

**THE STATISTICAL SITUATION OF EAFRD INVESTMENTS IN THE SW
OLTENIA REGION, THROUGH SUBMEASURE 4.1. - INVESTMENTS IN
FRUIT-GROWING HOLDINGS – DURING THE 2014-2020 PERIOD**

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ABSTRACT

The present statistical analysis was carried out from the database of the Agency for Financing Rural Investments, based on the evaluation reports, in order to highlight the investments made under sub-measure 4.1.a of the NRDP in the period 2014-2020, in the SW Oltenia region. According to reports, at the level of the SW Oltenia Region (with 5 counties), a number of 34 projects were accessed, distributed by county as follows: 12 in Dolj county (35% of the total number of projects), 5 each in Gorj and Mehedinți counties, 9 in Olt county (26% of the total number of projects) and 3 in Vâlcea county. From the total number of projects accessed, a number of 28 projects represented the establishment of new plantations and 6 projects aimed at modernization of holdings, i.e., a percentage of 82.3% is represented by new plantations. It is found that, at the level of the SW Oltenia Region, the fruit-growing areas have increased, which leads to the idea that from this point of view, the impact of the non-reimbursable funds was significant. The existence of future European programmes for the fruit-growing sector will allow the competitiveness of fruit-growing holdings to increase.

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, European funds have become good sources of financing for those who want to set up a business in the field of agriculture. The fruit-growing heritage was strongly affected in the period after 1989, so that most of the plantations in Romania were abandoned. After Romania's accession to the European Union, Romanian farmers benefited from the funds allocated to the fruit-growing sector. Sub-measure 4.1a – investments in fruit-growing holdings – aimed at increasing the competitiveness of fruit-growing holdings by equipping them with machinery and equipment, establishing, modernizing and/or expanding processing units, establishing fruit-growing plantations, converting existing plantations and increasing the areas occupied by fruit-growing nurseries. The funds allocated to this sub-measure and the number of projects implemented differed from one region to another. According to the study carried out in the SW Oltenia Region by Vladu et al. (2019) regarding the investment situation through the sub-measure 4.1.a, the dynamics of investments was low compared to the investments made at the national level (7.4% of the total number of projects funded at the national level over the period

2015-2017). Regarding the allocated funds, in NRDP 2014-2020, the focus was set on the modernization of agricultural holdings (sub-measure 4.1), small-scale investments in infrastructure (sub-measure 7.2) and support for the establishment of young farmers (sub-measure 6.1) (Chiurciu & Văruțoiu, 2021). In the implementation of sub-measures 4.1, 4.1.a, but also the sub-measure 6.1 and 6.3, a series of problems were noticed, such as the lack of registration of agricultural land in the integrated cadastral and land system, the land registration process being hampered by the lack of succession documents and insufficient resources to cover notary fees and other fees required for cadastral measurements (Felici et al. 2018). Analysing the National Rural Development Programme, under the demand-supply lens, Búkfeyes-Rákossy (2018) showed that, despite the fact that there are delays in the absorption of funds, they are not caused by a lack of applications or lack of interest, but by the improper sharing of resources. However, the long tradition of growing fruit trees in certain fruit-growing areas can be revitalized individually or in association through benefiting from financing schemes designed to support farmers' investments (Hognogi et al. 2018). This paper's aim is the statistical analysis of EAFRD investments in the S-W Oltenia Region through sub-measure 4.1a – investments in fruit-growing holdings.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present statistical analysis was carried out from the database of the Agency for the Financing of Rural Investments, based on the evaluation reports, in order to highlight the investments made under the sub-measure 4.1.a of NRDP over the period 2014-2020. In this paper, the following situations were aimed: the number of implemented projects; location of projects; type of beneficiary (men/women under 40, applicants established under GEO 44/2008 women/men under 40); the type of investment; the form of organization of the beneficiaries; the classification of the projects according to the fruit tree species.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Following the collection, analysis and processing of data related to the projects submitted by applicants through sub-measure 4.1a – Investments in fruit-growing holdings - over the 2014-2020 interval, certain aspects of interest could be outlined. According to the reports of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, at the level of the SW Oltenia Region (a region with 5 counties) a number of 34 projects were accessed, distributed by county as follows: 12 in Dolj (which represents 35% of the total number of projects), 5 each in Gorj and Mehedinți, 9 in Olt (which represents 26% of the total number of projects) and 3 in Vâlcea (Figure 1). The area occupied by fruit trees plantations in 2014, at the level of the SW Oltenia region, was 26230.62 ha, i.e., 16.53% of the total area of Romania (Coman & Chițu, 2014), of which 50.11% was owned by Vâlcea county (13145 Ha). However, the number of projects accessed in this county was the lowest at the regional level (3, i.e., 8.8%). Analysing the evolution of the area planted with fruit trees in the SW Oltenia region between 1990 and 2015, Micu et al. (2017) found that it decreased by 48% in 2015 when about 25486 hectares were cultivated compared to the cultivated area in 1990 when 48790 hectares were cultivated.

