THE CONTRIBUTION OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION TO THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN CALARASI COUNTY

CONTRIBUTIA CONSULTANTEI AGRICOLE IN DEZVOLTAREA MEDIULUI RURAL DIN JUDETUL CALARASI

ALINA DRAGOMIR[1]

[1] University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Bucharest, Romania; e-mail: alinaadragomir@yahoo.com

Abstract. *Rural area has an essential place in history, civilization and European identity, remains the main supplier of vital raw materials. Also an attraction by way of healthy living, cultural heritage and natural beauty. People are generally attracted by the idea of living and working in rural areas but in similar conditions to those of the city.*
The problem of development and rural arrangement is one of the most complex of present, because it supposed striking a balance between the requirement of preserving the economic countryside, environmental, socio-cultural in villages, also and tend to "modernize" the rural life.

Key words*: agricultural consulting, rural area, Calarasi County*

INTRODUCTION

"Knowledge, research, improvement and rural development activities are vital for the country, both by the size of rural area, expressed through the area owned and the share of employment in productive activities, social and cultural services, housing and tourism."[1]

Calarasi County is situated in the south-east of Romania, representing 2.1% of its surface. As framing in a region of development, county belongs to South-Muntenia Region. Rural population is approximately 61.5% of total county population [2]. Being a plain county, agriculture is the main economic activity, two thirds of the county's agricultural sector is represented by vegetable intake. 49% of total occupied population carries out agricultural activities. In terms of individual holdings in the county there are about 60,986 farms which represent 6,4% of total holdings in the region and 45,148 companies and agricultural associations, which means about 32% of agricultural companies [3]. Consulting plays an

important role in agriculture county Calarasi Agricultural Chamber of the county is the only public institution that provides specialized services free for farmers at the village and at farm level.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

To highlight the role of rural agricultural consultancy in Calarasi County the activities of agricultural consultants were analyzed in 2009-2011, fields that were the most requests and results obtained from consulting activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Between 2009-2011 agricultural consulting service has undergone changes, but they did not influence considerably the collaboration with farmers in the county. Services offered by the Chamber of Agriculture have materialized in training and improvement courses, popularization of certain technologies and European funds that can be accessed, assistance in achievement of projects and economic and legal information. One of the problems facing agriculture is unable excessive fragmentation of land and impossibility of application of appropriate technologies. Consultants from the country have contributed together with the farmers to form six agricultural cooperatives, two of them in training at the end of 2011, and two recognized groups of producers. In the county there are five agricultural high-schools, however, the level of training in rural areas is not very good, and accessing the structural funds requires certain conditions, among which a minimum specialization in the field.

To answer this request Agricultural Chamber organized the information courses, initiation and training that were followed by about 200 people annually [4].

For a better implementation of research results were made demonstrations and demonstration plots where the farmers could see the influence and evolution of the technology applicated or method which can be applied to improve productive efficiency. In this respect Agricultural Chamber organized about 40 demonstrations and 18 demonstration plots that having as purpose the promotion of new technologies.

An important place in consultants agenda they represented the meetings with the farmers in the county. In last year's a slight decrease was found in the number of people who participated at meetings (Figure 1).

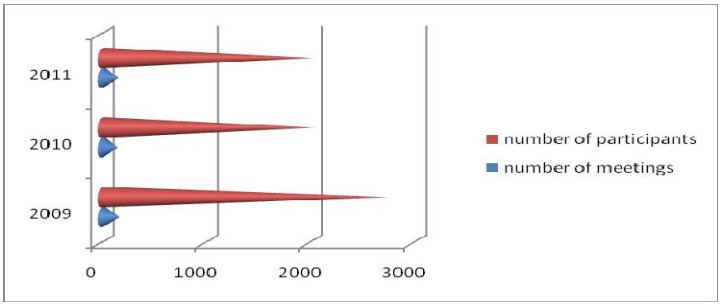


Figure 1. The situation of meetings and the number of participants during 2009 - 2011, Calarasi County

In 2009 in Calarasi County were organized 289 meetings, roundtables and debates attended by 3991 people. Between the topics most often addressed at these meetings the leader place is occupied talks on European funds and accessing them (32.5%), followed by information on the application of certain technologies and the related forms of association, the importance and benefits. During these meetings two models of projects for establishment of a vegetable farm in field were presented.

