the agricultural sector after aggregating all outputs and subtracting the inputs (invested value)
- Production value at base price - an indicator calculated as absolute value, showing the actual value of the agricultural production. For the data available from Eurostat, the value of the agricultural output is calculated in million Euros.

European and national public policies

With regard to these policies, the study will focus, on one hand, on the general strategies used by EU and the member states analyzed here to improve the productivity of the agricultural sector. On the other hand, considering that EU's policy is not variable, but is a constant in relation to the national policies, we will look at the extent to which the national policies reinforce certain European lines of action concerning productivity. The analysis of CAP also examines the evolution of Europe's agricultural production objectives over time.

Although treated as context variables, it is important to mention that the agricultural policies can cause major differences in point of agricultural productivity, as well as in point of farmers' access to specific professional training.

In identifying the lines of action that generate differences in farmers' access to education, we shall consider the public policy documents (either national or European) that answer to the following questions: What are the governments' main instruments of intervention in the agricultural sector? Are there any specific measures directed at the education of farmers and of the persons engaged in agriculture? Are there any employment policies in place aimed at supporting the adaptation of employees to the changes of labor market in agriculture? Is the available professional training correlated to the changes/know-how needs of the agricultural labor market?

Characteristics of the national agricultural sector

This variable is defined in terms of structures. With regard to agricultural productivity, we shall analyze the extent to which the specific differences between agricultural structures result in different

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national approaches to agriculture. Whether a country has an agriculture based on large farms, with high outputs and using technology is directly related to the types of government interventions in the sector. On the other hand, a country whose agricultural sector has a structure of small farms will require other types of investments.

In point of indicators, when we discuss the characteristics of the national agricultural sector, we consider the types of agricultural entities existing in a country, the type of management of such entities, the average size of the entities, the types of products of the agricultural entities, the national output value, the size of the farmland used, the number of employees in the agricultural sector, the workforce structure, the labor relations in agriculture, the extent of clandestine work and the wage structure in the agricultural sector. The following quantitative indicators will be analyzed:

- Share of agricultural land as percentage of the total area of the country.
- Number and structure of farms
- Share of the agricultural land used
- Share of employees in agriculture (% of the total number of employees in the country)
- Share of female employees in agriculture (% of the total number of female employees in the country)
- Share of male employees in agriculture (% of the total number of male employees in the country)

Farmers' access to professional training

The access of farmers to professional training programs is defined from two perspectives: the existence of private organization/association forms (trade unions, employers' organizations, farmers' organizations) that have the potential and, desirably, the ability to focus the educational interests of farmers and agricultural employees; and the educational instruments subsidized in a way or another by the government and/or the European Union.

The study will examine the associational structures in point of representation (members, organization, categories that are rather unrepresented in these structures, percentage of trade-union members in agriculture, collective negotiation models, etc.) and of available educational services (do the trade unions and employers' organization play any role in defining the educational offer or in accessing funds for training?).

Another aspect considered in analyzing farmers' access to training is the funding of educational costs. Thus, we shall identify the funding opportunities for the training of the persons working in agriculture on a European, national or local level. Then, we shall identify the entities that can access these funding opportunities and see the extent to which the government finances such professional training activities.

Finally, we shall examine the providers of professional training to identify, on one hand, their interest in delivering up-to-date knowledge and skills and, on the other hand, the methods used to draw the



Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

target group (Who receives professional training? How is selection made? Is the training free? Are the training providers public, or private entities?).

For an in-depth analysis the access of the persons engaged in agriculture to training, we shall further review aspects concerning the curricula, too (Who defines the curricula? On what grounds? etc.), as well as aspects concerning the actual access to training: access differences depending on types of employers, levels of initial education or membership in a trade union.

The following quantitative indicators will be used:

- Persons enrolled in agricultural tertiary education (% of total students)
- Graduates of agricultural studies (% of total university graduates)
- Farmers with basic or extensive agricultural education (% of total farmers)

Analysis method

This is a comparative study and the units of analysis are five countries: Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy and Romania. We shall consider, where appropriate, global data for the 27 EU member states, taking these mean values as reference.

The qualitative analysis - the analysis of public policies - focuses on the agricultural policy, but pays special attention to the educational policy (life-long learning included) and employment policies. The analysis method consists in the content analysis of strategic documents and in identifying those strategic directions that are likely to affect the variables considered here, i.e. productivity in agriculture and farmers' access to professional training.

The quantitative analysis also includes the content analysis of the data sheets filled in by the project partners in the surveyed countries.

The quantitative analysis will be based on the internationally-used traditional indicators, as described above in the section on the definition and operationalization of variables.

Descriptive analysis will be used in the qualitative analysis of public policies and of the national aspects requiring content explanation. Where statistical indicators are necessary, frequency analysis and contingency tables will be used as data aggregation methods.

Data collection

The relevant data for each country was collected through the project partners. The collected data will be analyzed qualitatively and descriptively. The statistical data is taken from official statistics for each country offered by Eurostat or the World Bank. The data source will be specified for each chart.



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Common Agricultural Policy and farmer's access to training

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is one of the oldest European policies, as the first efforts to identify common directions in the development of agriculture were initiated as early as in the 1950-s as a consequence of the post-WWII economic situation. The six founding members of the European Coal and Steel Community and, later, of the European Economic Community (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) had a major interest in improving the productivity of the agricultural sector, which played a significant role in the economy³. The initial objectives of the policy dealt with two aspects: the food security of Europe and the security of farmers' income. Obviously, these premises led to protectionist national policies in most European countries⁴. Considering these historical constraints, CAP is one of the most controversial European policies and has undergone many changes in point of both objectives and implementation tools. This Chapter describes CAP from 1962 to date, emphasizing the human resources development objectives from 1007 to 2013.

CAP – evolution from 1962 to 2007

The initial objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy were to improve productivity in agriculture, to ensure a fair living standard to farmers, to stabilize markets and to assure availability of supplies within the Union at affordable prices for consumers. PAC was established in 1957, as part of the Treaty of Rome, and the first European-level decisions were adopted in 1962. These decisions referred to the organization of six common agricultural markets (grains, pork, eggs, poultry meat, fruit and vegetables and wine); introduction of competition rules; the establishment of protectionist measures for the intra-community trade and the creation of the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund - the first funding instrument of the Common Agricultural Policy.

In the 1970-s, the objectives of CAP focused on initiating policies able to speed up the structural adjustment of farms. Farmers' need for professional training was included in the Commission's

³ Zobbe, Henrik - *The Economic and Historical Foundation of the Common Agricultural Policy in Europe*, Unit of Economics Working Papers 2001/12, Fourth European Historical Economics Society Conference,

September 2001. Merton College, Oxford, U.K., available at <http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/24212/1/ew010012.pdf>, last accessed on 2.03.2013

⁴ Hofreither, Markus F. - The "Treaties of Rome" and the development of the Common Agricultural Policy, Diskussionspapier, DP-23-2007, Institut für nachhaltige Wirtschaftsentwicklung, July 2007, available at: http://www.boku.ac.at/wpr/wpr_dp/DP-23-2007.pdf, last accessed on 2.03.2013

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

agenda at that time, too. The document "Reform of agriculture: practical proposals for the Commission"⁵ from 1970 proposed the following subjects for Council directives:

- Modernization of farms
- Incentives to farmers to withdraw from farming and encouraging the redeployment of land to improve agricultural structures
- Farming qualifications/training and the provision of social and economic information for farmers and farm workers
- Reduction of farmed areas
- Regulation of farmers' association

However, part of these proposals were denied and only three of them remained in the **1972 agenda: modernization of farms, the professional training of farmers and incentives to stimulate the withdrawal of ageing population from farming**⁶.

Nevertheless, that period saw an increase in the structural surplus⁷ for certain categories of agricultural products and a widening of the income gaps within the agricultural sector, but especially between agriculture and other sectors. As a result, **in the 1980-s** CAP focused on mitigating the impact of these issues and on reducing expenditure in the agricultural sector. The general terms of CAP are rediscussed in 1985 and the new directions are documented in a "Green Paper – Perspectives for the Common Agricultural Policy"⁸. After consultations on the Green Paper, the Commission identified by the end of 1985 several priorities for CAP:

- To gradually reduce production in the sectors which are in surplus
- To increase the diversity and improve the quality of production (by reference to the internal and external markets and the desires of consumers)
- To deal more effectively and systematically with the income problems of small family farms
- To support agriculture in areas where it is essential for land use planning, maintenance of the social balance and protection of the environment and the landscape
- To make farmers more aware of environmental issues

⁵ "Reform of agriculture: practical proposals for the Commission", April 1970, available at http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-history/crisis-years-1970s/proposals-1970_en.pdf, last accessed 07.03.2013;

⁶ "A new common agricultural policy? Social and structural reform in agriculture", July 1972, available at http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-history/crisis-years-1970s/social-and-structural-reform-1972_en.pdf, last accessed 09.03.2013;

⁷ "Agriculture and the problem of surpluses", March 1980, available at http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-history/crisis-years-1980s/surpluses_en.pdf, last accessed 09.03.2013;

⁸ "Perspectives for the common agricultural policy"(Green paper), July 1985, available at http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-history/crisis-years-1980s/com85-333_en.pdf, last accessed 10.03.2013;



Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

- To contribute to the development in the Community of industries that process agricultural produce, and thus involve agriculture in the profound technological changes which are taking place⁹.

The 1990-s are relevant for major changes in CAP. Known as the "MacSharry Reform"¹⁰, the reform of the European agricultural policy involved a shift of vision with regard to the assistance granted to farmers, from a price-oriented support to support for higher income. Thus, a new plan for the development of CAP was devised in 1991¹¹. The document submitted by the Commission to the Council, which described this reform,¹² argued that CAP needed to be revised in order to adapt it to the current situation in which the food deficit had been overcome and the interventions in agriculture, as implemented to that date, had generated a very small increase in the individual purchasing power of farmers and agricultural workers. The new proposals were intended to a participatory rural development able to maintain a sufficient number of farmers in rural areas, so that to preserve the traditional environment and activities. In this approach, farmers have two major roles: to produce and to protect the environment. The idea of non-farming activities and of rural development outside the primary production sector appears. The control of production in order to balance the markets and the organization of markets to reduce surplus and to improve the sustainability of agriculture become key objectives of CAP. The competitiveness and efficiency of the European agricultural sector have to be integrated with the current policies and the initial principles (a common market, community preferences and financial solidarity) must be implemented.

Thus, new directions of PAC are identified after this document: improving competitiveness, stabilizing the agricultural markets, diversifying production, environment protection and the EU budget for agriculture, which becomes an instrument of financial solidarity among the member states.

Although no specific reference is made during this period to the training of human resources in agriculture, the proposed objectives hint at policies of this kind (in particular, those concerning the improvement of competitiveness and environment protection).

Agenda 2000

The years 2000 came with a need for new policies and a financial framework able to prepare the EU for eastward enlargement. Thus, Agenda 2000 was adopted as an action program that reformed both the CAP and the regional policy and that had three major objectives: updating the European agricultural model, reducing the economic differences between the regions of Europe and dealing with all priorities, even at the expense of a lower budget increase.

Rural development became a pillar of the agricultural policy, which encouraged local initiatives and contributed to the diversification of small agricultural businesses.

⁹ "A future for Community agriculture - Commission guidelines following the consultations in connection with the Green Paper", December 1985, available at http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-history/crisis-years-1980s/index_en.htm, last accessed 12.03.2013

¹⁰ Raymond "Ray" MacSharry was European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development from 1989 to 1993.

¹¹ "The Development and Future of the CAP. Reflections Paper of the Commission", February 1991, available at http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-history/1992-reform/com91-100_en.pdf last accessed 14.03.2013

¹² Ibid. 11



Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

The priorities for CAP in Agenda 2000 included¹³:

- Improving competitiveness and market orientation
- Stabilizing agricultural income
- Integrating the environment issues with the agricultural policy
- Developing and improving the dynamics of rural areas
- Simplification and decentralization

With Agenda 2000, the access of farmers to professional training programs becomes part of the rural development pillar and the key measures in this respect included the introduction of subsidies for young farmers and farmer groups.

The CAP reform of 2003 involves major changes, both operational and in point of farmers' responsibilities. Thus, direct aid is granted to farmers based on a single payment scheme and the farmers receiving such aid have a clear legal obligation to have a sustainable farm management system. This condition directly connects the payments to farmers to their care for the environment and to other local or European requirements.

The reform of 2003 divided CAP into two pillars, one focusing on agricultural production and agriculture as an economic sector and the other concerning the rural development.

The second pillar is relevant for the access of farmers to professional training as part of the reform of CAP in 2003. The impact of the reform of 2003 on rural development can be seen in the programming of the structural funds for agriculture in the programming period 2007-2013.

CAP 2007 – 2013

The enlargement of the European Union in 2004 and 2007 led to the diversification of rural areas and farms and to an increase in the number of farmers. As a result, the allocation of funds for the period 2007-2013 needed to be reconfigured. To respond to this challenge, a single fund (the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development) was created exclusively for the second pillar of CAP.

In addition to this funding framework, strategic guidelines were defined for the European rural development, based on four axes:

- Axis 1: improving the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry;
- Axis 2: improving the environment and the countryside;
- Axis 3: improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of economic activity;
- Axis 4 - LEADER: helping local communities to generate employment opportunities and diversify activities;

¹³ "Agenda 2000. For a stronger and wider Union", July 1997, available at http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-history/agenda-2000/com97-2000_en.pdf, last accessed 12.03.2013

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

The programming criteria impose certain conditions on the member states, e.g. integrated approach or complementarity of financial instruments.

