REVIEW

on the dissertation for the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in: field of higher education 3.0. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.8. Economics, scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Agriculture)"

Author of the dissertation: Jon Arifi , independent doctoral student at the Department of Economics at the Agricultural University, Plovdiv

Topic of the dissertation: Environmental protection measures in the common agricultural policy of the European Union

Reviewer: Prof. Dr. Alexander Krasimirov Davchev, Higher School of Agribusiness and Regional Development; field of higher education 3. "Social, Economic and Legal Sciences", professional field 3.8 Economics, scientific specialty "Regional Economy and Sustainable Development" appointed as a member of the scientific jury by order No. RD-16-559/29.04.2026 by the Rector of the Agricultural University

1. Brief introduction of the candidate.

The PhD candidate Jon Arifi was born on November 5, 1996 and acquired his education in Pristina, Kosovo, respectively – a bachelor's degree in Art Management with a specialization in "General International Management" at Globus College and a master's degree in "Art Management and Finance" at Business College. His professional experience is related to several management positions, one in a company related to dentistry, and the other related to the construction works at the Vlora Airport in Albania. He is currently the manager and owner of a successfully developing company engaged in the production and processing of metals.

2. Relevance of the problem.

The topic of the dissertation is relevant and significant both in theoretical and practical aspects. In recent decades, the relationship between agriculture and the environment has become increasingly clear, especially due to global environmental problems. Agriculture has a dual role - on the one hand, it contributes to environmental degradation, and on the other, it is strongly

affected by it. Therefore, it is important for the sustainable use of natural resources.

In the European Union, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is one of the main policies, which, in addition to regulating agricultural markets and ensuring food security, also affects land use, biodiversity conservation and rural development. Therefore, it has an important role in protecting the environment and limiting climate change.

3. Purpose, tasks, hypotheses and research methods.

The aim of the study is to carry out a comprehensive and critical analysis of the environmental measures and policy instruments introduced through the successive reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the European Union, with a view to assessing their contribution to promoting sustainable agricultural practices and environmental protection.

In order to achieve the set objective, the following tasks have been solved:

1. The theoretical foundations of sustainable development and its importance for the management of natural resources have been analyzed;
2. The development of the concept of sustainability in agriculture and its application in EU policies have been studied;
3. The development of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the integration of environmental measures into it have been monitored;
4. The main environmental instruments within the CAP have been analyzed;
5. The role of organic farming in the EU as part of sustainable development has been studied;
6. The relationship between economic and environmental performance in EU agriculture has been assessed;
7. Statistical and econometric methods have been applied to analyze the dependencies between economic and environmental indicators;
8. The effectiveness of agri-environmental indicators and measures within the CAP is assessed;
9. Conclusions and recommendations are formulated for improving the environmental dimension of the CAP in line with the objectives of the European Green Deal and sustainable development.

The main hypothesis that the author advocates is that through an in-depth analysis of the structure, implementation and impact of environmental measures within the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), significant conclusions can be

identified that contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between agriculture and environmental sustainability, as well as to reveal good practices, policy weaknesses and opportunities for improving the environmental performance of the CAP.

The subject of the study is the system of environmental measures and instruments set out in the European Union's CAP.

The object of the study is the analysis of the environmental performance of agriculture in the EU Member States, with a particular emphasis on the effects of CAP reforms on sustainability indicators.

4. Visualization and presentation of the obtained results.

The dissertation is structured in four logically connected parts, each of which has its own introduction and methodological explanation, conclusions and a list of used literature - a total of 209 pages. The presentation of the presented dissertation work is developed in the following structure: Introduction, the first chapter entitled "Sustainable management of natural resources - theoretical and methodological concepts", the second chapter - "Historical evolution of the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU - main reforms", the third - "Analysis of the relationship between economic and environmental indicators of agriculture" and the fourth - "Organic farming and the natural environment of the EU", conclusions and used literature.

5. Discussion of the results and used literature.

The presented dissertation aims to carry out a comprehensive and critical analysis of the environmental measures and policy instruments imposed by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the EU. Each section builds on the previous one and provides a comprehensive analysis of the environmental measures under the CAP and their impact on the sustainability of agriculture in the EU.

