

# ***ROMANIAN AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND EXTENSION SYSTEMS AND THEIR LINKAGES***

## **1. Overview of the National Agricultural Research and Extension System and their linkages**

At present, the Romanian extension system is represented both by public and private bodies. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) is responsible for extension institutional building on public sector. As result, the public extension system has been in operation since 1998 and consists of the National Agency for Agricultural Consulting (ANCA), the first institutional structure, of European origin, set up on 1998 based on the PHARE Program RO 9505 01 0. ANCA was established with the aim to initiate the provision of agricultural consultancy services to Romanian farmers. It is an agency under the framework of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. It has been required by the European Union.

The recent years have also shown growing activity in private sector consultancy.

### **i. policies and strategies;**

Since its setting up on 1998, the *public extension system* has gone for years through a continuous restructuring process, both administrative and technical one, until reaching the present status. The policies and strategies developed in this regard had in view the stage of the agricultural development and farmer' needs. The main general objective of ANCA is to support the reform process in agriculture through popularization and training activities and technical assistance. The extension service is, in the same time, the main link on the information transfer chain between education and research institutes, and other information providers towards farmers. It realizes, on the one hand, the information provision under the understandable form and applied to the farmer's need, and on the other hand, the advisory service conveys the farmers' need to the education and research institutes in order to propose themes that will answer to specific requirements and conditions.

Changes of the contents of the activity have been made depending on the Romania's EU preadhesion and post-adhesion period and the priorities of Romanian agriculture.

One of the main priorities of the MARD of Romania is to support the transformation of a substantial number of the small subsistence and semi-subsistence farms into competitive marketoriented family farms. To achieve this, the advisory service has to understand and appreciate the rural economy

and the environment and focus on the needs of the individual farmers and hence to be able to offer different approaches to the different farmers.

By January 2007 Romania became a member of the European Union, and the Romanian agricultural sector has to fulfill all EU requirements in order to obtain all the benefits from the membership. At the moment the Romanian administration and authorities focus on fulfilling the EU requirements.

## **Building Partnerships for Technology Generation, Assessment and Sharing among West Balkan countries**

Overall, at present, many of the Romanian farmers lack awareness and knowledge on the consequences, both positive (i.e., access to subsidies) and negative (e.g., strict compliance norms in a range of fields) of EU accession. In addition, many farmers lack the business and technical skills to effectively develop their farms into viable businesses, able to compete in the European and world market. On the institutional side there is not proper integration of service provision by MARD, such agencies as ANCA and Payment Agency and Interventions in Agriculture (APIA), and knowledge providers such as agricultural research institutes and universities.

With the EU accession agricultural extension or consultancy cannot remain limited to the traditional tasks of supplying information, knowledge and training to improve farming and farm incomes. Also, and especially so, specific assistance is required in assuring full compliance with the EU rules and regulations that farmers have to meet to be eligible for EC subsidies – notably, Pillar 1 subsidies. This means that in the coming year agricultural consultancy should focus on supporting farmers for applying for such subsidies. This includes verification, together with the farmer, of full compliance with all relevant EC regulations, and as required, providing technical assistance to achieve that compliance.

For the medium term (from July 2007 onwards) focal points for developing advisory services will continue to be the successful accessing of Pillar One subventions as well as accessing Pillar Two subsidies for investment projects, environmental measures, rural development and diversification.

Other focal points are targeted support for potentially viable family farms in the form of technical and business advice, and promoting land consolidation by a) supporting the retirement of small farmers and b) mediation between such farmers and entrepreneurs willing to purchase or rent the land of these small family farms.

With the increasing complexity of farming, it can no longer be expected that one or two persons can adequately cover all themes (technical, economic, EU subsidies and compliance, diversification, and legal and social issues). Only *larger teams of experts* with complementary expertise working from the same

office (i.e., the “one stop-shop”) will be able to offer the full range of information, knowledge and support services farmers need to cope with an increasingly complex environment.

Advisory activity is a vital component of any agricultural policy and rural development taking into consideration that it is representing the chain’s link with (farmers) population from rural areas.

