

Knowledge Transfer For The Implementation Of The New CAP And The Guidelines Of The European Green Agreement - A Measure From The Strategic Plan "From Farm To Fork" For A Fair, Healthy And Environmentally Friendly Food System With Applicability In The Mountain Area

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Abstract

The mountains of Romania are a defined geographical, economic and social entity, with relief, climate, natural and socio-cultural heritage, identity recognized in Europe and in the world. Mountain areas are ecologically fragile areas, which need support for protection, development and specific management, determined by the right of difference, recognized at European and global level, being a common heritage, with value, which must be recognized by all and preserved. The main resources of Romania's mountains are represented by the forest fund and biodiversity, the forage flora of the natural meadows, mineral waters, landscapes and the local anthropic factor, bearer of economic and cultural traditions, determinant for the development of resources.

The major objective of the paper is the implementation of the new strategic guidelines of the European Green Agreement, the development of the short supply chain, production and marketing of products in the mountain area to ensure the market for mountain products. Developing environmentally friendly actions, encouraging all actors in the entire short chain to reduce environmental pollution and food waste, to achieve a sustainable food system.

Keywords: Mountain Area, Common Agricultural Policy, Sustainable Development, Farm, Mountain Product, Consumer, Biodiversity

Introduction

Mountain areas must benefit from a specific policy defined according to the principles of sustainable development, which ensures the needs of the present without compromising the chances of future generations. Sustainable development must also aim at reducing the imbalance between more-favored and disadvantaged mountain regions, marked by permanent natural constraints, targeting all economic, social, cultural and environmental issues.

The "From farm to fork" strategy within the National Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027 is at the heart of the Green Deal agreement. It addresses the interdependent links between healthy people, healthy societies and a healthy planet that should benefit from a fair transition, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis. Ensuring a sustainable livelihood for primary producers in the mountain area, who lag behind in terms of income, is essential for the success of recovery and transition.

The important role of food in the EU's rural development is highlighted by the emphasis on promoting agricultural products in the European Commission's policy. Partnership approaches to strengthening local food markets have proven to be effective rural development tools.

Short agri-food supply chains are dedicated to supporting the development of small producers engaged in alternative food production and ensuring informed consumer access to high quality local food. Therefore, guarantees are needed that the interests of the two parties will not be compromised by co-opting short agri-food supply chains into conventional chains.

The "From farm to fork" strategy is a new global approach to how to develop food sustainability. It is an opportunity to improve lifestyle, health and the environment, promoting the mountain product. Creating a favorable food environment that facilitates the choice of a healthy and sustainable diet will benefit consumers' health and quality of life and reduce society's health-related costs.

The European Commission's "Farm to Fork" strategy is a response to the global challenges of providing food, but it needs to be implemented in a coherent and correct way. The global food system faces major challenges. The global population increases as the area of land occupied by agricultural crops decreases. In the European Union, agriculture is responsible for producing 10% of greenhouse gas emissions. In this context, challenges such as access to healthy food, biodiversity loss and climate change need to be addressed with caution. Farmers working in agriculture need to produce more with less money and protect the environment. As we move towards sustainable agriculture, we must remember that farmers are part of the solution, not the problem. They must have the opportunity to become the main activists in the fight against climate change.

The future "Farm to Fork" strategy, part of the European Green Pact, offers the opportunity to develop a long-term strategy much needed for the food sector. The EU must adopt an extremely comprehensive strategy, which should focus on achieving healthy, safe and sufficient food (<https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/feature/steps-sustainable-farming>).

The implementation of the measures from the "From farm to fork" strategy must offer the possibility to strengthen the position of farmers in the food chain. This strategy must be seen as a whole, as the circular economy, the bioeconomy, forestry and energy policy are closely linked to the food system.

This paper seeks to inventory and focus information on the future common agricultural policy of measures under the European Green Agreement on mountain areas; identify the needs of farmers in their integration into the short supply, processing and marketing chain to create a fair and healthy food system; identify major sources of pollution and recommend measures to reduce food waste.

Materials and Methods

The research methodology used was the bibliographic study on: priorities and regulations of the European Union regarding the specificity and production of agricultural in mountain areas, environmental protection, market conditions, institutional forms of producer organization, issues related to self-consumption and marketing capacity local, regional and national. The main data studied for the socio-economic analysis of mountain areas provided the information necessary to identify: existing markets - the forms of trade practiced by agricultural producers in the mountain area; consumption and income patterns of agricultural producers; the level and main sources of food waste, the level of education and knowledge of agricultural techniques, the requirements for obtaining the mountain product and the degree of involvement through social networks, as well as the knowledge of the facilities offered by digital technology; possible actors who can join to participate in the creation of institutional structures such as producer groups.

