RURAL DEVELOPMENT, AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES

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ABSTRACT: The objectives set in this Strategy emerged from national and regional debates; they focus on the maintenance, consolidation, enhancement and continued adaptation of the structural configuration and functional capacity of natural capital as a foundation for the preservation and augmentation its support capacity and its ability to operate under the pressure of social development, economic growth and the foreseeable impacts of climate change.

KEY WORDS: rural, development, sustainable, agriculture

1. INTRODUCTION

The Strategy proposes an outlook of Romania’s sustainable development in the next two decades by setting objectives that go beyond electoral cycles or opportunistic political preferences. For this reason the National Sustainable Development Strategy was submitted for endorsement by the Romanian Parliament, while the implementation, monitoring and reporting mechanisms and those for consultation with the civil society and the citizens are regulated by law.

The concept of sustainable development is built on the premise that human civilization is a sub-system of the Ecosphere and is dependent on its material and energy flows, on its stability and capacity for self-adjustment. Public policies that are being developed on this assumption, such as Romania’s National Sustainable Development Strategy, seek to restore and preserve a rational and enduring equilibrium between economic development and the integrity of the natural environment in ways that society can understand and accept.

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2. DIRECTION OF AGRICULTURE IN ROMANIA

The legal dispositions, programming documents and executive decisions in these areas are correlated with the EU directives and Community regulations, as well as with Romania’s national strategies sectoral programmes.

**Horizon 2013. National Objective:** To enhance the economic vitality of Romania’s rural areas while maintaining the social balance by means of the sustainable development of agriculture, forestry and fisheries, including the related processing industries to meet optimally the demand for food and to preserve and improve the natural resource base.

By 2013, Romania is expected to implement the European agricultural model, which is characterized by viable, market-based production structures, while supporting rural development and environmental protection. Measures will be taken to support producers so as to enable them to adapt farming practices to the consequences of climate change inasmuch as these changes will affect the level and variability of crop yields and the numbers of livestock. Production chains will be established, including chains for the sustainable production of biomass and biofuels.

Special attention will be given to the development of food production for niche markets, as well as ecological and traditional products in those areas that offer favourable conditions. Measures shall be taken to protect the brands of specific Romanian products, recipes and preparation procedures on the EU Single Market, while complying with the food safety regulations, and to ensure appropriate promotion.

The main objectives for the following period are:

- Developing a competitive environment in agriculture, forestry and fisheries based on knowledge and private initiative;
- Reducing the proportion of the population employed in agriculture along with strengthening the economic viability of farming units;
- Reducing the fragmentation of farmland property and stimulating the concentration of small farms;
- Maintaining quality and diversity of rural space and forest estates in ways that maintain a proper balance between human activities and the conservation of natural resources.

The provisions of the National Strategic Plan for Rural Development 2007-2013 will be implemented following the following main directions for action:

1. To improve competitive strengths of the agricultural, forestry and fisheries sectors:
   - To enhance the competence of farmers and other persons involved in agriculture, forestry and fisheries so as to encourage better management;
   - To improve the competitive performance of commercial and semi-subsistence farms, to encourage cooperation and association among them in line with sustainable development principles, to support the pooling of producers into integrated production chains; to speed up the structural adjustment of semi-subsistence farms and to encourage them to enter the market; to promote modern farming practices; to facilitate the emergence of young farmers and the replacement of the current generation of managers of agricultural or forestry units by resorting also to early
retirement; to increase the ability of farms to adjust to market conditions and environmental requirements;
• To restructure and upgrade the processing and marketing of agricultural, forestry and fisheries products so as to enhance added value while ensuring sustainability and relative stability of prices; to support integrated development by means of setting up and strengthening food production chains, improving product quality and effective performance of food industries; to improve forest management and wood processing efficiency; to ensure rational and responsible exploitation of the fisheries.