The Council Decision of February 2006 on Community strategic guidelines for rural development (programming period 2007 to 2013) stipulates that "The future rural development policy focuses on three key areas: the agrifood economy, the environment and the broader rural economy and population. The new generation of rural development strategies and programs will be built around four axes, namely: axis 1, on improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sector; axis 2, on improving the environment and the countryside; axis 3, on the quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy; and axis 4, on Leader.

Under axis 1, **a range of measures will target human and physical capital in the agriculture, food and forestry sectors (promoting knowledge transfer and innovation)** and quality production. Axis 2 provides measures to protect and enhance natural resources, as well as preserving high nature value farming and forestry systems and cultural landscapes in Europe's rural areas. Axis 3 helps to **develop local infrastructure and human capital in rural areas to improve the conditions for growth and job creation in all sectors** and the diversification of economic activities. Axis 4, based on the Leader experience, introduces possibilities for innovative governance through **locally based, bottom-up approaches to rural development.**"¹⁴

The document states that the programming period 2007 to 2013 "provides a unique opportunity to refocus support from the new EAFRD on growth, jobs and sustainability. In this respect, it is fully in line with the Declaration on the Guiding Principles for Sustainable Development (2) and the renewed Lisbon Action Program which seeks to target resources at making Europe a more attractive place in which to invest and work, promoting knowledge and innovation for growth and creating more and better jobs."¹⁵

In point of farmers' access to professional training, axes 1 and 3 clearly state the need for investments in human resources in the rural areas. Axis 4 could also integrate the training of human resources with innovative local approaches. Thus, the importance of farmers' access to professional training becomes obvious, as it is an intersectoral component with a long-term impact on the level of achievement of the development objectives in agriculture. The same document refers to the **high importance of investment in the key resource of human capital**, which will allow rural areas and the agrifood sector to look to the future with confidence. The labor market in rural areas is a priority for Europe.

This document mentions a number of specific key actions related to the investments in the human capital and to the access of persons in rural areas to professional training, but only as recommendations for the national planning.

For Axis 1, most of the recommended key actions include elements of professional training:

¹⁴ Council Decision of 20 February 2006 on Community strategic guidelines for rural development (programming period 2007 to 2013), (2006/144/CE), available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32006D0144:RO:HTML> last accessed 10.03.2013

¹⁵ Ibid. 14

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

- Restructuring and modernization of the agriculture sector, which continue to play an important role in the development of many rural areas, particularly in the new Member States. Successful agricultural adjustment can be the key to improving the competitiveness and environmental sustainability of the agricultural sector and boosting jobs and growth in related areas of the economy. This includes **promoting the anticipation of change within the agricultural sector** in the context of restructuring and modernization and developing a **proactive approach to training and retraining farmers**, particularly as regards transferable skills;
- Encouraging the take-up and diffusion of information and communications technologies (ICT). The agrifood sector as a whole has been identified as lagging behind in the take-up of ICT technologies. This is particularly the case for smaller businesses. Adoption of e-business applications is still at a low level outside of large multinationals and their larger suppliers. Rural development funds should complement future Commission initiatives such as i2010 in the fields of e-business (particularly in relation to small and medium-sized enterprises), **e-skills and e-learning**;
- Fostering **dynamic entrepreneurship**. The recent reforms have created a market-oriented environment for European farming. This brings new opportunities for farm businesses. But the realization of this economic potential will depend on the **development of strategic and organizational skills**. Encouraging the entry of young farmers into the profession can play an important role in this respect;
- Developing new outlets for agricultural and forestry products. New outlets can offer higher value added, in particular for quality products. **Support for investment and training in the field of non-food production** under rural development can complement measures taken under the first pillar by creating innovative new outlets for production or helping the development of renewable energy materials, biofuels and processing capacity;

The key actions for **Axis 3** that incorporate and rely on the access to professional training include:

- Raising economic activity and **employment rates in the wider rural economy**. Diversification is necessary for growth, employment and sustainable development in rural areas, and thereby contributes to a better territorial balance in both economic and social terms. Tourism, crafts and the provision of rural amenities are growth sectors in many regions and offer opportunities both for on-farm diversification outside agriculture and the development of micro-businesses in the broader rural economy;
- **Encouraging the entry of women into the labor market**. In many rural areas inadequate childcare provision creates specific barriers. Local initiatives to develop childcare facilities can facilitate access to the labor market. This can include the development of childcare infrastructure, potentially in combination with initiatives to encourage the creation of small businesses related to rural activities and local services;
- Developing micro-business and crafts, which can build on **traditional skills or introduce new competencies**, particularly when combined with purchase of equipment, **training and coaching**, thus helping to promote entrepreneurship and develop the economic fabric;

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

- **Training young people in skills needed for the diversification of the local economy**, which can tap into demand for tourism, recreation, environmental services, traditional rural practices and quality products;

The LEADER axis should contribute to the priorities of the other axes, but also play an important role in the horizontal priority of improving governance and mobilizing the endogenous development potential of rural areas. The local development strategies are play an essential role in this respect, to the extent that they truly respond to the local needs. Such key actions with an impact on the training of farmers could include:

- Building local partnership capacity, animation and **promoting skills acquisition, which can help mobilize local potential**;
- Promoting **private-public partnership**. In particular, Leader will continue to play an important role in encouraging innovative approaches to rural development and bringing the private and public sectors together;
- Promoting cooperation and innovation. Local initiatives such as Leader and support for diversification can play an essential role in **connecting people to new ideas and approaches, encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship, and can promote inclusiveness and the provision of local services**. On-line communities can help in the dissemination of knowledge, the exchange of good practices and innovation in rural products and services;

The European programming documents emphasize the importance of professional training in many instances. Obviously, the economic growth objectives cannot be achieved without human resources able to permanently adapt to the changes and evolutions in the global markets. The programming document on EAFRD recommends integrated approaches to professional training, which conform to another European strategy, i.e. the employment strategy:

*"As regards the **development of human capital**, support under rural development would target farmers **and the economic actors involved in the diversification of the rural economy**. The population of rural areas could receive support as part of an integrated, bottom-up approach. Actions in these fields should be implemented in full compliance with the objectives of the European Employment Strategy, as set out in the Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs, and coherent with the actions taken under the national reform programs in the framework of the Lisbon process. The Education and Training 2010 work program seeks to achieve the education and the training side of the Lisbon goals. **Lifelong learning is at the heart of this program and applies to all levels and types of education and training, including the agricultural, forestry and agrifood sectors.**"¹⁶*

The conclusion of this section is that the European policies and CAP in particular, in the period 2007 to 2013, have shown a general interest in and emphasized the importance of the professional training of farmers. The following chapter will analyze the extent to which the European recommendations have been incorporated in the national policies.

CAP post-2013

¹⁶ Ibid. 14

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

New CAP reforms are planned for the programming period 2014 to 2020. As the purpose of this policy is to respond to the global changes by measures intended to improve the development of the agricultural sector, while taking into account the agricultural diversity in the 27 EU Member States, the debates over the new proposals for CAP started as early as in 2010. A new reform is necessary to counteract the recent challenges: the global economic crisis, the environmental challenges and the territorial challenges (a great diversity of farms and the dynamics of rural areas).

The reform objectives are built around three topics:

- Viable food production - with an emphasis on limiting the variability of farmers' income, improving competitiveness and compensations for areas affected by natural constraints.
- Sustainable management of the natural resources - focusing on securing the supply of public goods, environmentally-friendly growth by innovation and by limitation of and adaptation to climate changes.
- Balanced territorial development - stressing the dynamisms of rural areas and employment, diversification and social and structural diversity in rural areas.

A document of the European Commission that examines the potential impact of CAP from 2013 to 2020 in the field of rural development proposes the following priorities:

- Knowledge transfer
- Competitiveness and viability of farms
- Food chain organization and risk management
- Preservation and strengthening of the ecosystems that depend on agriculture and forestry
- Economy based on low carbon emissions and the efficient use of resources
- Potential for job creation and growth in rural areas.

Therefore, at least two of the rural development priorities for 2014 to 2020 refer to improving the access of farmers and, in a wider sense, of rural population to professional training programs. The transfer of knowledge and information and the use of the human potential in rural areas can only be achieved by consistent training programs and policies.

Another important strategic document that also defines the professional training priorities is Europe 2020 - A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth¹⁷. The strategy involves actions to help Europe to emerge stronger from the economic and financial crisis and to turn the European Union into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy, with high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. Europe 2020 proposes three priorities:

¹⁷ "Europe 2020 - A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth", available at http://ec.europa.eu/archives/growthandjobs_2009/pdf/complet_en.pdf, last accessed 22.03.2013

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

- smart growth: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation;
- sustainable growth: promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy;
- inclusive growth: fostering a high-employment economy
- delivering social and territorial cohesion.

These priorities set the framework for the development of human resources in all sectors. Particularly in the agricultural sector, the social inclusion goals can be achieved by training programs, especially for vulnerable groups.

European legal framework concerning farmers' access to professional training

There are several European regulations that specifically apply to the professional training of farmers and agricultural workers. Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) is relevant in this respect¹⁸. This regulation contains specific provisions regarding the importance of training for the objectives of CAP, as well as for the general development objectives of the European Union.

Article 15 of the Regulation stipulates that: "As regards training, information and diffusion of knowledge, the evolution and specialization of agriculture and forestry require an appropriate level of technical and economic training, including expertise in new information technologies, as well as adequate awareness in the fields of product quality, results of research and sustainable management of natural resources, including cross-compliance requirements and the application of production practices compatible with the maintenance and enhancement of the landscape and the protection of the environment. It is therefore necessary to broaden the scope of training, information and diffusion of knowledge activities to all adult persons dealing with agricultural, food and forestry matters. These activities cover issues under both the agricultural and forestry competitiveness and the land management and environment objectives."

Article 46 speaks of "a need to accompany changes in rural areas by helping them to diversify farming activities towards nonagricultural activities and develop non-agricultural sectors, promote employment, improve basic services, including local access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and carry out investments making rural areas more attractive in order to reverse trends towards economic and social decline and depopulation of the countryside. **An effort to enhance the human potential in this respect is also necessary.**"¹⁹.

The same document defines measures to support rural development by improving the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry, including measures aimed at promoting knowledge and improving human potential through vocational training and information actions, including diffusion

¹⁸ Regulation (CE) 1698/2005 of the Council of September 20, 2005, available at <http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=DD:03:66:32005R1698:RO:PDF>, last accessed 18.03.2013

¹⁹ Ibid.

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

of scientific knowledge and innovative practices, for persons engaged in the agricultural, food and forestry sectors.

There are many European regulations and policies²⁰ indicating that professional training in general and specifically the professional training of farmers should be regarded as European and national priorities, considering the economic growth and development objectives of the European Union. As a result, the evolution of industry and technology should be supported by adequate professional training and conversion measures. Moreover, the professional inclusion in the labor market is not possible without an initial training and life-long learning framework.

The role of the European trade unions is to structurally improve the proposals of the European Union concerning, among other things the professional training of employees. EFFAT (the European Federation of Trade Unions in the Food, Agriculture and Tourism) develops various actions meant to influence the European policies in the agricultural sector so that to promote adequate professional training for farmers. In this respect, the actions of EFFAT focused on the reallocation of funds to include employment investments in farms, innovation and professional training (2012), the establishment of a European Sector Skills Council in agriculture to have a positive impact on job creation and improving competitiveness in the agricultural sector (2012)²¹, the creation of an Agripass curriculum vitae template and of a register of jobs in agriculture (2007).

National policies and practices concerning the training in agriculture

The national agricultural policies, although influenced by the European policies, practices and implementation instruments, have different objectives. This chapter will analyze each of the agricultural policies of the five surveyed countries, focusing on the period 2007 to 2011. Thus, we shall review the main measures included in the national agricultural policies, with an emphasis on training measures for farmers and proactive employment measures. Then, we shall identify the basic characteristics of the labor market in the agricultural sector in each country and examine the structure of the trade unions in agriculture.

National measures for agriculture

According to the new *acquis* on the European Union Cohesion Policy, each Member State develops a **National Strategic Reference Frameworks (NSRF)** as a reference document for programming the Structural and Cohesion Funds. Thus, the national agricultural policies are related, on one hand, to the European policy in the sector and, on the other hand, to the national objectives in agriculture.

In **Bulgaria**, the national policy is aimed at developing a competitive agriculture and improving the viability of rural areas, implementing a sustainable management of natural resources and applying high quality standards for the agricultural produce. The strategy documents include the implementation of CAP in the Program for the development of rural areas for 2007 to 2013. The government's program for 2009 to 2013 fosters the development of agriculture as a major

²⁰ Vocational education and training policy (which promotes life-long learning), instruments like EURES (the European job mobility and training portal), Europe 2000 Strategy

²¹ Source: http://www.effat.eu/files/f44103c87136f665bea3b156168721c4_1348236113.pdf

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

component of the economic development. There are also specific policies for fishing and the development of organic farms.

In **Germany**, the national agricultural policy is defined by framework documents. e.g. "Improvement of Agricultural Structures and Coastal Protection 2012-2015" and a national strategic plan for rural development as CAP implementation plan.

