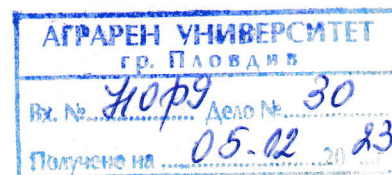


REVIEW



on a dissertation work for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree “**doctor**” (PhD), 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: BESIM BISLIMI

doctoral student at the Department of Management and Marketing
at the Agricultural University - Plovdiv

Topic of the PhD thesis:

**MANAGEMENT OF ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

Member of the Scientific Jury:

Assoc. Prof. Ekaterina Dimitrova Kyuskieva-Arabska, Ph.D.

appointed a member of the scientific jury with

Order № RD-16-908 / 26.09.2023 by the Rector of the Agricultural university

1. Topicality of the problem

The relevance of the scientific research presented in the dissertation on management of road infrastructure to achieve sustainable development of agriculture can be considered in several aspects: 1) The application of the concept of sustainable development in agriculture and its importance for the future of the humanity and the planet; 2) The role and importance of the agricultural sector in the modern economy in relation to the goals set for achieving sustainable development; 3) The role of infrastructure in rural areas to improve the sustainable development of agriculture; 4) Improvement of agricultural productivity and development of trade in agriculture; 5) Role, importance and development of road infrastructure and agriculture in the countries of the Western Balkans. In this sense, the research poses topical questions and is distinguished by originality and dissertability.

2. Purpose, tasks, hypotheses and research methods

The presented research is oriented towards the analysis of the connectivity of the road infrastructure for sustainable agricultural development in the countries of the Western Balkans. The main objective is to determine how agriculture should be developed in view of the transport infrastructure as one of the most important economic activities in the region. A secondary objective is to identify the importance of certain agro-economic factors for the construction of an adequate policy for regional development, which combines the development of agriculture and other activities in one functional system.

In this regard, the following scientific tasks were set: 1) determination of the current state of agricultural development in the region of the Western Balkans, incl. identifying possible factors that determine the economic importance of agriculture in the Western Balkans, determining the influence of certain agro-economic factors for sustainable development within the Western Balkan countries; 2) defining the strengths and weaknesses of the Western Balkan countries in terms of sustainable agriculture and rural development and proposing a development model to significantly improve the potential of certain agro-economic factors for sustainable development in the Western Balkans; 3) determination of the need, importance and development of the national transport policy and analysis of EU policies for financing infrastructure projects in the region, incl. international factors and transport policy of the EU, opportunities for integration of the national regional network as a basic condition for international integration; 4) analysis of infrastructure projects in the road network in the Western Balkans region, pan-European transport corridors and regional context and the importance of EU investment and funding in road and transport infrastructure.

The main hypothesis of the study was based on the statement that the development of the road network through investments in the road network would increase the transport of agricultural products, which would have a positive impact on the overall economic situation in the Western Balkans.

Special hypotheses: 1) The connection of the road network of the countries of the Western Balkans with the other road networks in the region allows a faster integration of the region into the EU, but also an economic, social and political connection; 2) The lack of cooperation between the countries of the region in the implementation of joint projects in the road infrastructure has a negative impact on further economic development, but also on the rapid integration of the countries of the region into the EU; 3) Investing in the development of a modern road network allows greater efficiency and effectiveness of transport, reduction of transport costs and a positive impact on the environment.

The applied research methods are in accordance with the set goals and objectives.

3. Visualization and presentation of the obtained results

The dissertation submitted for review is 205 pages long. Its structure includes an introduction, six chapters, a conclusion and a list of used sources. The results are presented in 10 tables and 10 figures and pictures.

