

REVIEW



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 of production (agriculture and sub-sectors)

Author of the dissertation: Hike Takvor Garabedian, full-time PhD student at the Department of Management and Marketing at the Agricultural University, Plovdiv

Topic of the dissertation: The influence of the Common agricultural policy for management and development of the beekeeping sector in Bulgaria

Reviewer: Prof. DSc. Vyara Krasimirova Slavyanska, Academy of the Ministry of Interior – Sofia, field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.7. Administration and management, scientific specialty Social management

appointed as a member of the scientific jury by order № RD-16-99 / 11.02.2022 by the Rector of AU.

1. Brief introduction of the candidate

Hike Garabedian acquired Bachelor degree of Economics and International Relations at Lake Forest University, Lake Forest, IL-USA (2005), as well as a Master's degree in Business Administration from two educational institutions in parallel – Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" and City University of Seattle, USA, Sofia-Campus (2011). He graduated with honors.

He began his career in 2004 as a trainee in marketing and market research at Brunswick Corporation, IL-USA and in financial services and logistics at CNH (Fiat Group), WI-USA. Subsequently, he gained professional experience mainly in the field of financial services, online marketing and trade, holding various positions:

- Receivables and support specialist for company dealers in CNH Capital- (Fiat Group), WI-USA;
- Financial Manager at Sienit Holding AD, Plovdiv;
- Manager of the team of financial analysts in T.K. Ltd., Sofia;

Hike Garabedian directs its attention and efforts to the scientific field through 2019, as a full-time doctoral student at the Department of Management and Marketing, Faculty of Economics, University of Economics. Proof of the stability of his research interests is his appointment in October 2021 as an assistant in the Department of Mathematics and Informatics, Faculty of Economics, AU.

The doctoral student inspeaks a high level of English and Armenian and a good level of Italian – he was approved by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria as a professional translator from English into Bulgarian and vice versa in 2010 and has worked in the field of translation services as Operations Manager at AP Ltd., Plovdiv.

He has excellent computer skills in Microsoft Office, GIMP, Wordpress and Finance-Plus.

The accumulated solid professional experience, combined with the in-depth educational training and the acquired language and computer competencies are a prerequisite for conducting quality research.

2. Relevance of the problem

From time immemorial, bees have played an important role in the evolution of life, which is why they are considered as vital biological resources. Their best-known function is to produce honey and other bee products, but they also play an important role in the ecosystem as pollinators for 84% of the plant species that make up humanity's daily food. It has been proven that the yields from their pollination activity exceed 30 times the value of the obtained direct bee products – honey, pollen, wax, propolis, etc., which gives a clear idea of the economic importance of beekeeping.

In Bulgaria, due to the available natural resources (climate, variety of honey plants), beekeeping has always been an important branch of agriculture. Despite the decline in the number of beekeeping farms over the last decade, the number of bee colonies is growing, the amount of honey produced, its sales and its selling price are also on a steady upward trend. Moreover, since the accession of our country to the EU, Bulgaria has established itself as a traditional exporter of honey, which has established it as one of the agricultural products with a strong export orientation.

In this context, directing the research interest to "the impact of the CAP on the development of beekeeping in the Republic of Bulgaria" (as the subject of the dissertation research) has its logical argumentation and gives a request for significance and relevance.

3. Purpose, tasks, hypotheses and research methods

The goal of the dissertation research is to analyze the role of the CAP in the management and development of the beekeeping sector.

In connection with the achievement of the goal the author has defined 5 research **tasks**:

- 1) Clarification of the nature of beekeeping as an object of influence by the CAP;
- 2) Clarification of the financial instruments of the CAP to support beekeeping as a business model for the implementation of investments;
- 3) Establishing the state and development trends of the beekeeping sector in the context of the CAP;
- 4) Evaluation and analysis of the sector before and after the CAP programs for the period 2007-2020;
- 5) Defining recommendations for improving the CAP for the new programming period.

The author defends the thesis that "The management and development of the beekeeping sector is influenced by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and in order to achieve sectoral competitiveness, this policy needs to create a competitive environment."

The following research approaches and methods are used in the dissertation: research of literary and normative sources; systematic approach and systematic analysis; expert approach; index method; statistical methods (descriptive statistics, t-test, one-way analysis of variance, chi-square analysis and multiple comparison method). Most of the information is accumulated through focus groups, survey method and in-depth interviews – surveys and interviews of farmers running small farms. The empirical information is processed with the specialized software product SPSS and the statistical package of MS Excel. The chosen methods are appropriate in view of the set research goal and the defined tasks.

The study covers the period of validity of the previous CAP (2007-2013) and the current CAP (2014-2020), i.e. 13 years.

4. Visualization and presentation of the obtained results

The dissertation is developed in a total volume of 131 pages, including 122 pages of main text and 9 pages of bibliography. Structurally contains an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. The illustrative material includes 38 figures and 2 tables.

5. Discussion of the results and used literature

The introduction presents the conceptual framework of the study, which includes all the necessary details – clearly justified relevance and significance of the problem, well-formulated subject and object of study, logical conceptual thesis, correctly stated goals and objectives, detailed methods and time constraints. This lays a good foundation for conducting the dissertation research.