The first part examines the link between natural resource management and sustainable development, focusing on its principles, global environmental challenges and its relevance for the transformation of agriculture.

The second part traces the development of the CAP and its key reforms, as well as the integration of environmental measures over the period 2000–2027,

with a focus on their role in sustainable development and environmental protection.

The third part analyses the relationship between economic performance of agriculture and the environment using statistical and empirical methods, including the ecological Kuznets curve, as well as the impact of agricultural practices on climate and resources.

The fourth part examines organic farming in the EU as an element of sustainable development, its standards, market development and institutional support, as well as its alignment with the Green Deal and the CAP Strategic Plans.

Based on the research conducted, the following main conclusions are formulated:

• The integration of environmental aspects into the CAP has developed significantly since the 1990s, moving towards a more balanced approach with a focus on sustainability, biodiversity, climate and resource efficiency.

• Sustainable development is established as a fundamental principle in EU agricultural policy and influences the objectives and instruments of the CAP, especially after the 2013 and 2023 reforms.

• Organic farming is established as a key element of EU policies with increasing support and positive effects on soils, chemicalisation and biodiversity, despite differences between Member States.

• Empirical analysis shows a complex and partly non-linear relationship between economic and environmental efficiency; the Kuznets environmental curve hypothesis is partially confirmed.

• The Environmental Performance Index (EPI) and agri-environmental indicators are important tools for assessing and comparing environmental performance and for supporting policies.

• Agri-environmental measures and green payments have a positive effect on the environment, but with uneven results between Member States due to differences in implementation and capacity.

The literature used is directly related to the topic of the dissertation, and the large number of sources, as well as their contemporary nature, makes a very good impression. The 230 sources used are more than sufficient to build a good theoretical framework and give weight to the dissertation work.

It can be assumed that the results of the presented study are interpreted in depth, reasoned and relevant to the set goals and objectives.

6. Contributions of the dissertation work.

The dissertation work contains scientific-theoretical and scientific-applied conclusions, as follows:

Scientific-theoretical contributions:

Conceptual integration of sustainable development and agricultural policy

A conceptual framework has been developed that unites the environmental, economic and social dimensions of sustainability in the context of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), emphasizing its role as an economic and environmental instrument.

Clarifying the relationship between economic and environmental outcomes in agriculture

Through theoretical and empirical analysis, the interdependencies between agricultural productivity, environmental degradation and sustainability are clarified.

Assessment of the Evolution of the Common Agricultural Policy

The development of the CAP is systematized through the prism of sustainable development, showing the transition from a production-oriented to an environmentally integrated policy.

Extending the Environmental Performance Index to the Agricultural Context

The Environmental Performance Index has been adapted to assess agriculture in the EU, allowing for comparability of environmental performance across countries.

Scientific and applied contributions:

Empirical assessment of agricultural and environmental performance in the EU

A comparative analysis of the relationship between economic performance of agriculture and environmental status is presented, finding that higher technological and agro-environmental integration leads to better environmental performance without loss of productivity.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of CAP environmental instruments

Agri-environmental measures and eco-schemes for the periods 2014–2020 and 2023–2027 have been evaluated, identifying gaps between objectives and implementation and formulating proposals for improvement.

Policy recommendations for long-term environmental sustainability

The dissertation formulates an integrated set of institutional and practical recommendations for reforming the Common Agricultural Policy and related environmental policies of the European Union. These include the introduction of payments based on the achieved results in the provision of ecosystem services, strengthening monitoring and control systems, harmonizing environmental data and improving coordination between agricultural, water and climate legislation.

7. Critical remarks and questions.

I have no critical remarks and questions.

8. Published articles and citations.

The publications presented are those that are directly related to the topic of the dissertation and reflect its main research aspects. The publication activity is in accordance with the minimum requirements for admission to the defense of a dissertation. No data on citations are provided.

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

CONCLUSION:

Based on the various research methods learned and applied by the doctoral student, the correctly conducted experiments, the generalizations and conclusions made, I believe that the presented 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 for its application, which gives me reason to evaluate it **POSITIVELY**

I would like to propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to also vote **positively** and award Jon Arifi the educational and scientific degree of "doctor" in the scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Agriculture)"

Date: 14.05.2026
city of Plovdiv