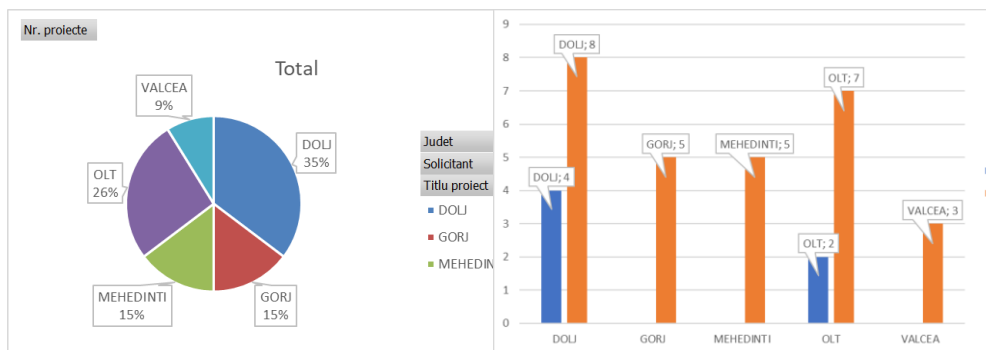


Figure 1. Total number of projects accessed through Sub-measure 4.1a - Investments in fruit-growing holdings, in the SW Oltenia region

Figure 2. New projects and projects requiring modernization

Compared to other regions, the number of projects funded at the level of the SW Oltenia region was lower. In the South-Muntenia region through the National Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, through sub-measure 4.1.a, the number of projects was 51.5% higher than in the SW Oltenia region, i.e., 66 projects, most of them being implemented in the Dâmbovița county (16), followed by Argeș (14), Călărași and Giurgiu (12) (Sterie and Dumitru, 2021).

As for the state of fruit trees plantations, in 2013, most of them were old, older than 25 years old, with reduced productive potential, in decline or abandoned, and only 7% of the total area was occupied with young plantations, while those on fruit occupied 67110 hectares (42% of the total area) (<http://madr.ro/docs/dezvoltare-rurala/rndr/buletine-tematice/PT13.pdf>). There was a need for massive investment support in the fruit-growing sector, in the context of the need for sustainable development of the fruit-growing sector. From the total number of projects accessed in the SW Oltenia Region through sub-measure 4.1a, a number of 28 projects represented the establishment of new plantations and 6 – modernization of holdings (Figure 2). It is noted that the percentage of newly established plantations was high, representing 82.3%. In 2013, fruit-growing areas in Romania occupied an area of 100,957 km², of which over 84.7% are in rural areas. The population of approximately 9.407 million inhabitants within these areas was in demographic decline, being continuously decreasing and aging (<http://madr.ro/docs/dezvoltare-rurala/rndr/buletine-tematice/PT13.pdf>). From the point of view of the legal organization of the beneficiaries, the project structure was as follows: out of 34 projects, 26 (76.47%) were accessed by legal entities, and the remaining 8 projects were accessed by natural persons. In Dolj county, 11 projects were accessed by legal entities and one project – by a natural person. At the Olt county level, 5 projects were accessed by legal entities and 4 projects by natural persons. In Mehedinți county, two projects were accessed by legal entities and 3 projects by natural persons. In Gorj and Vâlcea counties, all projects were accessed by legal entities, respectively 5 in Gorj county and 3 in Vâlcea county.

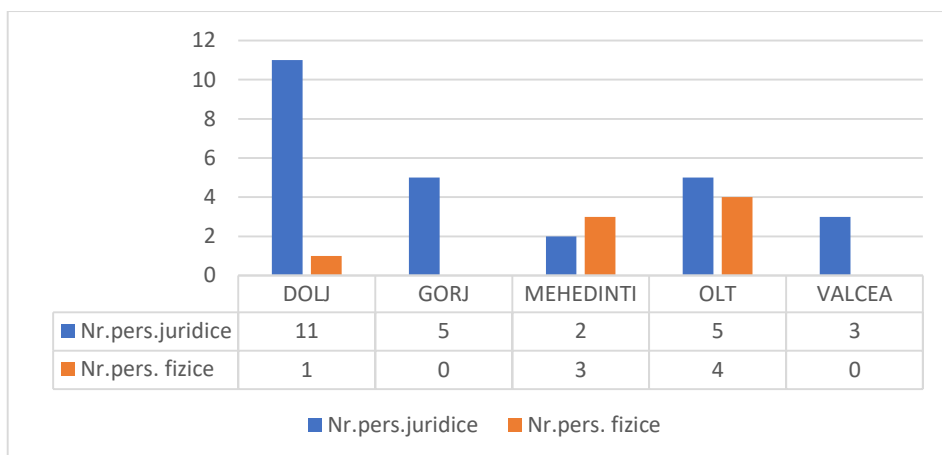


Figure 3. Distribution of projects according to the form of organization of the beneficiaries

