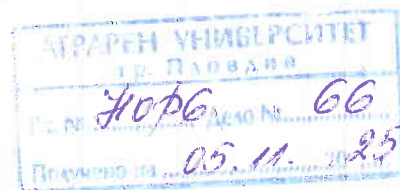




TRAKIA UNIVERSITY – STARA ZAGORA

Faculty of Economics

REVIEW



on a PhD thesis for obtaining the educational and scientific degree “**Doctor**” in: Field of Higher Education 3. *Social, Economic and Legal Sciences*; Professional Field 3.8. *Economics*; Scientific Specialty *Economics and Management (Agriculture)*

Author of the PhD Thesis: Georgi Borisov Gerov

part-time PhD student at the Department of "ECONOMICS" at Agricultural University, Plovdiv

Theme of the PhD Thesis: ADAPTATION OF BULGARIAN AGRICULTURE: BALANCING NATIONAL INTERESTS AND THE EU GREEN POLICIES

Reviewer: Prof. Dr. Nadka Stefanova Kostadinova

Trakia University, Stara Zagora, Field of Higher Education 3. *Social, Economic and Legal Sciences*; Professional Field 3.8. *Economics*; Scientific Specialty *Economics and Management (Agriculture, Management Accounting)* appointed as a member of the Scientific Jury with Order № RD-16-969/03.10.2025 by the Rector of the Agricultural University, Plovdiv, and a decision from the first meeting of the Scientific Jury, Protocol № DZ-89.

1. Short Introduction of the Candidate.

The PhD student, **Georgi Borisov Gerov**, graduated with an educational qualification degree (EQD) "Master" in "Agrarian Economics" in 2001 from AU-Plovdiv. From March 2000 to December 2006, he was an Assistant Operations Manager in a transport company in England. From January 2007 to April 2008, he worked as a Warehouse Manager in England. From April 2008 to December 2008, he was an Operations Manager in a food and beverage industry company in Poland.

From December 2008 to October 2013, he worked as General Director of a similar company in Hungary. From December 2013 to January 2015, he was Executive Director of a company in the Czech Republic. From February 2015 to June 2016, he was Head of Business Development for a marketing company in the Netherlands. From August 2016 to December 2017, he was Head of Product Management for a trading company in England. From January 2018 to June 2018, he was Interim Executive Director, Food and Beverage Industry Division, in Budapest, Hungary. From July 2018 to January 2022, he was Interim Production Director for a British company for the production and trade of ready-made food mixes and salads in Prague, Czech Republic.

In January 2022, he was enrolled in part-time PhD studies at the Department of "Economics," AU Plovdiv, Faculty of Economics, and was dismissed with the right to defense from 30.09.2025, Order № RD-26-66/03.10.2025. He is proficient in English, Czech, Greek, and Russian at an excellent level, and Polish and Hungarian at a basic level. He possesses excellent computer and negotiation skills.

2. Relevance of the Problem.

The relevance of the PhD thesis is determined by the necessity for a strategic balance between European environmental goals and Bulgarian national interests. The tension between the EU's green ambitions and the realities of Bulgarian agriculture is not merely a result of technical incompatibilities but reflects a deeper deficit of strategic subjectivity and institutional readiness for the more active involvement of rural communities. As a result, there arises a need for in-depth scientific research and the development of a methodological framework for the adaptation of agriculture to the EU's green policies.

3. Aim, Tasks, Hypotheses, and Methods of Research.

The aim of the research is clearly and precisely formulated. The tasks of the research, the subject, and the object are logically connected with the stated aim. In

accordance with the set aim and tasks, the research methodology includes several main groups of methods: methods of analysis, synthesis, induction and deduction, abstraction; statistical methods for correlation and regression analysis, analysis of time trends and moving averages to track long-term changes in agrarian indicators, the construction and use of index numbers, which are used for sub-sector analysis and comparison between economic models. The results of the research are presented using methods of tabular grouping and graphical data analysis, which makes a very good impression.

The main research thesis has been confirmed using this methodology.

4. Visualization and Presentation of the Obtained Results.

The PhD thesis is excellently visualized, structured into an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, and a list of references with a total volume of 245 standard pages. A good balance has been achieved regarding the length of the individual chapters. A classic structuring approach has been adopted, with clearly distinguishable and logically interconnected theoretical, methodological-analytical, and project parts, which, in their entirety, constitute an independent, complete scientific study. The dissertation is illustrated with 28 tables and 23 figures. 236 literature sources were used, of which 235 are in Latin script.

5. Discussion of the Results and References.

In Chapter One, the theoretical foundations and conceptual frameworks of agricultural adaptation are thoroughly examined, emphasizing the significance of the EU's Green Policies, national interests, and the specific characteristics of Bulgarian agriculture.

The focus is placed on conflicting and synergistic points between local needs and European regulations, as well as on deeply entrenched structural problems related to the mismatch between the homogenizing approach of the EU and the heterogeneity of national agrarian systems. Both synergistic and conflicting areas between local

specifics and the European regulatory framework are identified. Thus, Chapter One establishes a solid theoretical foundation for the research framework upon which the empirical and strategic analyses in the PhD thesis are built.