Results and Discussion

The mountain area represents an exceptional potential of Romania and fulfills numerous ecological, economic, social, cultural and agricultural functions. Spatial planning must take into account the protection and development of mountain regions. An integrated policy for mountain regions will have to be a special component of the national spatial planning policy and will necessarily have to involve measures of economic and social development, protection and management of natural resources as well as respect for local traditions and cultures. . It should be borne in mind that mountain regions, despite their diversity (which must be protected and promoted) have common economic, social and environmental problems due to their altitude, slopes and climate (CEMAT, 2000). Also, keep in mind that the environmental situation in mountain regions is not only a constraint, but can also be an opportunity for those who live there, for this reason it is necessary to find the right balance between economic and social development and the requirements. environmental protection.

Mountain natural heritage is a whole, in which the components lose their individual importance, so they "work" into a whole. The framework that encompasses them therefore transcends the content, becoming more important than the last.

The mountain supports the economy and society; it is essential for our health and well-being, both in the short and long term, and yet it is found too little in existing policies and in the current decision-making tools and system. In addition to providing us with high-quality mountain products, the water we drink and the air we breathe, mountain ecosystems (in other words, well-preserved, protected or managed) also help communities to be more resilient to social and environmental changes. The construction of an own identity for the agri-food products from the mountain area (certification as "mountain product"), for the partial compensation of the technical-socio-economic handicap mainly related to the relief and the pedoclimatic conditions as production factors, represented a well deserved success for Mountain area. The direct link between the mountain area and the quasi-absence of the pollution phenomenon due to agricultural practices is known. It is an advantage for the mountains of Romania, which, with little or no support for the chemicalization process, offers the highest guarantees of quality and health for consumers, from the start.

The Romanian Carpathians represent a large European mountain massif, with an important area of meadows, pastures and polyfloral natural meadows, with high forage value and at the same time with a high degree of functional biodiversity (of first social utility). At the same time, in the mountains of Romania there are many other rare plant species or even endangered species, the largest area of virgin forests and the largest number of large carnivores (bears, wolves, lynx) in the European Union. The role of mountain forest vegetation, but also herbaceous in carbon sequestration and in the context of climate change, as well as in motivating the biodiversity of plant and animal species is particularly important and sustainable.

The main aggressions on the mountain environment occurred mainly by massive deforestation after 1990 and by the degradation that occurs in the floral structure of natural meadows, a direct consequence of the drastic decrease in the number of herbivorous domestic animals: cattle, sheep, goats, buffaloes - after 1990 - and implicitly of the volume of organic fertilizers (essential factor for maintaining and conserving the forage flora of natural meadows - irreplaceable).

Obtaining a rich natural flora with fodder value is the representation of a centuries-old process of human efforts to raise ruminants and thus provide organic fertilizers, a process determined by the condition of lack of alternative for providing human food.

Climate change and environmental degradation are an existential threat to Europe and the world. To find solutions to this threat, Europe needs a new growth strategy, which will transform the Union into a modern, competitive and resource-efficient economy in which, by 2050, we will no longer emit greenhouse gases, economic growth will be decoupled from resource use and no person and no place will be left behind.

Short food supply chains mean selling from farmer to consumer by involving as few intermediaries as possible. The concept is already a success in most countries of the European Union and, lately, it also enjoys increased attention in Romania, both among farmers and consumers. Local agriculture - obtaining agricultural and food products in order to sell them in an area close enough to the area of cultivation - is also a concept that promises to change the way we currently relate to obtaining food. Direct selling has a vital role in this process, the cases in which the farmer sells to the clients without intermediaries being more and more frequent in Romania. This gives rise to local food systems where food production, processing, marketing and consumption take place in a relatively small geographical area.

The European Commission's priorities for 2023-2027 are structured around chapters of major interest:

1. The European Green Pact (to be the first climate-neutral continent);
2. A Europe ready for the digital age;
3. An economy in the service of citizens;

4. A stronger Europe on the international stage;
5. Promoting our European way of life;
6. A new impetus for European democracy

The European Green Pact is the EU's roadmap for achieving a sustainable economy. The challenges of climate and environmental changes in all areas can ensure a fair and inclusive transition for all Europeans. The European Green Pact is the EU's roadmap for achieving a sustainable economy. Its purpose is to simulate the efficient use of resources by moving to a circular, cleaner economy and to restore biodiversity and reduce pollution.