Besides the role of information and disseminating of certain information these meetings are important and socially, farmers having the opportunity to expose the problems that they faced, to get solutions, but also to share their own experience.

There can be observed that in terms of areas in which was provide technical assistance (Fig. 2) most requests were for cereals (high culture) and rural development programs, most requests coming from small farms (81.85%).

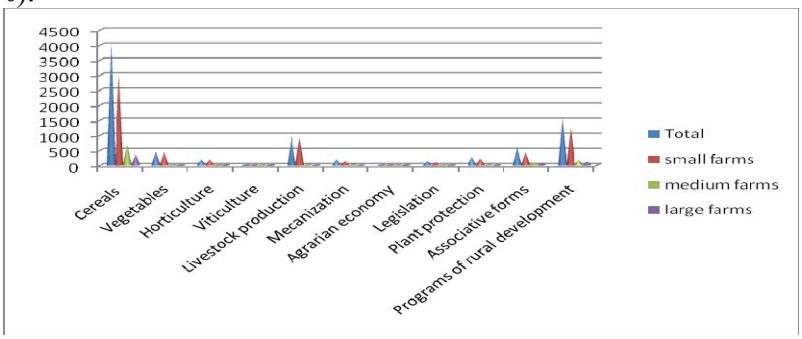


Figure 2. Fields where technical specialized assistance was given in 2009 in Calarasi County

At the end of 2009, 27 projects on 112 Measure were prepared, whose values represented 199,000 euros and 2 projects on 121 Measure (worth 262,844 euros). Of the total drafted projects: 23 projects were submitted, four have been approved, and the remaining projects were being developed. All projects prepared in 2009 total 461,844 euros. There were also 25 potential beneficiaries of which 22 were interested in modernizing agricultural farms.

In 2010 were organized 206 meetings, roundtables and debates attended by 2699 people. During these meetings are found doubling the number of requests in technology and the increase with 3% of discussions about associative forms.

For technical assistance 47.9% was offered for cereals (high culture) and 18.3% for rural development programs and access European funds. Compared with 2009, in 2010 requests for technical assistance increased with 7.5% for cereals (high culture) and with 4.3% for rural development programs.

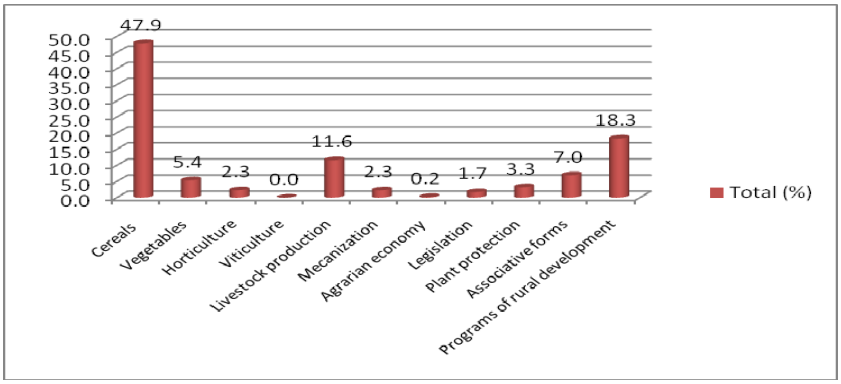


Figure 3. The situation of areas in which has been given technical assistance to Calarasi County in 2010 (%)

Following the work of consultants in the county in late 2010 have been prepared 148 projects with a totalling of 1,532,500 euros, most projects were submitted on 141 Measure (92.5%).