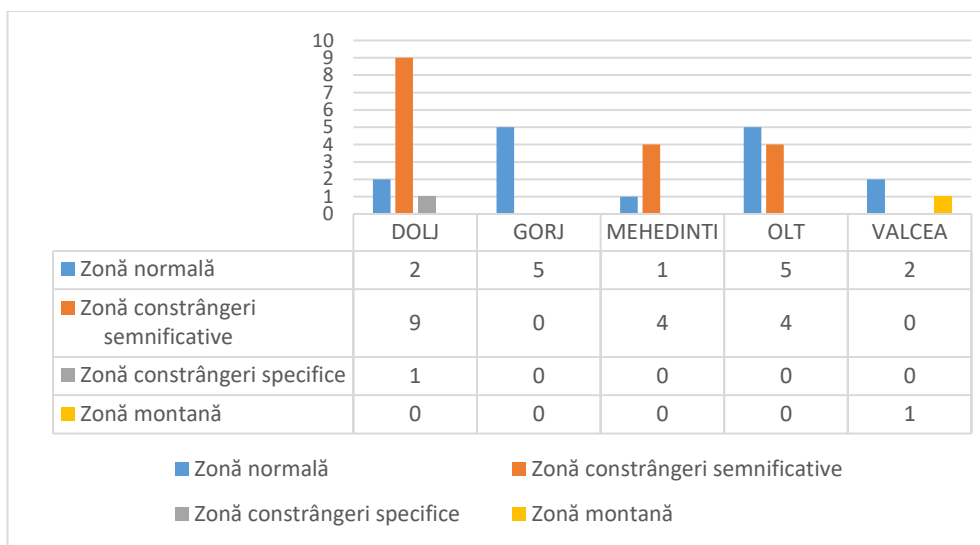


Figure 4. Distribution of projects according to favourable areas

A number of 15 projects out of a total of 34 were accessed in normal areas, distributed as follows: 5 projects each in Gorj and Olt counties, 2 projects each in Dolj and Vâlcea counties and one project in Mehedinți county. In areas with specific constraints, only one project was accessed, respectively in Dolj county and one project in a mountainous area, respectively in Vâlcea county (Figure 4). According to Boboc and Florian (2019) population aging as well as migration will be the real problems in the near future for most EU member states with predominantly rural areas. The principle of equality is one of the fundamental values of the European Union. Thus, the Romanian legislation guarantees equal rights to citizens to participate in economic and social life. Under sub-measure 4.1.a, the application

of applicants who were under 40 years of age was encouraged. Thus, from the total of 34 projects, 20 projects were implemented by men under the age of 40 (DJ-4, GJ-4, MH-3, OT-8, VL-1) and 6 projects by women under 40 (DJ-2, GJ-1, MH-1, VL-2). According to the statistics, it was found that out of a number of 34 projects submitted by the applicants, those established under the Emergency Ordinance (GEO) 44/2008 are 8 persons (7 men and one woman) who were under the age of 40, they were from Dolj and Mehedinți counties. The aging of the population was a need also addressed by the rural investment plan, offering young farmers an investment of 426,744,132 euros for the period 2014-2020, of which 333,400,012 euros were spent until 03.01.2019 (Boboc and Florian, 2019). Regarding the classification of projects according to the fruit tree species, six projects were intended for the establishment of tree plantations plus modernizations; a project for the reconversion of a fruit tree plantation; three projects to establish an apple plantation in a super-intensive, ecological system; five projects for establishing a mixed plantation (apple and walnut, cherry and apple, apple and quince, blueberry and cherry, fruit trees and shrubs); six blueberry plantation establishment projects; three walnut plantations establishment projects; two hazelnuts; four of strawberry in the greenhouse and solarium; two projects for the sea buckthorn processing unit. It is noted that attention was paid to the establishment of fruit-growing plantations plus modernization (17.64% of the number of implemented projects) and fruit bushes, especially blueberry (17.64% of the number of implemented projects). And Asanica et al. (2017) claim that, after 2007, thanks to European support, sub-measure 4.1a, the areas occupied by blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum* L.) increased to more than 700 hectares in 2016. Regarding sour cherry, Coman et al. (2018) claims that requests for the establishment of sour cherry plantations through sub-measure 4.1.a have increased, which will lead to an increase in areas. In a study by Vladu et al. (2019) shows the following ranking of fruit tree species used in the projects implemented through sub-measure 4.1a: 109 ha of walnut, 75.4 ha of hazelnut, 56.1 ha of apples, 55.7 ha of blueberries, 23.7 ha of sweet cherries, 19.36 ha of plum, 13.76 of quince, 11.6 ha of raspberry, 8.30 ha of sea buckthorn, 2.26 ha of pear, 2.16 ha of peaches and nectarines, 1.20 ha of strawberries, 0, 26 ha of apricots and 0.26 ha of sour cherries.

CONCLUSIONS

Fruit growing is an extremely important branch for Romania, and the SW Oltenia area offers wide possibilities for the creation of fruit-growing plantations with various species, considering the favourable climatic and edaphic conditions. At the level of the South-West Oltenia Region, the fruit-growing areas have increased, which leads to the idea that from this point of view, the impact of non-reimbursable funds was significant. The European programmes intended for this sector have allowed and will allow the increase in the competitiveness of fruit-growing holdings by equipping them with machines and equipment, establishing, modernizing and/or expanding processing units, establishing fruit-growing plantations, converting existing plantations, and also increasing the areas occupied by fruit-growing nurseries.

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