Efficiency’ increasing of the extension system could be realized through links setting up between informative and formative system on the following ways:

- a) Access improvement of the small farmers to information based on the interactive methodology;
- b) Utilization/involving of the farmers’ diversity organization, especially professional ones;
- c) Organization of the group education, as study clubs for farmers, field demonstrations, advisory circles;
- d) Setting up of the organized system of coo-operation between advisory, research, education, associations and professional organizations;
- e) Permanent concern for vocational training of the advisors and their work abilities increasing in direct work with farmers;
- f) Logistic improvement and institutional organization;
- g) Identification of the intermediary optimum form between public advisory service (which are free of charge) and paid advisory. Free of charge advisory service does not motivate advisors and as a consequence it risks a diminution of the level and quality of the services provided. Paid advisory services risks to move away the small farmers who can not afford to pay for these services.
- h) Increasing of the advisor involvement in the Romanian rural life as an active progress factor and socio-economic dynamic.

To reach all above, ANCA has established a medium and long-term strategy. In a first phase, it includes the establishment of trainers, training of agricultural producers for the elaboration of business plans, market surveys, information on land prices and assessments of demonstration farm projects. At present, this strategy is under revision supported by the World Bank project called “MAKIS - Modernizing Agricultural Knowledge and Information System” and it will guide the overall activities of ANCA.

## **ii. structure (list stakeholders, both public and private);**

As it was already mentioned at the beginning, the present Romanian extension system is represented both *by public and private bodies*.

*Structure of public sector is the following:*

The public extension system consists of the National Agency for Agricultural Consulting (ANCA), with headquarters in Bucharest, and its network of County Offices for Agricultural Consulting (OJCA) established in Romania’s 41 county capitals and 600 Local Centers for Agricultural Consulting (CLCA) at a

small proportion of Romania's approximately 2400 communes (the equivalent of a municipality, with the elected mayor as its highest official). So, it can be said that the extension system has a *pyramidal* structure (communal, county, national level). From the financial point of view, funds are coming from the state budget and own incomes, according to the Governmental Decision no. 22/2005 approved by Law no. 77/07.04.2005.

Comparing with other „actors on the extension market”, nearly all services provided to the farmers are free of charge.

The structure of human resources involved in extension activities is as follows:

At the end of 2006 ANCA (national level), the OJCA's (county level) and the CLCA's (local level – consisting in actual fact of individuals based in selected communes) were employing, respectively, 70, 430 and 600 people, for a total of 1100. Of this staff, the majority (85%) has a technical agricultural background. Only about 3% has a background in economics and/or business, with the remainder working in administration or other fields (e.g. legal, communications, and since recently food processing). However, in recent years new, younger staff (including fresh graduates) was hired, also with a background in economics and business management. With regard to the *quality* of staff there is, on the positive side, the fact that most if not all field staff is university-graduated, with good technical skills and knowledge.

Beneficiaries of the public extension services (ANCA) are farmers, especially from the small and average/medium family farms and other economic agents from the rural side.

### ***Private sector consultancy***

This sector is represented by private consultancy companies that developed a territorial network. The majority of their activities is connected to agricultural inputs commercialization. Private companies also provide new technologies together with their sold products without extra payments (e. g. the price of products include all category of costs).

Recent years have shown growing activity in *private sector consultancy* mostly in response to the financing possibilities offered by SAPARD, with 50% subsidies on investments in farm improvement such as stables and equipment. In almost all cases this involves technical assistance in the application for financing for SAPARD projects – both for the 50% of EU financing and the 50% financing that the applicant should finance himself, usually through a bank loan. Especially in large-scale projects private consultants help the farmer-entrepreneur with developing bankable business plans, against a no-cure – no-pay fee consisting of a percentage of the amount of the loan or application. OJCA staff is also involved in such applications but mostly in technical issues, as most OJCA and ANCA staff lacks the required economic and business management background and skills.

