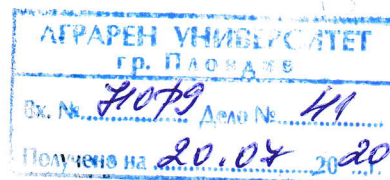


OPINION



on a dissertation 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: Organization and management (agriculture and sub-sectors).

Author of the dissertation: JELENA MIROSLAV MILANOVICH, part-time doctoral student at the Department of Management and Marketing at the Agricultural University, Plovdiv

Dissertation topic: "COMPETITIVENESS OF THE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS IN SERBIA"

Reviewer: Assoc. Prof. VALENTINA LYUBENOVA NIKOLOVA-ALEXIEVA, University of Food Technologies-Plovdiv, field of higher education: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field: 3.8 Economics, scientific specialty: "Economics and Management", appointed as a member of the scientific jury with order № RD-16-267 / 05.03.2020 by the Rector of AU.

1. Relevance of the problem.

Increasing the competitiveness of Serbian agriculture is directly related to expanding exports of agricultural products to both the EU and the rest of the Balkans and is crucial for the establishment of agricultural production as an important sector in the country's economy.

The urgency of the problem is determined by the importance of agriculture for the national economy of Serbia, arising from the large share that this sector occupies in GDP, national income, exports and employment.

In this regard, I believe that the researched problem related to the maintenance and development of a competitive distribution system of agricultural products in Serbia is relevant in theoretical and scientific-applied aspect.

2. Purpose, tasks, hypotheses and research methods.

The topicality and significance of the researched issues are successfully argued in the introduction of the dissertation. The research thesis is formulated, according to which by maintaining and developing a competitive distribution system of agricultural products, sustainable development of both rural areas and agriculture as an important sector of the national economy of the Republic of Serbia is achieved. The thesis is proved in the course of the research by verifying working hypotheses explaining the importance of the factors on the competitiveness of the distribution system of agricultural products. The goal and the work tasks related to its

achievement are correctly defined, as well as the subject and the object of development.

The chosen methodology and research tools correspond to the complex, multidimensional nature of the research. The functional and structural approach, upgrading of already made researches, theoretical analysis and synthesis, collection, systematization and generalization of statistical data and their graphic, tabular and schematic presentation, content analysis are used. The following methods are used to prove the conceptual thesis: correlation analysis and regression analysis, graphical analysis and comparative analysis.

The use of quantitative and qualitative methods, sample surveys and in-depth interviews makes an excellent impression.

A survey of 126 respondents on the territory of Serbia was used to achieve the main goal and the set tasks. Data processing is performed using the statistical software SPSS.

All this gives grounds to conclude that Jelena Milanovic is well acquainted with the modern literature on the researched problem and has the necessary theoretical level for research and analysis of economic problems, formulation and testing of hypotheses, through empirical evidence and derivation of scientific summaries.

3. Visualization and presentation of the obtained results.

The presented dissertation is in a volume of 184 pages. Structurally, it includes an introduction, 3 chapters and a conclusion. The results are obtained through modern tools and are illustrated with appropriately selected 146 tables and 20 diagrams, which is proof of the qualities of the doctoral student as a very good researcher.

The structure of the dissertation research is logically constructed and corresponds to the set goal and tasks. The work contains concrete results and empirical evidence that objectively reflect the real achievements of the research.

4. Discussion of the results and used literature.

The introduction substantiates the topicality of the topic, presents the scientific thesis, the object and subject of research, the goals and objectives of the research, the methods used and the scientific and applied contributions.

The first chapter examines the theoretical foundations of research, clarifying the key concepts - competitiveness, factors influencing competitiveness, approaches to measuring competitiveness, the specifics of competitiveness in agriculture and its contribution to rural development. The types of distribution channels and the elements of the physical distribution of agricultural products are also considered, as well as the modern technologies applied in the distribution and logistics sector.

The second chapter of the dissertation describes the methodological tools of the research. A questionnaire has been developed to assess the factors influencing

the competitiveness of the system for distribution of agricultural products. The questionnaire consists of 12 questions describing each element of the physical distribution of agricultural products and 15 questions describing the competitiveness of the distribution system. The answers are evaluated on a liqueur scale.

The third chapter presents two models of influencing factors. Within these models, through the application of the method of multiple correlation and the method of regression analysis, the connections between the factors and the direction of influence on the competitiveness of the system for distribution of agricultural products are studied.

The conclusion summarizes the results obtained from the empirical study.

The dissertation analyzes the current scientific achievements in the field of distribution and supply chains. The bibliographic reference includes a total of 137 sources in English. The indicated literature sources are current and directly related to the topic of the dissertation.

The presented bibliography is a proof of the wide erudition and the very good knowledge of the scientific literature on the topic of the dissertation.

The systematizations and generalizations made show in-depth and conscientious work with the literature, skills for application of analytical and deductive techniques for processing a significant amount of information with different research methods.

5. Contributions of the dissertation.

At the end of the abstract there is a report on the claimed contributions. Contributions can be divided into scientific and scientific-applied.

Scientific contributions include the development of conceptual models of influencing factors as a framework for assessing competitiveness.

The scientific-applied ones include:

- the analysis of the competitiveness of the distribution system with agricultural products in the Republic of Serbia and the establishment of the critical factors in the organization and development of the distribution system with agricultural products;
- the proposed are models of competitive distribution systems that can be used in practice.

With full conviction I accept the contributions as real, reliable and proven in the course of the dissertation research. I consider the contribution achievements to be a personal work of the doctoral student.

6. Critical remarks and questions.

The presented dissertation work is a complete, completed study, which has indisputable contributions and indisputable qualities, but as the first significant study of the doctoral student, I allow myself to give some recommendations:

- It is recommended when making a literature review to show the critical thinking and the author's position of the doctoral student.
- The formulation of the conclusions after each part could be in a more generalizing and synthesized form, rather than descriptive. In this way, greater clarity and certainty would be achieved.

Question: How can the Internet of Things and Blockchain technologies affect agricultural supply chains and add value to the customer?

7. Published articles and citations.

Five scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation are presented. Three of them are co-authored and two are independent. The presented abstract objectively reflects the structure and content of the dissertation.

CONCLUSION:

Given the merits of the dissertation, the relevance and complexity of the researched problems, the need to find effective solutions for them in practice, the good theoretical level of the researched and analyzed problems, it can be summarized that the presented dissertation meets the normative criteria for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" / ZRASRB, art. 6, para 2 and para 3 and the Regulations of the Agrarian University for its application /.

These results of the study, dedicated to the "**Competitiveness of the distribution systems of agricultural products in Serbia**" provide sufficient grounds for **HIGH EVALUATION** of the scientific potential and research opportunities of the doctoral student.

All this allows me to confidently vote **POSITIVE** for the award of Jelena Miroslav Milanovic to the scientific and educational degree "Doctor" in the professional field 3.8. "Economics", scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Agriculture and Subsectors)".

Date: 12.07.2020

Plovdiv

PRODUCED BY

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(Assoc. Prof. Valentina Nikolova-Alexieva, PhD)