

АГРАРЕН УНИВЕРСИТЕТ гр. ПЛОВДИВ	
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SCIENTIFIC OPINION

On dissertation for obtain the Educational and Scientific Degree 'Doctor' (PhD) in Higher Education: 3.0. Social, Business and Legal Sciences, Professional Field: 3.8. Economics, Scientific Specialty: "Organization and management" (agriculture and sub-sectors).

Author of the dissertation: Dragan Metodya Miladinovski, PhD student in self-study at the Department of "Management and Marketing".

Doctoral thesis topic: Management and development of competitiveness of agricultural enterprises in the Republic of North Macedonia.

Scientific opinion: Assoc. Prof. Snezhinka Konstantinova Stoyanova, PhD, University of Food Technologies – Plovdiv, 3.0. Social, Business and Legal Sciences, Professional Field: 3.8. Economics, appointed as a member of the Scientific Jury by order No. RD-16-481 of 05.05.2022 from the Rector of the Agricultural University – Plovdiv.

1. Relevance of the problem.

The competitiveness of enterprises is a fundamental economic problem, the relevance of which is constantly increasing. The decisive factor in corporate growth is the competitiveness of business units. The main engine of economic growth in individual countries is the corporate growth of enterprises. The foundation of the well-being of nations and its growth is determined to the highest degree by economic growth. This chain of causation confirms the great importance and growing relevance of the problems for the development and effective management of the competitiveness of enterprises in different sectors of the economy.

The importance of the theoretical substantiation and practical solution of the problems of the competitiveness of local enterprises depends on many factors, but perhaps one of the most important is the degree of openness of the national economy to foreign markets. The Republic of North Macedonia is a country with a relatively open economy. The topicality of the main problem of the dissertation is confirmed by the significant change that will occur in this area – the forthcoming accession of the country to the EU. This will further open the country's market to European producers, who must prepare for competition not only on the national but also on the large European market.

Another factor that emphasizes the urgency of the problem of competitiveness is the specifics of the sectoral economy. Agriculture is a major sector of the economy of the Republic of North Macedonia important for employment. This defines the right choice of sector and the research conducted to solve the problems of competitiveness of agricultural enterprises.

The doctoral student rightly points out that competitiveness depends on a set of factors, noting that in the dissertation the competitiveness of the agricultural

enterprise will be considered as a result, a function of the choice of organizational form for business development. This statement does not correspond exactly to the content of the dissertation, as the second and third chapter's present research on many other factors and propose solutions to increase the competitiveness of agricultural enterprises.

2. Purpose, tasks, hypotheses and methods of research.

The aim of the dissertation is defined as analysis and assessment of the factors determining the competitiveness of agricultural enterprises in the Republic of North Macedonia and the development of guidelines for improving their competitiveness in the domestic market. I accept this formulation of the goal as correct, but it does not correspond to the statement that "in the present study, the competitiveness of the agricultural enterprise will be considered as a result, a function of the choice of organizational form for business development".

In the in-depth empirical study presented in chapter two, the 69 agricultural enterprises analyzed were not divided into focus groups according to organizational forms of business. In this respect, I tend to assume that the established impact of the form of business on competitiveness is the result of more theoretical research and analysis than empirical research. As such I accept the evidence of the conceptual thesis of the dissertation.

Based on the correctly defined goal, the doctoral student has managed to form a set of four main tasks, the solution of which allows the successful realization of the goal.

The subject and object of the study are clearly and precisely defined.

Appropriate tools of approaches, methods and models for the implementation of the research have been compiled. In this regard, I would like to note the interesting methodological approach of linking SWOT analysis and SOR analysis, which has revealed strategic guidelines for improving the competitiveness of agricultural enterprises.

3. Visualization and presentation of the obtained results.

The dissertation is relatively well illustrated:

- 5 tables;
- 10 figures;
- 1 application.

In some places there are omissions in the numbering of figures and tables.

The formation of the SWOT matrix is not well represented. I believe that it would be better to present the transformation of the main factors of competitiveness from the SWOT analysis into the main directions for its increase through the SOR analysis.