In Chapter Two, the PhD student presents a methodological framework and analytical approach to the study of adaptation in agriculture. The data sources for the research are indicated: Eurostat, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Bank, the National Statistical Institute, the Ministry of Agriculture, the State Fund "Agriculture," and others. The time scope covers the period from 1990 to 2022, and the geographical scope is national with an emphasis on regional differences (NUTS 2 level).

The selection and characteristics of the indicators are logically justified, including agrarian indices, ecological, economic, demographic, and production indicators. An assessment of dynamics is presented using trends and moving averages, along with the application of correlation and regression analysis. The research thesis and the 16 formulated hypotheses, which reflect the complex nature of adaptation, are presented very precisely and through visualization. In this way, the PhD student creates a stable foundation for the subsequent empirical section of the research. The handling of the conceptual apparatus, obviously based on a broad theoretical foundation, makes a very good impression.

Chapter Three is dedicated to an empirical analysis of the factors for adaptation of Bulgarian agriculture. An in-depth analysis of the dynamics of selected macroeconomic, social, and ecological indicators has been performed with the aim of outlining the long-term trends in Bulgarian agriculture. The analysis is based on empirical data for the period after 1996, covering indicators critical to the sector such as the animal density index, areas with permanent crops, persons employed in agriculture, and others. These indicators were selected based on in-depth correlation and regression diagnostics. The use of dynamic analysis allows the PhD student to reveal not only the direction of development but also the strength and frequency of deviations from long-term trends.

Here, the PhD student consistently executes the methodology from Chapter Two, achieving the main goal of the dissertation. The stated research tasks have been accomplished, and the research thesis has been defended.

In *Chapter Four*, strategic scenarios and policies for the adaptation of agriculture are presented. The reorientation of European funds towards national priorities is justified. Emphasis is placed on cooperative and integration models for territorial consolidation. The PhD student proposes the development of a Cooperative Agrarian-Climate Index (CACI) – an integrated metric designed to comparatively analyze the sustainability of agricultural cooperatives relative to individual producers. Strategies for digitalization and precision agriculture are developed, as well as scenarios for constructive collaboration between exports and ecology. Attention is paid to the feedback loop between practical results and theoretical frameworks. This chapter offers a multi-layered model of sustainability in which theory is supplemented by the practical results of the research.

Based on the analyses conducted in the PhD thesis, its conclusion presents a number of significant findings that reflect the adaptation potential of Bulgarian agriculture in the context of Bulgarian green policies. Based on these findings, the PhD student formulates recommendations directed towards the state administration, European institutions, as well as the agrarian scientific community.

I consider the PhD thesis to be original and in-depth scientific study, the personal work of the author. The PhD student has complied with the rules of scientific ethics, correctly citing the literature sources used. The calculation procedures and the statistical processing of the empirical data have been correctly performed. The PhD thesis is excellently illustrated and visualized.

The dissertation submitted to me for review proves that the author has acquired in-depth theoretical knowledge of the researched problem and possesses the ability to conduct independent scientific research.

6. Scientific Contributions of the PhD thesis.

As a result of the work on the PhD thesis, scientific-theoretical and practical-applied contributions have been derived. I highly value the scientific and scientific-applied contributions stated by the PhD student.

I accept the statement of contributions. It realistically reflects the results achieved in the PhD thesis and highlights its significance and merits.

7. Critical Notes and Questions.

It is notable that the literature used in the dissertation is entirely in Latin script with an extremely limited number of Bulgarian authors. I believe the conducted research would have benefited from reflecting the studies of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Maria Kotseva-Tikova, Assoc. Prof. DSc Elitsa Petrova, and others. This remark does not diminish the merits of the dissertation.

I have the following question: What are the possibilities for the research results to reach the state administration, European institutions, and others?

I recommend that the PhD student, in his future scientific work, publishes his research in specialized, peer-reviewed, and indexed scientific journals.

8. Publications and Citations.

PhD student presented five publications in English. Three of these are scientific articles, two of which are solo-authored, and two are scientific reports in co-authorship. With a required minimum of 30 points, the PhD student has achieved 76.66 points. Thus, the requirement of Article 9 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on Academic Development in the Republic of Bulgaria (PPZRASRB) for admission to defense is met.

The submitted abstract, with a volume of 41 pages, objectively reflects the structure and content of the PhD thesis, and the main scientific and applied results achieved.

CONCLUSION:

The PhD thesis of the PhD student **Georgi Borisov Gerov** is a complete, independent scientific study dedicated to current economic problems. The set aim and tasks of the research have been successfully fulfilled. I believe that the presented dissertation meets the requirements of the Law on Academic Development in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB) and the Regulations of the Agricultural University for its implementation, which gives me grounds to give it a **POSITIVE** assessment.

I take the liberty of proposing that the esteemed Scientific Jury also votes positively and awards **Georgi Borisov Gerov**, part-time PhD student at the Department of "ECONOMICS" at the Agricultural University, Plovdiv, the educational and scientific degree "**Doctor**" in the scientific specialty *Economics and Management (Agriculture)*.

Подписите в този документ са заличени

28.10.2025 г

Stara Zagora

Е във връзка с чл.4, т.1 от Регламент (ЕС) 2016/679

(Общ Регламент относно защитата на данни).