4. Discussion of results and references

The dissertation presents the results of the conducted research in six chapters. The first chapter "Characteristics of transport infrastructure" presents general information about the development of transport infrastructure and introduces the key terms. The second chapter "Theoretical assumptions of sustainable development" discusses the concept of sustainable development, presents an analysis of the factors and principles of sustainable development and indicators of sustainable development. The third chapter "Theoretical-methodological approach to agriculture" analyzes the role of agriculture in the economy, presents the concept of sustainable agriculture, the role of strategies in agriculture and agricultural policy, challenges to the development of agriculture in the globalized economy. The fourth chapter examines a strategy for sustainable agricultural development through road infrastructure and emphasizes sustainable agriculture and rural development. The fifth chapter "The importance of roads for development and trade in agriculture" analyzes the effect of rural infrastructure investment on market access and trade, and agricultural trade in particular, as well as the conditions and complementarities related to benefit maximization for the development of agriculture and the reduction of poverty. The focus is on the importance of road infrastructure for market integration, development and trade in agriculture from both in macro and micro perspectives. The sixth chapter "Agriculture and transport infrastructure in the Western Balkan countries" presents an analysis of agriculture in the Western Balkan countries, in particular an examination of the challenges and consequences for the Western Balkan countries of the implementation of the European rural development policy, a reflection of the state of the road network in the Western Balkans, national transport policies and the need for development, EU policies for financing infrastructure projects in the region as a prerequisite for the integration of the national regional network in the international road network, valorization of infrastructure projects in the road network in the Western Balkans region Balkans and opportunities to join the Pan-European Corridors in the transport and regional context.

In conclusion, the main conclusions were presented considering: 1) agriculture as an economic sector of essential importance for the development and survival of a country; 2) sustainable agriculture as the efficient production of high-quality, safe agricultural products in a way that protects and improves the natural environment, social and economic conditions for farmers, agricultural workers and local communities with measures for health and well-being; 3) transport infrastructure as an important source of goals and content of economic policies of society, incl. a general condition for the development of the economy; 4) the importance of improving rural infrastructure, particularly rural roads; 5) poorly developed infrastructure, outdated transport capacity, inadequate organization of transport, security and environmental protection as the main economic barriers to growth, increasing productivity and competitiveness; 6) the improvement of connectivity within the Western Balkans, as well as between the Western Balkans and the European Union, as a key factor for growth and job creation, which will contribute to clear benefits for the economy and citizens of the region; 7) the development and implementation of policies and strategies, financing of measures and reforms, the inclusion of the private sector and the management of road infrastructure with an emphasis on the sustainable development of agriculture.

The described literary sources at the end of the thesis are 234 in number.

5. Contributions of the PhD thesis

I accept the contributions formulated in the abstract as authentic and personal work of the author, allowing myself to reformulate them and supplement as follows:

Scientific contributions

1. Enrichment of the concept of sustainable development by bringing out new aspects of the essence of the sustainable development of agriculture and the role of infrastructure in this process.

2. Defining the essence and bringing out the role of the road infrastructure for the sustainable development of agriculture as a national industry.

Scientific and applied contributions

3. Analysis of agriculture, its economic importance and the role of road infrastructure for the sustainable development of agriculture in the Western Balkans.

4. Analysis and evaluation of the need, importance and development of the national transport policy, EU policies and instruments for financing infrastructure projects in the region for the integration of the national regional network as a basic condition for international integration.

5. A model of development for improving the potential of certain agro-economic factors for the sustainable development of agriculture in the Western Balkans.

6. A reasoned strategy for the sustainable development of agriculture in the Western Balkans, based on the road infrastructure as the main element of sustainability.

6. Critical remarks and questions

My main recommendations to the author of the dissertation work are related to the technical design, the accuracy of the translation at some places, the relevance of the data and the used literary sources and future publications of the results of the dissertation work.

7. Published articles and citations

The presented list of publications covers the scientometric indicators for the acquisition of the PhD degree.

The presented abstract reflects the structure and the content of the dissertation.

CONCLUSION:

Based on the different research methods learned and applied by the doctoral student, the correctly performed experiments, the summaries and conclusions made, I believe that the presented dissertation meets the requirements of Law for development of the academic staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules of the Agricultural University for its application, which gives me reason to evaluate it **POSITIVELY**.

I take the liberty of proposing to the esteemed Scientific Jury that it also vote in favor and award BESIM BISLIMI the educational and scientific degree "**Doctor**" in the scientific specialty "Organization and Management of Production (Agriculture and Sub-sectors)".

Date: 29.11.2013
Plovdiv

Reviewer: EA
(Assoc. Prof. E. Arabska, PhD)