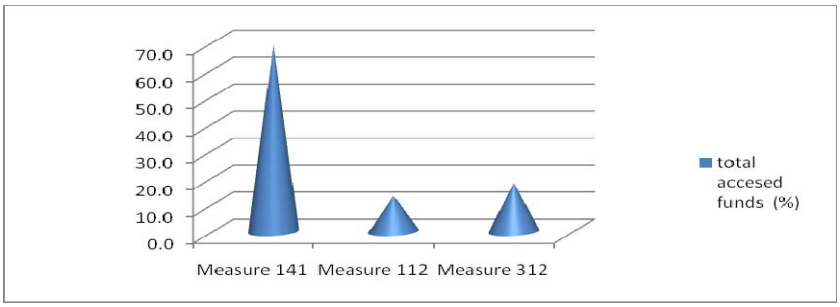


Figure 4. The measures situation which have been accessed in Calarasi County, 2010

In 2011 there were organized 172 meetings, roundtables and debates attended by 2222 people. During these meetings, the most discussions were about horticultural technology (19%) and those about of associative forms (10%). In terms of technical assistance 40.6% of requests are about the cereals (high culture), 14. 1% requests of accessing European funds and 13.6% are requests in zootehnic area. In last year was observed a decrease of requests about the cereals culture and an increase of zootechnical requests. Also, we observed requests for technical assistance in the field of organic agriculture and the implementation of the measures, practices and methods from the code of good agricultural practices.

In terms of accessing European funds were submitted 99 projects, which totalling 904,500 euros, of these 90% was on 141 Measure and 10% on 112 Measure.

Along of the three years can be seen the most accessed measures in the county were the Measure 112 and Measure 141 (Figure 5), and from point of view of discussions mostly was present the Measure 141. In terms of amounts accessed largest amount was recorded in 2010 by projects submitted on Measure 141-Supporting semi-subsistence farms (Figure 5). In total in all three years in Calarasi County were attracted funds amounting to 2,898,844 euros.

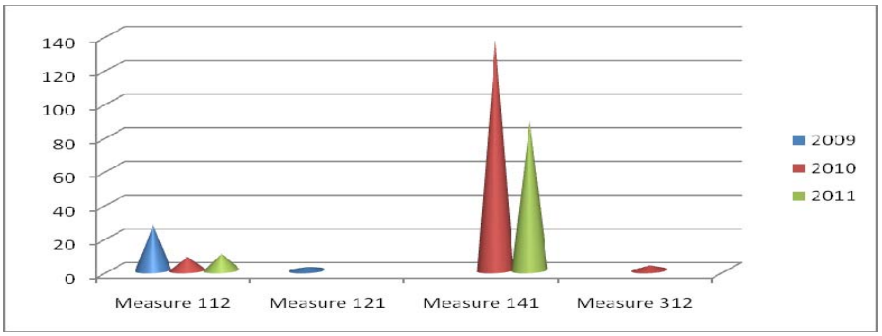


Figure 5. The situation of measures accessed in the period between 2009-2011 in Calarasi County

CONCLUSIONS

The Agricultural Chamber of Calarasi is the county institution which offers free agricultural consulting to the farmers in village and at farm level.

The Customers of the Agricultural Chamber are generally represented by small farmers.

The main problem facing the county consultant service is a small number of consultants compared to the number of requests.

The Agricultural Chambers represent the interests of farmers in relation to government organizations**.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research was performed during the process of elaboration of the doctoral thesis funded by project POSDRU/88/1.5/S/52614.

REFERENCES

1. **OTIMAN P.I**- Dezvoltarea rurală durabilă a României în contextul integrării europene (I)
2. *** Anuar statistic al judetului Calarasi, 2010,
3. *** Recensamantul general agricol 2011-date provizorii.
4. *** Rapoarte anuale ale Camerei Agricole Calarasi, 2009-2011