



OPINION

on a doctoral dissertation for the award of 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: Yon Arifi, PhD candidate independent study at the Department of Economics, Faculty of Economics, Agricultural University – Plovdiv.

Dissertation topic: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION MEASURES IN THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Reviewer: Prof. Natalia Mihova Stoyanova, PhD, University of Agribusiness and Rural Development – Plovdiv, in the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences, professional field 3.7 Administration and Management, scientific specialty “Economics and Management (Sustainable Regional Development)” appointed as a member of the scientific jury by **Order No. RD-16-559/29.04 .2026** of the Rector of the Agricultural University.

1. Relevance of the problem

The relationship between agriculture and the environment has become increasingly evident in recent decades, especially in the context of global environmental challenges. Agriculture, as both a factor and a victim of environmental degradation, plays a key role in the sustainable management of natural resources.

2. Aim, objectives, hypotheses and research methods

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

In accordance with the defined subject, object and aim of the research, as well as its theoretical and empirical framework, the main research tasks include:

1. To conceptualize and critically analyze the theoretical foundations of sustainable development and its importance for natural resource management;
2. To examine the theoretical evolution and practical interpretations of sustainability in agriculture, including its principles, components and applicability within the EU policy framework;
3. To trace the historical development of the EU Common Agricultural Policy, identifying key stages of reform and assessing the integration and transformation of environmental measures;
4. To systematize and analyze the environmental instruments introduced within the CAP;
5. To investigate the role and development of organic farming in the EU as an integral part of the

sustainable development strategy;

6. To assess the relationship between economic and environmental outcomes of agriculture in the EU;
7. To apply statistical and econometric methods to evaluate the relationships between agricultural economic indicators and environmental outcomes;
8. To assess the use and effectiveness of agri-environmental indicators and measures within the CAP;
9. To formulate conclusions and recommendations for improving the environmental dimension of the CAP in line with the objectives of the European Green Deal, climate neutrality and long-term environmental sustainability.

The present study applies a multi-method approach integrating both qualitative and quantitative research methods to ensure a comprehensive analysis of environmental measures within the EU Common Agricultural Policy. The methods and sources are systematized in accordance with the stages and objectives of the research:

1. Literature review
2. Method of abstraction
3. Historical, descriptive, compilation and comparative methods
4. Collection of secondary data
5. Statistical methods

3. Presentation of results

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the study, positioned at the intersection of agricultural policy, environmental sciences and sustainable development, the methodology integrates diverse qualitative and quantitative approaches.

4. Discussion of results and literature used

Chapter III presents the analytical and empirical core of the dissertation, examining the complex relationship between the economic efficiency of agriculture and its environmental indicators in the European Union. The literature used is sufficient for the needs and objectives of the dissertation.

5. Contributions of the dissertation

Scientific and theoretical contributions:

1. Conceptual integration of sustainable development and agricultural policy
2. Clarification of the relationship between economic and environmental outcomes in agriculture
3. Assessment of the evolution of the Common Agricultural Policy
4. Expansion of the Environmental Performance Index in the agricultural context

Scientific and applied contributions:

1. Empirical assessment of agricultural and environmental outcomes in the EU. The results provide a quantitative basis for policy formulation, showing that countries with higher levels of technological adoption and agri-environmental integration achieve better environmental indicators without compromising productivity.

2. Evaluation of the effectiveness of environmental instruments within the CAP. Discrepancies between policy design and practical implementation are identified, and specific recommendations are formulated to improve effectiveness and performance.
3. Policy recommendations for long-term environmental sustainability

6. Critical remarks and questions None.

7. Published articles and citations

Arifi, J., 2026. *Exploring the dynamics of export performance in the Balkans: A GMM panel data approach*. *South East European Journal of Sustainable Development*, Vol. 10 (1/2026), pp. 205–218, ISSN (print) 2545-4463, ISSN (online) 2545-4471.

Arifi, J., 2026. *Modeling risk strategy formation: the role of managerial experience and business characteristics*. *South East European Journal of Sustainable Development*, Vol. 10 (2/2026), pp. 192–211, ISSN (print) 2545-4463, ISSN (online) 2545-4471.

Arifi, J., 2026. *Institutional and economic determinants of exports: evidence from western Balkan countries*. *South East European Journal of Sustainable Development*, Vol. 10 (2/2026), pp. 212–232, ISSN (print) 2545-4463, ISSN (online) 2545-4471.

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

CONCLUSION

Based on the knowledge acquired and the research methods applied by the PhD candidate, the correctly conducted analyses, and the conclusions drawn, I consider that the submitted dissertation meets the requirements of the Bulgarian legislation and the regulations of the Agricultural University for its implementation, which gives me grounds to evaluate it **POSITIVELY**.

I would like to propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to also vote positively and to award Yon Arifi 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)”.

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