Human resources of the private consultancy companies are generally limited (1 to 14 persons) but the majority of them is university-graduated, in some cases 100%. The main activities developed are technical assistance, studies and projects elaboration, training, research and advisory on agricultural production domain. Extremely important is the fact that they disseminate market information and legislation. The beneficiaries of the private services are trading companies and agricultural associations and less extent, individual farmers.

### ***Task division between public and private sector consultancy***

The consultants propose for public sector extension to closely collaborate with the private sector in providing consultancy services, with as much as possible, public and private sector providing complementary services. In the cases where the private sector already effectively offers services in a particular area, at prices acceptable to farmers and with sufficient competition to ensure prices remain acceptable, the public sector should not strive to compete by striving to offer similar services. The public sector should not only avoid competition with private consultancy, it should actively promote and support its development. With the enormous needs for advice and training resulting from EU accession, both in terms of accessing subventions and improving production, productivity and profits, there is enough room in the market for all suppliers. A good working relationship between public and private sector consultants is essential for optimizing service provision to farmers.

It is neither desirable nor useful to clearly demark either thematic or geographical areas for public sector and private sector consultancy. Instead, a flexible approach should be taken into consideration where the market determines which fields and areas are covered by private consultants and where public sector consultants should operate.

### **iii. organization and management of research and extension stakeholders;**

Trials of public extension system re-organization have been made in 2001. At that time, the public agricultural extension system was decentralized by delegating administrative and financial management to the County administrations (Prefectures). ANCA kept a role only in a technical sense, notably in the coordination of information supply and support for the training of consultants and farmers. This situation resulted in the large-scale use of OJCA and CLCA extension staff to undertake non-extension activities, and a consequent lack of emphasis on their core tasks of consultancy and training. The links between research, education and professional associations was also broken as a result of this incoherence.

In recognition of this problem the OJCA's were, in February 2005, re-assigned (administratively, managerially and financially) to ANCA and the MARD. Since then ANCA and the OJCA's have actively undertaken a wide range of training

and consultancy activities, among others aimed at accrediting farmers for accessing EU subsidies.

After reorganization from 2005, the reconstruction of the advisory system started, in spite of the fact that some main negative aspects are still in force, as follows:

- Lack of covering at the level of each community. The number of agricultural advisors (ANCA-OJCA) is just 1.100 in the condition of the strong fragmented structure of the Romanian agricultural production (4,5 million of agricultural exploitations of 1 ha to 2.000 hectares);

- The impact of advisory activity is not enough monitored and valued;

- Lack of or weak organizations (professional associations, farmers' club, and so on) that led to efficiency increasing of the advisory activity;

- Motivation and staff's perfecting;

- The advisors are still used for administrative activities and there is still confusion in territory concerning the specific responsibilities of the advisory and other bodies (Directorate for Agriculture and Rural Development -DADR, APIA, ...);

- The process of the informational feed-back from the beneficiaries of the advisory services is still insufficient and it does not contribute to establish the objectives;

- Cooperation with research and education is still not so strong. At central level, extension system is organized on three specialized directorates which include different compartments:

1. Vocational training and producers association directorate;

2. Information and extension directorate;

3. Technical assistance and farm development directorate;

At the county level the structure is similarly, there are compartments with the same role of the central level directorates.

With regard to the planning and organization of activities in spite of the fact that ANCA and the OJCA's are implementing a wide range of activities in the fields of information supply, training and demonstration, as well as non-consultancy related tasks such as land and livestock registration, there is still need of priority setting.

The management of the extension is provided by general director at national level and executive directors at the county level. The last ones are also in charge with management and activity's coordination at the communal level (CLCA). There is a good collaboration between national and local level managers. Periodically meetings are organized in order to discuss the problems and present the outputs.

#### **iv. research-extension linkages**

ANCA developed certain activities in collaboration with research institutions. These are under the form of:

- *Demonstrative plots* setting up, especially for new varieties of crops and hybrids and new technologies implementation.
- *Organizing of fairs and exhibitions* together with research institutes, input suppliers and local public administration, where the newest results of research have been exposed together with agricultural machines and equipments.
- *Organizing of the seminars, symposiums and round tables* where researchers, farmers, input suppliers have participated.
- *Elaboration of the model projects* with the aim to EU funds access.
- *Elaboration, printing and distribution (free of charge) of the brochures, leaflets, books on the agricultural, economical, legal framework domain.* These were in function of the farmers and advisory specialists needs.

