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DYNAMICS AND STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE AGRICULTURE LABOR FORCE IN ROMANIA AND EUROPEAN UNION

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Abstract: *The development of the agricultural sector is closely related to the availability, structure and efficient use of labor resources, in the context of economic, demographic and technological transformations. The paper aims to analyze the dynamics and structural changes of the labor force in Romanian agriculture, in the context of the developments recorded at the level of the European Union. The research considers the comparative analysis of the main indicators regarding the employment of the population in agriculture, the distribution of the labor force by demographic categories and professional status, as well as the structural particularities of the agricultural labor market. The proposed methodology is based on the processing and interpretation of official statistical data provided by Eurostat and the National Institute of Statistics, using dynamics analysis, structural indicators and territorial comparisons. The study aims to identify the main trends regarding the evolution of agricultural employment, to highlight Romania's particularities in relation to the other Member States and to examine the challenges associated with the aging of the employed population, technological transformations and the need to adapt professional skills.*

• Introduction

Agriculture is a strategic sector of the economy, playing an essential role in ensuring food security, the use of natural resources, employment and the economic development of rural areas. Beyond its contribution to agri-food production and the formation of added value, agriculture fulfills important economic and social functions, contributing to the maintenance of productive activities and livelihoods in rural communities. In this context, the workforce is one of the fundamental resources of the development of the agricultural sector, and its availability, structure and characteristics influence the ability of farms to adapt to economic, technological and institutional changes.
From the perspective of sustainable development, the transformations of the agricultural workforce have implications that go beyond the strictly economic dimension. The reduction or modification of the population's participation in agricultural activities, generational changes and the evolution of qualification requirements can influence the organization of farms, the continuity of productive activities and the development of rural communities. In this context, generational renewal and the development of professional skills are important directions of European policies on agriculture and rural development.

• Material and method

The research is based on a quantitative, descriptive and comparative approach, using official statistical data provided by Eurostat, the National Institute of Statistics (INS) and other relevant institutional sources. The methodology involves the analysis of the dynamics and structure of the agricultural workforce, through specific statistical indicators, aiming to highlight evolutionary trends, structural transformations and disparities between Romania and the other Member States of the European Union.

• Results and discussions

In 2023, the population employed in agriculture accounted for approximately 3.9% of the total employed population in the European Union, equivalent to about 8.4 million people (Figure 1). The importance of the agricultural sector in the structure of employment differs considerably between Member States, with significant disparities being highlighted compared to the European average.

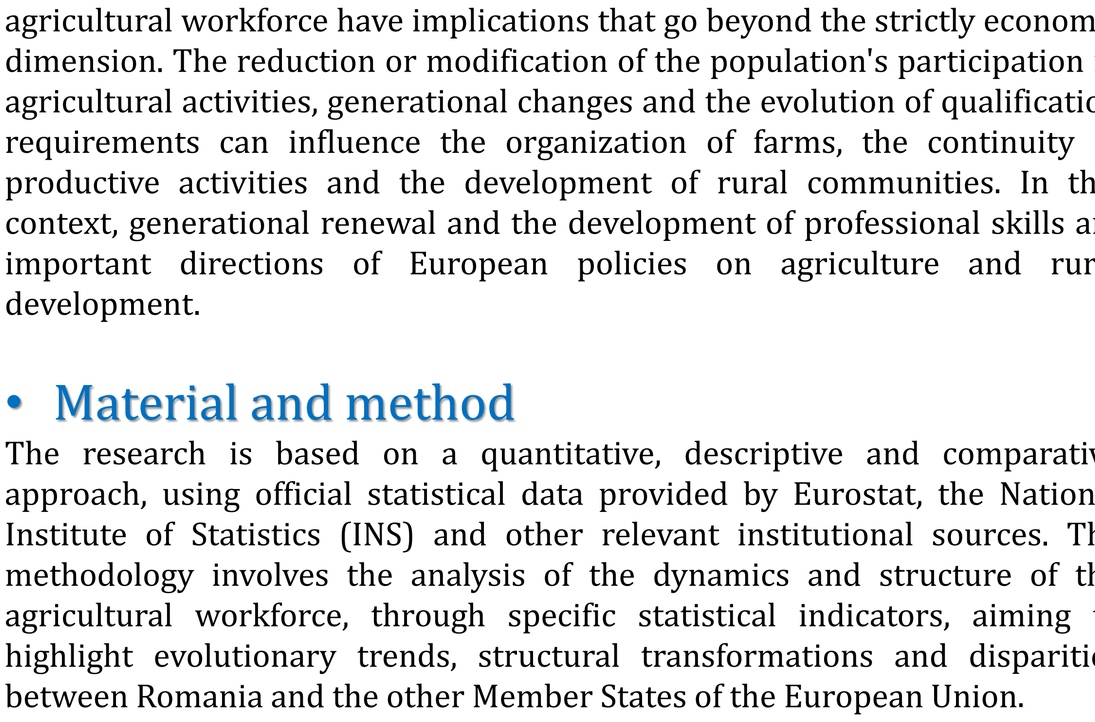


Figure 1. Employment in agriculture (% of total employment 2010 and 2023)

