

## ABSTRACT

Whichever the economic theories it has developed along different period, economics evidences the importance of the agro-food and agro-industrial industries in stimulating the various agricultural sectors towards economic advancement, along with stressing the central part they play in the development of the countries possessing the necessary opportunities for expanding their agricultural and industrial branches – namely, raw materials and relatively cheap manpower.

The Romanian agro-food sector, considered *versus* only two of its components – agriculture and food industry - plays an essential role in the natural economy, both as the population it involves and to the added value thus created. If taking into consideration the whole agro-industrial field, known as including – as primary branches – agriculture, silviculture, fish trade and forest exploitation, and the adjacent processing industries, the conclusion is that it uses about half of the active population and more than one third of the added value obtained. The shortcoming is that the position of majority in such structures is held by the primary branches, especially agriculture.

A series of objective and subjective motivations explain why agriculture and food industry rank among the basic branches of the Romanian economy, such as:

- ✓ Romania is an European country which, due to the large surfaces and - equally – the fertility of its agricultural land, possesses a significantly productive agricultural potential;
- ✓ A considerable part of Romanian population is involved in agricultural activities or lives in rural areas;
- ✓ Between the two World-Wars, Romania used to be a most important cereal exporter;
- ✓ During the period of its centralized economy, as a result of the administrative management of its various branches, agriculture assured a considerable transfer of assets towards the industrial sector;
- ✓ In the decades before 1989, agriculture was an important source of foreign currency;
- ✓ Along the transition period, agriculture remained one of the few branches having faced no serious regress, along with its having absorbed large part of the vacant manpower discharged from the industrial sectors.

Nowadays, Romania faces quite a complex – both economic and social – problem, being one of the richest EU countries as to its agricultural potential, but also with the most numerous rural population. Or, the rural zones still have to solve some specific problems, related to the small surfaces (which do not permit a coherent financing system or the application of reliable insures policies), which means a rudimentary subsistence agriculture, for productivity, low performances, grown old population, etc.

The literature of the filed finds the causes of such difficulties in the instability of land's ownership, in the lack of adequate financial and material resources, destruction of the irrigation systems, in the almost complete neglect of applied scientific researches, low productivity, under-development of zootechnics, etc. The state authorities have not encouraged, by a suitable legislation system, the development of agricultural actions of large scale, on extended surfaces, by a stimulative and reciprocally advantages association of the private owners.

To all these causes, one should also add the numerous surfaces of fertile land that changed their initial destination, being no longer used for agricultural purposes.

As to zootechnics, known, for quite long periods, as representing a key factor no only for agriculture but for the whole Romanian economy, it came to be characterized by continuously decreasing economy indices, its extremely high potential being less and less valorized.

In the food industry, the number of private companies increased, starting with the year 1990, up to an about 20.000 officially acknowledged processing units.

The importance of the private food companies has continuously increased, nowadays the elementary industry in Romania being mainly formed of small farms (over 80% of them having less than 10 employees), while only 3-4% of them have more than 250 employees.

However, the physical production of this sector witnessed a constant decrease after the year 1990, which might be explained by a reduction of the internal demand, low competition of the food industry on the external and internal market, and the scarce offer of the agricultural products as raw materials. The reduced subsidies for consumers and the general decline of the purchasing capacity at population level contributed to reducing the demand, while the Romanian alimentary products have to face the competition of the imported food (sugar, oil, milky products and meat).

Obviously, the optimum solution for making the sector efficient once again was its transformation into a private business. Consequently, in the last decade, this problem has been one of the most important actions at governmental level.

As a member of the European Union, with full access to the Common Agriculture Policy, Romania is entitled to use special financial funds, capable of assuring mobilization and full valorization of the existing human resources, along with stimulating the involvement of the private sector in projects aimed at developing the Romanian agro-productive sector, for the attainment of a visible economic background and long-time performances.

Starting from all these ideas, and also considering the full utilization of manpower in the two economic sectors here under analysis, the author aimed at a practical application of the research theme entitled “Studies on some mutations and tendencies of the human resources from the agriculture and food industry of the Iasi district” to the concrete case study of the Iasi region.

