



ACADEMIC OPINION

on a dissertation for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the 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, PhD Student, Department of Economics, Agricultural University – Plovdiv

Topic of the PhD thesis: ENVIRONMENTAL MEASURES IN THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Reviewer: Professor Dr. Boryana Lyubcheva Ivanova, Agricultural University-Plovdiv, Department of Economics, 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, 3.8. Economics, scientific specialty "Economics and management (Agriculture)", appointed by Order 16-559/29.04.2026 of the Rector of the Agricultural University - Plovdiv as a member of the scientific jury.

1. Relevance of the topic

The presented dissertation addresses a significant topic related to the environmentalization of the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union and its importance for the sustainable development of the agricultural sector. The topic is particularly relevant in the context of intensifying climate change, the need to reduce environmental pressure on natural resources, and the growing public expectations for the development of sustainable agri-food systems.

The study focuses on the analysis of environmental mechanisms and instruments within the CAP framework, emphasizing their role in promoting sustainable agriculture, preserving biodiversity, and limiting negative environmental impacts. In the context of the European Green Deal and the new EU priorities in the fields of climate and sustainability, the topic has substantial scientific and practical significance.

The dissertation demonstrates an effort to explore the links between the economic and environmental aspects of agricultural policy and highlights the need for an integrated approach in the formulation of policies for the sustainable development of agriculture.

2. Aim, tasks, hypotheses and research methods

The main objective of the dissertation is to analyze the development and effectiveness of the environmental measures within the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union and to assess their significance for the sustainable development of agriculture and environmental protection.

The research tasks are logically structured and correspond to the formulated objective. They include study of the theoretical concepts of sustainable development, tracing the historical evolution of the CAP, systematizing the environmental instruments within the policy, analyzing agro-environmental indicators, and assessing the relationship between the economic performance of agriculture and the environmental conditions in the EU Member States.

The research approach is well justified and combines both theoretical and empirical methods. The study employs literature and documentary analysis, comparative and historical methods, as well as statistical and econometric approaches, including correlation and regression analysis. The methodological framework is appropriate to the subject of the research.

3. Visualization and presentation of the results.

The dissertation is consistently structured and consists of an introduction, four chapters, conclusions, recommendations, and a bibliography, length of 209 pages.

The obtained results are presented in a clear and systematic manner. The theoretical considerations are successfully linked with the empirical analyses, which contributes to a more convincing argumentation of the author's conclusions. The dissertation includes tables, figures, and statistical data that facilitate the understanding and interpretation of the analyzed relationships and processes.

4. Discussion of the results and theoretical background.

The first chapter presents the theoretical framework of sustainable development and natural resource management. It examines the main concepts, principles, and interpretations of sustainability, as well as the global environmental challenges related to climate change, pollution, and environmental degradation. The role of agriculture and agribusiness in these processes is also analysed.

The second chapter traces the development of the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union and its major reforms. Particular attention is paid to the gradual integration of environmental objectives into the policy, as well as to the transformation of support instruments toward sustainable resource management and the environmentalization of agriculture.

The third chapter contains an empirical analysis of the relationships between economic and environmental indicators in the agricultural sectors of the EU Member States. The study examines the links between agricultural productivity, environmental indicators, and the impact of factors such as the use of mineral fertilizers, pesticides, and energy. The role of agro-environmental measures and indicators within the CAP framework is also analysed.

The fourth chapter is devoted to organic farming and its importance for the sustainable development of the European Union. It examines the development of organic production, institutional support, and the relationship between the European Green Deal and policies for sustainable agriculture

The literature used is based on 230 sources and is current and relevant to the researched topic. It includes scientific publications, regulatory documents, EU strategic frameworks, and international reports, demonstrating a solid understanding of both the theoretical and practical aspects of the issue under consideration.

5. Contributions of the PhD thesis

I accept the PhD student contributions to the dissertation. Among the most significant contributions, the following may be highlighted:

Scientific and theoretical contributions

- Extension of the Environmental Performance Index (EPI) to the Agricultural Context- The study adapts and applies the EPI framework to assess agricultural sustainability across EU Member States. This represents a methodological and theoretical contribution that links macro-level environmental indicators with sectoral agricultural performance, allowing for cross-national comparability of ecological outcomes.

Scientific and applied contributions

- Empirical Evaluation of Agricultural and Environmental Performance in the EU- Based on comparative statistical analysis, the dissertation offers empirical evidence on the correlation between agricultural economic output and environmental performance among EU countries. The findings provide a quantitative foundation for policy-making, revealing that states with higher technological adoption and agroecological integration exhibit better environmental indicators without compromising productivity.
- Assessment of the Effectiveness of CAP Environmental Instruments- The research systematically evaluates agroecological measures, eco-schemes, and organic farming interventions under successive CAP programming periods (2014–2020 and 2023–2027). It identifies gaps between policy design and implementation, offering concrete recommendations for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of CAP's environmental architecture.

6. Critical remarks and questions.

The following recommendation may be addressed to the dissertation: it would be beneficial to develop more in-depth comparative analyses regarding the long-term impact of environmental measures on the competitiveness and sustainability of agriculture in the individual Member States of the European Union.

7. Publications and citations.

The PhD student has presented three publications related to the topic of the dissertation, reflecting key aspects of the conducted scientific research.

The publications meet the requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".

The submitted dissertation abstract accurately reflects the structure, content, main results, and contributions of the dissertation thesis.

CONCLUSION:

Based on the different research methods applied by the PhD student, the correctly performed analysis, the formulated recommendations and conclusions, I consider that the presented dissertation meets the requirements of the Law for Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, The Regulation for the Application of the Law for Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations of the Agricultural University - Plovdiv for its application, which gives me reason to evaluate it **POSITIVE**.

I would like to propose to the Scientific Jury to vote **POSITIVELY** and award Jon Arifi the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific speciality "Economics and Management (Agriculture)"

Date: 12.05.2026
Plovdiv

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заличени
във връзка с чл.4, т.1 от
Регламент (ЕС) 2016/679
(Общ Регламент относно
защитата на данни).