



REVIEW

of a doctoral dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in: Field of higher education: 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, Professional field: 3.8. Economics, Doctoral programme: Economics and Management (Agriculture)

Author of the doctoral dissertation: Butrint Bytyçi, doctoral student in independent form of study, at the Department of Economics, Faculty of Economics, Agricultural University - Plovdiv.

Topic of the doctoral dissertation: *THE ROLE OF AGRICULTURE IN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO*

Reviewer: Assoc. Prof. Dr Vanya Krasteva Georgieva, Agricultural University - Plovdiv, field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.8. Economics, scientific specialty Agricultural Economics,

appointed as a member of the scientific jury by Order No. ПД-16-907/03.10.2025 from the Rector of AU.

1. Brief presentation of the candidate.

Butrint Bytyçi is a doctoral student in independent form of study at the Department of Economics at the Agricultural University - Plovdiv. He holds a Master's degree in Management, which he obtained from Rochester Institute of Technology - Kosovo in 2018. His Bachelor's degree in Physical Education and Sport was completed at the University of Prishtina "Hasan Prishtina", Faculty of Physical Education and Sport in 2012.

From a professional perspective, Butrint Bytyçi has extensive and diverse experience. From 2023 to the present, he has been working as a Programme Manager at the European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA) in Prishtina, where he is responsible for managing European projects and coordinating activities in the Western Balkans region. Between 2018 and 2023, he held the position of Programme Manager at the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF), where he managed grant programmes and projects supporting civil society in Kosovo.

Butrint Bytyçi also has teaching experience as a physical education teacher at "Limania" Primary School (2012-2014), as well as coaching experience with youth football teams in Kosovo.

Butrint Bytyçi has excellent command of Albanian (native language), as well as good proficiency in English and basic knowledge of Serbian. This linguistic diversity is an asset for his work in an international and multicultural environment.

2. Relevance of the problem.

The presented doctoral dissertation addresses an extremely topical issue for the economic development of Kosovo and the Western Balkans region as a whole. The choice of topic is well justified for several reasons:

Firstly, agriculture continues to be a vital sector for the Kosovan economy, providing a significant share of employment (particularly in rural areas) and representing a strategic priority in the context of the country's efforts towards European integration. Although the share of agriculture in GDP is gradually declining (as is typical for developing economies), the sector retains its socio-economic importance through ensuring food security, sustaining rural communities and contributing to the trade balance.

Secondly, Kosovo is a young European state with a predominantly rural population and significant untapped agricultural potential. The country faces a number of structural challenges - fragmented farms, outdated technology, limited access to finance, weak integration into value chains and vulnerability to climate change. This context necessitates an in-depth analysis of opportunities for sectoral transformation. Thirdly, Kosovo's efforts to harmonise its national agricultural policy with the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) represent both a challenge and an opportunity. Examining the experience of newly acceded Member States and neighbouring Western Balkans countries provides valuable lessons and recommendations for adapting policies to local conditions.

Fourthly, from a scientific perspective, the study contributes to expanding the empirical evidence base regarding the relationship between agriculture and economic growth in the context of transition economies. The macroeconomic analysis, combined with institutional review and regional comparative assessment, enriches the academic discourse in the field of agricultural economics and development.

3. Aim, objectives, hypotheses and research methods.

The aim of the study is clearly formulated and consists of analysing the role of agriculture for the sustainable economic development of Kosovo through a comprehensive theoretical and empirical assessment of its structural characteristics, dynamics and potential for future growth, with particular emphasis on deriving policy-relevant conclusions for more effective economic and agricultural strategies.

The object of the study is the national economy of Kosovo, analysed through the dynamics of economic growth and pathways to sustainable development. The subject of the study is the impact of agriculture on the sustainable development of Kosovo, analysed through key indicators such as GDP growth, employment, rural livelihoods, trade balance and compliance with EU policies.

The objectives of the study are systematically structured and include: (1) presenting a theoretical framework of economic growth through a review of growth theories; (2) establishing the conceptual and empirical relationship between agriculture and sustainable economic development; (3) defining the methodological framework, including research design, data collection and analytical tools; (4) analysing the development of the agricultural sector in the context of the EU's CAP; (5) examining development trends and challenges in the Western Balkans and Turkey; (6) assessing Kosovo's macroeconomic environment; (7) evaluating the agricultural structure in Kosovo; (8) presenting empirical analysis of agriculture's contribution to economic development through econometric modelling; (9) identifying challenges and recommendations for promoting sustainable agricultural development.

The research methods are adequate to the stated aims and objectives. The methodological approach includes qualitative and econometric analysis, based on secondary data and comparative literature review. For the theoretical foundation, methods of analysis and synthesis are used to systematise concepts of growth and agricultural development, induction and deduction to formulate hypotheses and draw conclusions, historical method to trace the evolution of agriculture, and comparative analysis to assess similarities and differences with other Balkan countries and the EU. At the empirical level, descriptive statistics are applied to examine macroeconomic and agricultural indicators, and time series analysis to capture the dynamics of GDP, production and investment. To ensure statistical robustness and avoid spurious regressions, the Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) and Phillips-Perron (PP) stationarity tests are applied. In the empirical part, the Vector Error Correction Model (VECM) is applied to capture the short-term dynamics and long-term relationship between agricultural production, capital formation, education and GDP per capita in Kosovo.

4. Visualisation and presentation of results.

The doctoral dissertation is logically and consistently structured in three main chapters, covering the theoretical framework, the European and regional context, and the empirical analysis of Kosovo. The overall volume of the dissertation is appropriate for in-depth scientific analysis.

The first chapter presents an in-depth theoretical and methodological review of economic growth and the role of agriculture, covering classical, neoclassical and endogenous growth theories, as well as the specific role of agriculture as a driver of economic development.

The second chapter analyses the European and regional context of agricultural development, including a detailed review of the EU's agricultural structure, the development and reforms of the CAP, the specific challenges for new Member States, and the agricultural sector and policies in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

The third chapter presents the empirical analysis of Kosovo, including the macroeconomic environment and structural characteristics of the economy, public infrastructure and limiting factors, agricultural production and competitiveness, and most importantly - an econometric study of the relationship between agriculture and economic growth.

The study is richly illustrated with statistical data, tables and graphs. The dissertation contains 30 tables and 43 figures, which effectively illustrate key trends, structural

characteristics and empirical results. The econometric analysis used is clearly presented, including stationarity tests, cointegration analysis and VECM models. The empirical results show that agricultural production, capital formation and education have a statistically significant positive effect on GDP per capita in Kosovo. The long-term equilibrium coefficients show that a 1% increase in agricultural production leads to approximately a 0.79% increase in GDP per capita, demonstrating the strong relationship between agriculture and economic growth.

5. Discussion of results and literature used.

The discussion of the results is in-depth and balanced. The author successfully links the empirical findings with the theoretical framework and regional context, highlighting the practical implications for policy. The results from the econometric analysis are correctly interpreted and placed in the broader context of Kosovo's economic development.

The dissertation demonstrates in-depth knowledge of the issues through the use of rich and diverse scientific literature. A total of 264 literature sources are used, including classical and contemporary works in the field of economic growth, agricultural economics, regional development and policy analysis.

The cited sources include authoritative scientific publications in renowned international journals, official documents of the European Union, the World Bank, FAO and other international organisations, statistical data from the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS) and Eurostat, as well as national strategic documents and policy frameworks. The bibliography is current and includes both foundational works and the latest publications in the field.

The dissertation demonstrates the author's ability to synthesise theoretical frameworks, empirical data and policy analyses into an in-depth and critical study. The discussion includes both the strengths and limitations of the methodology used, which further enhances the academic value of the work.

6. Contributions of the doctoral dissertation.

Based on the analysis of the presented doctoral dissertation and abstract, I accept the following scientific-theoretical and scientific-applied contributions:

Scientific-theoretical contributions:

- The systematic linking of classical economic growth theories with modern endogenous approaches, which provides a conceptual framework for analysing small economies with a significant role for the agricultural sector.
- The development of theoretical understanding of the challenges facing policy harmonisation in candidate countries and potential candidates for EU membership, through comparison of CAP principles and reforms with the political environment in agriculture in Kosovo and the Western Balkans.
- The conceptualisation of the structural dependence between macroeconomic conditions and the performance of the agricultural sector, with emphasis on the role of agriculture as a driver of growth and a stabilising factor.

- The proposal of a theoretical framework that integrates innovations, sustainability, policy alignment and market orientation into a model for assessing agricultural competitiveness in transition economies.

Scientific-applied contributions:

- The presentation of econometric evidence on the effects of agricultural production, capital formation and human capital on GDP per capita in Kosovo, through the use of the Johansen cointegration method and the Vector Error Correction Model (VECM).
- The development of recommendations for aligning Kosovo's agricultural policies with the CAP 2023-2027 framework, including strategic planning, competitiveness measures, sustainability and improving quality of life in rural areas.
- The identification of institutional, financial and infrastructural challenges through comparative analysis with the EU and the Western Balkans, which need to be overcome to improve sectoral efficiency.
- The proposal of a set of measurable indicators for monitoring progress in agricultural competitiveness, sustainability and policy harmonisation, which can be applied in Kosovo's Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development.

7. Critical remarks and questions.

The empirical analysis covers the period 2009-2020, which does not allow for an assessment of the impact of more recent economic shocks, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent changes in global supply chains.

The econometric model used, whilst methodologically correct, could be enriched by including additional control variables such as foreign direct investment, technological intensity and climatic factors.

The study is focused primarily on quantitative analysis, with limited qualitative methods (interviews with farmers, farm case studies), which would enrich understanding of microeconomic processes in the sector.

I would like to recommend that the doctoral candidate continues his scientific pursuits and developments in the field of the dissertation topic, which will contribute to better utilisation of the achieved scientific and scientific-applied contributions.

8. Published articles and citations.

The three publications of the doctoral candidate are thematically related to the doctoral dissertation and demonstrate his ability to extract and publish scientific results from his research. The publications cover fundamental aspects of the dissertation – the agricultural sector, economic development and policy frameworks in Kosovo. Information regarding citations of these publications is not available at the time of preparing this review.

The presented abstract objectively reflects the structure and content of the doctoral dissertation.

CONCLUSION:

Based on the various research methods learned and applied by the doctoral candidate, the correctly derived findings, generalisations and conclusions made, I

believe that the presented doctoral dissertation meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations of the Agricultural University for its implementation, which gives me grounds to evaluate it **POSITIVELY**.

I would like to propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to also vote positively and award Butrint Bytyçi the educational and scientific degree "**Doctor**" in the scientific speciality Economics and Management (Agriculture).

Date: 30.10.2025 г.
Plovdiv

REVIEWER:

Подписите в този документ са заличени

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