The scientific investigation was structured as follows:

*Chapter I – Evolution of the concept of manpower as a human resource*

*Chapter II – Dynamics of the structure and weight of manpower in the Romanian agriculture – a regional and an European approach*

*Chapter III – Contributions of the mutations and tendencies on the evolution of the active population from the agriculture and agro-food industry of the Iasi district*

*Chapter IV – Contributions on the structural and dynamic disparities of manpower in the Iasi district. A case study*

*Chapter V – Perspective of the tendencies of the manpower utilization in the agriculture and agro-food industry of the Iasi district*

*Chapter VI - Conclusions and Recommendations*

*References*

*Appendices*

The Ph.D. thesis entitled “Studies on some mutations and tendencies of the human resources from the agriculture and food industry of the Iasi district” considers the following theoretical objectives:

- A bibliographical investigation of the actual state-of-art of the researches on the evolution and modifications occurring in the manpower involved in agriculture;
- Analysis of the mutations manifested in the dynamics of manpower in Romanian agriculture and agro-food industry;
- A diagnosis study of the human resources from agriculture and food-industry of the Iasi district;

- A case study evidencing the extent of development of the human resources in the sector under consideration for the Metropolitan area of the Iasi county;
- A case study devoted to the extent of development of the human resources as a function of the specific character of the agricultural production (the Stolniceni Prajescu village and the vegetable basin of Tg. Frumos);
- Elaboration of a possible *scenario* on the future evolution of manpower in the Iasi region, based on the demographic prognosis of the district;
- SWOT analyses at county and locality level, meant at identifying, on one hand, the advantages and opportunities and, on the other, the shortcomings and possible dangers, characteristic to such administrative units, once known that they represent factors influencing the quality of the human resources.

The main specific research methods applied in the study of human resources involved in the agriculture and agro-food industry of the Iasi district are:

1. deductive and quantitative dynamic economic analyses;
2. SWOT analyses
3. economic inquiry of the participative research, assuming collection of data in the territory.

The first part of the study (Chapters I and II) surveys data from the literature of the field on the concepts of human resources, as well as on their evolution and improvement tendencies.

Chapter I – *Evolution of the concepts on manpower as a human resource* – reviews the concept of manpower and its evolution in time, starting with the main aspects under which human resources are reflected in the economic theory, and from some peculiarities of the manpower from agriculture. There follows a description of the *analytical methodology* of the human resources. The author proposed a coherent methodology for analyzing the human resources from agriculture, as well as for establishing suitable strategies for their improvement, on considering the conditions, characteristics and socio-economic potential of the rural settlements.

Chapter II - *Dynamics of the structure and weight of manpower in the Romanian agriculture – a regional and an European approach* – discusses comparatively the dynamics of population and of manpower in Romania, on the basis of some specific occupational indices usually applied at European level.

The analysis continues with the identification of the main tendencies of manpower, stress being laid on the losses of manpower and human capital Romania is now suffering from.

The last section, discussing some of the effects of the actual economic crisis upon manpower, identifies its deficits in the economy, after which some conclusions are drawn on the main characteristics of manpower in the transition period.

The second part of the thesis, including the author's own contributions, discusses the collection, selection and systematization of the whole corpus of data specific to the Iasi district, to the Metropolitan area of the city and to certain localities (*i.e.*, the Stolniceni Prajescu village and the Tg. Frumos vegetable basin) selected for illustrating the mutations manifested in the manpower involved in agriculture. These data refer especially to some peculiar elements of the human resources, synthesized and analyzed by the specific methodology for the three above-mentioned types of analysis, as well as to the abstraction – on their basis – of some strategies for the development and improvement of the available human resources, best suited to this geographical area and to the existing opportunities of regional and national development in the years to come. Therefore, these chapters are dedicated to an as complete as possible analysis of the manpower occupied in the agriculture and food-industry of the Iasi county.

Chapter III, entitled *Contributions of the mutations and tendencies on the evolution of the active population from the agriculture and agro-food industry of the Iasi district*, represents the core of the problem here under consideration, synthesizing the most important ideas related to it.

For better understanding the mechanisms on which the socio-demographic and economic evolution of the Iasi district is based, a two-fold perspective upon the theme has been preferred, namely:

- a) evidencing of the internal and external factors characterizing the evolution of the Iasi district population at national level, viewed as a specific structure of the region and of the county, respectively;
- b) analysis of the role played by the district – at both regional and national level – in evidencing the internal socio-demographic differentiations, as well as of the influence of the economic factor in the mutations occurring in the manpower of the Iasi county – with application to the agriculture and food industry sectors.

The first part of the chapter approaches the evolution of the active population from the agriculture of the Iasi region, stress being laid on the cooperation and association forms viewed as capable of integrating the agricultural manpower, and also on the dynamics of the active population from the food industry.

Logically, the study should also approach the contribution of agriculture and of the food industry to the realization of the regional raw internal product, on categories of resources, along with some aspects of (internal and external) migration of manpower at county level.

Chapter IV - *Contributions on the structural and dynamic disparities of manpower in the Iasi district. A case study* – includes two series of case studies, each one with its specific features, considered from different perspectives, on the occupation extend of manpower within the district; consequently, the Metropolitan area of the city was selected for the structural aspects of manpower occurring in urban proximity, while the Tg. Frumos vegetable basin was considered for identifying the specific peculiarities of the occupied manpower, as a function of the agricultural production.