2. To improve environment quality in rural areas, consolidating the application good practice in agriculture, forestry and food industries in order to ensure consumer safety:
• To ensure continued use of suitable farmland in depressed areas and to promote sustainable agriculture in order to maintain the vitality of rural settlements in the mountain areas and in other less propitious locations;
• To preserve and improve the condition of natural resources and of habitats by encouraging the use of farming methods that are compatible with environmental protection, conservation of biodiversity, improved quality of water, soil and natural landscape; to grant compensation payments to farmers for the disadvantages resulting from the implementation of Natura 2000 network in keeping with the EU directives on the impact of greenhouse emissions and climate change, on the protection of birds, and on the conservation of natural habitats and wildlife;
• To promote the sustainable management of forests by enlarging the wooded areas that have an important role in protecting the water and soil resources and biodiversity against destructive natural or man-made impacts; to develop the recreational functions of the forest; to provide compensation to the owners of forest estates for the disadvantages caused by conservation measures in protected areas.

3. To encourage the diversification of rural economy and to improve the quality of life in the countryside:
• To maintain and develop economic activities and to increase the number of jobs by diversifying non-agricultural employment and encouraging small-scale entrepreneurship in the countryside; to set up, improve and diversify economic development facilities and tourist attractions;
• To increase the attractiveness of the rural areas and reduce the migration of young people to urban centres by developing modern physical infrastructure; to improve social, economic and environmental conditions; to protect and preserve natural and cultural heritage in the countryside; to diversify the offer of tourist services;
• To develop the skills and competences of the local actors for good management, local spatial planning and modern development of villages.
• To start the implementation of local development initiatives:
• To introduce the bottom-up concept of action in the administration of rural communities, which should ensure a high degree of spatial economic and social integration, supported by the organisation of local action groups;
• To promote the participation of rural communities in the drafting and implementation of local development strategies and to encourage innovative actions;
to encourage local actors to work together with other local communities in Romania or abroad for the accomplishment of joint projects;

- To improve local administration by means of developing abilities to prepare and manage projects, including projects implemented in partnership, and to mobilize citizens’ participation in the decision-making process; to capitalize on the potential of the LEADER programme and on the financial resources allocated in this framework for rural development and for supporting local action groups.

The “Farmer” Programme, which was started in 2005, will be continued for some time to support investments in agriculture and in product processing, storage, preservation and marketing.

The harmonization of national legislation with the relevant Community acquis will be completed by 2013; the appropriate national structures corresponding to the EU ones will become fully operational.

Besides the objectives included in the National Rural Development Plan 2007-2013, the following additional measures are recommended:

- To prepare, in collaboration with the academic community, and to implement a National Programme for Sustainable Forest Management with a view to prohibit the reduction of forest areas, to increase the total wooded area with at least 200,000 hectares through reforestation, particularly on degraded or abandoned land. Additional interventions are needed to develop a national system of tree belts especially in drought-prone areas at risk of desertification; to promote intensive treatments based on natural regeneration that are best suited to preserve the valuable native species of trees and to enable the forests to fulfil their multiple economic, social, ecological functions in a sustainable manner. Active intervention is required to enforce the legal dispositions banning razed logging, to expand the area of woods that serve to protect watersheds, soil, climate, landscapes or biodiversity in the system of protected natural areas; to adjust the practice of forestry to the effects of global climate change; to apply optimal age standards for logging and to combat the harvesting of younger trees in order to get an artificial increase of timber production; to preserve biodiversity at all levels: genetic, species, ecosystems and complexes of ecosystems; to integrate virgin and quasi-virgin forests in protected natural areas; to proceed with the reconstruction of damaged and economically or ecologically dysfunctional forests; to tend to young forest growth and to conserve dead wood within prescribed limits according to EU practice; to develop an integrated and participative management of torrent basins in mountain areas; to increase the accessibility of forests; to compensate the owners of forested areas for the disadvantages that may result from the inclusion of forests in the categories having special protection functions or those that are designated as protected natural areas; to provide public support for the sustainable management of privately-owned forest areas of under 30 hectares.