In **Romania**, the NSRF defines the allocation priorities of the Structural and Cohesion Funds for the reference period. The NSRF connects the national development priorities established by the National Development Plan, 2007-2013, to the European priorities - the Community Strategic Guidelines (CSG) on Cohesion, 2007-2013, and EU's Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs, 2005-2008. This strategic document for the medium-term planning of the Structural and Cohesion Funds is based on the National Development Plan, 2007-2013, approved by the Government of Romania in December 2005. The National Strategic Plan provides the basis for implementation of the National Program for Rural Development, 2007-2013.

In **Italy**, the common strategy is defined by a National Strategic Plan and locally organized depending on the regional characteristics of the sector, while in **France** a law from 2006 defines the agricultural policy.

The next section overviews the main measures established by the national policies referred to above and analyzes the extent to which the professional training of farmers is regarded as a national priority.

Main measures defined by the national policies

The measures defined by the national policies suggest the approach of national governments to the professional training in agriculture. Although the professional training is not an objective per se, in most cases, it is an essential instrument for achieving the objectives.

In Bulgaria, the national agricultural policy largely follows the European policies in this sector:

- Providing national and European funding to support the revitalization of the Bulgarian agriculture and managing the European funds in an efficient and transparent manner, based on an adequate project evaluation and monitoring system.
- Using the state aid as an instrument to address the existing problems and prioritizing the agricultural policy actions.
- Using the market mechanisms to create competitive and sustainable agricultural entities.
- Sustainable markets for the agricultural produce.
- Creating support conditions for small and medium-sized producers.
- Sustainable development of fishery and water resources.
- Improving the management ability of the sector.
- Improving the efficiency of the advice/consulting system in agriculture and using the scientific research by improving the relationship between research and consulting in agriculture and agribusiness.
- Regulating and protecting the traditional agricultural production and products of Bulgaria.

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

- Optimizing the irrigation infrastructure for an efficient use of water resources.
- Rural development policies focusing on the revitalization of tradition in rural areas, taking into account the local potential and encouraging local initiatives.
- Improving the quality of life, developing the infrastructure and basic services for the companies and population in rural areas.
- Encouraging farmers to use the support opportunities for green farming and compensation payments under Natura 2000 program.

The measures proposed in Bulgaria do not specifically refer to the professional training of farmers, although some measures can be seen as encompassing this activity (e.g. counseling, revitalization of traditions, local initiatives, use of scientific research in agriculture, improving the management ability of the sector, etc.).

The agricultural policy of Germany includes four measures but, like in Bulgaria's case, the professional training of farmers is rather intrinsic. Thus, we can assume that the improvement of production also includes the improvement of the ability of human resources to manage a more productive process, while the measure concerning the improvement of the market structure requires the professional training of the farmers involved.

1. Measures to improve production and working conditions in agriculture and forestry:
 - Rationalization of agricultural and forestry companies
 - Land management adapted to market and location
 - Balancing the location disadvantages
 - Other measures relevant for agriculture and forestry, mainly targeted at small family businesses
2. Measures to reorganize rural land by improving the agricultural structures and securing a strong and sustainable ecosystem
3. Water management and structural cultural measures
4. Measures to improve the market structure in agriculture, forestry and fishery by promoting the grouping of producers and by providing incentives to producers in order to boost sales.

In France, the agricultural policy has the following objectives:

- Promoting entrepreneurship to generate benefits for the labor market and improving the quality of life for the persons engaged in agriculture.
- Promoting social benefits and proper working conditions.
- Consolidating the income and activities in the sector
- Adequate response to the needs of citizens and consumers
- Simplifying and modernizing agriculture

In general, improving the quality of life of the persons engaged in agriculture involves a training process in order to obtain a sustainable measure. Furthermore, the entrepreneurship and the modernization of agriculture also require action targeting the human resources, including the transfer of specific management knowledge, as well as technological knowledge.

In Romania, the National Strategic Plan is built around three key elements:



Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

1. Facilitating the conversion and modernization of the dual structure of agriculture and forestry, as well as of the related processing industries, in order to make them more competitive and to contribute to the economic growth and convergence of income in rural areas (where possible), while securing proper living conditions and environment protection in these areas.
2. Preserving and improving the environment quality in the rural areas of Romania by fostering a sustainable management of farmland and forests.
3. Managing and facilitating the transition of workforce from agriculture to other sectors able to offer proper social and economic living conditions.

The emphasis of the third measure on transition from agriculture to other economic sectors suggests the idea of professional conversion. Like in the other countries, the Romanian agricultural policy focusing on the transformation and modernization of the agricultural sector can include professional training as a means to improve the efficiency of the agricultural workforce.

In Italy, the agricultural policy is aimed at expanding the quality food production system, focusing on traditional products and sustainability. Like in the other cases, the professional training is an implicit dimension of the agricultural policy.

The analysis of the main aspects of the national policies in the five countries leads to the conclusion that they largely follow the European policy and the major objectives set by CAP. The professional training is not an objective in itself, but can be an implicit instrument for accomplishing the proposed goals.

Specific measures concerning farmers' access to professional training

Although the objectives of the national policies do not lay an emphasis on the professional training of farmers as an essential element of implementation of the agricultural policy, there are many measures that see the professional training as an explicit means used in developing and implementing the policies. This section describes these measures.

In **Bulgaria**, the Rural Development Program, 2007 - 2013, includes a measure dedicated to professional training and to information and dissemination of scientific knowledge to farmers. This measure is targeted at the farmers registered according to the national regulations, to the managers and employees registered as farmers in registered agricultural entities, individual owners of forests, managers or employees of agricultural entities that own forests and persons receiving assistance for farming and environment protection under other measures.

In **Germany**, the social partners have a substantial right to participate in the development (by the Professional Training Regulations), regulation (by the Professional Training Committees) and implementation (examination) of the professional training, mainly based on the legal framework provided by the Professional Training Law. The social partners are consulted as part of the process of revising the laws and regulations relevant for the sector. Additionally, they are involved in various ways in the development and regulation of the training models, e.g. by participation in the consultative committees of vocational schools.

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

In **France**, there is a national collective agreement for professional training in agriculture, which provides the access of farmers to professional training. The National Agreement of 2/06/2004 on professional training in agriculture includes the following provisions:

- Access to professional training for workers and individual right to education adapted to the agricultural sector.
- In order to improve the access of young people to training and education, a period is provided during which they have specific employment contracts for on-the-job training.
- The participation of social partners in the development of professional training and education is secured on national level in all sectors of agriculture.
- Assuring the development and stimulation of workers by skill assessment tests.

In **Romania**, the three key aspects of the national policy deal only to a limited extent with the professional training. However, due to the European funds allocated for professional training, professional training opportunities are available to farmers.

- The approach to the first key element primarily considered the manner of responding to and mitigating the structural disadvantages affecting agriculture and forestry with a view to modernization, strengthening and restructuring so that to achieve a high level of competitiveness and sustainability in point of environment protection. This will provide a sound mechanism for preserving rural life, widening the range of viable farming and other jobs, thus contributing to the achievement of the income convergence objective, while maintaining the social fabric. Another aim is to support the grouping of farmers in order to avoid the excessive concentration of the capital and high fixed costs, while enabling the use of scale economies and the efficient use of scarce capital resources and of the funds granted by the European Union.
- In approaching the third key aspect, the NSP seeks to improve the balance between the economic development of rural areas and the sustainable use of natural resources by maintaining and improving the attractiveness of rural areas as essential elements for the diversification of farms and for identifying alternative economic activities. To this end, the program includes measures like supporting the continuation of agricultural activities in disadvantaged areas, thus approaching the problem of land abandonment; furthermore, farmers will be supported to implement/continue to use farming methods that are not harmful to the environment or to change the destination of land from farming to forestry. Special attention will be paid to help the farmers and forest owners to reduce the specific disadvantages and to comply with the obligations resulting from the implementation of the network of protected areas under Natura 2000.
- The third key aspect refers to the fact that the NSP focuses on the needs of two categories of population in rural areas: the population above the retirement age and the active population working part-time or unemployed. In this respect, the strategic guidelines are aimed at facilitating the transfer of land between generations and the diversification of non-farming rural economy.

Another type of relevant measures can be found in Axis 3 of the National Program for Rural Development: quality of life in rural areas and diversification of rural economy. The first priority



Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

(strategic objective) in the implementation of Axis 3 consists in maintaining and developing the economic activities considering the existing context in Romania and is targeted at the creation of new jobs. The development and diversification of the economic activities in rural areas and the growth of employment by the development of companies and creation of new jobs is a key factor in preserving the rural population and securing its welfare. One of the essential challenges confronting rural economy is the impact of the restructuring process and the implied need for diversification and growth of the non-farming sector in rural economy. The diversification of farms and other companies by shifting to the non-farming sector is not just a reasonable response to the ever-changing demands of the market, but will contribute to absorbing the workforce surplus in agriculture. In order to be accomplished, this objective needs to be correlated with the support granted through the professional training and education activities under the Sectoral Operational Program "Human Resources Development". It is necessary to promote non-farming activities, which can result in increasing the rural income, creating new jobs and reducing the gap between rural and urban areas, fostering and supporting the diversification of rural activities, by acquiring entrepreneurial abilities and new skills and by widening the range of services available to rural population.

The specific measure included in the **Italian national policy** concerning education is Measure 111 - professional training and information campaigns, organized in many regions of Italy. This measure contributes to the achievement of the specific objective of expanding the professionalization of farmers and of all the persons engaged in farming and forestry, by providing a proper level of technological and economic knowledge, combining information, training and consulting in a single knowledge system.

The measure includes two distinct actions:

1) Training and information for forestry and farming: contributions granted by province level announcements for participation in information events and/or training activities selected from the Green Catalog.

The beneficiaries of this action include: Farm owners, contractors, employees, young people la employed in their first job, either individually or as members of various associations.

2) Actions to support the knowledge system: data funds by regional contests, to improve, integrate and supplement the offer of information and training for the employees in forestry and agriculture. The beneficiaries of these actions include vocational education institutions and training providers.

The national policies of the three countries differ, but each individual national policy includes, in a form or another, objectives and funding programs related to the professional training of farmers. The national policies incorporate more or less the European ideas on agriculture. There is a major gap between the policies of the new Member States and those of the old ones. Thus, Romania and Bulgaria include almost all the provisions of CAP in their national policies, while Italy, France and Germany are more concerned with adapting the national policy to the national context and demands.

Proactive national employment policies and their impact on the labor market in the agricultural sector



Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

The agricultural policy alone cannot address all the challenges confronting the rural population. Thus, the employment policy is equally relevant for farmers and for their position in the labor market. This section overviews the main employment policies and the way they affect the labor market in the agricultural sector.

In Bulgaria, the National Action Plan for Employment is aimed at raising the employment rate and inclusion in the labor market of vulnerable groups as a priority for the areas greatly affected by the economic crisis. The proactive employment policies implemented in the labor market partly impact the acceleration of economic recovery, to the extent that they are able to directly affect the workforce supply (both quantitatively and qualitatively) and a rapid and quality transition in the labor market.

At the same time, the provision of professional training and the subsidizing of employment for vulnerable groups also mean social welfare and social inclusion, providing income and welfare to beneficiaries and taxes and social welfare contributions to the government. Unfortunately, according to the Bulgarian project partners, the programs implemented by the employment agencies rather offer poorly paid and low quality jobs. As much as 45% to 53% of the jobs offered during the last five years by these agencies were for unskilled workers. This practice results in a partial short-term improvement of the current situation of the labor market, but generates strategic planning risks and challenges. The creation of quality new jobs is associated with investments in the economy, agriculture included, but such investments are limited. The operational program "Human Resources Development" does not focus on a specific policy to strengthen the labor market, based on mobilizing the necessary skills for a sustainable and competitive development of the economy, but a policy of this kind is much needed, more than anywhere else, in the agricultural sector. Many employees in agriculture are excluded from the proactive measures implemented through this human resources development program or from the programs of the employment agencies.

In Germany, there is a learning support trade union, the Association for Promoting Farming and Forestry, Workers' Association (VLF), which contribute to the life-long learning and, consequently to employment.

PROVEA is a program implemented in France by the social partners. The program has survey and research objectives aimed at promoting jobs and employment in agriculture. The program is financed by a contribution of 0.2% of the labor costs. The contribution is paid to the organizations implementing the program by employers (75%) and employees (25%).

The creation of new jobs in **Romania**, in the non-agricultural sector, both in and outside farms, will contribute to the improvement of the structure of farms and rural economy, as well as to creating new jobs. The actions that generate new jobs are correlated with the training and skill improvement programs, as a key condition for the development of the human capital and for adaptation to the specific requirements of the new economic activities. The employment policies mainly focus on non-farming activities. Moreover, like in Bulgaria, farmers risk to be left outside the programs of employment agencies, as they are considered to be engaged in agriculture.

Italy has several proactive employment policies, which are part of the employment stabilization objective. There are professional training programs, as well as programs aimed at the inclusion in the labor market of some specific categories, e.g. women, young people, chronically unemployed, non-



Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

EU citizens, etc. Another method to improve employment consists in combined employment contracts, which balance professional experience and training periods. Each Italian region has a specific system of employment public services. If we look at the employment rates in Italy, we notice that the unemployment rate is high, especially among young people, and that there are many differences between regions. Underemployment is also present, as the demand often exceeds the supply, resulting in the expansion of economic insecurity. The unemployment costs in Italy are lower than in other sectors of social expenditure.

The employment policies in Romania and Bulgaria do not cover the agricultural sector completely, making various professional training opportunities inaccessible to farmers. The policies in France and Germany seem to put more power into the hands of trade unions, which can take proactive action in connection with the employment in the agricultural sector. Italy has regional employment policies and various instruments for improving employment (combined contracts, special programs for vulnerable groups, etc.).

