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ASPECTS REGARDING DEMOGRAPHIC DYNAMICS AND THE RESTRUCTURING OF AGRICULTURAL SPACE IN ȘICULA COMMUNE, ARAD COUNTY

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Abstract: This study presents aspects of demographic trends, land use structure, the dynamics of agricultural activities, and prospects for sustainable development in the commune of Șicula, Arad County The results indicate a population decline of approximately 19.1% during the analyzed period, accompanied by an intensifying demographic aging process and a persistent negative natural population growth rate. The commune's land resources are characterized by a predominance of agricultural land—specifically arable land—which underpins the commune's primarily agrarian profile. A SWOT analysis highlights opportunities related to the utilization of agricultural resources, access to European funding, and the development of rural tourism, while also identifying challenges such as depopulation, infrastructure issues, and limited economic diversification. Implementing strategic initiatives could contribute to enhancing economic competitiveness and the quality of life for the population of the commune.

• Introduction

Geographically, the locality is situated in the Arad Plain—part of the Western Plain—at an average altitude of 104 meters, west of Ineu. It lies along the Criș Alb River, within an embanked section on its right bank. The commune's territory possesses natural resources favorable to agricultural activity, primarily due to highly productive land and the availability of water resources. From the perspective of territorial development, an analysis of the Șicula commune entails examining its key geographical, demographic, economic, and socio-cultural characteristics, as well as identifying available resources and the challenges faced by the community.

• Material and method

The research analyzing the potential and strategic directions for the sustainable development of the Șicula commune was based on the collection, processing, and interpretation of statistical data and information regarding demographic trends, land use, agricultural activities, and local development prospects.

Based on the results obtained, strategic directions were formulated, focusing on the utilization of agricultural resources, the diversification of the local economy, the modernization of infrastructure, and the development of rural tourism. This methodological approach enabled the identification of key trends and factors influencing the sustainable development of the Șicula commune.

• Results and discussions

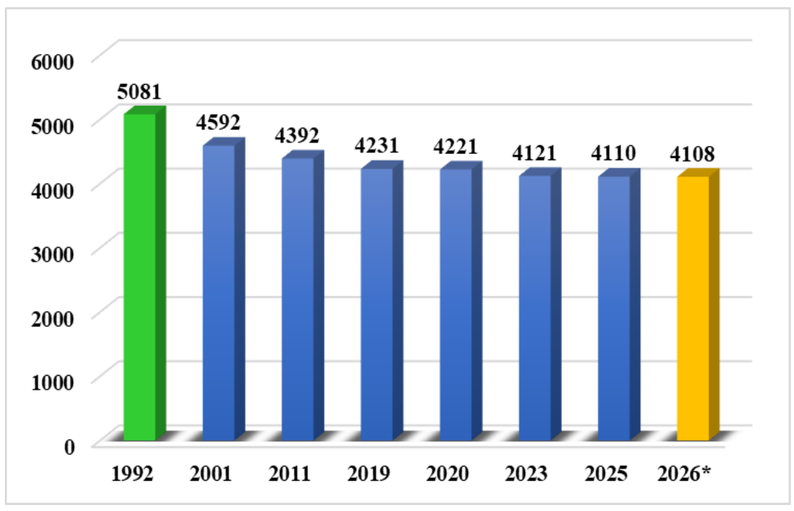


Figure 1. Analysis of the total population in the commune

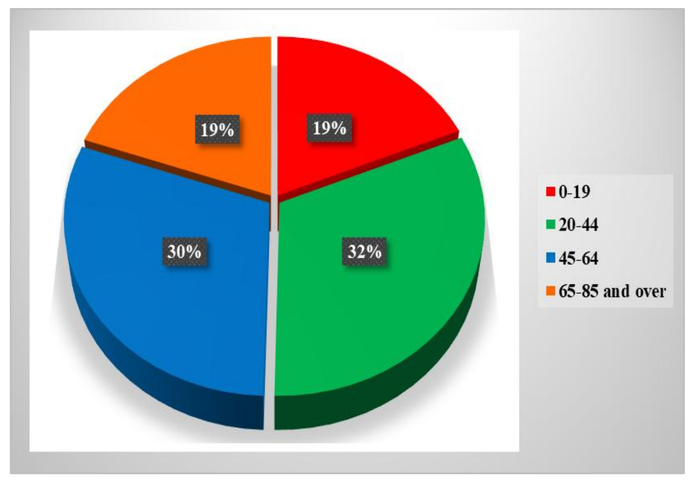


Figure 2. Situation of the main age groups 2026*

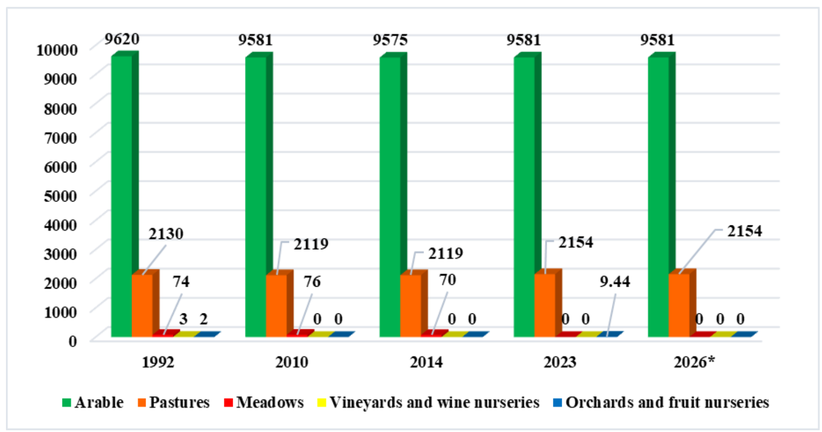


Figure 3. Variation of areas in the agricultural category (ha)





Conclusions

The analysis of demographic trends and the socio-territorial structure of the Șicula commune reveals a complex transformation process, characterized by a persistent, long-term demographic decline, coupled with significant structural shifts in both the population and land use. The steady decrease in the number of inhabitants—by approximately one-fifth over the analyzed period—places the commune within the category of rural units affected by gradual depopulation, a phenomenon typical of many rural areas in post-transition Romania.

The dominance of agricultural land—particularly arable land—confirms the commune's agrarian character; however, marginal shifts in crop composition and a reduction in certain categories, such as hayfields or secondary crops, suggest a gradual reconfiguration of the agricultural exploitation model.

The development of rural tourism and agritourism offers a complementary avenue for leveraging local resources, contributing to economic diversification and enhancing the territory's visibility.