The measures that must be taken target all sectors of the economy, including: investments in green technologies, support for innovation in the industrial sector, the introduction of less polluting, cheaper and healthier forms of private and public transport, the decarbonisation of the energy sector, improving the energy efficiency of buildings, collaborating with international partners to improve global environmental standards.

EU food security policy and actions cover 4 protection areas:

Food hygiene: businesses from the food sector, from farms to restaurants, must comply with EU food law. This also applies to companies importing food into the EU.

Animal health: sanitary controls and measures targeting pets, farm animals and wild animals monitor and manage diseases and ensure the traceability of all farm animals.

Plant health: the detection and eradication of pests at an early stage prevents them from spreading and ensures healthy seeds.

Contaminants and residues: monitoring keeps contaminants away from food and feed. The maximum acceptable limits apply to both EU and imported food and feed.

The integrated approach to food security is covered by the following 3 sections:

Food - Every European citizen has the right to know how every food product they eat is produced, processed, packaged, labelled and sold. The central objective of the European Commission's food safety policy is to ensure a high level of protection for human health with regard to the food industry - the largest production and employment sector in Europe. The Commission's guiding principle - set out mainly in the White Paper on Food Safety - is to apply an integrated farm-to-fork approach that covers all links of the food chain.

Animals - The aim of the animal health policy is to increase the health and improve the conditions of animals in the EU, especially food-producing animals; intra-Community trade and imports of animals and animal products must be carried out in accordance with the appropriate international standards and obligations.

The general purpose of the animal welfare policy is to ensure that animals do not have to endure pain or suffering and force the owner/keeper of the animals to comply with the minimum welfare requirements.

EU animal husbandry legislation aims to promote free trade of breeding animals and their genetic material, taking into account the sustainability of breeding programs and the conservation of genetic resources.

Plants - The European Commission is actively involved in setting international phyto-sanitary and quality standards for plants and plant products. EU law has provisions for the harmonized protection of "green resources" (pesticides, plant varieties, genetically modified organisms) (EFSA, 2021).

Pursuant to Article 51 of (EC) Regulation No. 882/2004 on official controls on food and feed, animal health and animal welfare rules and Article 2 of Council Directive 2000/29 on protection measures for plants and plant products, several initiatives for "A better preparation of safe food" have been developed and implemented.

These have been the basis for the development of the European strategy to ensure and maintain a high level of consumer protection and animal and plant health, to ensure the safety of food imports from non-EU countries into the EU market, to reduce risks to EU consumers and to give EU businesses easier access to safe goods from non-EU countries; to build confidence in the EU regulatory model with the competent authorities of other international trading partners and pave the way for new opportunities in the food market and increased competitiveness for EU operators and ensuring fair trade with non-EU countries, and in particular with developing countries, while improving and harmonizing official controls in EU countries and creating the conditions for fair competition.

European citizens must have access to safe and healthy food at the highest standards.

A number of food incidents in the late 1990s drew attention to the need to establish general principles and requirements on food and feed law at the level of the European Union. The European Commission developed an integrated "from farm to fork" approach to food safety, presented in its "White Paper" on food safety. It covers all sectors of the food chain, including feed production, primary production, food processing, storage, transport and retail (http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/index_en.htm).

General principles followed:

- Health protection is the primary goal of all EU rules and standards for agriculture, animal husbandry and the food industry.
- European legislation covers the entire food production and processing chain in the EU as well as imported and exported goods.
- European citizens must have complete and clear information when assessing the potential risks of food products.
- European level legislation and agreements strengthen trust between consumers, the agri-food industry and institutions.

The regulation on general food law is the basis of the food and feed law. It establishes a general and coherent framework for the development of food and feed law at both Union and national level. It sets out general principles, requirements and procedures underlying the decision-making for food and feed safety, which cover all stages of food and feed production and distribution.

The implementation of integrated food security policies in the EU involves various actions, namely:

Ensuring effective control systems and assessing compliance with EU standards on food safety and quality, animal health and welfare and nutrition, and plant health for plants from the EU and third-party countries in relation to their exports to the EU. Managing international relations with third-party countries and international organizations on food safety, animal health and welfare, plant health; as well as with the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and ensuring the management of science-based risks.

Stimulating sustainable food processing, wholesale, retail, hospitality and food services practices leads to the initiative to improve the corporate governance framework, including the requirement for the food industry to include sustainability in corporate strategies.

Launching initiatives to stimulate the reformulation of processed foods, including setting maximum levels for certain nutrients, is part of an EU code and a monitoring framework for responsible business and marketing behaviour in the food supply chain, and the establishment of nutritional profiles in order to restrict the promotion of foods high in salt, sugars and/or fats, the materials that come into contact with food, all contribute to improving food safety, ensuring the health of citizens and reducing the sector's environmental footprint.

