

REVIEW



on a dissertation thesis for obtaining the educational and scientific degree “**Doctor**” in: field of higher education 3.0 ‘Social, business and legal sciences’, professional field 3.8 ‘Economic’, scientific specialty: ‘Organization and management of production’

Author of the dissertation thesis:

DIMITAR TOTEV STOENCHEV, a PhD student at the Department of Management and Marketing in the Agricultural University, city of Plovdiv.

Dissertation topic: “**Strategic human resources management in the organization of production processes in agriculture**”

Reviewer:

Associate professor Dr. Teodora Orfeeva Parisheva-Stoeva, 3.0. ‘Social, business and legal sciences’, 3.7 “Administration and Management”, “Organization and management of production”, appointed as a member of the scientific jury by order № РД-16-478/ 02.04.2026 of the Rector of the Agricultural University.

1. Relevance of the issue.

The dissertation thesis presented for review provides a current scientific study related to the strategic management of human resources in Bulgarian agriculture. Bulgarian agriculture is experiencing serious difficulties related to providing production processes with labor resources. The agricultural sector is not attractive for professional realization and it is difficult to find personnel with the necessary knowledge and skills. In this context, Bulgarian agricultural producers are looking for various approaches to deal with the difficulties.

2. Purpose, tasks, hypotheses and methods of research

The purpose of this dissertation is to establish the influence of strategic human resource management in the management of production processes in agriculture.

In order to achieve the set goal, the following tasks will be solved:

1. The importance of strategic human resource management in business organizations is clarified.
2. A methodology for studying human resource management in agriculture is developed.
3. The impact of human resources on the results of the production activities of the studied objects has been determined.
4. Recommendations have been made for improving the management of human resources in agricultural holdings based on a strategic approach.
5. A model for strategic management of human resources in agriculture has been developed.

The object of the scientific research are agricultural holdings, with varying degrees of specialization and located throughout the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria.

The subject of the scientific research are the management activities in planning, organizing, motivating and controlling human resources in agricultural holdings.

The thesis of the dissertation is that the strategic approach to human resources management in modern market conditions is a prerequisite for ensuring production processes and improving their results in agricultural holdings.

Leading sub-theses in the study are:

- Strategic human resource management is a process that requires taking into account the specifics of the organizational culture of business organizations.
- There is potential for stimulating human resources in Bulgarian agriculture.
- The implementation of strategic human resource management requires coordination and centralization of activities and in order to improve the financial results of agricultural holdings.

When conducting the study, the systematic approach, retrospective analysis, situational analysis, comparative analysis, statistical methods, diagnostic analysis, prognostic analysis, etc. were applied.

3. Visualization and presentation of the results obtained

The dissertation thesis presented for review consists of an introduction, an exposition in three sections, a conclusion, and a list of references – a total of 111 standard pages. In accordance with the main tasks set in the study, the exposition in the dissertation is developed according to the following structure: introduction, chapter one “Theoretical and methodological foundations of strategic human resource management”, chapter two “Analysis of human resource management practices in agricultural holdings”, chapter three “A model for strategic human resource management in agriculture”, conclusion, literature and appendices.

4. Discussion of the results and bibliography

The first chapter of the dissertation thesis analyzes six main approaches to strategic human resource management. The most popular among them is the Best Practice Approach, which claims that there is a universal set of good HR practices that lead to high efficiency, regardless of the context or strategy of the organization. The Resource-Based View (RBV) is useful in that it addresses the building of company advantages. Another approach to HRM is the Best Fit Approach, which determines that the HR strategy must be tailored to the specific context of the organization – its environment, strategy, structure and stage of the life cycle.

The fourth approach is the Configurational Approach, which defines effectiveness as the fit between different elements of the HR system and the overall business strategy. The Institutional Approach emphasizes the influence of social, legal, and cultural institutions on the shape of HR strategy. The final approach is the Critical Approach, which questions the neutrality of HRM. This approach defines HR as a means of reproducing power and inequality.