- To speed up the preparation of a medium to long-term programme for the upgrading of irrigation systems through the rehabilitation of the existing ones and building new systems based on the best available technologies; to establish the required investment resources for each stage and to identify funding sources. Such actions have acquired priority status in the context of global climate change, higher
frequency and intensity of drought and expanding desertification, in parallel with increasing scarcity of available water resources. The programme will need to contain provisions to optimize water use in agriculture, which accounts for approximately 70% of the total water consumption.

- To implement the Strategy for the sustainable development of Romanian mountain areas, which are ecologically fragile and face significant natural and social challenges; farming in those areas requires strenuous efforts, imposes restrictions on certain economic activities and land uses and entails higher operational costs due to altitude, steep gradients and harsh climate conditions with shorter vegetation periods. The protection and responsible use of mountain resources, taking into account the effects of climate change, together with the implementation of the objectives established in the relevant Strategy, which was approved by the Romanian Government as early as 2004, are designed to prevent the depopulation of those areas and the degradation of specific traditions, crafts and cultural features. State support will be required in order to provide the means for the balanced development of high mountain zones on a par with other areas in terms of income and living conditions.

The financial resources for meeting the objectives in the National Strategic Plan for Rural Development amount to about Euro 9.97 billion, of which 80.46% come from EU co-financing through the European Agriculture and Rural Development Fund. Additional Community funding includes Euro 5.5 billion for direct payments to farmers, Euro 248 million for market-support measures and Euro 230 million for fisheries. Between 2007 and 2013, about Euro 14 billion will be transferred from the Community budget for agriculture, fisheries and rural development in Romania. Significant amounts will be added to this from the Romanian state budget.

Horizon 2020. National Objective: To strengthen production structures in agriculture and forestry while promoting the economic and social development of the rural areas in order further to reduce the existing disparities and to attain the current average performance level of the other EU Member States; to establish Romania as stability factor for food security in South-East Europe.

To this end, a new action programme for 2014-2020 shall be prepared during the preceding period; it will be based on the principles of sustainable development and will set specific targets for the improvement of environmental conditions (measures to combat soil degradation, to protect the areas at risk of flooding, to maintain an adequate and sustainable level of the crops, to support depressed areas, to improve landscape quality), the increased competitiveness of certain sectors that have an impacting on the environment (to make use of renewable energy sources, to improve the management of water resources, wastewater, solid waste, fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides), the improvement of rural life quality (higher incomes resulting from better performance in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, expansion of public services and utilities, diversification of non-agricultural activities and entrepreneurship).

The programmes for sustainable forest management will continue with additional reforestation and ecological reconstruction of damaged forests and forested land affected by degradation phenomena.
Measures shall be further taken to improve farmers’ training and their management abilities, to enhance the capitalization of local natural resources, to improved work security standards, to encourage environmental initiatives and to secure better animal hygiene and welfare.

The envisaged actions will take into account the possible changes in the implementing mechanisms of the EU Common Agricultural Policy after 2013.

*Horizon 2030.* National Objective: To achieve full implementation of the Community policies and practices in agriculture, forestry and fisheries; to complete the restructuring and modernization of these sectors and of the rural areas.

3. CONCLUSIONS

During that period, a high level of competitiveness will be reached in the agriculture and food sectors; they will become compatible with the Western European farming model following the establishment of viable agricultural structures, the modern development of rural economy, the diversification and improved quality of products. Romania will overcome the productivity gaps in the farming sector and will come close to the European standards in the food processing industries. Food safety rules will be fully observed in accordance with the Community eco-conditionality requirements.

Following the application of a coherent multi-annual forestry programme, the share of wooded areas will grow to 34% of the national territory in 2030, opening the prospect to reach the optimum level of 45% further on.

The measures to be taken and the necessary financial resources will be determined, following the evaluation of the results obtained in the preceding period, on the basis of specific studies that will consider various possible scenarios, including the amount of required investments for each programme and objective.

REFERENCES:

