



OPINION

on the dissertation for obtaining the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in:
Area of higher education: 3.0 Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, Professional
field: 3.8 Economics, Scientific specialty: Economics and Management
(Agriculture)

Author of the dissertation: Butrint Yusuf Bitici, independent PhD student at the
Department of Economics, Agricultural University – Plovdiv

Title of the dissertation: THE ROLE OF AGRICULTURE FOR THE ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO

Reviewer: Prof. Dr. Dimo Atanasov Atanasov, Agricultural University – Plovdiv,
Area of higher education: 3.0 Social, Economic and Legal Sciences,
Professional field: 3.8 Economics, Scientific specialty: Economics and Management
(Agriculture), appointed as a member of the scientific jury by Order No. RD-16-
970/03.10.2025 of the Rector of the Agricultural University.

1. Relevance of the Problem

Agriculture is a fundamental pillar of Kosovo's economy, providing employment, rural income, and food security. However, it faces a number of challenges, such as land fragmentation, outdated technology, climate change, market instability, and others, that make it unsustainable. Despite these difficulties, the sector possesses significant potential due to the country's geographical location, the availability of a young labor force, and its proximity to EU markets.

This study analyzes the role of agriculture in the sustainable development of Kosovo through theoretical, methodological, and practical approaches, assessing its impact on GDP, employment, the trade balance, and the country's integration into the European Union.

The research is timely and relevant, as it presents agriculture as a strategic driver of inclusive growth and policy reform, offering valuable insights and solutions for development planning as well as for broader regional discussions on transition and sustainability.

2. Purpose, Objectives, Hypotheses, and Research Methods

The purpose of the study – *“to analyze the role of agriculture in the sustainable economic development of Kosovo through an extensive theoretical and empirical*

assessment of its structural characteristics, dynamics, and growth potential, with an emphasis on deriving relevant policies and support strategies” is well formulated.

The objectives through which the PhD student achieves the research purpose are also appropriately chosen, namely: to study the theoretical and methodological foundations; to select analytical tools and economic models for assessing the impact of agriculture on Kosovo’s economic development in the context of the EU and global trends, as well as through regional comparison with the Western Balkans and Turkey; to evaluate the macroeconomic environment and structural constraints to progress; and to propose recommendations for the sustainable development of the sector.

3. Illustration and Presentation of the Obtained Results

The use of **30** tables and 43 figures provides effective visualization throughout the dissertation. This demonstrates that the candidate has a strong ability to use various types of tables and graphs, to synthesize large volumes of information, and to present it in a clear and comprehensible manner.

4. Discussion of the Results and Literature Used

In the first chapter, the author examines concepts, theories, and models of economic growth – from classical and neoclassical to more contemporary endogenous models, which provide a framework for understanding the role of various sectors, including agriculture. Special attention is given to the factors of growth such as capital, human resources, technology, institutional environment, and trade. Agriculture is highlighted as a key driver of economic development, contributing to food security, employment, and poverty reduction. The dissertation also discusses agricultural policies for sustainable development, innovation and technology in the sector, as well as structural challenges such as land fragmentation, limited access to finance, and vulnerability to climate change. The methodological approach combines theoretical review, policy analysis, and econometric modeling, enabling a comprehensive assessment of agriculture and its role in economic growth and sustainable development.

The second chapter examines the broader European and regional context of agricultural development. It presents the structure of agriculture and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the EU, including reforms up to the 2023 – 2027 programming period. The effects of the CAP on productivity, competitiveness, and sustainable rural development are analyzed. Agricultural policies in the Western Balkans and Turkey are also reviewed, with a comparative analysis to Kosovo. Special attention is given to EU harmonization, investment potential, institutional modernization, and access to funds, while acknowledging the limitations to full integration.

The third chapter focuses on Kosovo’s national economy, combining structural analysis and empirical research. It examines the macroeconomic environment, structural characteristics, infrastructure, limiting factors, and development risks. Particular emphasis is placed on the relationship between macroeconomic challenges (unemployment, trade imbalance, external dependence) and agricultural development. The chapter analyzes

agricultural production, competitiveness, market orientation, modernization opportunities, diversification, and the development of value chains. National policies, financial mechanisms, and their alignment with EU standards are also evaluated.

Empirical analysis using econometric models demonstrates the interaction between agricultural production, investment, education, and capital formation with Kosovo's GDP.

The author provides recommendations including structural reforms, investments in infrastructure and technology, improvements in education, enhanced access to finance, and strengthened institutional coordination, aiming to increase competitiveness, support sustainable development, and position agriculture as a strategic driver of inclusive growth in Kosovo.

A total of 264 information sources were used, carefully selected according to the research objectives, cited correctly, and presented at the end of the dissertation.

5. Contributions of the Dissertation

I accept the presented summary of the research contributions. They can be grouped as follows:

Scientific-Theoretical Contributions

1. **Synthesis of classical, neoclassical, and endogenous growth theories in the context of Kosovo.** The study systematically links classical economic growth theories with modern endogenous approaches, providing a comprehensive conceptual framework for analyzing small economies where the agricultural sector plays a significant role.
2. **Adaptation of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to the economic structure of the Western Balkans.** By comparing the principles and reforms of the CAP with the political environment in Kosovo and the Western Balkans, the study develops a theoretical understanding of the challenges of policy harmonization in candidate and potential candidate countries for EU membership.
3. **Link between macroeconomic stability and agricultural development.** The dissertation conceptualizes the structural dependence between macroeconomic conditions and the performance of the agricultural sector, emphasizing agriculture's role both as a growth driver and as a stabilizing factor during economic instability.
4. **Multidimensional framework for agricultural competitiveness.** A theoretical framework is proposed that integrates innovation, sustainability, policy alignment, and market orientation into a unified model for assessing agricultural competitiveness in transition economies.

Applied-Scientific Contributions

1. **Empirical evidence on the role of agriculture in Kosovo's economic growth.** Using the Johansen cointegration method and the Vector Error Correction Model (VECM), the dissertation provides econometric evidence on the short- and long-term effects of agricultural production, capital formation, and human capital on Kosovo's GDP per capita.
2. **Policy recommendations for agricultural modernization and EU integration.** The study offers concrete, evidence-based recommendations for aligning Kosovo's agricultural policies with the CAP 2023–2027 framework, focusing on strategic planning, measures for competitiveness,

sustainability, and improving the quality of life in rural areas.

3. **Identification of structural gaps in agricultural policy implementation.** Through comparative analysis with the EU and the Western Balkans, the research identifies the main institutional, financial, and infrastructural challenges that need to be addressed to enhance the sector's effectiveness.

4. **Framework for monitoring and evaluation.** The study proposes a set of measurable indicators to track progress in agricultural competitiveness, sustainability, and policy harmonization, which can be integrated into Kosovo's Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development.

6. Critical Remarks and Questions

I have no serious critical remarks regarding the author. My recommendation is for him to be bolder in his analysis and to express his personal opinion more assertively on various topics and aspects. It is clear that he is well-acquainted with the researched problem, demonstrates strong analytical skills, but his personal interpretation of the results should stand out more prominently.

7. Published Articles and Citations

The candidate has presented a summary of published articles related to the dissertation. There are three articles, all authored independently. The citations are correct. The autoreferat objectively reflects the structure and content of the dissertation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the various research methods applied by the PhD student, the properly conducted studies, and the drawn summaries and conclusions, I consider that the presented dissertation meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations of the Agricultural University Plovdiv for its application. This provides me with grounds to give it a **positive evaluation**.

I also allow myself to recommend that the esteemed Scientific Jury vote positively and award **Butrint Yusuf Bitici** the educational and scientific degree "**Doctor**" in the scientific specialty "**Economics and Management (Agriculture)**".

Date: 27.10.2025 r.
Plovdiv

REVIEWER:
(Prof. Dr. D. Atanasov)