The general characteristics of human capital in Bulgarian agriculture are defined as follows:

- Low educational level – a significant share of the employed have primary or secondary education.
- Aging of the workforce – the average age of workers in the sector exceeds 50 years.

- Seasonal employment – typical for fruit growing, vegetable growing, viticulture, etc.

- Migration processes – many agricultural workers are engaged temporarily and migrate between regions and countries.

The conclusions of the first chapter are as follows: human resources management in the agricultural sector is characterized by its pronounced specificity, determined by the seasonal nature of labor, dependence on natural and climatic conditions, the lower degree of automation in a number of activities and the combination of traditional practices with increasing requirements for modernization. These features require flexible and adaptive approaches to planning, selection, training and motivation of personnel, which should take into account both short-term labor needs and long-term development of human capital in the sector.

In the second chapter, the results show that the largest share of surveyed agricultural producers are located in the South Central (22.8%), South Eastern (20.5%) and North Eastern regions (18.3%). This corresponds to national statistical data, according to which it is these regions that concentrate a significant part of agricultural areas and production capacities. Of particular concern is the fact that 55% of respondents systematically experience a shortage of labor during the campaign, and 60% consider seasonality to be a serious problem. This clearly shows a discrepancy between the needs of the agricultural sector and the availability of a qualified and motivated workforce.

The organizational structure of the studied farms includes three main activities:

- creation of jobs with developed job descriptions that meet their specific requirements;
- ranking of jobs in a hierarchical structure by building the relevant organizational links;
- delegation of rights and obligations by hierarchical levels and building the necessary departments.

The third chapter presents a model for strategic management of human resources in agriculture. The model is built on the logic of strategic management, adapted to the specifics of the agricultural sector – seasonality, technological transformation, labor shortage, sustainability, regulatory requirements. It includes four main modules and twelve interconnected components. The generalized logic of the model is as follows:

1. Analysis → determines the context and needs
2. Planning → formulates HR strategy and competency profile
3. Implementation → implements HR solutions in selection, training, motivation
4. Control and sustainability → ensures adaptability and long-term effectiveness.

The focus of the recommendations is on creating a sustainable system for strategic human resources management, which would cover the processes of selection, training, qualification, assessment and motivation, tailored to the specific needs of the sector. In this way, the aim is to increase the efficiency of production processes, strengthen the social sustainability of rural areas and achieve competitiveness of Bulgarian agriculture within the single European market.

5. Dissertation Contributions:

The dissertation thesis "Strategic Management of Human Resources in the Organization of Production Processes in Agriculture" contains the following significant scientific contributions to the theory and practice of corporate management:

1. The specificity of production processes in agriculture and the place of human resources in the production process are clarified.
2. The mechanism of human resources management in agriculture has been clarified.
3. The factors determining the impact of human resources on the results of production activities in agricultural holdings have been identified.
4. A model for improving human resources management in agricultural holdings based on a strategic approach has been developed.

6. Critical comments and questions

I have no critical comments to the dissertation work of the PhD student.

7. Published articles and references

DIMITAR TOTEV STOENCHEV is a an author of three /3/ articles:

1. Stoenchev, D., Motivational approaches in human resource management. Journal of Bio-based Marketing. 2025, № 2
2. Stoenchev, D., Human resource management in agriculture. Journal of Bio-based Marketing. 2026, № 1
3. Stoenchev, D., Strategic approach to personnel management in agricultural holdings. Journal of Bio-based Marketing. 2026, № 1

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

CONCLUSION:

I think that the presented dissertation thesis meets the requirements of the Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, and the Regulations of the Agricultural University regarding its implementation and I therefore confidently give it a **POSITIVE** assessment.

I venture to suggest to the Honorable scientific jury to give their positive vote as well and to award to DIMITAR TOTEV STOENCHEV the educational and scientific degree "DOCTOR" in Organization and management of production.

Date: 15/04/2026
city of Plovdiv

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