Trade unions in agriculture

There are two major trade unions in Bulgaria having a representative status at national level: the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (CITUB) and the Confederation of Labor Podkrepa. CITUB has 28 member organizations. In the agricultural sector, the trade unions are represented by the Federation of Independent Trade Unions in Agriculture, through FNSZ and NFZGS. The Federation of Independent Trade Unions in Agriculture (FNSZ) represents and promotes the interests of 5,500 employees in agriculture, including farmers and employees in veterinary services, irrigation, agricultural sciences, grains and seeds production, storm and damage protection and cattle breeding and selection. It has 5,500 members (9.6% workers in agriculture) from 118 trade unions organized into guilds and local associations. All the organizational activities of the federation are aimed at defending and protecting the trade union interests and rights of the workers in this sector and to counteract the negative processes related to the restructuring of the sector using the available legal means, including collective negotiation and social dialog.

PODKREPA has 90,000 members. The agricultural federation has around 1,000 members. Non-trade union members include employees of small and medium-sized farms and agricultural facilities, seasonal workers and family farm workers.

In Germany, the number of unionized workers is slightly declining and the level of unionization in agriculture is around 10%. In horticulture, the companies are smaller, which results in a level of unionization below 10%, while in forestry it exceeds 50%. Over 80 workers' councils (mostly members of IG BAU), especially in large companies, represent the trade union locally, thus directly representing around 20% of the employees in agriculture.

In France, there are three major trade unions that represent the agricultural sector: CFDT, CGT, CFE CGC (representing technicians and managers).

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

In Romania, the trade unions relevant for agriculture include Agrostar Federation (Federația Națională a Sindicatelor din Agricultură, Alimentație, Tutun, Domenii și Servicii Conexe „AGROSTAR”) and

CERES (Centrala Nationala a Sindicatelor Lucratorilor din Agricultura, Industrie Alimentara, Turism si Activitati Conexe "CERES"). They operate as trade union federations or trade unions and are represented at national and local level.

The trade union members include: employees of agricultural companies, research institutes and facilities, food and tobacco companies, farmers, as well as independent professionals, from all sectors of agriculture (land cultivation, poultry breeding, viticulture, horticulture, trade unions of producers and farmers). Unionized persons represent 20% of the total number of employees and individual workers in agriculture.

The main trade unions in Italy include FAI – CISL Federazione Agricola Alimentare Ambientale Industriale; FLAI-CGIL (Federazione Lavoratori dell’AgroIndustria; INAS-CISL Istituto Nazionale Assistenza Sociale CISL; UGC-CISL (Unione Generale Coltivatori); UILA-UIL (Regionale Unione Italiana Lavoratori Agroalimentare). These organizations include all workers in the food industry. Therefore, the agricultural sector is present only in part. The agricultural workers represent 40% of the workers. Seasonal and temporary workers are the least represented categories.

Employers

There are four national confederations of employers in Bulgaria, recognized as representative based on the criteria defined by the Labor Code (until the last census of 2012):

- Bulgarian Industrial Chamber
- Industrial Capital Association
- Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Confederation of Employers and Industrialists of Bulgaria

In Germany, the employers in agriculture are grouped in the Federation of Employers in Agriculture and Forestry, which represents agricultural and forestry companies.

In France, the largest organization of employers is the National Federation of Agricultural Holders' Unions - FNSEA. The federation includes both employers' and professional organizations. All the members of FNSEA are employers in the agricultural sector.

In Romania, the representative employers' organizations are the National Federation of Romanian Agricultural Producers, the League of Agricultural Producers' Associations in Romania (LAPAR), the Federation of Agricultural Employers in Romania (FPAR), ProAgro Confederation, the National Federation of Employers in Agriculture and Food Industry (FNPAIA) and the Confederation of Employers in Industry, Agriculture, Construction and Services in Romania (CONPIROM). The members include employers' associations of agricultural producers.

In Italy, the most important employers' organizations are COLDIRETTI, CIA, CONFAGRICOLTURA. They represent various types of agricultural employers, small, as well as larger farms.

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

The role of trade unions and employers' organizations in providing professional training services for the employees in the agricultural sector

In Bulgaria, the professional training is regulated by the Labor Code and is included in the collective employment agreement. The regulatory changes concerning the professional training introduced approaches that refer to the mutual obligations of employees and employers in solving this major issue. The specific details of these obligations are defined by the law. These changes immediately resulted in a modernization of the collective employment agreement. The employer is responsible for the professional development of the employees. At the same time, the trade unions offer short training courses for their active members on topics ranging from changes in the labor regulations to European regulations, communication and negotiation, as well as other subjects of interest for trade union members. This informal training form plays an important role in the career advancement of workers and promote successful social dialogs.

In Germany, there is a political demand for the allocation of funds for professional training. The trade unions and employers' associations participate in defining the training content and the employers may implement professional training programs in their companies.

In France, the social partners are represented in the boards of directors of OPCA (Joint Commission for Collective Training). OPCA is officially authorized by the government.

In Romania, the employers' organizations and trade unions promote professional training activities, considering the demands related to the improvement of competitiveness, diversification of agricultural production and activities, restructuring and modernization of the agricultural sector, encouragement of market-oriented business and the need for a wide range of business and management skills.

In Italy, the trade unions and employers agreed on establishing a joint management system for the professional training of workers in the agricultural sector and the professional training is implemented by the social partners.

The analysis of the five cases leads to the conclusion that the trade unions and employers' organizations play an important role in the professional training, either by participating in the development of curricula or by implementing professional training programs. Therefore, these entities can directly influence the policies on professional training in agriculture, at least nationally. In Romania and Bulgaria, where the trade unions and employers' organizations can only implement professional training services, the curricula are rather determined by the funding programs accessed for providing training to farmers.

Characteristics of the agricultural sectors - a comparative analysis

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This chapter reviews the main indicators of the agricultural sector, which describe, on one hand, the structure of the sector in physical terms (farmland area, farm size, number of farms, types of farms, etc.) and, on the other hand, the workforce structure (percentage of persons engaged in agriculture) and the differences between the small-scale agriculture (subsistence and semi-subsistence farming) and large-scale agriculture.

Share of agricultural land as percentage of the total area of the country

This indicator describes the agriculture growth potential of a country. The agricultural land is defined as part of the total area, including: arable land, permanent cropland and pasture land. Arable land is defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as the land under temporary agricultural crops, temporary meadows for mowing or pasture and land under market and kitchen gardens. Permanent cropland is the land cultivated with long-term crops which do not have to be replanted for several years. This category includes land under trees and shrubs producing flowers, fruit trees, walnut trees and vineyards, except those for forest trees. Permanent pasture land is the land used permanently (five years or more) to grow herbaceous forage crops, either cultivated or growing wild²². We mention that the indicator also measures the unused agricultural land, as it does not quantify the actual use of the agricultural land, but the agricultural potential.

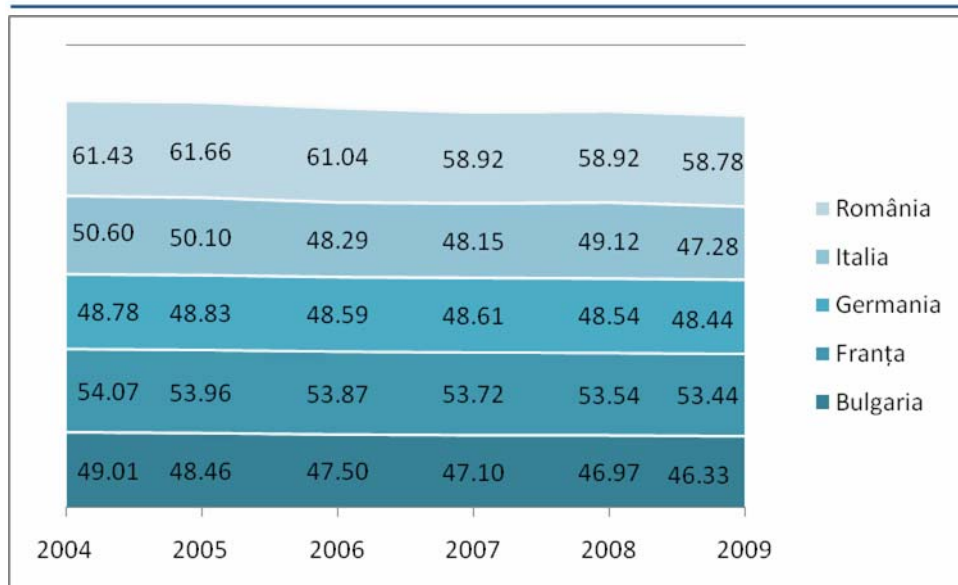
The chart below shows the changes in the share of agricultural land as percentage of the total area of the country in 2004 to 2009.

Chart 1. Share of agricultural land as percentage of the total area of the country (2004-2009)²³

²² World Bank's definition of the indicator taken from World Development Indicators (WDI), available at <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator>

²³ Data from World Development Indicators (WDI), available at <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator>, last accessed 12.03.2013

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As we can see in the chart above, the five countries analyzed here do not differ substantially in point of agricultural potential. All the analyzed countries experienced a decrease in the share of agricultural land by up to 3% from 2004 to 2009. Romania has the largest agricultural land area, followed by France, Germany, Italy and Bulgaria. The greatest differences are between Romania and Bulgaria - over 10%. In point of agricultural potential, it is worth mentioning that, in general, the countries with a larger total area tend to have a higher agricultural potential, too. However, Romania has a smaller area than the three countries in Western Europe. A possible explanation is the rural/urban ratio: Romania has the highest percentage of rural population of the five countries (45%, compared to 33% in Italy, 30% in Bulgaria, 24% in France and 12% in Germany)²⁴. Thus, the large agricultural area of Romania can be also seen as an indicator of lower urbanization, i.e. of less built-on area.

Number and structure of farms

Agricultural holding is an economic unit of agricultural production under single management, which conducts agricultural activities by using agricultural land and/or by livestock breeding or activities for maintaining agricultural land in proper farming and environment conditions, either as core business or as a secondary activity.

There are two types of agricultural holdings: unincorporated (individual farms, subsistence farms, individual or family enterprises) and incorporated (agricultural companies, trading companies, autonomous corporations controlled by the government, cooperatives, etc.)

Unincorporated agricultural holding is an economically-independent economic unit comprising one or more persons, generally members of the same family, who work together, under common current management, to generate agricultural production, irrespective of size or purpose.

²⁴ Data from 2003, taken from http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/peo_per_liv_in_rur_are-people-percentage-living-rural-areas last accessed 17.03.2013.

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

Incorporated agricultural holding is any technically and economically independent unit that operates under a single current management, irrespective of ownership, size or production destination, which, during the reference period, had agriculture as core business or conducted agricultural secondary activities in addition to its non-agricultural core business.

In **France**, there are almost 500,000 farms or similar agricultural entities. In point of physical structure, around 25% of them have less than 6 hectares, while other 25% have over 82 hectares. The number of farms has decreased by 26% over the last ten years, but the number of large farms remained constant. In point of production type, 150,000 of the French farms are cattle farms, while 310,000 cultivate crops. A relevant fact is that 6% of the farms (the 6% largest farms of more than 200 hectares) physically cover 25% of the agricultural land.

Like France, **Italy** has experienced a decrease in the number of farms in the recent years and the average farm area expanded. Small family farms prevail, but the emergence of new, more flexible types of agricultural entities caused an increase in the number of employees in agriculture. The professionalization of agriculture has already begun, as suggests the fact that smaller farms (below 30 hectares) disappear, while the large farms increase in number. In 96% of cases, the farms are small family businesses, but there is an increasing diversity of farm owners. The number of agricultural companies increased compared to 2000, although they own 3.6% of the total farms and use 17.7% of the agricultural land in Italy.

In **Germany**, there are almost 300,000 farms of an average area around 55 hectares, and 371,000 in **Bulgaria**, which have an average area of 10 hectares.

There are around 3.8 million agricultural holdings in **Romania**. According to the European Agricultural Census of 2010, this is 32% of the total number of agricultural holdings in the European Union²⁵.

The following table shows the number of agricultural holdings in the five countries, in relation to the agricultural land used and the average size of holdings.

Table 1. Number of farms and area used²⁶

Country	Number of farms in 2010 - thousands	Percentage in total EU27, number of farms, 2010	Agricultural area used, 1000 hectares	Percentage in total EU27, agricultural area used	Average area/farm, in hectares
Bulgaria	371.1	3.1 %	3,621.0	2.1 %	9.8

²⁵ EU-Agricultural census 2010 - The number of agricultural holdings in the EU27 fell by 20% between 2003 and 2010. While the agricultural area decreased by only 2% - October 2011, available at http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/5-11102011-AP/EN/5-11102011-AP-EN.PDF last accessed 23.02.2013

²⁶ Data from EU-Agricultural census 2010 October 2011, available at http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/5-11102011-AP/EN/5-11102011-AP-EN.PDF last accessed 23.02.2013

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

France	514.8	4.3 %	27,090.0	15.9 %	52.6
Germany	299.1	2.5 %	16,704.0	9.8 %	55.8
Italy	1,630.0	13.5%	12,885.3	7.6 %	7.9
Romania	3,856.3	32.0 %	13,298.2	7.8 %	3.4
EU 27	12,053.8	100%	170,027.3	100%	14.1

The table above shows that the countries with the greatest number of farms are also the countries with the smallest per-farm area (Romania, with 3.4 hectares, and Italy, with 7.9). Bulgaria remains below the European mean, while Germany and France are obviously countries with rather large and professional farms. If we consider the European mean of 14 hectares, we can assume that Bulgaria, Italy and Romania have a small-scale agriculture compared to Germany and France. We also note that France and Germany have the highest agricultural land use, although Romania has a larger usable agricultural area (see Chart 1).