During the development of the study, the occupational profile of the population from the Metropolitan area was the following:

- the city of Iasi – mixed profile;
- secondary (industry) and tertiary (services) sectors – the Letcani, Holboca, Tomesti, Miroslava, Reditu and Valea Lupului villages;
- tourism: Schitu Duca, Barnova;
- predominantly agricultural profile, and commercial activities: Ciurea, Popricani, Schitu-Duca, Ungheni and Victoria.

The Metropolitan area of the Iasi city has a mixed agricultural profile, combining the characteristics of subsistence agriculture (in the isolated zones) with those of the agriculture offering products for the alimentary needs of the urban population. The profile of such agricultural activity, expressed mainly by the ratio between the two main branches (plant culture and animal breeding), may be deduced from the value of the production obtained, estimated in currency units.

Within the economic activity of the Iasi Metropolitan area, agriculture plays only a secondary part, in parallels with its being continuously affected by the changing destinations of the land at the borders of the district, preferred for building projects, residential piles, or industrial or commercial facilities.

Nevertheless, even under such circumstances, the number of companies with agricultural profile has increased, the years 2006-2007 recording an important leap of the turnover. The total wages in agriculture registered a considerable decrease, if considering the several tendencies of reorganization and technological modernization of the sector.

The second important domain approached in the present study, industry, witnesses the loss of the main industrial complexes and the occurrence of small-size, flexible companies, oriented towards the short-term demand of the market. Mention should be here made of the industry of primary (pharmaceutical, chemical) products, the industry of metallic constructions, furniture, as well of numerous publishing and printing houses.

The second case study discusses the behavior of manpower in the vegetable basin of Tg. Frumos.

This area includes, practically, the farmer villages belonging to this locality, namely Bals, Costesti, Ion Neculce and Tg. Frumos city.

*Even if the natural conditions of the zone – i.e., the fertile soils and a suitable climate – are favorable to the development of all agricultural branches, chapter IV discusses exclusively the vegetable cultures, once known that vegetable growing absorbs considerable manpower, another explanation being the presence of about 1200 Lippovan Russians, whose main occupation is vegetable growing and whose organizations and associations have transformed this agricultural area into a landmark recognized as such at the level of the whole country.*

Another case study devoted to the behaviour and mutations of manpower in the Iasi district has been performed in the Stolniceni-Prajescu village.

*Here, the ethnic and confessional structure of the population is of special interest, if considering their significant influence upon the demographic, social and, equally, economic behaviour, upon people's old customs and upon the general climate of the community.*

The stable population from the territory of Stolniceni-Prajescu is generally characterized by a certain inertness, at least as to its numerical evolution, as well as by its demographic behaviour and occupational aspects. A special reaction has been noticed to various economic, political, social and cultural factors, which differentiates this place among the other settlements of the Iasi district.

Stability is granted by the around 20% of Lippovan Russians, whose demographic and occupational economic habits have made the village one of the main sources of vegetables in the district, besides the Tg. Frumos basin. Most frequently, the dynamics of the population is

closely correlated with a subjective perception of these elements, so that any individual influence is quite difficult to quantify.

This special attitude is given by the presence of Gipsy ethnic representatives, about 6% of them living almost exclusively in the village of Cozmesti.

Therefore, the commune includes three different villages with different demographic and economic habits, caused by their different ethnic composition.

Chapter V - *Perspectives of the tendencies of manpower utilization in the agriculture and agro-food industry of the Iasi district* – opens with some evolution *scenarios* of the Romanian manpower, followed by other possible *scenario* for the manpower of the Iasi district, in general, as well as according to the quantification and training level of manpower, with special application to agriculture and food industry.

Chapter VI - *Conclusions and Recommendations*

The study ends with a section of conclusions and proposals for the improvement of manpower occupation in the district of Iasi.

Part of the results discussed in the Ph.D. thesis was presented at scientific manifestation and published in various scientific volumes.

**The original contributions** of the thesis entitled “**Studies on some mutations and tendencies of the human resources from the agriculture and food industry of the Iasi district**” refer to:

- utilization of a combined methodology for analyzing the human resources occupied in agriculture, corroborating the facilities and advantages specific to economic analysis, to SWOT analysis, as well as to participative research;
- collection, synthesis and computer processing of all economic data necessary for a complete analysis of human resources at the level of the Iasi district;
- performing of a dynamic, deductive and quantitative economic analysis involving all human resources of the Iasi region;
- performing of a dynamic, deductive and quantitative economic analysis involving all human resources of the two areas selected for the case study, namely the vegetable basin of Tg. Frumos and Stolniceni-Prajescu;
- establishment of some *scenarios* on the future evolution of manpower in the district of Iasi, starting from the demographic prognosis of the region;
- providing original opinions and solutions for the improvement of manpower occupied in the agricultural and food industry of the Iasi district.