## **2. Information and communication strategy to support agricultural development**

At present, at CLCA level consultants work as individuals rather than in teams (one cause is limited number of the consultants at the communal level). With the increasing of the complexity of farming, it can no longer be expected that one or two persons can adequately cover all themes (technical, economic, EU subsidies and compliance, diversification, and legal and social issues). Only larger teams of experts with complementary expertise working from the same office (i.e., the “one stop-shop”) will be able to offer the full range of information, knowledge and support services farmers need to cope with an increasingly complex environment. This will be one of the goal of the future ANCA’s strategy.

### **□ The current information and communication channels and tools**

**a. to improve, identify, sort and match information needs and knowledge of farmers, extensionists, agricultural researchers and policy makers within the country;**

Consultants from the communal and county level have the main role in defining the farmers’ information needs. As result, every year, the program of activity at the national level is established based on the proposals coming from the field. In the recent years, some surveys have been organized in the county in order to establish the training according to farmers’ needs. On the other hand, the yearly program of activity takes into consideration the priorities of Romanian agriculture based on the MARD policies and strategies. According to the knowledge needs, consultants make a list of the training courses necessary.

The current and basic information and communication channels are:

- personal contact – face to face, phone and low extent e-mail;
- group contact – workshops, seminars, training events;
- mass - press, radio & television, internet, big events.

The current and basically information and communication tools are as follows:

### ***Internal***

1. Mass media Compartment (as part of ANCA) and of the “communicators-network” (at the CJCA’s levels) provides disseminations of the consultancy and extension activities, permanent communications with the mass-media, at the local and national level.

Results obtained:

- Own publications of the county agricultural consulting office, delivered free of charge to the target groups;
- Obtaining of the weekly, bimonthly, and monthly spaces as part of the local and national publications in the field;
- Obtaining of the weekly emission spaces at the local and national radio and TV broadcast<sup>1</sup> (Antena satelor, Viata satului, Radio România 1).

As a result, the advices of the agricultural advisor arrive at the beneficiaries, a continuum informational flow being assured. Publications and specialty headings also assure informational feed-back.

2. Internet connections, available for ANCA consultants;
3. Specific information delivering to ANCA’s consultants are realized through “training of trainers” activities on the priorities domains;
4. Developing of the international programs of collaboration with the similar institutions from UE, Japan, s.o.

### ***External***

1. Informational flow developing through continuum delivering to agricultural producers of the technical, knowledge, economical, managerial, legislative and marketing based on :

*conception activities, projections, publication, multiplying and delivering of the specialized*

1 Broadcast had the main weight, so far, having in view the full covering at the national level and the rural population receptivity at this delivering way of information.

*materials, films making, TV/broadcasts, and other audio-video materials and communication;*

*organizing of the vocational training courses<sup>1</sup>;*

2. Technical assistance provided to farmers concerning applying of the modern agricultural technologies, and new farm management methods;
3. Informational flow developing, improvement of the communication channels and agro food products promotion, as part of the relation *ANCA-farmers and among farmers*, through fairs, competitions, exhibitions organized at the local or national level;



4. Realizing of the information transfer, research results, and connections between agricultural producers, input suppliers, research institutes, and agricultural education through seminars, debates, round tables organizing;
5. Partnership with different national and international partners with the aim to develop proper technologies, model agricultural farms, and experience exchange;
6. Setting up of the ANCA own web site and providing of the links with county offices;

**b. to link farmers to markets;**

1. Data basis setting up at the central level of ANCA focused on the market information from each county of Romania and for the main crops and animals;
2. Data basis setting up focused on the main agricultural inputs suppliers;
3. Farmers support in associative forms setting up (cooperatives, producers groups, cooperatives);
4. Farmers support in SAPARD funds access for measures related with investments in farms and activities diversification in the rural areas;
5. Farmers support in EU funds access.