The data presented above already define certain categories that describe the professionalization of agriculture and the extent to which small-scale agriculture (subsistence and semi-subsistence farming) prevail in the agricultural sector. Obviously, of the five countries, only Germany and France can be considered as countries with a developed agriculture. Romania has one third of the farms in Europe and uses about 8% of the total European agricultural area used. Comparatively, France has 4.3% of the European farms and uses 16% of the total agricultural land in Europe.

Employees in the agricultural sector

As we have already pointed out, of the five countries analyzed, two can be classified as having a developed agriculture, while in the other three (Bulgaria, Italy and Romania) the development of agriculture is limited in point of size of the agricultural holdings. Obviously, the size of farms also gives an idea of their technological level. For an in-depth analysis of the development differences in the agricultural sector between the three countries, this chapter will focus on the workforce in agriculture. The first assumption is that a great number of farms means a great number of employees. The second assumption is that a great number of employees in the agricultural sector means a higher need for access to professional training.

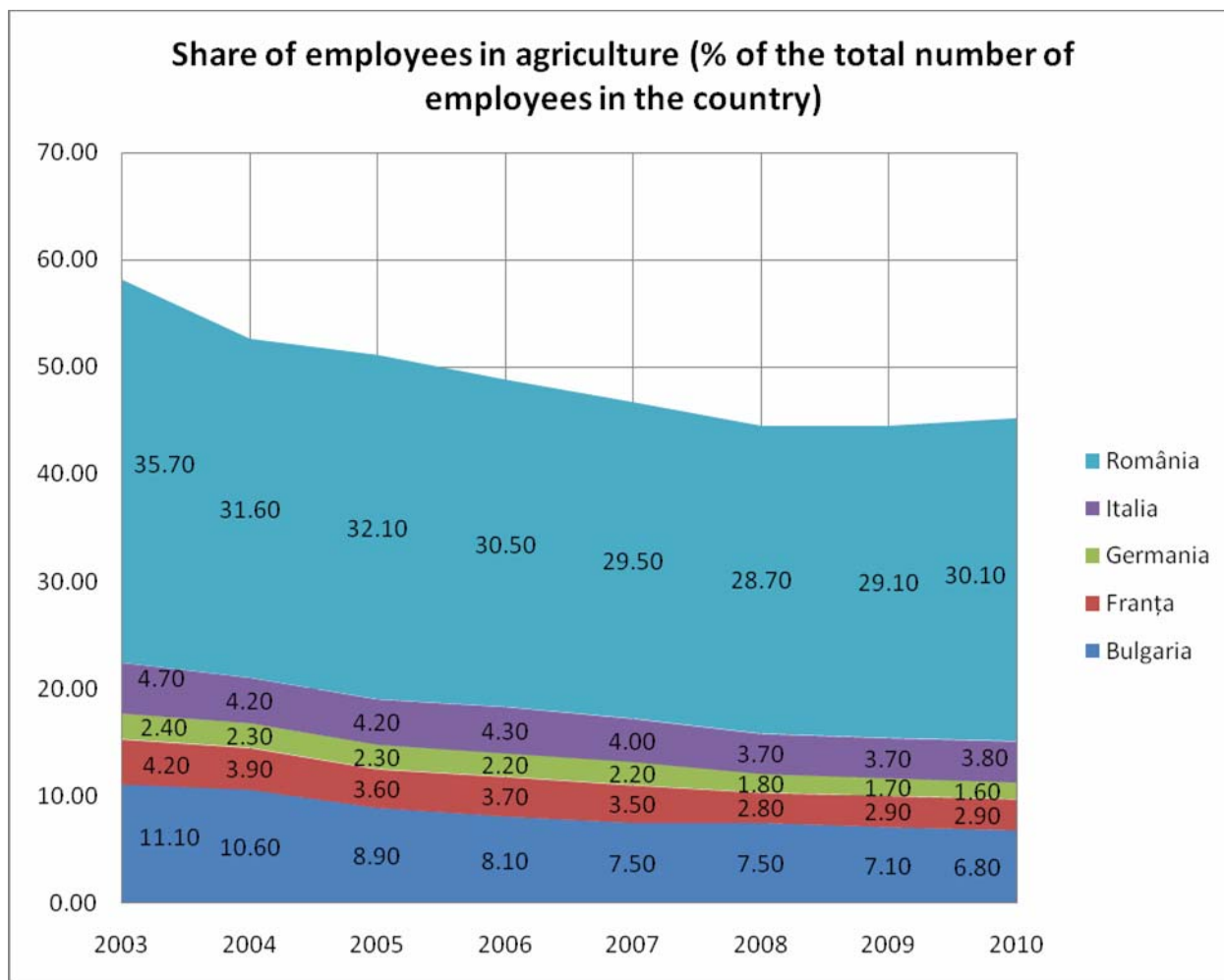
This section analyzes two types of indicators: percentage of employees in the agricultural sector and gender differences in the employment in agriculture. While the former indicator describes a situation that can be correlated with the need for professional training, the latter also points at the gender category with the greatest training needs.

A methodological element that should be emphasized is the use of the concept of employees in agriculture. Although the World Bank defines employees as persons working for a public or private employer and receiving remuneration in money or in kind in consideration of their work, the data are based on the available national statistics. According to the data sheets used in this project, all the five

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

countries report the existence of clandestine work, especially among the disadvantaged categories (persons with low income or immigrants). In Italy, for instance, clandestine work in agriculture amounted to 37% of the total persons working in the agricultural sector in 2011. In Romania, the National Institute of Statistics uses the concept of person engaged in subsistence agriculture for all owners of agricultural land, regardless whether they are employed or not.

Chart 2. Share of employees in agriculture (% of the total number of employees in the country)²⁷



The lowest percentages of employees in the agricultural sector are in Germany and France, the only countries with a developed agriculture (1.6% and 2.9%, respectively). This is explained by the higher use of technology and machinery in agriculture, which reduces the employment needs, in spite of the large size of farms. On the other hand, the need for specific professional training (in the use of the technological infrastructure in agriculture) is likely very high in these countries, compared to the countries with prevailing small-scale agricultures. Italy has a small number of employees in this sector, in spite of the relatively great number of farms and of the mean per-farm area. Half of the Italian farmers are employed while the other half work in their own farms. In Bulgaria, the number is

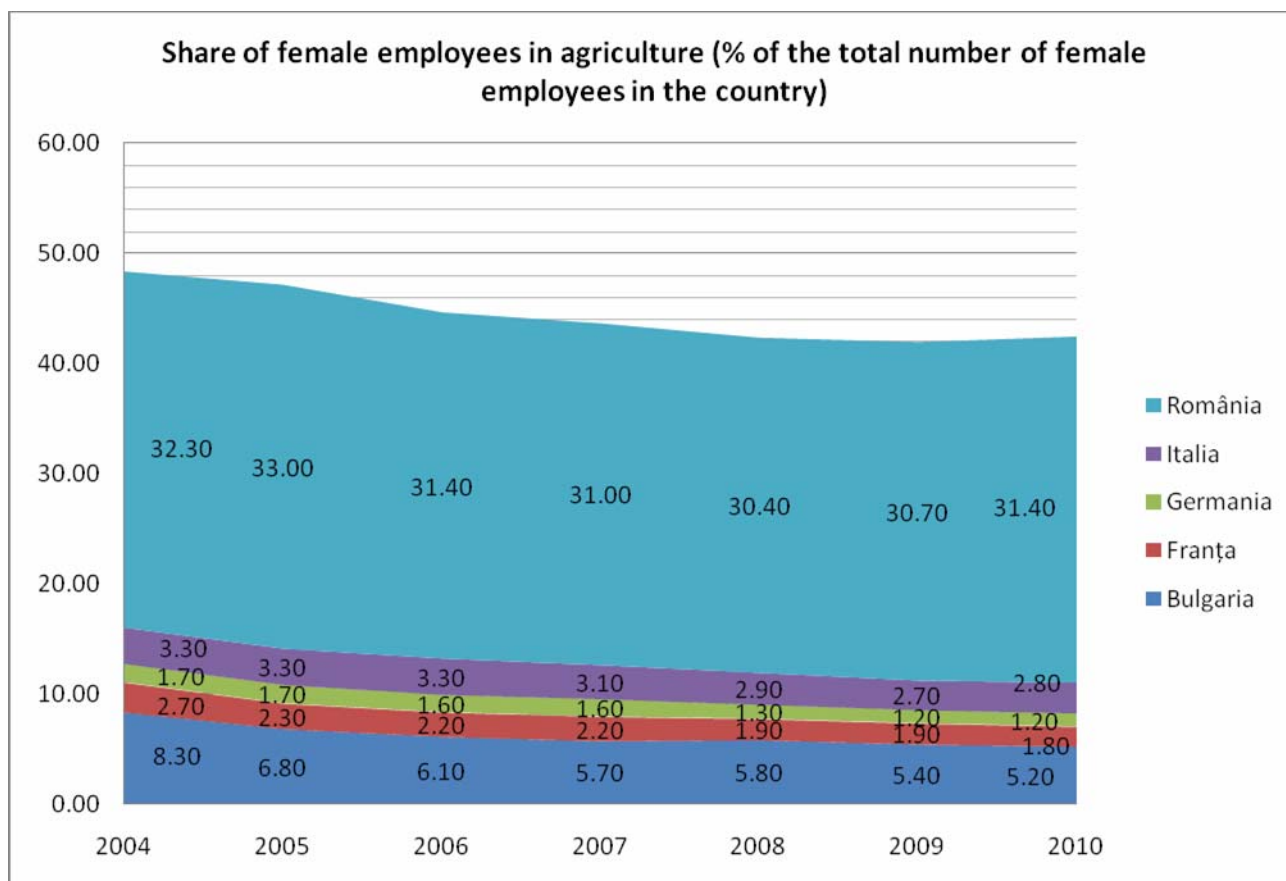
²⁷ Data from World Development Indicators (WDI), available at <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.AGR.EMPL.ZS>, last accessed 12.03.2013

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

relatively great compared to the other three countries. Here, more than 90% of the persons employed in agriculture are family farm workers. Romania is a particular case. Although the percentage increase trend is most obvious in this case, it is important to mention that, like in Bulgaria, over 90% of the persons engaged in agriculture are actually persons who own and cultivate a plot of land, without being actually employed and without being evident that their work generates income.

The following chart shows the percentage of women working in agriculture of the total number of women active in the labor market. While, in general, the tendencies identified with regard to the employees in agriculture remain unchanged, we note in Romania a slight increase in the percentage of women working in agriculture.

Chart 3. Share of female employees in agriculture (% of the total number of female employees in the country)²⁸

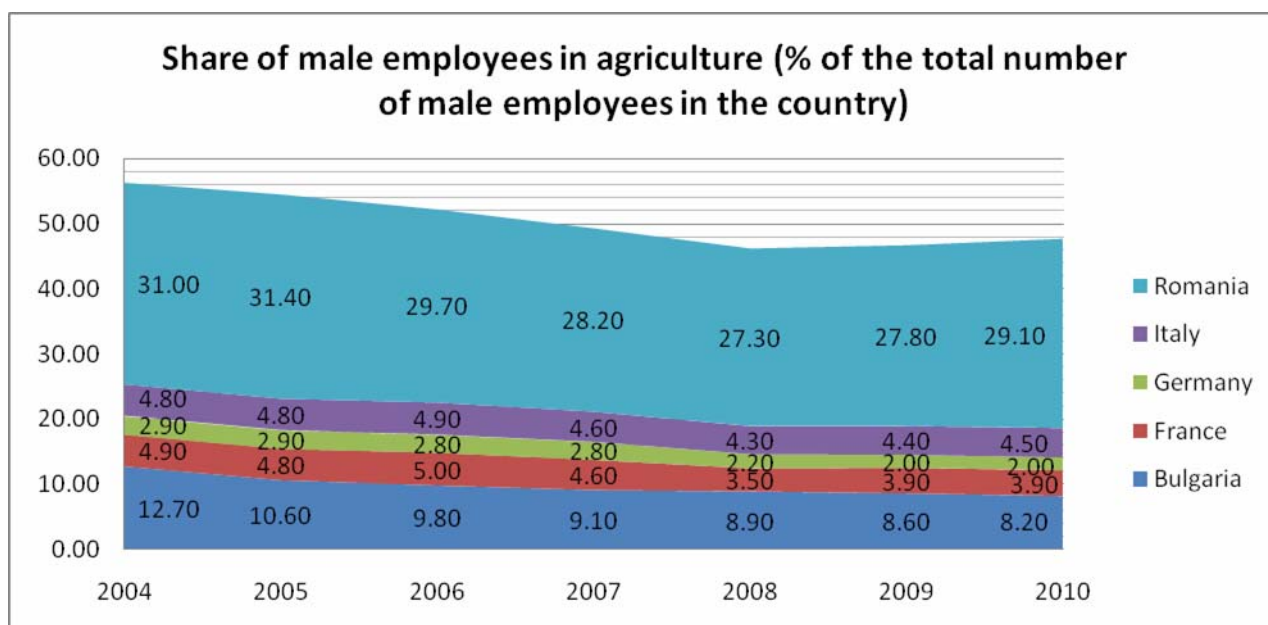


²⁸ Ibid.

