

REVIEW

on a dissertation work for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "doctor" by : field of higher education **3. Social, economic and legal sciences**, professional field **3.8 Economics**, scientific specialty **Economics and Management (Agriculture)**

Author of the dissertation: NATALIA YORDANOVA SHUKADAROVA
doctoral student at the Department of Economics at the Agricultural University, Plovdiv

Dissertation topic: Sustainability of Bulgarian grain production in the context of the European Green Deal

Reviewer: Assoc. prof. Dr. Georgi Aleksiev Aleksiev, Trakia University , Stara Zagora, Faculty of Economics, Higher Education Field **3. Social, economic and legal sciences**, professional field **3.7 Administration and management**, scientific specialty **Organization and management of production (agricultural business)** appointed as a member of the scientific jury by order No. RD-16-854/28.06.2024 by the Rector of the AU.

1. Brief introduction of the candidate.

Doctoral student Nataliya Yordanova Shukadarova graduated with a degree in "Modern Greek Philology" at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", bachelor's degree in 2004, then master's degree in "Modern Greek Philology" again at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in 2007. The doctoral student also obtained a "professional bachelor's" degree in 2011 in the specialty "Horticulture and Winemaking Technologies" from the Agricultural College, Plovdiv. She continued her studies abroad by participating in the *Cochran Fellowship Program in Grain Management* at the Kansas State University, United States of America in 2012. In 2014, she obtained a master's degree in the specialty "European Expert in Agriculture and Rural Areas" from the Agricultural University, Plovdiv. Since June 2021, she has been a part-time doctoral student at the Department of Economics at the Agricultural University, Plovdiv.

She speaks English and Greek, has good communication and teamwork skills.

2. Relevance of the dissertation problem.

The presented dissertation examines a current and significant problem for the agricultural sector. The intensive development of the agricultural sector, based on Bulgaria's membership in the European Union and the negative impact of climate change, creates a need to build policies to overcome these negative effects within the Community, which at the same time protect the economic interests of those employed in the sector. A new approach is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of grain production systems, including both economic parameters and social and environmental ones, forming the triad of the sustainable development model. The doctoral student was able to present the topicality of the researched problem and its significance for the sector.

3. Purpose, tasks, hypotheses and research methods.

The aim and tasks of the dissertation work are correctly and clearly formulated, adequate to the object of research, emphasizing the analysis of the sustainability of Bulgarian grain production in the context of the European Green Deal and the specific policies resulting from it.

The research methodology used, covering various methods and approaches, is suitable for the purpose and tasks of the research, and has been applied correctly.

4. Transparency and presentation of the obtained results.

The presentation of the dissertation work is exhibited in four chapters, and a good balance has been achieved in terms of individual paragraphs, part of the four chapters. An innovative approach of structuring a dissertation with distinguishable and linked overview, theoretical, methodical-analytical and project parts was adopted, which in their totality represent a self-completed study.

The dissertation submitted for review has a total size of 221 standard pages and consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, and a bibliography. The material is visualized by 45 pcs. figures and 6 pcs. tables.

The structure (title page, table of contents, introduction, exposition, conclusion and bibliography) and content of the dissertation are in accordance with the

requirements of Art. 27, para. 2 of the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

5. Discussion of results and used literature.

In *the first chapter*, the main production results of the Bulgarian grain production are presented. The nuances of European green policies are reported, and the results of previous research on the subject are presented. Key elements of the European ecopolitics, the forms of support for agriculture in the Community and the most important environmental requirements placed on the grain producers in the country are presented. The Common Agricultural Policy is presented in its dynamics, taking into account the influence of the problems related to food security in the formation of this policy.

Chapter two is devoted to the methodology and methodological problems in the survey of the opinion of producers from the sector. The methodology by which a survey was conducted among 128 respondents electronically is presented. The questions posed to the participants and the significance of the information received were discussed.

In *chapter three*, the agricultural factor income per annual labor unit is estimated, which helps to assess the labor productivity at the level of a specific production unit. The indicator of state support for research and development in agriculture, which creates a basis for assessing the country's potential for future development of national grain production and its competitiveness, was also studied. The impact of the dynamics of organic farming in the country on Bulgarian agriculture is also evaluated. The national framework for supporting the sector - the Strategic Plan for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas for the period 2023-2027 (SPRZSR) and the role of Green Architecture, which is a key part of it, was evaluated.

The information obtained from the conducted survey was presented and analyzed, and the attitudes of the producers included in the study regarding the influence of the green policies introduced by the EU on their production results in the future were evaluated and grouped.

In the fourth chapter, practical-applied solutions for increasing the sustainability of Bulgarian grain production are presented, based on the results of the conducted survey. Models are proposed for evaluating policies related to environmental practices in the sector and evaluating their impact on the productivity and competitiveness of individual participants in it. An author's model for a sustainable grain-producing farm is presented. Recommendations are proposed for improving the institutional environment of grain production in Bulgaria.

In the conclusion of the dissertation, the doctoral student presents summarized results, based on which she formulates adequate recommendations for optimizing grain production in the country and the sustainable development of the sector.

I believe that the dissertation work is an in-depth scientific study, a personal work of the author. The doctoral student complied with the rules of scientific ethics by correctly citing the used literary sources. The calculation procedures and the statistical processing of the empirical data were performed correctly. The dissertation work is well illustrated and illustrated.

The abstract is presented in a form that meets the requirements, reflecting in a volume of 48 pages the content of the dissertation and the main scientific and applied results achieved. The contribution report correctly reflects the results achieved by the author, which I generally accept.

The dissertation submitted to me for review proves that the doctoral student has acquired in-depth theoretical knowledge of the studied issue and has the ability to conduct independent scientific research, justify recommendations and present opportunities for optimization.

Used literature - the bibliographic list includes a total of 140 sources - monographs, studies, articles, reports, normative documents and documents from official websites of institutions.

6. Contributions of the dissertation work.

In my dissertation submitted for review, several main scientific and scientifically applied contributions can be noted.

Scientific contributions

The requirements for ecological compatibility of grain production have been systematized within the Strategic Plan for the Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas.

A survey was conducted among producers and their attitudes towards European green policies were assessed.

Scientific and applied contributions

A specific model for improving the forms of support for farms with an area of 500 ha has been proposed. within the framework of direct payments under the SPRZSR. An up-to-date, optimal production model for sustainable grain farming has been developed, by balancing the ecological, economic and social dimensions.

Recommendations for the development of the institutional environment to support Bulgarian grain production in the context of European ecopolitics are presented.

7. Critical Notes and Questions.

I have a question and recommendation for the doctoral student:

Based on the conducted survey and the analyzed results, what would be the impact of increased requirements for social responsibility in the sector on the depopulation of rural areas in the country?

I recommend the doctoral student in her future scientific activity to publish her research in specialized, refereed and indexed scientific journals.

8. Published articles and citations.

The PhD student has published 2 independent articles in English in a journal, visible in EBSCO and AGRIS, on the topic 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 reason to evaluate it **POSITIVE** .

I take the liberty of proposing to the honorable Scientific Jury to also vote positively and award Nataliya Yordanova Shukadarova the educational and scientific degree " *doctor* " in the scientific specialty **Economics and management (agriculture)**.

Date: 30.08.2024
Plovdiv

REVIEWER: 
(Assoc. prof. Dr. Georgi Aleksiev)