



REVIEW

on the dissertation submitted for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in Higher Education Area: 3 "Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences", Professional Field: 3.8 "Economics", Scientific Specialty: "Organization and Management of Production".

The author of the dissertation is **Yordan Ivanov Penchev**, an independent doctoral student at the Department of "Management and Marketing", with the dissertation topic: **"Management of Agricultural Product Supply Chains"**.

Reviewer: Prof. Dr. Violeta Dinkova Dirimanova, Agricultural University – Plovdiv, Higher Education Area: 3. Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences, Professional Field: 3.8 Economics and Management, Scientific Specialty: Organization and Management of Production, appointed Chair of the Scientific Jury by Order № RD 16-518/22.04.2025 of the Rector of the Agricultural University.

1. Brief presentation of the candidate

Yordan Ivanov Penchev was born on 20.03.1994. He obtained a Bachelor's degree in "Regional Development Management" from the Faculty of Economics at the Agricultural University – Plovdiv in 2020. In 2021, he completed two Master's degrees – one in "Agricultural Marketing" from the same university, and another in "Regional Security" from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". He is proficient in English. From 2022 to 2025, Yordan Penchev was a full-time PhD student in the Department of "Management and Marketing" at the Agricultural University – Plovdiv.

2. Relevance of the topic

The topic of the dissertation is of particular importance in the context of integrating Bulgarian agriculture into the global economy. The development of efficient, market-oriented, and sustainable agricultural supply chains is a key condition for increasing the competitiveness of Bulgarian producers, especially in the context of volatile markets and high logistics costs.

3. Aim, tasks, hypotheses, and research methods

The *aim* of the research is to determine the degree of integration of agricultural producers in supply chains and its impact on farm performance. The following tasks have been set by the doctoral candidate:

1. Clarify the specifics of production structures in agriculture and the business relationships with intermediaries during product realization.
2. Define the mechanism of functioning of supply chains for agricultural products.
3. Develop a methodology for studying agricultural supply chains.
4. Identify the factors that determine the market status of agricultural producers in the supply chain.
5. Identify the potential for shortening the supply chains from agricultural producers.
6. Make recommendations for improving farmers' market positions in the supply chain.
7. Develop a model of the supply chain for agricultural products.

Various scientific *methods* have been applied: system analysis, situational and comparative analysis, diagnostic and forecasting approaches, retrospective analysis, statistical methods, and case study analysis.

4. Visualization and presentation of results

The dissertation is logically structured and consists of an introduction, three main chapters, a conclusion, and a bibliography. The results are illustrated with 13 tables and 26 figures. A total of 45 literary sources were used, covering both Bulgarian and international publications. The analyses are clear, consistent, and well-reasoned.

5. Discussion of the results and literature used

Yordan Penchev's dissertation presents a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the contemporary challenges in managing agricultural supply chains. The theoretical part reviews core concepts regarding production structures in agriculture, the specifics of product marketing, and the role of intermediaries in distribution. Both traditional and modern approaches to logistics and marketing are explored, including the use of short supply chains as a tool for improved efficiency.

The candidate effectively combines classical models with current research trends in agrarian economics. The literature is rich and diverse, including legal documents, scientific publications, EU strategies, and analytical materials from both national and international institutions (such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Eurostat, and the National Statistical Institute). This reflects the author's ability to integrate relevant scientific and practical information.

The practical part of the study, based on surveys with 123 agricultural producers from Southern Bulgaria, identifies key factors influencing farmers' market status. A serious statistical analysis has been conducted, including chi-square tests for correlations between marketing determinants and farm characteristics (land area, experience, education, association membership, etc.). These findings are summarized

in tables showing factor relationships and profiles of producers potentially engaged in supply chain optimization.

The author does not limit the work to describing the current state but also proposes practical solutions—such as a model for agricultural supply chains incorporating different marketing and logistics scenarios. Emphasis is placed on the role of education, innovation, and access to market information as prerequisites for better farm positioning.

The dissertation also highlights the importance of institutional support, such as the Rural Development Programme, which has positively impacted part of the surveyed farms. The author makes a strong link between macroeconomic policy and microeconomic outcomes, contributing to well-grounded and practice-oriented conclusions.

The synthesis of theoretical analysis and empirical research is professionally executed, with convincingly argued conclusions focused on improving the efficiency of agricultural supply chains in a real-world business environment.

7. Contributions of the dissertation

The dissertation "Management of Agricultural Product Supply Chains" offers the following significant theoretical and practical contributions:

- Clarification of the specifics of agricultural production structures and business relations with intermediaries;
- Identification of critical factors influencing the efficiency of agricultural supply chains;
- Development of a model for optimal distribution management of agricultural products;
- Formulation of practical recommendations for improving the market positioning of farmers;
- Analysis of market challenges and opportunities for the implementation of short and direct supply chains;
- Methodological contribution to the study of agricultural distribution systems.

8. Critical notes and recommendations

The methodological section could benefit from a more detailed justification of the choice of certain quantitative methods. It is advisable for the author to publish the results of the dissertation in specialized international academic journals to broaden the visibility and impact of the research findings.

9. Published Articles and Citations

The doctoral candidate has published the required minimum of scientific articles related to the dissertation topic, in accordance with the criteria for obtaining the Doctoral degree. The publications are:

1. Penchev, Y., Distribution management of agricultural production. Economics and Management of Agriculture, 2022, No. 2.
2. Penchev, Y., Profile of farmers in shortening supply chains. Journal of Bio-based Marketing, 2025, No. 1.
3. Penchev, Y., Functioning of agricultural supply chains. Journal of Bio-based Marketing, 2025, No. 1.

CONCLUSION:

Based on the presented study, the applied research methods, and the conclusions drawn, I believe that the dissertation meets the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the regulations of the Agricultural University – Plovdiv, which provides sufficient grounds for me to give it a **POSITIVE** evaluation.

I respectfully recommend to the Honorable Scientific Jury also to vote positively and award **Yordan Ivanov Penchev** the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in the scientific specialty Organization and Management of Production.

Date: 8.05.2025
Plovdiv

REVIEWER:
(Prof. Dr. Violeta Dirimanova)