

REVIEW

АГРОАРЕН УНИВЕРСИТЕТ	
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On the dissertation for obtaining a Scientific Degree "Doctor" (Ph.D.) in field of Higher Education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, Professional Field 3.8. Economics, Scientific Specialty "Organization and management of production" (agriculture and sub-sectors).

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

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

Reviewer: Prof. Asen Ivanov Konarev, Dr.Sc, 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" (by industry), appointed a member of the scientific jury by Order № RD-16-481 of 05.05.2022 of the Rector of the Agricultural University, Plovdiv.

1. Brief introduction of the candidate.

Dragan Miladinoski was born on October 30, 1969.

He did not provide data on his secondary education, as well as where and how he received his bachelor's degree. He received his master's degree in economics after studying in 2008-2010 at the Faculty of Economics at the University of Skopje (FON). Since 2020 he has been accepted as a doctoral student in independent training at the Department of Management and Marketing, Faculty of Economics at the Agricultural University, Plovdiv.

He started his career as an import employee at the foreign trade company IMPROMEX – Skopje, where for two years he organized and imported and explored new markets.

From 1995 to 1998 he worked as a director in the production enterprise DPPMPP "Drago – Kichevo", where he performed the following main functions:

- company management;
- planning and analysis of new markets;
- organization of production.

From 1998 to the present (over 23 years) he has worked in the Customs Administration in Skopje, where he is constantly evolving from customs inspector, shift manager, controller, and independent advisor to senior customs inspector.

He is fluent in English, fluent in German, excellent in Serbian and relatively good in Bulgarian. He has good communication and organizational skills.

2. Relevance of the problem.

The topicality and the growing importance of the problems treated in the dissertation are relatively well justified, as the doctoral student emphasizes the following arguments:

- accelerated economic and political reforms in RN Macedonia;
- the search for and creation of conditions for economic growth and social prosperity;
- the implemented infrastructure projects for modernization of the country's agriculture;
- the specific stage of development of the sector in the conditions of pre-accession to the EU and the expected increase in competition;
- the high level of employment (30%) of the population in the activities carried out in the sector;
- the significant share (about 20%) of GDP created in the sector, etc.

I estimate convincing the evidence of the importance of government intervention and market conditions for the development of the sector and agricultural enterprises. On this basis, the trend of increasing competition is correctly revealed and the leading factor for the development of the sector is justified – maintaining and increasing the competitiveness of local enterprises compared to other market participants.

In the context of a systematic approach, a set of factors that directly or indirectly affect the competitiveness of agricultural enterprises is well defined. The conceptual orientation of the differentiation of the research for revealing the influence of the organizational form of the business on the competitiveness of the enterprise is interesting.

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

I consider that the purpose of the dissertation is well defined, and the restriction on the internal market could be removed.

In this regard, a more convincing relation between the conceptual thesis and the goal could be made. The type of organizational form chosen for the development of the business model is only one of the factors determining the competitiveness of agricultural enterprises.

The main goal is logically well decomposed into four tasks:

- determining the economic nature of the object of study;
- formation of methodological and methodological tools of the research;
- revealing the main factors influencing the subject of research;
- development of strategic guidelines and models for improving the competitiveness of enterprises.

The subject and object of research are very well defined.

I evaluate the methodological tools as appropriate and sufficient for conducting in-depth research and realization of the goal and tasks of the dissertation. The methodology is based on three fundamental approaches:

- system approach;
- the approach of the Neoclassical theory of the enterprise;

- the approach of Institutional theory.

In methodological terms, the method of modeling is widely used, and I want to emphasize three of its applications in the dissertation:

- model of SWOT-analysis;
- model of SOR-analysis;
- a model of a financial system to increase competitiveness.

4. Visualization and presentation of the obtained results.

The dissertation is not well illustrated. This is confirmed by the following quantitative parameters:

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

The figures and tables are relatively well formed and numbered, with the exception of Figure 3, which is presented on page 56, and the following Figure 4 – on page 49 (?).

The source for compiling the tables and figures (author's product or borrowing from the used literature) is well understood, with the exception of the following three tables, which do not indicate the source:

- Figure 10 on page 108;
- Figure 4 on page 49;
- Figure 3 on page 56.

I consider that according to the criterion of "visualization and presentation of results" the dissertation is at a satisfactory level.

5. Discussion of results and references.

The dissertation is optimal in volume – 125 pages, which includes the application (3 pages). Structurally, it has a classical structure: an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion.

In the first chapter the theoretical views on the nature of the enterprise and its peculiarities in agriculture are thoroughly studied and presented. In this part, presented in the abstract, I find a very interesting and informative figure, presenting the causal links between the factors determining the specifics of the agricultural enterprise – this figure should be included as a good graphic image of the specifics of the dissertation.

The three main properties that an agricultural enterprise must possess are convincingly revealed:

- stability;
- flexibility;
- adaptability.

Particular attention is paid to the stability of the system and its relationship to the concept of "homeostasis". The sustainability of the agricultural enterprise depends on many controllable and uncontrollable by management factors with single or complex influence, which form the various stages (phases) in its development.

Based on an in-depth critical analysis of theory and practice, the following characteristics for good market performance of the company are formulated:

- high productivity of resources;
- production of high quality products at minimal cost;
- increasing profitability;
- constant and/or growing market share;
- efficiency of management;
- adaptability to changes in the environment;
- innovation.

