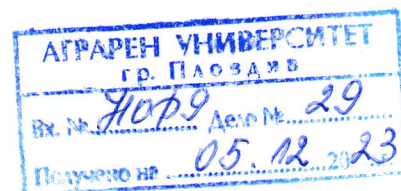


REVIEW



on a dissertation work for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in: field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional direction 3.8 Economics, the scientific specialty Organization and management of production (agriculture and sub-sectors)

Author of the dissertation: Besim Hamdi Bislimi, doctoral student of independent training at the Department of "Management and Marketing" at the Agricultural University, Plovdiv

Dissertation topic: "Road infrastructure management to achieve sustainable agricultural development"

Reviewer: Prof. Dr. Ivanka Milkova Kostova, University of Plovdiv "Paisiy Hilendarski", field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional direction 3.8 Economics, scientific specialty Economics and Management

designated as a member of the scientific jury by order No. RD-16-908 of 26.09.2023 by the Rector of AU.

1. Brief introduction of the candidate.

Besim Bislimi was born on 23.02.1966 in Albania. In 1999, he graduated from the University of Prishtina and received a diploma in engineering. He speaks English, Croatian, Serbian, has computer skills. He has 28 years of experience in management and planning. He is a doctoral student in independent training at the Department of "Management and Marketing" at the Agricultural University, Plovdiv.

2. Relevance of the problem.

Sustainable development is a new aspiration and necessity of humanity when its future and survival is in question. Rural infrastructure, like other public investments, increases agricultural productivity, which in turn triggers rural growth, leading to higher agricultural wages and improved non-agricultural employment opportunities. An increase in agricultural productivity, which reduces food prices, benefits both urban and rural residents who are net buyers of

food. Rural roads provide the important link to growing markets near rural areas; they also reduce the input costs and transaction costs of rural producers and consumers, which reduces food prices, benefiting both urban and rural residents who are net food buyers. Thus, in addition to growth benefits, agricultural productivity has significant poverty reduction effects.

2. Purpose, tasks, hypotheses and research methods.

The correctly formulated goals, tasks, object and subject of the research directly correspond with the thesis defended in the dissertation work.

Based on the place and importance of road infrastructure for the sustainable development of agriculture and the indisputable fact that it is very complex, rich, diverse and the long-term strategy, policy and model of social development in rural areas, the subject of scientific research of the Doctoral dissertation is related with an analysis of the connectivity of road infrastructure for sustainable agricultural development, in relation to the countries of the Western Balkans.

Therefore, the main objective of this study is to determine, through a descriptive description, analysis of the state and quality of the available potential, how agriculture should be developed in view of the transport infrastructure as one of the most important economic activities in the region. The 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 unit.

Within the scope of this research, the most important tasks are:

- ☐ determination of the current state of agricultural development in the region of the Western Balkans;
- ☐ Identification of possible factors that determine the economic importance of agriculture in the Western Balkans;
- ☐ Determination of the impact of certain agro-economic factors on sustainable development within the Western Balkan countries;
- ☐ Finding and defining the strengths and weaknesses in the Western Balkan countries above in terms of sustainable agriculture and rural development;
- ☐ Proposing a development model that would significantly improve the potential of certain agro-economic factors for sustainable development in the Western Balkans.
- ☐ The need, importance and development of the national transport policy.

- EU policies for financing infrastructure projects in the region.
- International factors and EU transport policy.
- Integration of the national regional network, as a basic condition for international integration.
- Assessment of infrastructure projects in the road network in the Western Balkans region.
- Pan-European Transport Corridors and Regional Context (SEETO)
- The importance of EU investment and funding in road and transport infrastructure.

A hypothetical framework

In this part of the research of the doctoral dissertation, the main and special hypotheses are developed, which are covered in the further research.

The main hypothesis

The main or main hypothesis is based on the claim that the development of the road network through investments in the road network will increase the transport of agricultural products, which will have a positive impact on the overall economic situation in the Western Balkans.

Special hypotheses

- 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.
- The lack of cooperation between the countries of the region in the implementation of joint projects in the road infrastructure negatively affects the further economic development, but also the faster integration of the countries of the region into the EU.
- Investing in the development of a modern, modern road network allows greater efficiency and effectiveness of transport, reduction of transport costs and a positive impact on the environment.

Scientific methods

In the analysis, research and implementation of this doctoral dissertation, the following scientific methods were applied:

- data collection methods,

- analytical and comparative research method.
- inductive and deductive locking method,
- classification method,
- method of abstraction, concretization and generalization,
- method of description,
- methodology for modeling systems,
- system approach.