In certain places a different style of presenting the results in the abstract compared to the dissertation is allowed.

4. Discussion of results and references.

Structurally, the dissertation is well developed.

The introduction presents the state of agriculture in the Republic of North Macedonia and the reasons for it.

The analysis of the first chapter convinces me that the doctoral student has successfully solved the first two main tasks:

- has defined the economic essence of the agricultural enterprise as a production system and its constituent elements;
- clarified the methodological approaches and methodological issues in the study and assessment of the competitiveness of the agricultural enterprise.

In this part of the opinion, I would like to note that the first chapter reveals and convincingly substantiates the specific competitive advantages of the three forms of business:

- sole proprietorships;
- cooperative agricultural enterprises;
- agricultural enterprises – joint stock companies.

Four main stages of identifying the factors of market presence with the help of the SWOT analysis model are methodologically correctly distinguished. The strategic orientation of agricultural enterprises is determined by the SOR analysis, which is based on the principle: "attack the most attractive opportunities with the most significant strengths of the enterprise, bypassing obstacles".

The second chapter presents well the main results of significant empirical research, presenting:

- the profile of the surveyed agricultural enterprises (sample, focus groups, etc.);
- strengths (weaknesses, opportunities and threats) are identified;
- the critical factors are revealed, and the interaction between them in the SWOT matrix is assessed;
- the strategic orientation of agricultural enterprises is determined through the SOR analysis.

At the beginning of the third chapter the main obstacles for improving the competitiveness of the agricultural enterprises of Republic of North Macedonia are substantiated and pointed out. On this basis, important decisions are proposed, which must be taken at national and regional level at the current important stage of the country's accession to the EU. Three groups of needs of enterprises from are convincingly proved:

- innovations;
- risk management;
- implementation of marketing.

Of particular interest is the relatively original model of a financial system for increasing competitiveness, which is proposed in this chapter.

141 literature sources were used – in Latin language. The literature is not arranged correctly. In addition, there are differences in the literary sources presented in the abstract and dissertation.

5. Contributions of the Dissertation.

I accept the reference for the contributions contained in the dissertation.

In my opinion, they can be divided into the following two groups:

First group. Scientific contributions:

2. A conceptual framework for assessing the competitiveness of agricultural enterprises has been developed.

Second group. Scientific and applied contributions:

1. The level of competitiveness of enterprises in the sector is assessed.
2. The needs of agricultural enterprises to improve their competitiveness have been identified.
3. A financial model has been drawn up to improve the competitiveness of agricultural enterprises.

6. Critical notes and questions.

I have no significant critical remarks regarding the dissertation.

I have the following questions for the PhD student:

1. Are significant changes in the sectoral structure of the Republic of North Macedonia expected after its accession to the European Union?
2. What is the doctoral student's opinion regarding the future trade relations in the field of agriculture?
3. Are there currently any credit unions in the Republic of North Macedonia to finance the activities of agricultural enterprises and what is their importance for increasing competitiveness?

7. Published articles and citations.

A reference to the publications on the dissertation is presented – 5 issues:

- independent – 3 pieces;
- co-authored – 2 issues in English language, in which the doctoral student is not a lead author.

The publications reflect the main results achieved with the development of the dissertation.

The number and content of the publications meet the requirements contained in the Regulations of the Agrarian University – Plovdiv.

No reference to the citation is provided.

CONCLUSION:

In support of the above, I consider that Dragan Metodya Miladinovski has developed his doctoral thesis at the required scientific level. Various research analyses have been adopted and applied.

Based on the dissertation research and its scientific contributions, I think that the dissertation work meets the requirements of the Application of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria, and the Rules of the Agricultural University for its application, which gives me a reason to rate it **POSITIVE**.

I allow myself to propose to the venerable Scientific Jury also to vote and to award to Dragan Metodya Miladinovski the Educational and Scientific Degree 'Doctor' (PhD) in the Scientific Specialty: "Organization and management" (agriculture and sub-sectors).

08.06.2022
Plovdiv

SCIENTIFIC OPINION BY:
(Prof. Sn. Konstantinova, PhD)