Revising EU marketing standards for agricultural, fishery and aquaculture products to ensure the assimilation and supply of sustainable products is the promotion of sustainable food consumption by facilitating the transition to healthy and sustainable diets.

Proposal to harmonize mandatory nutrition labelling on the front of packaging to allow consumers to make informed healthy food choices

Proposal to request origin information for certain products

Establishing the best ways to set minimum mandatory criteria for sustainable food procurement in order to promote a healthy and sustainable diet, including organic products, in schools and public institutions Proposal for a sustainable food labelling framework to enable consumers to make sustainable food choices Revising the EU program for the promotion of agricultural and food products, with a view to strengthening its contribution to sustainable production and consumption A review of the legal framework of the EU program for schools, with a view to reorienting the system towards healthy and sustainable food

The mountain product - The Romanian mountain areas are areas that face many needs, but have the advantage of the existence of resources and raw materials of a high natural quality.

The sustainable development of the mountain rural area and increasing the attractiveness of mountain living, invigorating and increasing the profitability of traditional mountain households/farms by creating and adapting a system of local development models based on the superior use of the area's natural resources in high quality mountain products and convenient marketing prices for farmers. Raising the awareness of consumers and local communities/stakeholders regarding the need to encourage the consumption of mountain products to support farms and reduce mountain rural depopulation.

The policies developed and addressed to the mountain area have several results/indicators; one of them is the "Mountain Product".

At the level of the Romanian mountain area there are 2404 mountain products registered in 737 ATUs in the following categories: meat and meat products, milk and dairy products, vegetables-fruits, vegetable products, bread and bakery products, beekeeping products, fish products and eggs.

Mountain products support the local economy by capitalizing on them, maintaining the cultural heritage of rural areas and helping to preserve the cultural identity, by preserving local traditions and customs: local holidays and festivals that promote traditional garb, customs and products alike.

Some recent events (the pandemic, the economic crisis) have brought to the fore the special value of high quality “mountain products”, which in today's agri-food industry become “niche” products, guaranteed healthy food, natural, bringing health in people's homes.

Putting in place the necessary mechanisms to organize the high capitalization of mountain “agri-food products”, in favour primarily of the direct producers, which are found in mountain family farms, generally small and medium-sized, with a high degree of dispersal in the mountain area, an economy still alive but facing worrying phenomena such as: agricultural abandonment by young people from mountain villages, increasing aging and weakening of the working capacity of still active mountain farmers, de-profitability of livestock and drastic reductions in their numbers in small and medium-sized farms, with “side effects” regarding the loss of labour force and for the local non-agricultural activities, as well as the implicit deep affecting of the valuable traditional cultural fund of the Romanian mountain countryside.

The small mountain family farm should be understood as a “part-time” activity, but which is also a provider of local labour for forestry, mining, stone quarries, construction, various local services, grassland care, etc., being at the same time the cell for the preservation of “good practices” and valuable cultural traditions. The small mountain farm produces its own family food, feed and animal care and household hygiene, being a development resource for agro and rural tourism, mountain tourism and the development of short supply and sales chains.

In the mountains of Romania, mountain communities include small families with a small number of animals. If we add vegetable gardens, etc., as well as fruit trees and shrubs, we will better understand how valuable small and medium-sized mountain farms are, and the multiple reasons for supporting their maintenance, including by increasing the interest of a part of the population to settle in the mountain rural areas (Piria, 2015).

Food waste - Food safety is closely monitored throughout the food chain. And, also on the whole food chain, a worrying phenomenon of “Food waste” has developed.

Food waste is a recognized issue, which has become increasingly politically and socially important in recent years. Food waste is generated throughout the food chain, namely in the stages of production, processing, marketing and consumption, it can be defined in many different ways and there is no single methodology for measuring this phenomenon. However, it is widely acknowledged that around one third of food produced for human consumption is wasted or lost worldwide.

The UN estimates that, worldwide, the annual economic and environmental costs associated with this phenomenon amount to approximately US \$1.7 trillion; over 50% of EU food waste is generated at household level, 88 (±14) million tonnes of food waste/year - the equivalent of 20% of total EU food production - €143 billion, 173 kilograms of food waste/person/year (EU), 170 million tonnes of CO₂ (emitted from production to disposal of food waste in the EU) (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu>).