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

The next chart, concerning the percentage of men working in agriculture, shows the same tendencies as in the case of women. We note that in four cases out of five the percentage of men working in agriculture is lower than that of women. Romania is again a particular case.

Chart 4. Share of male employees in agriculture (% of the total number of male employees in the country)²⁹



The data regarding the workforce in agriculture are relevant indicators for the access of agricultural workers to professional training. Thus, the more persons are engaged in agriculture in a country, the higher should be the need for access to professional training in the sector. Theoretically, a significant part of these employees should be trained, just like in any other field. In an unstable economic context and considering the technological developments and industrial evolution, the professional training of farmers should be a priority.

Analyzing these data from the perspective of the two types of agriculture previously identified, i.e. large-scale agriculture (in France and Germany) and subsistence and semi-subsistence agriculture (in Italy, Bulgaria and Romania), the approaches to the professional training of farmers should take into account the types of knowledge and skills that farmers need. Thus, in France and Germany technical training would be more likely required. The countries with a small-scale agriculture should consider the types of agricultural holdings, the great number of farmers who perform several functions at the same time (manager, worker, entrepreneur, etc.) and the training needs so that they be able to perform better once trained.

²⁹ Ibid. 16

Productivity of the agricultural sector and farmer's access to training

This section analyzes the relationship between productivity in the agricultural sector in terms of percentage of GDP and indicators relevant for the access of farmers to professional training. The share of GDP generated by agriculture in the European Union is less than 3%; however, the agricultural sector is a source of income for about 20% of EU's population, i.e. people living mostly in rural areas and for whom the agricultural sector is of maximum relevance³⁰.

Productivity of the agricultural sector

Productivity in the agricultural sector can be measured by various indicators. As we have already mentioned in the description of the method, we shall use two traditional indicators. The first one - the percentage of agriculture in GDP - shows the importance of agriculture in a country and the contribution of the sector to the total domestic product of the country. It is a percentage that indicates how much of the country's economy is represented by agriculture. The second indicator rather measures performance. The value of production shows, in absolute (financial) terms, what is the value of agricultural production in a country. We use these two indicators for methodological reasons, considering that both of them are relevant for analyzing the productivity of the agricultural sector. While for the former comparisons show how much more relevant is the agricultural sector for a country compared to the others, the latter indicates the way countries perform, allowing for the absolute results (in million Euros) to be compared.

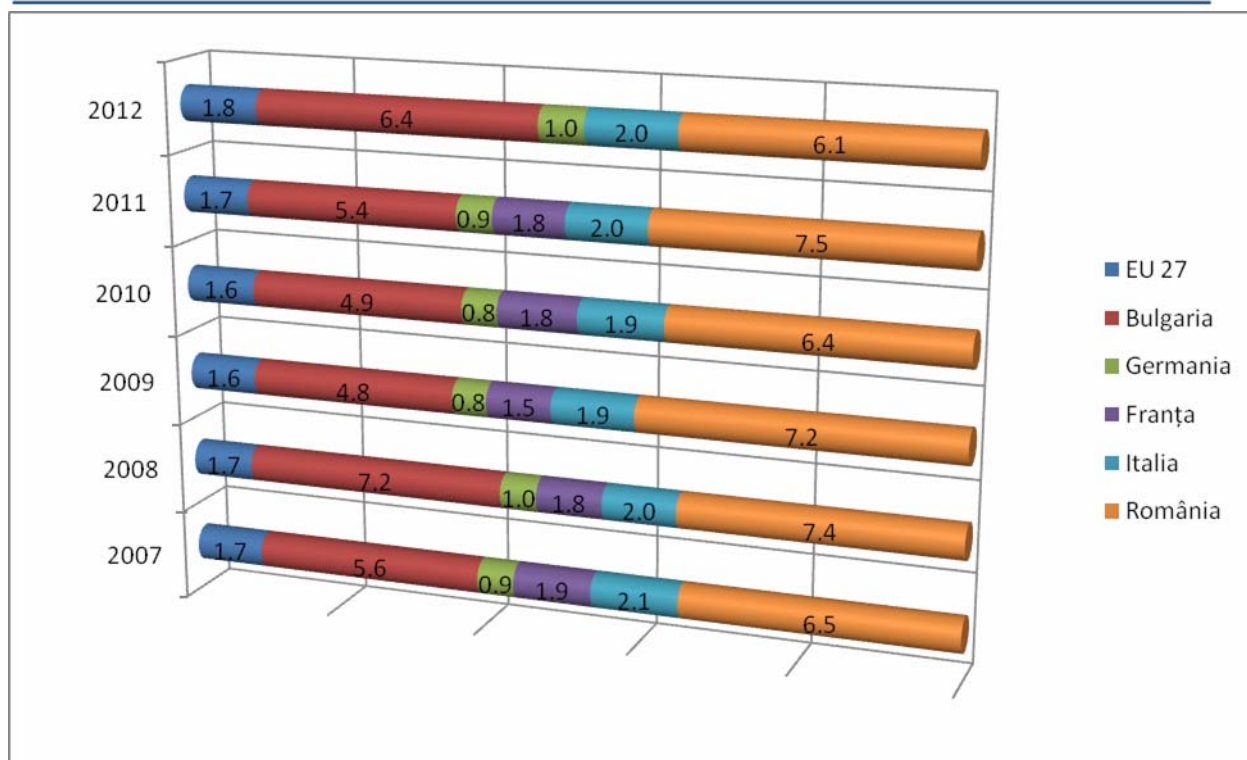
The share of agriculture in GDP is the agriculture value added as a percentage of GDP (considering the base price) and represents the net output of the agricultural sector after aggregating all outputs and subtracting the inputs (invested value). The chart below shows the percentage of GDP represented by agriculture in the period from 2007 to 2012, according to Eurostat data. We mention that no 2012 data is available for France.

Chart 4. Agricultural value added as percentage of GDP, 2007 - 2012³¹

³⁰ Access to European Union – online version available at http://www.europedia.moussis.eu/books/Book_2/ last accessed 20.03.2013.

³¹ Eurostat data, available at <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do> last accessed 18.03.2013

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"



The agriculture percentage of GDP in the five countries analyzed here indicate a clear tendency. The countries with a high agricultural potential and developed agricultures have a low agriculture percentage of GDP. The same tendency is also visible in the European mean, which is almost identical to the figures in France and Germany. Italy has the same tendency in point of agriculture value added, although the characteristics of its agricultural sector bring it closer to Romania and Bulgaria in terms of types of agricultural holdings and average farm size (see Table 1). The values for Bulgaria and Romania are around 7%.

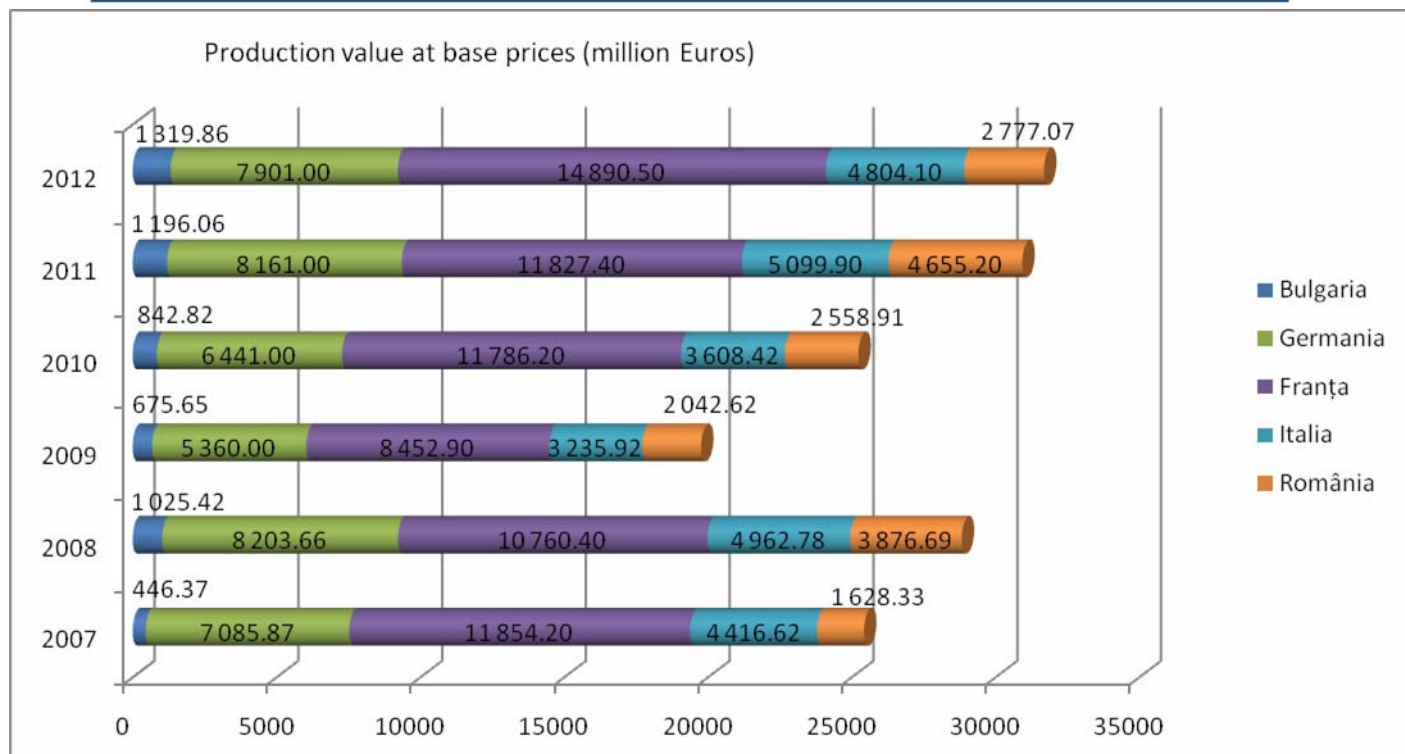
The chart above clearly shows that agriculture is an important sector in the economy of Romania and Bulgaria, with a percentage of GDP much higher than in the other countries and than the European mean. The economical importance of agriculture is more limited in Italy, France and Germany.

The following indicator examined actually shows the significance of the agriculture percentage of GDP, i.e. how much is Romania's and Bulgaria's approximately 7% compared to France's 2%. The chart below displays the values for each country, in million Euros, in the period from 2007 to 2012.

Chart 5. Production value at base prices, 2007-2012³²

³² Eurostat data, available at http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=aact_eaa01&lang=en, last accessed 23.03.2013

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"



The countries with sound agriculture have a higher value of agricultural production. France has the highest production value, followed by Germany. Italy is again at the middle, while Romania and Bulgaria have low production values. A decrease of this value in all countries is visible in 2009.

The chart shows that, although agriculture does not generate a significant percentage of GDP in Germany and France, the agricultural profit in absolute figures in these countries is higher than in the countries where agriculture is a net contributor to GDP. In fact, the agricultural revenues of Romania and Bulgaria are low. If we examine these results in relation to the percentage of employees in agriculture, we can conclude that the countries with low production (in economic terms), but for which the sector is significant as a revenue source, also have the greater number of employees in agriculture.

This section reinforces the conclusions of the previous section concerning the characteristics of the agricultural sector. At this point, we have two groups of countries: Germany and France (with a developed agricultural sector, large farms, less employees and a relatively high production value, which represents, however, a low percentage of GDP) and Romania and Bulgaria (with small farms, many employees and a low production value representing a higher percentage of GDP). Italy cannot be clearly included in either of these categories, but it is rather close to France and Germany (small farms, few employees, average production value representing a low percentage of GDP).

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

Farmers' access to professional training

As already emphasized in the previous chapters, the access of farmers to professional training is a key factor in the implementation of the European and national policies. In order to accomplish the development objectives set by the European and national programming documents, a workforce adapted to the current economic context, skilled and productive is required. The improvement of farmers' management, technical or technological skills requires proper initial training, as well as life-long learning provided by intensive training programs.

One of the major challenges confronting the persons engaged in agriculture is the aging process and the limited number of young people willing to manage a farm, to start small businesses in agriculture or to simply work in this sector. Under the circumstances, a developed agricultural sector will be hard to build, especially for countries like Romania and Bulgaria, which, as we have pointed out, experience deficiencies regarding the value of economic production and have many persons engaged in agriculture and small-sized farms.