**c. to collaborate within the region on technology generation, assessment and sharing**

**□ Ideas and suggestions for improved regional partnerships in technology generation, assessment and sharing**

**a. Potential benefits and constraints;**

- real improvement of research and extension following the sharing of experience and knowledge;
- identification of topics of neutral interest;
- different stages or research development and extension within the region;

**b. Potential partners and promoters;**

- similar institutions and persons with same concerns from neighboring countries and especially border countries (cost reduction reasons);
- importers of agricultural inputs and products, because they know very well the market and farmer's needs and possibilities.

1 Vocational training courses have two parts, theoretical and practical one in the agricultural domain and food industry. These courses, where is possible, contain modules of legislation, management and marketing, accounting notions, and economical administration, s.o. The courses are part of «Codex of professions in Romania.

The attendants receive certificates (recognized by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural development) which will facilitate credits obtaining and subsidies, which let them to rent land and manage exploitations as well as to benefit from the external financing programs.



## Romania – basic information<sup>1</sup>

<p><b>Population:</b>          Total :21.70 millions inhabitants          In rural area: 10.26 millions</p> <p><b>Area:</b>          Total: 238 390 sq. km          Agricultural area: 14.8 millions ha          Forested area: 6.6 millions ha          Waters and ponds: 0.9 millions ha</p> <p><b>Administrative organization:</b>          41 counties          306 towns and municipalities          2705 comunas</p>	
<p><b>Land fragmentation</b>          Total number of farms : 4.3 millions          Total number of parcels: 14.5 millions          Average farm size: 3.1 ha          Average plot size: 0.95 ha          Average number of parcels: 3-4          Farms with &lt; 1 hectare: 50%</p>	<p><b>Land Reform</b>          Almost complete legal framework regarding land issues          Key land-related institutions are established          Changes in the structure of land property (from co-operative and state property to private property)          Polarized farming structure (small and large farms)          Emerging of rural land market</p>
<p><b>Current agricultural policy (1):</b>          The Romanian government wishes to develop special measures to transform semi-subsistence farms into commercial farms and to increase the size of farms as to benefit of economy of scale.          Objectives for the period 2005-2008 :</p>	<p><b>Current agricultural policy (2):</b>  <b>2. Stimulation the transformation of peasant households into family commercially farms.</b>          -state support favouring the exchange and sale</p>

<p><b>1. finalizing the land property reform</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-finishing of land reform program, including completion of land restitution</li> <li>-fair monetary compensation when land restitution in kind is impossible;</li> <li>-monitoring of land property restitution program;</li> <li>-registration of all agricultural/forest areas</li> <li>-introducing a single cadastre;</li> <li>-revision of agricultural land succession procedures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>of agricultural land;</li> <li>-promotion of investment in new farms and for the consolidation of existing farms;</li> <li>-provision of a lifelong “land allowance” for each hectare of agricultural land sold by an owner of at least 60 years of age;</li> </ul>
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1 Land Consolidation and Land Development, Prague, 2006, ATTILA DIMA – MARD, MARIOARA RUSU - Senior researcher, Institute of Agricultural Economics.

## ***Main vocational training courses for farmers on agricultural and food industry domain (as part of the Occupation Codex from Romania (COR)***

### ***Agricultural domains***

- Farmer on vegetables crop and animal breeder;
- Trained worker on animal breeder;
- Worker on crop growing;
- Trained worker on field crops and vegetables;
- Animal breeder of domestic animals for milk and meat production;
- Farmer;
- Fruit grower;
- Vegetable grower;
- Viticulturist;
- Horticulturist;
- Florist;
- Beekeeper;
- Worker on mushroom;
- Agricultural mechanic;
- Tractor driver.

### ***Agro food industry domain***

- Butcher;
- Pastry specialist;
- Baker specialist;
- Miller;
- Distiller of natural brandies;
- Milk products preparatory;
- Worker on fruits and forest mushrooms.

### ***Pisciculture and other domains***

- Fisher on the interior and coast- rivers;
- Fisher;
- Landscape-florist;
- Worker in agro-tourist's household