4. Transparency and presentation of the obtained results.

Structure of the dissertation: the dissertation is structured in an introduction, an exposition in 5 chapters, a conclusion and references. The total volume of the dissertation is 205 standard typewritten pages.

In the first part, Characterization of transport infrastructure through literature review, ie. a review of the literature by various authors interested in this issue, general information on the development of transport infrastructure, such as road and rail traffic, is presented. A major emphasis is placed on explaining key terms that are directly related to traffic. This part is an introduction to further research developments.

The title of the second part is Theoretical Assumptions for Sustainable Development. This part discusses the concept of sustainable development. The factors and principles characteristic of sustainable development are analyzed in detail. It concludes with an explanation of sustainable development indicators.

In the third part, A theoretical and methodological approach to agriculture, the following topics are considered: a brief overview of economic thought on agriculture and agricultural policy, the role of agriculture in the economy, different approaches to defining agriculture, defining the function of the economy of agriculture, the concept of sustainable agriculture, a part dedicated to development strategies in agriculture and a part dedicated to the challenges of agricultural development in a globalized economy.

The fourth chapter of the dissertation, A Strategy for Sustainable Agricultural Development Driven by Transport Infrastructure, discusses strategies for sustainable agricultural development, the role and importance of the rural economy in the global economy, with an emphasis on the promotion of sustainable agriculture and the development of rural areas. - SARD (Sustainable

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Agriculture and Rural Development). The main objective of SARD is to increase food production in a sustainable manner and ensure food security.

In the fifth part, The Importance of Roads for Development and Trade in Agriculture is an analytical review of literature that provides evidence on the effect of rural infrastructure investment on market access, trade and agricultural trade in particular, as well as on conditionality and complementarities, relating to the maximization of benefits for agricultural development and poverty reduction. It gathers evidence to suggest that investment in hard infrastructure (roads, communications and energy supply) is necessary but not sufficient for successful market integration. This part analyzes the issue of hard infrastructure provision, particularly roads, and its importance for market integration, development and trade in agriculture from both a macro and micro perspective.

The last part of the dissertation is "Agriculture and transport infrastructure in the countries of the Western Balkans".

5. Discussion of the results and used literature.

The content of the dissertation testifies that the doctoral student has carried out an in-depth scientific study.

My assessment of the structure and content of the dissertation is positive. It also includes combined scientific knowledge and practical approaches to solving problems. There is evidence that the PhD student can carry out independent research, draw conclusions and justify proposals for solving problems.

The analysis of the dissertation work, of the means of scientific research used in it, forms the conviction that the dissertation work contains sufficient evidence of scientific and applied contributions.

I believe that the contributions listed in the Statement of Contributions of the dissertation reflect what has been achieved in it.

6. Contributions of the dissertation work.

I accept the statement of contributions attached to the dissertation.

The following contributions of a scientific and applied nature can be highlighted in the dissertation:

1. The nature of the road infrastructure for the sustainable development of agriculture as a national branch of a country has been clarified;
2. The essence of the sustainable development of agriculture has been clarified and the role of infrastructure in this process has been studied;

3. The essence of agriculture in the context of the sustainable development of economic branches is clarified;
4. A strategy for the sustainable development of agriculture in the Western Balkans has been drawn up and argued, based on the road infrastructure as the main element of sustainability;
5. The role of road infrastructure for the sustainable development of agriculture in the Western Balkans is analyzed.

7. Critical Notes and Questions.

My recommendation to the PhD student is to continue working on the problems of road infrastructure management to achieve sustainable agricultural development.

8. Published articles and citations.

The presented publications (3) of the doctoral student are a reflection of the results of the theoretical and empirical research in the dissertation work.

The dissertation research conducted, the results obtained, the dissertation publications and the formulated contributions are the personal merit of the doctoral student.

The abstract has a volume of 37 pages and is developed according to the requirements, faithfully reflects the main results achieved in the dissertation and gives a true idea of the content and quality of the dissertation work.

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

CONCLUSION:

Based on the various research methods learned and applied by the doctoral student, the correctly performed experiments, the generalizations and conclusions made, I believe that the presented dissertation meets the requirements of the ŽARSRB and the Regulations of the Agrarian University for its application, which gives me a reason to evaluate it POSITIVE.

I take the liberty of proposing to the honorable Scientific Jury to also vote positively and award Besim Bislimi the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in the scientific specialty: Production Organization and Management (agriculture and sub-sectors).

Date: 25.10.2023

REVIEWER: