

LITERATURE REVIEW

of dissertation for obtaining a doctorate degree in: higher education field: 3. Social, business and legal sciences, professional field: 3.8 Economics, scientific field: Organization and management (agriculture and sub-sectors).

Author of the dissertation: Jelena Miroslov Milanovic – extramural PhD student at the Department of Management and Marketing at the Agricultural University, Plovdiv.

Theme of the dissertation: “Competitiveness of agricultural products distribution systems in Serbia”.

Dissertation reviewer: Prof. Asen Ivanov Konarev PhD in Economics, University of Food Technology - Plovdiv, higher education field: 3. Social, business and legal sciences, professional field: 3.8 Economics, scientific field: Economics and Management (by branches), appointed for a Member of the Scientific Jury with Order No. ПД-16-267 / 05.03.2020 of the Rector of the Agricultural University - Plovdiv.

1. Brief introduction of the applicant

Jelena Milanovic was born on 14th December, 1969 in Belgrade, Serbia. She graduated her secondary education at the Technical School, Belgrade, majoring in Civil Engineering Technician in 1989.

She graduated her higher education at the Faculty of Business Economics and Entrepreneurship at the University of Belgrade, acquiring the qualification "Master - Economist" in 2016.

For some time, she worked as a translator in the fast food business company "McDonald's" - Belgrade branch, and since 2003 she has been the director of the travel agency "Viva", Belgrade.

She is fluent in English, knows and uses successfully Microsoft Windows, Word, Excel, Internet.

In her personal profile she states that she is diligent, extremely responsible and communicative, inventive, a good team player, independent, striving to receive further professional development and to acquire new knowledge and skills.

2. Relevance of the problem

Jelena Milanovic has made serious efforts to convincingly substantiate the relevance of the topic of the dissertation, including the following arguments:

- the large share of agriculture in GDP, national income, exports and employment in recent years
- the loss of market positions;

- the development of organic production and the growing demand for organic products;
- the situation of rural areas in Serbia;
- migration processes along the "village-city" route;
- the dependence of the economic structure of rural areas on the primary sectors.

The topicality of the dissertation is well related to the following fundamental components of the strategy for the development of agribusiness in Serbia:

- optimal use of available resources;
- increasing the intensity (yield) of production;
- increasing the volume of total production;
- increase in exports of agricultural products, etc.

The growing level of relevance is successfully justified by the main challenges to the development of agriculture and rural areas.

I believe that the author's abstract does not sufficiently substantiate the relevance and significance of the increase in the competitiveness of the distribution systems themselves - a gap that has been overcome in the dissertation itself.

3. Purpose, tasks, hypotheses and research methods.

I believe that the purpose of the dissertation is well-formulated and rationally specified into two main processes:

- analysis and disclosure of the determining factors of the competitiveness of the distribution system of agricultural products;
- compiling and proposing models to increase this competitiveness.

I accept the presented four tasks as the main ones, because in order to achieve the goal Jelena Milanović has solved other tasks, especially in connection with the application of the modeling method.

The subject and object of research are correctly formulated.

The thesis of the dissertation is convincingly related to the sustainable development of agriculture and rural areas of Serbia. The research hypotheses are grouped within two working models of the factors that influenced the competitiveness of the distribution systems of agricultural products.

The presented six research approaches and methods are appropriate and sufficient for the formation of tools for achieving the goal and solving the tasks of the dissertation.

4. Visualization and presentation of the results obtained

The dissertation is very well-illustrated:

- 146 tables;
- 18 figures;
- 102 graphics;
- 20 diagrams.

It is a pleasure to read and review such a dissertation.

All tables, figures, graphs and diagrams are well-formed and numbered, and the source is very well understood (author's product or borrowing from the used literature).

I believe that the dissertation is at a very high level according to the criterion of "visualization and presentation of results".

5. Discussion of the results and the literature used.

The dissertation is relatively large in volume - 196 pages, including applications, which are 13 pages. Structurally, it has 3 main parts.

In the first chapter, the theoretical foundations of the research are studied and presented in depth, and Jelena Milanović consistently presents:

- competitiveness as a conceptual definition;
- the factors that affect competitiveness;
- approaches to measuring competitiveness;
- the specifics of competitiveness in agriculture;
- the methods in which competitiveness contributes to rural development.

In the second part of this chapter, the dissertation successfully identifies the main factors defining the distribution network in agriculture. Discovered and well-characterized are:

- distribution channels;
- the elements of the physical distribution of agricultural products;
- the technologies applied in the distribution and logistics sector.

The second chapter is devoted to the methodology and research methodology. The serious research of the theoretical and empirical results from previous scientific researches on the problems of the dissertation makes a good impression. The reasons are presented, and the questionnaire for determining the influence of the factors participating in the models of competitiveness of the system for distribution of agricultural products has been compiled.

The third chapter presents and applies very well the statistical approaches and methods for measuring the impact of all elements on the distribution system of agricultural products.

The dissertation author compiles and tests two models, which she tests for reliability. The methods of multiple correlation and regression analysis are correctly applied to study the relationships between the factors involved in the construction of the two models.

In the conclusion, the main results of the research are presented in a summary form, and guidelines for further studies of the system for distribution of agricultural products in Serbia are marked.

The literature used is presented in 137 sources. A significant part of Internet sources have been used. The literature is well-arranged. There are many sources from recent years, which shows that Jelena Milanovic has studied the current state of the problem.

6. Dissertation contributions

I accept the reference of the contributions of the dissertation, distinguishing them as follows:

- **Scientific contributions:**

- the clarified nature of the competitiveness of the distribution system with proven importance for the sustainable development of agriculture and rural areas;
- the conceptual framework for assessing the competitiveness of the distribution system of agricultural products in the Republic of Serbia.

- **Scientific - applied:**

- the analysis and assessment of the competitiveness of the distribution systems of agricultural products in the specific conditions of Serbia;
- the identified critical factors of the organization and development of the distribution system;
- the developed models for building competitive distribution systems to be used in practice.

I believe that the contributions are the result of the development of the dissertation and are the personal work of Jelena Milanovic.

7. Critical notes and questions

I objectively assess the difficulties that arise in the management of foreign doctoral students. Nevertheless, I allow myself to make critical remarks on the preparation of the abstract and especially on its translation.

I highly appreciate the efforts of the members of the Department of Management and Marketing at the Agricultural University for the quality training of a large number of foreign doctoral students during the past term. The current dissertation I am reviewing is convincing proof of this assessment of mine.

I have the following question to the doctoral student:

"Apart from the multiple correlation and the methods of regression analysis, can other methods be used to reveal the strategic factors for the development of the distribution system of agricultural products?"

8. Published articles and citations

A list of 5 publications on the dissertation is presented, which in quantitative terms meet the requirements of the Regulations of the Agricultural University of Plovdiv. They are distributed as follows:

- independent - 3 pieces
- in co-authorship - 2 pieces

In the collective publications the doctoral student is a leading author in two publications. No reference is provided for the cited.

The presented abstract objectively reflects the structure and content of the dissertation. As I pointed out, it could be drawn up more precisely.


Conclusion

Based on the various research methods and the applied by the doctoral student, the correctly

performed experiments, the summaries made and the conclusions drawn, I believe that the presented dissertation corresponds to the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations of the Agrarian University for its proposal, which gives me a reason to rate it POSITIVE.

I also allow to propose to the Honorable Jury to vote positively and award Jelena Miroslav Milanovic the educational-qualification degree PhD in Organization and Management.

29.06.2020
The city of Plovdiv

The review was prepared by: 
Prof A. Konarev, PhD in Economics