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HABILITATION THESIS

**Sustainable economic development in the
agri-food system**

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A. ABSTRACT

Most of the scientific research carried out at the national and international level converges towards the consideration that growth and development measures, in their entirety, are environmental degradation factors. Research specific to the agri-food field also almost unanimously agrees that agriculture, the food industry and even public food services emit negative factors that lead to the degradation of air, soil, water, fauna and flora biodiversity.

However, the impact of an important category among the paths of economic growth and development is not harmful to the environment. On the contrary, ways to reduce average consumption per product unit, increase the production factors level of use of and, generally, economic efficiency growth are measures that involve the economic performance development while also reducing the negative impact on the environment.

Consequently, the identification and application of all favourable measures to economic development in accordance with environmental protection is an immediate priority of scientific research. Moreover, these measures must be developed, verified and implemented in economic practice.

These were the challenges that marked my own scientific research activity since the beginning of my university career. In the habilitation thesis entitled "**Sustainable economic development in the agri-food system**" I presented part of the research I carried out in this direction, together with other results of the professional, scientific and academic career evolution.

The habilitation thesis is structured in accordance with the legislation in force and with the IULS regulation regarding the organization and development of the habilitation certificate obtaining process. This includes the sections: A – Summary; B - Scientific and professional achievements; career development and development plans; B.I. – Scientific, professional and academic achievements; B. II. – Plans for the evolution and development of own professional, scientific and academic career and B.III. - Bibliographical references.

In order to highlight the dynamics of my own scientific career, I have selected the most important and relevant results obtained since acquiring the PhD title in the Agronomy field in 2007. These are presented in the B.I. section, grouped in two subchapters that include research on assuming the role of development actor sustainable by agro-food economic entities and some microeconomic instruments intended for sustainable development.

For the realization of this part of the habilitation thesis, I used articles that I published between 2010 and 2022. The original contributions and their relevance for the agri-food field in the context of the current stage of scientific research were highlighted. These results are briefly presented on the two research directions in Chapter I. Scientific achievements.

The first section of it, entitled "Agro-food economic entity - actor of sustainable development" brings into discussion the concern of agri-food entrepreneurs for the principles of sustainable development and for the dynamics of the demand for food products.

The research conclusions regarding the ethical behaviour in the economic activity of the agricultural managers in Iași county show that the values of sustainable development related to their own field of activity are important for them, which is also reflected in the economic performances.

The analysis of local food consumption and production led to a number of conclusions. Consumers prefer face-to-face interaction and specialized stores, consider these products healthy; they appreciate the lower price than at supermarkets but are reluctant due to the lack of quality certification. Manufacturers prefer face to face interaction; sell mainly in the agri-food market; motivates the sale by providing healthy products; they believe they sell cheaper than supermarkets but will give up if the price drops by 20%.

The second section of chapter 1, entitled "Microeconomic tools for sustainable development" presents some development paths that allow increasing the performance of economic units in line with reducing the impact on the environment.

The conclusions of the research on "diversification versus production specialization" show that: 1. in unfavourable climatic conditions, there are no "saving" crops that protect the economic performance of the farm; 2. specialized production structures will determine, in the medium and long term, higher efficiency and viability than diversified structures.

On the other hand, the European structural funds had a positive influence on the tourism services offer development, the share of use of Romania's tourism potential, the flow of values from the rural area and determined an improvement in the degree of employment in this sector and an increase in overall labour productivity.

The identification of the factors that determine the adoption of decision support systems (DSS) within the vegetable farms in Romania shows that the majority of farmers interviewed believe that the decision to implement DSS is based on: purchase - use costs; time consumption; complexity; general utility; intuitive interface; technical and economic support; providing solutions. Certified

digital skills and the quality of the Internet connection do not influence the dimensions of the quality of applications due to the developed system of mobile networks in Romania.

Analysis of employee satisfaction in the bakery industry led to particularly useful results. Total salary, workload and number of hours worked were the best motivators. The weighted average value of job satisfaction was 27.4%. Low levels of satisfaction are more costly to employers than high levels of satisfaction.

Within Chapter II. Professional achievements - the most important results that I have achieved professionally, such as: the publication of 12 specialized books, of which 9 as sole author or first author and 3 as co-author; project manager of 4 projects obtained through competition and member of 19 other grants.

In Section B.II, I have highlighted the own objectives proposed for career development in the didactic and scientific plan, in accordance with the strategic objectives of the Faculty of Agriculture and IULS, as well as different possibilities for achieving them.