Chapter One "Methodological Approach for Analysis and Assessment of the Impact of the CAP on the Development of the Sector" considers consistently the peculiarities of beekeeping in Bulgaria, specific instruments for beekeeping intervention, approaches and methods for analysis and assessment of the CAP, methodological approach for analysis and assessment of the impact of the CAP. Presented are the types of interventions in the beekeeping sector, the financial assistance from the EU and the measures under the National Beekeeping Program. The essence of the CAP, its financing, effects of the implementation of Direct Payments and the Rural Development Program, the objectives of the CAP after 2020 are clarified.

Chapter Two "Analysis of the impact of the CAP on the development of the sector" covers the analysis of honey production and trade, the analysis of market positions, the assessment of the effects of the application of the CAP on the development of the sector and the impact of subsidies on farm profitability. The needs of the bee farms in the conditions of the CAP (for innovation, marketing, business risk management) have been identified and on this basis recommendations to the state have been formulated in order to meet them.

In the third chapter "Profiling barriers to beekeeping with a view to improving the application of the CAP" the results of a survey of 31 bee farms during the period 04.03.2020 - 07.06.2020 are presented in order to conduct an objective analysis of the impact of the CAP on the beekeeping sector. The results of a focus group study, including 69 experts, were also presented in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats for beekeeping farms.

The Conclusion summarizes that the future development of beekeeping farms cannot take place without the active financial support of the CAP (which is directly related to the argumentation of the conceptual thesis). Establishing one's own brand and converting production into organic requires large investments, which are accompanied by high risk. In this regard, the so-called joint investments are recommended, which provide an opportunity to share the investment risk in the organizational development of farms.

The bibliography includes 109 literary sources in Bulgarian and mostly in English, incl.: scientific publications of Bulgarian and foreign authors; data from the Ministry

of Agriculture and Food, including data from the Agrarian Report of the Ministry; Eurostat data and the agricultural accounting information system; a number of normative documents of the European Commission and the Republic of Bulgaria. The information sources used are relevant to the issues under consideration.

6. Contributions to the dissertation

In the abstract, the doctoral student highlighted the main scientific and applied contributions that he believes he has.

Scientific contributions

1. The nature of beekeeping in the context of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has been clarified;
2. The essence of the CAP support for the development of the beekeeping sector has been clarified;

Scientific and applied contributions

3. A methodology for analysis and assessment of the impact of the CAP on the development of beekeeping farms has been developed;
4. The influence of the CAP on the development of beekeeping farms as well as on the sector has been established;
5. The needs of beekeeping farms in the conditions of the CAP have been identified.

I accept the mentioned contributions as significant and corresponding to the real results of the research work of the doctoral student.

7. Critical remarks and questions

I have no significant critical remarks on the content of the dissertation, but in order to improve it I would recommend:

1. At the end of each chapter, and arches – currently there are only in the second chapter, but they need to be more focused and synthesized to the most essential.
2. In the appendix to present the Questionnaire (there are questions on page 52, but the tool should be presented separately in its authentic form), as well as the issues discussed in the focus groups.
3. The PhD student should expand the scope of the scientific journals in which he publishes his research results (currently all his publications are in the Journal of Bio-Based Marketing), which it would provide him with a wider audience, and it would not be a problem, given his foreign language skills.

I have the following question for the PhD student:

1. In many places in the dissertation are presented findings and conclusions about the state of the beekeeping sector. As there is no reference to sources or specification of the issues discussed in the focus groups, it remained unclear to me whether the author's reflections and summaries based on the conducted empirical research are, or any publications / normative documents are cited (moreover, in some places data from 2013 are given – on page 81). In this regard, if it is possible for the doctoral student to bring some clarity about the methodological aspects of the research. For example, on page 51 there are pointed 2 focus groups, including a total of 69 people from Plovdiv and Asenovgrad, on page 67 there are also 2 focus groups, including a total of 78 people from Plovdiv and Sliven. Obviously, different things are the subject of discussion in these groups. There are 31 surveyed producers – on page 117 it is stated that they also form the expert assessment, but at the same time the results presented in the SWOT matrix on page 119 were obtained by 69 experts. The expected short answer is related to clarifying the connection between the focus groups, the survey and the expert method, the way of conducting, the participants, synthesized goals and conclusions from the application of each of the methods.

8. Published articles and citations

The most significant research results of the dissertation have gained popularity through the publication of 4 scientific articles (one of which is cited). All publications are in the period 2020-2021, which indicates the relevance of their content.

The presented abstract is prepared according to the requirements and objectively reflects the structure and content of the dissertation in a synthesized form. It has been developed in a volume of 40 pages and includes five parts related to the general characteristics, the main content, the contributions, publications and citations.

CONCLUSION:

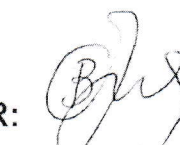
Based on the different research methods learned and applied by the doctoral student, correctly performed experiments, summaries and conclusions, I believe that the presented dissertation meets the requirements of ZRASRB and the Rules of the Agrarian University for its application, which gives me reason to evaluate it POSITIVE.

I propose to the honorable Scientific Jury also to vote in favor and award Hike Garabedian the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty

Organization and management of production (agriculture and sub-sectors).

Date: March 12, 2022
Plovdiv

REVIEWER:



(Prof. DSc. V. Slavyanska)