Romania stands out for the highest share of the population employed in agriculture among the countries analyzed, respectively 20.7%, which means that approximately one in five employed persons worked in this sector. Shares higher than the European Union average were also recorded in Bulgaria (14.1%), Greece (9.5%) and Poland (7.8%). These differences highlight the structural particularities of employment in agriculture and the different relative importance of the agricultural sector on national labour markets.
In 2023, the majority of farm managers in the European Union (71.4%) were working on the basis of practical experience, without formal agricultural training. The share of those who had completed complete agricultural training was only 9.7%, while 18.8% had basic agricultural training (Figure 2).
The comparative analysis at Member State level highlights significant disparities in the level of professional training of farm managers. The lowest shares of managers with full agricultural training were recorded in Greece, Cyprus and Malta (around 0.7%), as well as in Romania (1.0%), where practical experience was the main form of acquisition of agricultural skills.

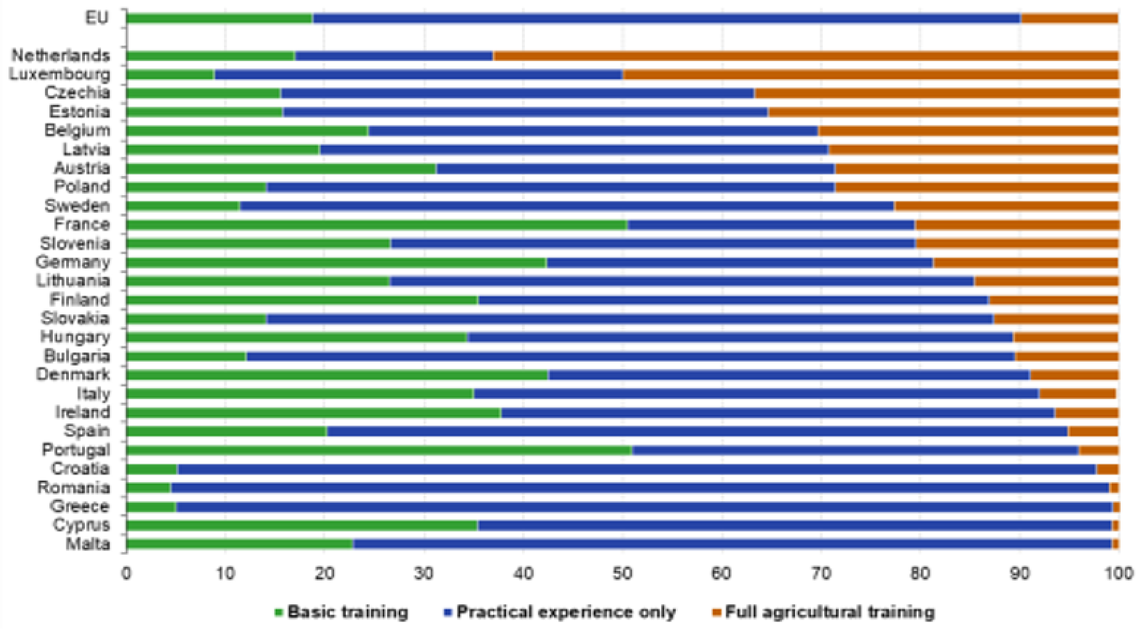


Figure 2. Level of agricultural training of EU farm managers

At the other end of the spectrum, the highest shares of managers with full agricultural training were recorded in the Netherlands (63.1%), Luxembourg (50.0%), the Czech Republic (36.8%), Estonia (35.3%) and Belgium (30.3%). These differences highlight the heterogeneous nature of the professional training of farm managers in the European Union.

• Conclusions

The analyzed data highlight important structural disparities between Romanian agriculture and that of the European Union, especially regarding the share of agricultural employment and professional training of farm managers. At the same time, the low participation of young people and gender imbalances represent relevant challenges at European level, underlining the importance of generational renewal policies, professional training and adaptation of human resources to the requirements of contemporary agriculture.
Romania differs from the European Union as a whole by the considerably higher share of the population employed in agriculture and by the low level of complete agricultural training among farm managers. At the same time, the European challenges regarding generational renewal and gender balance highlight the importance of developing human capital, professionalizing agricultural management and adapting the workforce to the economic and technological transformations of the sector.