The concepts of "competitiveness" and "competitive advantage" of the enterprise are correctly formulated.

After an in-depth analysis, the factors determining the competitiveness of three groups of enterprises are revealed and indicated:

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

In fact, in the third group an attempt was made to reveal the factors determining the competitiveness of capital companies in agriculture. In the following studies, I recommend that this group be divided into the following four subgroups:

- joint-stock companies (JSC);
- limited liability companies (LLC), which are very common in agriculture;
- partnerships limited (PL);
- partnership limited by shares (PLS).

Each subgroup has significant specifics, which form large differences in the factors determining the competitiveness of each subgroup.

In the third part of the first chapter the methodological issues of the research and assessment of the competitiveness of the enterprise are very well presented. The following parameters of the study are clearly formed:

- agricultural enterprise according to the legislation of the RN of Macedonia;
- general population;
- empirical set;
- main indicators for evaluation of enterprises.

The identification of the factors of market development was carried out with the help of the SWOT-analysis, realized in 4 stages. The strategic orientation of agricultural enterprises is determined by a relatively new and less applicable method called 'SOR-analyses'. This method was used by a group of experts, including the doctoral research supervisor, about 10 years ago, to determine the strategic factors for the development of small farms in Bulgaria. In my opinion, it is used for the first time in an empirical study of the competitiveness of agricultural enterprises in RN Macedonia.

In the second chapter the doctoral student successfully applies the developed methodological tools for analysis of the competitiveness of agricultural enterprises. It presents very well:

- the profile of agricultural enterprises;

- identifying strengths / weaknesses, opportunities and threats;
- the identification of the critical factors and the assessment of the interaction between them in the SWOT-matrix;
- the strategic orientation of agricultural enterprises.

The third chapter has a strongly applied, effective character. It identifies the basic needs of agricultural enterprises to increase competitiveness, proposing the most important decisions to be taken at national and regional level. The following three groups of needs are emphasized:

- needs for innovation;
- risk management needs;
- marketing implementation needs.

The proposed model of a financial system for increasing the competitiveness of agricultural enterprises, which includes the following six main elements, makes a very good impression:

- financial fund for mutual assistance – here one can consider improving the sources of funds for the fund;
- innovation venture fund – here the first way of securing could be eliminated, and the emphasis is on the second and especially the third way of securing;
- credit cooperative – despite all the problems of direct democracy, I strongly recommend financial cooperatives as an effective means of lending to agriculture and especially to small agricultural enterprises;
- insurance guarantee fund – I recommend its manager to be elected by the General Meeting of the credit union;
- advisory board – this should be a subsidiary body and not a key element of the system. I suggest that it be situated also to the credit union;
- agricultural enterprises – main consumers of the positive effect of mutually funded.

I highly appreciate the proposed model of the financial system, although I have made some recommendations for its improvement, as a person with experience in the activities of credit unions and microfinance organizations.

The literature used is presented in 141 sources. The literature is not well arranged. In addition, there are literary sources in Cyrillic in the abstract, and in the dissertation all sources are in Latin. This raises some questions about existing problems in the relationship between the abstract and the dissertation.

6. Contributions of the Dissertation.

I accept the report on the contributions to the dissertation, and I am inclined to distinguish them in the following three groups:

A. Scientific contributions:

- the clarified nature of the agricultural enterprise and the management of its competitiveness;
- the developed conceptual framework for assessing the competitiveness of agricultural enterprises.

B. Scientific and applied contributions:

- the constructed model of a financial system for increasing the competitiveness of agricultural enterprises.

C. Contributions:

- the analyzed and assessed level of competitiveness of enterprises in the sector;
- the identified basic needs and proposed solutions to increase the competitiveness of agricultural enterprises.

7. Critical notes and questions.

In certain places I made specific critical remarks and recommendations. Assessing objectively all the difficulties that arise in the management of foreign doctoral students, here are just a few remarks:

7.2 The dissertation is not well illustrated. Substantive figures from the abstract are not presented in the dissertation and vice versa.

7.2 There is no logically valid sequence of numbering of some tables and figures.

7.3 In addition to joint stock companies, it is necessary to study other forms of capital companies such as limited liability companies, limited liability companies, etc.

7.4 The literature is not well arranged. In addition, there is Cyrillic literature in the abstract, which is missing in the dissertation.

These critical remarks do not diminish my positive attitude towards the dissertation.

8. Published articles and citations.

A list of 5 publications on the dissertation is presented, which in number meet the requirements of the Regulations of the Agrarian University, Plovdiv. They were published in the period 2019-2022. They can be systematized as follows:

- independent – 3 pieces;
- co-authored – 2 pieces.

The doctoral student is not the lead author in the collective publications.

No reference to the citations is presented, therefore the presence and significance cannot be assessed.

The abstract objectively reflects the structure and content of the dissertation, but could be compiled more precisely.

CONCLUSION:

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, Plovdiv 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**' (Ph.D.) in the Scientific Specialty "Organization and management" (agriculture and sub-sectors).

June 9, 2022
Plovdiv

REVIEWER: 
(Prof. A. Konarev, Dr.Sc.)