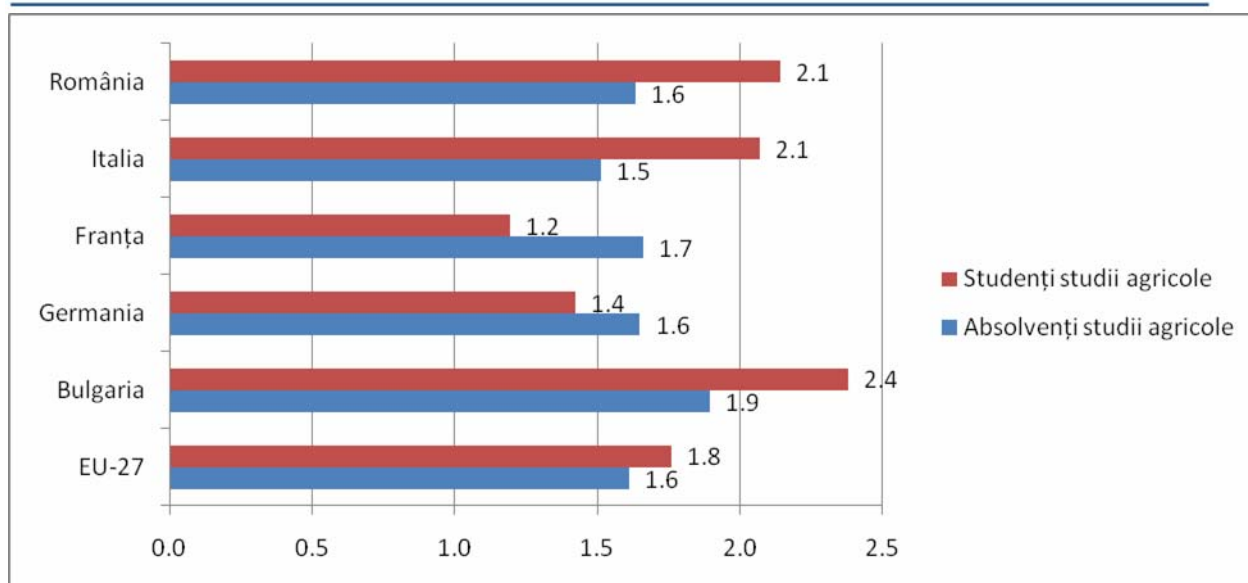
This section presents the indicators concerning the access of farmers to professional training. The indicators used show, on one hand, the percentage of people benefiting from agricultural higher education. The indicator is symmetrical to the one concerning the agriculture percentage of GDP, showing the importance of the agricultural sector from an educational perspective. The second indicator used is the percentage of farmers with basic or extensive education in agriculture. It shows the degree of professionalization of work in agriculture.

The chart below describes the share of persons enrolled in agricultural tertiary education (% of total students) and graduates of agricultural studies (% of total university graduates).

Chart. 6. Share of graduates of agricultural studies in the total number of persons enrolled in or graduates of tertiary education, 2010³³.

³³ Eurostat data, available at <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/bookmark.do?tab=table&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tps00062#> last accessed 17.02.2013

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"



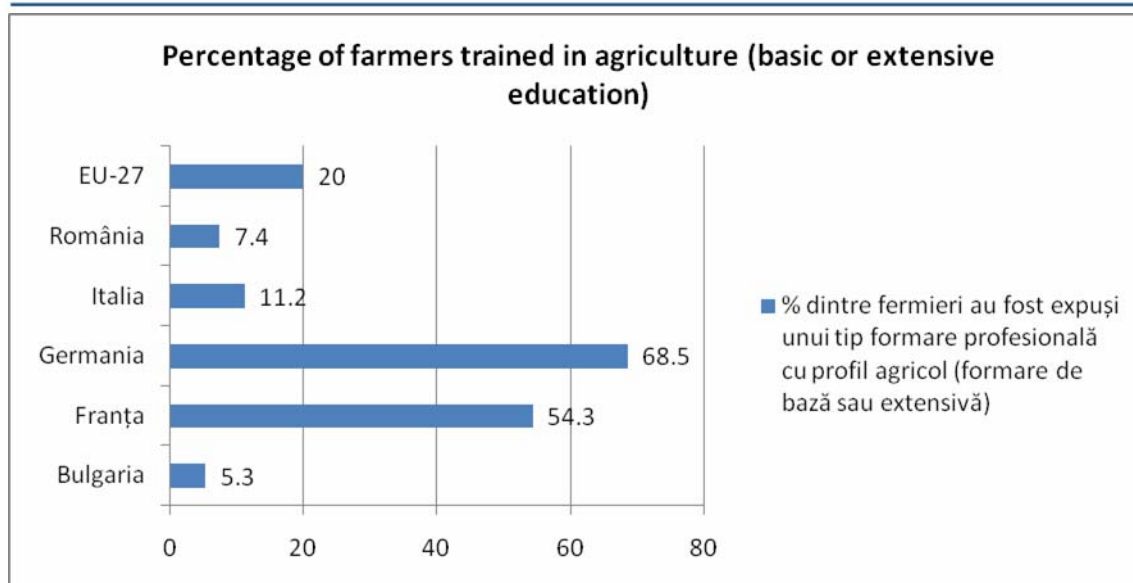
All the analyzed countries follow the European tendencies, with percentages of students or graduates of agricultural universities oscillating around the same mean values of 1.6% and 1.8%, respectively. The indicator does not suggest significant differences among the five countries, which means that the agricultural higher education does not generate major differences in point of performance of the agricultural sector.

The next indicator describes the percentage of farmers/agriculture workers with basic or higher education in agriculture. According to a Report of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, the last year for which such data are available is 2005. Methodologically, the indicator only refers to farm managers, irrespective of the farm type or size. Agricultural education has three dimensions: only practical experience (actual work in a farm), basic education (any course completed in a college or other specialized institution; apprenticeship in agriculture is considered as basic education) or extensive education (any course taken after the completion of compulsory education and equivalent to a two-year educational cycle, completed in a college, university or other higher education institution).

Chart 7. Percentage of farmers trained in agriculture (basic or extensive education), 2005³⁴

³⁴ "Rural Development in European Union. Statistical and Economic Information. Report 2011", p. 106, available at http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/statistics/rural-development/2011/full-text_en.pdf last accessed 20.03.2013

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

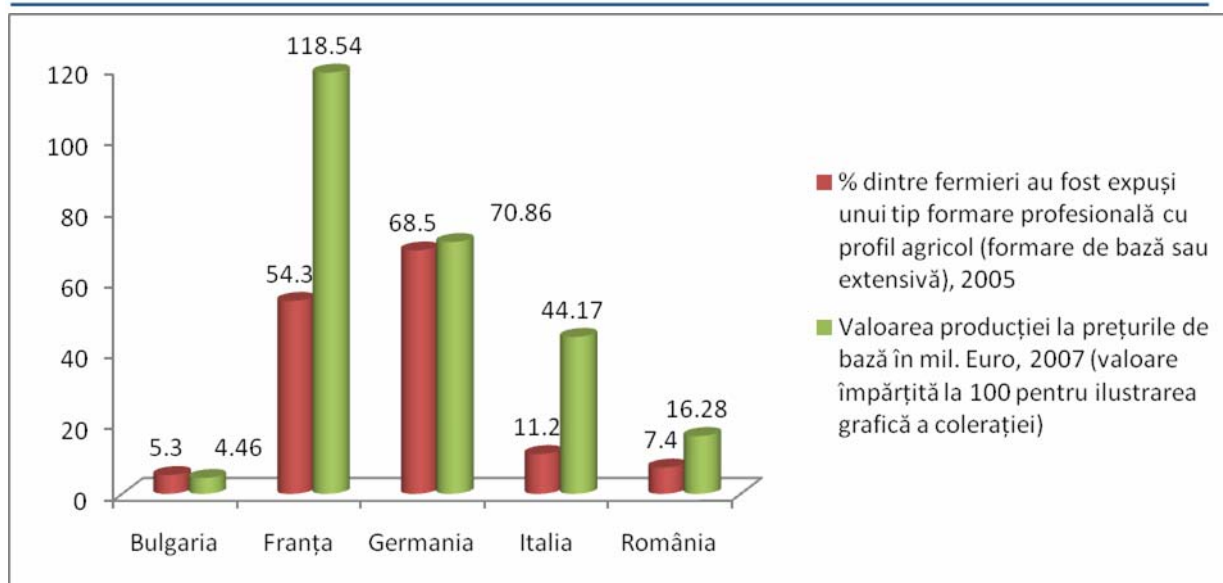


Germany and France are countries with a level of farmer education much above the European mean. While in general only 20% of the managers of farms and agricultural holdings in the European Union have at least basic education in agriculture, in Germany and France most of the persons managing an agricultural holding have this type of training. Italy is below the European mean, while in Bulgaria and Romania agriculture seems to be a field in which learning is based almost exclusively on practical experience. The data are based on the clusters identified in the previous sections of the study. Germany and France, with a professionalized and high-performance agricultural sector, have farms that are managed, in most cases, by persons with at least basic agricultural education. Romania, Bulgaria and, in this case, Italy, too, with fragmented agricultural sectors, have subsistence and semi-subsistence farms managed by farmers who, in around 90% of cases, did not receive any form of professional training.

Obviously, it is difficult to identify a direct causal connection between the performance of the agricultural sector and the extent to which farmers received specialized professional training. It is equally obvious, however, that there is a positive correlation between the two variables. For the indicators "percentage of farmers with basic or extensive education" and "value of agricultural production at base price", the correlation coefficient is 0.82. **This coefficient actually indicates that the performance of the agricultural sector is higher in countries where more farmers received professional training.** The chart below illustrates the variation of the two indicators in the five countries analyzed here. In order to simplify and keep the proportions of the chart, the initial agricultural production value has been divided by 100 (the correlation coefficient remains unchanged, as variation does not change). As the figures for farmers' education are from 2005, we used for the agricultural production value only the data from 2007.

Chart 8. The correlation between the "percentage of farmers with basic or extensive education" and the "value of agricultural production at base price".

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"



Existence of funding programs for agricultural training

This section reviews the funding programs that the social partners and agricultural companies can access for the training of farmers. The analysis is qualitative and is based on information provided by the partners in the five countries included in this project.

The formal agricultural education system in **Bulgaria** was established 120 years ago. However, there is a clear lack of analysis with regard to the connection between the sector's labor market and the need for new skills required for the new jobs. Moreover, the educational programs should be updated, considering the new techniques and technologies used in agriculture. According to the project partners, no employer will be willing to invest in the education and training of the human resources under the current conditions, in the absence of available training programs.

The analysis performed by the trade unions in Bulgaria identify as a possible solution the development of sector funds for professional training and of sector schemes for financing life-long learning and training courses. Such mechanisms, i.e. funds and schemes, could contribute to accomplishing the objectives of the European initiative "New Skills for New Jobs"³⁵ and also facilitate the absorption of the funds for vocational education and professional training, considering the current economic situation. These mechanisms could help to promote on-the-job training, which would be a good solution for seasonal workers, unskilled workers, for employees receiving the minimum wage or for those under the threat of unemployment. This process requires the involvement of certain social partners and of the government and, above all, the political will for implementing long-term solutions in this sector.

Although Bulgaria has a Rural development Program that includes financing for the professional training of farmers, the funds are limited and do not always respond to the actual training needs of farmers.

³⁵ New Skills For New Jobs: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=568>

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

The Bulgarian government does not finance professional training programs in agriculture and the only source of financing is the EU funds. As regards the Rural development Program (M111), the main entities eligible to apply for financing as providers of professional training include: educational institutions authorized in accordance with the applicable laws; high schools providing training in: agriculture, plant protection, veterinary medicine, agricultural equipment and technology, forestry, environment protection and preservation; nonprofit legal entities; and scientific research institutes.

The final beneficiaries include:

- Farmers registered in accordance with the national regulations, i.e. Ordinance No. 3/1999
- Directors or persons employed based on an employment contract by legal entities registered as farmers in accordance with Ordinance No. 3/1999 on creating and maintaining a register of farmers
- Natural persons who are owners/co-owners or leaseholders of forests and/or land associated to forests 1999
- Directors or persons employed based on an employment contract by legal entities that are owners/co-owners or leaseholders of forests and/or land associated to forests
- Persons benefiting from social welfare in accordance with Ordinance No. 11/2009, subject to the terms and conditions of the procedure for application of Measure 214 - "Payments for agriculture and environment protection" under the Rural Development Program, 2007-2013.

Professional training providers

In this section, we shall see how the trade unions in agriculture involve farmers in training programs, whether they analyze the training needs and whether they train only their members or have an inclusive approach. Then, we shall identify the nature of professional training providers (public or private) and the training costs in the agricultural training market.

In Bulgaria, the trade unions are included in consultative or working groups on employment and vocational training. However, they have neither the ability nor the legal obligation to assess the training needs of the trade union members. Nevertheless, the trade unions have a rather inclusive approach and admit non-trade union members to their training courses.

The professional training providers are mostly public institutions, as private providers only hold 20% of the professional training market in the agricultural sector. The training costs are paid either by trainees or by training funds if the training is part of an externally-financed program.

In accordance with the legal framework for formal education and with the VET regulations, the professional training is divided into various qualification levels - 1 to 5 in the European Qualifications Framework.



Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

In France, OPCA (Joint Commission for Collective Training), a regional council and the Employment Agency offer professional training opportunities to the unemployed. They can attend free training courses.

Various types of professional training opportunities are available:

- CIF: the employee can enroll in a long-term educational program (up to one year; the course is free for the employee and the employee receives part of his/her salary over the training period)
- DIF: the right of each employee to take up to 20 fully-paid hours of training a year (up to 120 hours after 6 years).
- Professionalization contract: the employee can work part-time during a professional training program.

As regards the funding of training programs, both trade unions and employers are entitled to apply for financing. Each individual case is then evaluated and a decision is made depending on the acceptance/rejection of the individual project. Most professional training projects are accepted. The government does not finance training programs, but it can impose on the agricultural sector to finance training programs for employees through OPCA for specific reasons (e.g. training in the adequate use of pesticides).

The mission of trade union representatives is to inform the trade union members and the employees with regard to professional training opportunities. The trade unions have created a special body called "Job Observer". Its role is to identify the specific needs of each job in agriculture and the skills and availability of workers.