Situations that generate waste and food losses along the food chain

- *Marketing:*
 - expiration date expiry;
 - unsold products (even if discounts were applied);
 - surplus stocks (drastic reduction of the HoReCa sector during the pandemic);
 - deterioration of products or reduction of their quality/weight during storage;
 - removal of certain products - for not meeting aesthetic requirements.
- *Consumers:*
 - during storage;
 - cooking too much;
 - foods that “spoiled”;
 - leftovers from food preparation;
 - leftovers on the plate.

Reducing food loss and waste are EU-wide targets for reducing food waste but also for revising EU date-setting rules (“consume by” and “preferably before”).

The costs associated with food waste are of at least two types: economic costs and environmental costs.

The economic costs include not only the costs related to the value of the products themselves, but also the costs related to the production, transport and storage of wasted products, as well as the cost of their treatment. From an environmental point of view, food waste is a waste of resources (such as land, water, energy and other factors of production) throughout the life cycle of products and the consequent increase in greenhouse gas emissions.

Food safety is regulated in Romania by law no. 150/2004 on food safety as the basis for ensuring a high level of protection of human health and consumer interests, taking into account the food supply diversity, including traditional products and the efficient functioning of the internal market.

Out of the total estimated 100 million tons at European level, Romania is responsible for the waste of 2.55% (2.55 million tons/year). Compared to the Romanian population, there is a quantity of wasted food of about 129 kg / person/year. The target for 2030 is to halve food waste per capita.

The greatest food waste is recorded in urban areas, while rural communities use traditional methods of capitalizing on food waste in the household; in the urban environment, over 95% of the remains in the municipalities reach the landfill, thus making it impossible to capitalize on waste of any kind, both food and non-food.

A Romanian throws away over 350 grams of food daily, reaching 129 kilograms of food annually. Of this amount, 24% is cooked food, 22% - fruits, 21% - vegetables, 20% - bakery products, 11% - dairy products and 1% - meat.

12% of the food bought ends up in the basket, but we are fine, because the EU average is almost double. The bigger the family, the more food is thrown away. A worrying phenomenon is that we have, on one hand, malnutrition and food waste, but on the other hand 15% of the Romanian population is obese, which means that food education has shortcomings, people do not care about the quality and quantity of food. We waste almost as much as the European average, although we have much lower incomes and spend about 40% of them on food (http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_del/2014/665/oj)

Food waste occurs because we miscalculate quantities when shopping, don't store food properly, but also because we don't pay attention to shelf life. Resource waste also means a high pollution factor.

Conclusions

From an environmental point of view, food waste is a waste of resources (such as land, water, energy and other factors of production) throughout the life cycle of products and the consequent increase in greenhouse gas emissions.

The challenge of addressing food waste must take into account the whole supply chain; from food production to food processing and retail. The causes of food waste are different between developed and developing countries, with most losses in developing countries being in the early stages after harvesting and processing, while in developed countries the major losses are in the retail and consumption stage.

The relationship between extending shelf life and reducing food waste does not seem simple, complex consumption patterns in combination with a long supply chain and multiple storage points implies that extending shelf life cannot guarantee a consumption before the products have reached the "to be consumed before the date" point. Another factor is the growing demand for so-called "fresh products", which may lead to the perception that products with a longer shelf life are considered less fresh.

Given the environmental, economic and social implications of food waste over time, it is necessary to adopt a sustainable production and consumption approach to combat food and waste surplus throughout the whole global food supply chain.

The implementation of EU agricultural policies has to some extent increased the sustainability of the Romanian agricultural economy by connecting it to EU norms and standards of quality and competitiveness and to financial support for mountain farms through direct payments under the mechanisms of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). However, in all the years since our accession to the EU, no practical solutions could be found to support small subsistence households, traditional peasant-type units, which were considered ineligible. This situation has been corrected by the appropriate adjustment of the frameworks for the application of direct payments under the first pillar of the CAP, in the multiannual financial cycle. CFM Post 2020 will also continue to improve the system of direct payments dedicated to subsistence farms.

Protecting small farms by all measures, sustainable development programs do nothing but preserve the population in mountain areas, the traditions, increase the value of products, diversify services, preserve/create jobs, protect the environment, increase education for mountain peasants.

Ensuring the safety and health of all agri-food workers - from primary producers to those involved in food processing, transport and retail - will be essential to save lives and protect public health, people's livelihoods and food security. Producer groups in the retailing of agricultural products represent the chance for farmers, ranchers and smallholders from mountain areas to enter the markets of agri-food products, markets that are increasingly globalized and subject to fierce competition both internally and externally, as well as models of local governance, which could guide the inhabitants of mountain areas in ensuring the sustainability of traditional activities, but also the preservation of old traditions.

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