The training programs are free for employees. Each employee is paid by the employer or the costs are covered by OPCA. The trade unions organize training courses for economic and social reasons, but mainly for the benefit of their representatives/members. The training providers are either public or private. The employer is free to choose to cooperate with a public or private provider.

The structure of the professional training market is established by CPNE (Joint National Commission for Employment). CPNE defines guidelines for the training programs considering the specific needs of each job. OPCA subsequently publishes a detailed description of the requested training programs. The professional training providers respond to the calls and submit price offers.

Italy has an institutional system for providing professional training through the regional institutions, which often uses EU funds, and a professional training system organized and managed by the social partners. The main training financing mechanism in the agricultural sector in Italy is RSP, through which the regions introduced a specific measure, 111 - "Vocational Training and Information Campaigns", aimed at training the employees in the private sector. The general objective is to foster the dissemination of scientific and technical knowledge in order to improve competitiveness and efficiency. The training courses debate topics like: sustainable management of the natural and agricultural resources to protect and efficiently use the land or the dissemination of innovative production processes and the improvement of product quality.

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

Each region decides with regard to the eligible entities for this type of financing. There are regional programs that use government funds for the training of human resources in agriculture. Depending on the local characteristics and on workers' needs, the trade unions propose free local training programs for all the interested workers. Both public and private training providers are available.

In Romania, multiple financing sources are available for the professional training of workers in agriculture, the most important of them being the European Social Fund (ESF). Both national and European financing sources are available. The trade unions and employers' organizations support the training in professions like plant cultivation, green agriculture worker, beekeeping, etc.

The main entities entitled to apply for financing for the training of agricultural workers include nongovernmental organizations and educational institutions. The government has an important contribution to supporting this type of programs, state aid being an example in this respect. Trade unions frequently use questionnaires to identify strengths and weaknesses, the training needs and the ways in which they can be satisfied. Most of the professional training programs are free, but there are also courses for which the trainees are required to pay a fee. The trade unions equally train members and non-members. The professional training providers in Romania are both private and public.

In Germany, there are many financing opportunities for professional training programs available both locally and at land level. If requested by the social partners and the professional training providers, the government may finance the training of employees in the agricultural sector.

The trade unions agree by social dialog on the content of the initial training, life-long learning and master courses. Most courses are free, but a fee may be charged in certain cases. The training providers are either public, half-public or private.

Curricula and access to training

In Bulgaria, in addition to the specific subjects related to the fields included in the training program, current topics and subjects are considered, e.g.: CAP, labor regulations, working conditions, specific agricultural language, PC operation skills. The program and curricula are established by the provider depending on the needs of the prospective trainees and on the specific subjects considered.

As regards the access to professional training, the project partners in Bulgaria say that the opportunities to access a professional training program are not equal, as the employees of larger farms benefit from more opportunities. In addition to that, the participation to professional training courses is conditional upon a certain level of education, which already excludes the small, subsistence or semi-subsistence farmers.

In France, the subjects included in the training programs largely depend on the type of activity, but the main current topics are the environment, safety, technical know-how, automation and quality. The curriculum must be specific and sustain the ability to offer a quality training program. Sometimes the trainees are required to define the curriculum themselves based on certain references to organize their activities.

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

As regards the equal access to training, there are regulations concerning the access to training for repeated applications from the same employee: there must be a period of at least two years between two successive training programs attended. After the last reform of the educational system, it became more difficult to obtain financing for professional training courses.

The financing provided by OPCA is equal for both smaller and larger institutions and sometimes there are internal training programs fully funded by the employer. From this point of view, it is easier to attend training courses in large companies.

In Italy, the main subjects in the training curricula include new agronomic techniques for environment sustainability and occupational safety. . In general, the curriculum contains theoretical knowledge, as well as practical activities.

The subjects are usually chosen by trainers based on the information obtained by trade unions and considering the needs communicated by farmers.

In Romania, the professional training programs for farmers consist in induction, specialization, qualification and re-qualification training. The curriculum is established in most cases by the trainer who delivers the course. The trade unions interpret the questionnaires filled in by employees, identify the needs of employees and propose subjects for the training courses. The role of the future trainees is very important, as the courses and specific subjects are selected taking into account their needs and requirements.

The professional training for a specific job based on long-term curricula is a frequent practice in **Germany**. There are fewer technical training programs. The certified training courses are decided by social partners and schools.

Analyzing the information for each country, we note again differences between Germany, France, and Italy, on one hand, and Romania and Bulgaria, on the other hand. In point of professional training financing opportunities, France, Germany and Italy are less dependent on European funds, resulting in a slightly wider access of farmers to professional training. As regards the curricula, the social partners in all countries are able to influence to some extent the professional training topics.

Conclusion

Education and the access to professional training are considered as long-term investments in the human resources and their returns consist in economic growth driven by a productive workforce. In the recent years, in the context of the global economic crisis, the role of professional training has become central to the agendas of governments in Europe. The economic changes also require an adjustment of employment measures and in order to perform at high levels the workforce in each economic sector needs specific skills to respond to these changes.

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

The agricultural sector, a key component of the European economy, is permanently changing in point of technology and intervention policies. The need for professional training is obvious, especially after the agricultural map of Europe was redrawn following the EU enlargement in 2004 and 2007.

This report examined the European and national policies in point of farmers' access to professional training and factually analyzed aspects like the characteristics of the agricultural sector, productivity in the agricultural sector and the access of farmers to professional training.

In terms of policies, the professional training of farmers is not an objective or a direction in itself, either for the European Union or for the national governments. There are many instances in which the professional training becomes an instrument or a strategy for the implementation of actions meant to lead to the achievement of the set objectives. This is enough to conclude that the objectives of the European policies and strategies for agriculture inherently require skilled workers able to adapt to the technological or economic changes. The European regulations specifically emphasize the importance of professional training in agriculture.

The national policies incorporate more or less the European ideas on agriculture. There is a gap between the policies of the new Member States and those of the old ones. Thus, Romania and Bulgaria include almost all the provisions of CAP in their national policies, while Italy, France and Germany are more concerned with adapting the national policy to the national context and demands.

The employment policies in Romania and Bulgaria do not cover the agricultural sector completely, making various professional training opportunities inaccessible to farmers. The policies in France and Germany seem to put more power into the hands of trade unions, which can take proactive action in connection with the employment in the agricultural sector. Italy has regional employment policies and various instruments for improving employment (combined contracts, special programs for vulnerable groups, etc.).

The trade unions and employers' organizations play an important role in the professional training, either by participating in the development of curricula or by implementing professional training programs. These entities can directly influence the policies on professional training in agriculture, at least nationally. In Romania and Bulgaria, where the trade unions and employers' organizations can only implement professional training services, the curricula are rather determined by the funding programs accessed for providing training to farmers.

In point of professional training financing opportunities, France, Germany and Italy are less dependent on European funds.

The quantitative analysis describes clear facts. The five countries analyzed can be split in two categories. The first category, which includes Germany and France, is characterized by larger and rather professionalized farms, a low agriculture percentage of GDP, but high agricultural production value, and a small percentage of employees in the agricultural sector. It can be defined as the category of countries with developed agricultures. In spite of having rather small farms, with areas



Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

below the European average, Italy matches this category according to all the other indicators. Comparatively, Romania and Bulgaria have underdeveloped agricultures. They have small farms, a great number of employees in the agricultural sector, a higher agriculture percentage of GDP, but a low production value in absolute terms.

Correlating these data with the percentage of farmers who received (at least basic) professional training, we note that the results are consistent with the previously defined categories. While in general only 20% of the managers of farms and agricultural holdings in the European Union have at least basic education in agriculture, in Germany and France most of the persons managing an agricultural holding have this type of training. Italy is below the European mean, while in Bulgaria and Romania agriculture seems to be a field in which learning is based almost exclusively on practical experience. The data are based on the clusters identified in the previous sections of the study. Germany and France, with a professionalized and high-performance agricultural sector, have farms that are managed, in most cases, by persons with at least basic agricultural education. Romania, Bulgaria and, in this case, Italy, too, with fragmented agricultural sectors, have subsistence and semi-subsistence farms managed by farmers who, in around 90% of cases, did not receive any form of professional training.

It is difficult to identify a direct causal connection between the performance of the agricultural sector and the extent to which farmers received specialized professional training. It is equally obvious, however, that there is a positive correlation between the two variables. For the indicators "percentage of farmers with basic or extensive education in agriculture" and "value of agricultural production at base price", the correlation coefficient is 0.82. **This coefficient actually indicates that the performance of the agricultural sector is higher in countries where more farmers received professional training.**

This correlation points at clear recommendations for Romania, Bulgaria and Italy. Considering that the development of the agricultural sector is an objective of major interest, the investment in the human resources in agriculture is a key factor that will lead to the achievement of the objective.

The access of farmers to professional training emerges as an essential national need, at least for Romania and Bulgaria. Obviously, the other country cannot avoid implementing actions in this respect either, especially considering the competitiveness objectives set by the European Union. Although the European and national policies include, in all cases, at least minimal measures concerning the access of farmers to professional training, their implementation will make a difference between the countries with developed and high-performance agricultural sectors and those with underdeveloped agricultures.

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

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Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

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Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

Annexes

Annex 1 – National data collection sheet

Country:	
<p align="center">Structure and characteristics of the agricultural sector</p> <p align="center">Briefly describe the agricultural sector in your country in 2007 to 2011. Provide statistical data where appropriate.</p>	
Describe the farms' and agricultural holdings' structure – how many types of agricultural entities are there (small farms, big companies, family farms, producers' associations etc.). How does each of them work – the management structure, average number of employees/workers ?	
Agricultural entities structure (in terms of land fragmentation) – what is the average size of each of the types identified before.	
Agricultural entities' structure (in terms of what they produce/agricultural sectors) – what is the main product for each of the types identified before.	
The value of annual production/sector – national level indicator	
Utilized agricultural area - the total arable land, permanent grassland, land used for permanent crops and kitchen gardens. The	

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

<p>UAA excludes unutilised agricultural land, woodland and land occupied by buildings, farmyards, tracks, ponds, etc.</p> <p>(percent from total land and number of hectares)</p>	
<p>Number of employees in agriculture (compared to the total employment rate)</p>	
<p>Describe the agricultural labour force: how many man, how many women, how many migrants etc.</p>	
<p>Describe the categories of agricultural workers: employees, self employed, family workers etc. If there are statistics at national level on these categories, please provide the numbers for 2007-2011.</p>	
<p>Describe the unregistered work phenomena (or even black agricultural labour market, if the case)</p>	
<p>Agricultural wages structure: basic wage, productivity-based wage, other added payments to the wage (bonuses, quotas etc.), the percent of the social contributions from the salary</p>	
<p>Work relations in agriculture: permanent employees/temporary employees/seasonal workers/other types of</p>	

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

contracts.	
Share of agriculture in the GDP (%)	
Share of agriculture in the total gross fixed capital formation (%)	
National agricultural policy	
What is the strategic document defining the national agricultural policy, within 2007 and 2011?	
What are the main measures on agriculture, defined in the policy?	
What are the specific measures related to the access of agricultural workers to training and education programmes?	
What are the main active employment policies that could help agricultural workers adapt easily to agricultural labour market changes? How do these active measures work?	
Is there any predictability of labour market changes in terms of skills? Is there coordination between what kind of trainings are delivered and what kind of skills are needed on the labour market? How does the government monitor changes in agricultural labour market and how does	

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

it assess future needs?	
Trade unions in agriculture	
<p>What are the most representative agricultural workers' unions in your country? Who are the members? How are they organized?</p> <p>What is the percent of unionized agricultural workers out of the total agricultural workers? What categories are rather not belonging to unions?</p>	
<p>What are the most representative agricultural employers in your country/unions of employers in agriculture? Who are the members? How are they organized?</p>	
<p>Describe the collective bargaining process and how does it meet the needs of agricultural workers. What effects does it have?</p>	
<p>Describe the role of unions and employers' unions in delivering training and education for agricultural workers.</p>	
Funding of professional training for farmers	
<p>Are there any opportunities for financing training agricultural workers? Are they local, regional, national or European? Please describe the main</p>	

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

opportunities and the type of trainings they support.	
What are the main entities able to apply for funding for training for agricultural workers (agricultural holdings, unions, NGOs etc.)?	
Does the state finance specific training programmes for agricultural workers?	
Professional training providers	
How do unions outreach and involve agricultural workers in training activities? Does any worker have the chance of being trained? How do unions assess the training needs in agriculture? Are the trainings mostly free or do the trainees have to pay for them? Do unions train people outside the unions?	
Are there rather public or private training providers? How is the training for agricultural workers sector divided?	
Professional training curricula	
What are the main topics of available training programmes for agricultural workers?	
How are the curricula established? What is the	

Project : "Farmers' access to education and training activities"

<p>role of unions in defining training topics? What is the role of the future trainees in defining the curricula?</p>	
<p>Farmers' access to professional training</p>	
<p>To what extent do agricultural workers have access to training?</p> <p>Is there a difference in accessing training for employees of big holdings as compared to small/semi-subsistence/ family farms?</p> <p>Is union membership a condition for better access to training?</p> <p>Is a particular level of education a condition for better access to training?</p>	
<p>Best practice examples</p>	
<p>Please provide a best practice example from your country regarding training for agricultural workers.</p> <p>Who initiated the training? How was it financed? What topics did the curriculum covered? Who was trained? How were they selected? What was the short term result? What changes did occur after the training? How do you see the long term results of the training?</p> <p>*Please feel free to describe any other stakeholder involved and the effects over them or any other facts not covered in these questions.</p>	