



University of Agricultural Sciences and
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Sciences

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Habilitation Thesis

Rethinking agricultural public policy in the light of consumers' expectations. Evidence, dilemmas, and challenges

Summary

Agriculture is the sector that has undergone over time numerous interventions, called agricultural policies, in order to ensure food security of the population and to adapt it to the challenges of internal and external competition. The reform of agriculture and of the food sector, both in Romania and in other parts of the world, has determined the reshaping of the policy framework and of the legislation in this field, which has prompted the preoccupation of the academic environment and the update of the educational programmes toward these research directions.

A holistic approach to the agriculture sector – by joining agricultural, environmental, economic or social issues – is one of the solutions that can guide more effectively the sustainable development in this sector. Consistent agricultural public policies are required to meet the needs that have been identified in practice, because policy specialists can facilitate the development and implementation on a public level of the solutions created by agricultural sciences. Today's society is, above all, a society of order, and knowledge of the law is not only an asset, but also an obligation of any specialist in other areas than the legal one.

The present habilitation thesis is a plea for the multidisciplinary study of agriculture. The focal point of the thesis is the grounding of the role of public

policies in the field of agriculture and of the way in which the agriculture – environment relationship can be studied and analyzed through the research in legal and political sciences, as illustrated in the publications analyzed here. This contribution presents the professional achievements accomplished after obtaining the PhD title, which I hope to prove the originality and relevance of the scientific and professional contributions, while anticipating the development of the future professional career.

The thesis is structured on three main sections:

- I) Part I. Scientific and professional achievements, disciplinary thematic directions;
- II) Part II. Rethinking agricultural public policy in the light of consumers' expectations. Evidence, dilemmas, and challenges;
- III) Part III. Career development plans.

For the development of the present thesis, over 90 bibliographic references, containing relevant publications (e.g., books, scientific articles, studies), thematic Internet pages and, last but not least, official documents of the national institutions and of the European Union were consulted and they were all included in the *Bibliography* section.

In order to give coherence to ideas, the first section *Scientific and professional achievements, disciplinary thematic directions* was divided into few subchapters on which I will stop in the following. The first subchapter (1.1.), entitled *Back in time. On the thread of knowledge – milestones from the professional training*, presents the trajectory of my professional activity, starting from the bachelor studies and ending with the postdoctoral ones. Several reasons that have prompted me to focus on agricultural policies are also presented. Let us just stop on a few: the diversity of national agricultural policies, structural differences and low yields in European agriculture (in some countries), the political importance of farmers and the international context. In this respect, I considered that the investigation of the EU's agricultural policy was of particular interest. Let us not forget that the Common Agricultural Policy was (and still is) regarded as one of the most important political areas in the EU. Subchapter 1.2. *Achievements and scientific fields of interest* refers to the research activity (e.g., articles, books, book chapters, and studies). This is reflected in 13 papers indexed in ISI database, 48 papers indexed in other international databases (BDI), 27 books and books chapters (out of which 5

are single author book), editor/reviewer for 8 journals indexed in international databases (BDI), coordinator of a book series published in Romania and abroad, director for 2 research projects, participant in over 30 international conferences, coauthor of 2 patents, 6 awards, and a h-index=8.

Developments in science in fields such as human health, animal welfare, consumer behavior toward agricultural and green products, with a strong impact on new legislative approaches related to food control, change in perceptions at the public authority level, and the responsibilities of the agricultural sector are new challenges. As a consequence, we are witnessing the shaping and development of new trends in agricultural and environmental public policies, with inevitable echoes in both the legislative corpus and scientific literature. These are just a few of the reasons why I have also focused, within scientific articles, on the agriculture – environment relationship. Professional achievements and thematic research directions were presented in the context of the current state of scientific research in the field of agricultural and environmental legislation and public policies (in these sectors), highlighting the relevance of the personal contributions in an arguable and documented manner.

Part 2 of the *thesis Rethinking agricultural public policy in the light of consumers' expectations. Evidence, dilemmas, and challenges*, that also represents the title of the thesis in question, contains four subchapters: 2.1. *Conceptual clarifications* that is helpful in terms of introducing two central concepts: that of public policies and of the "public" character of a policy; 2.2. *Agricultural policy as a public policy* where clarifications and arguments in motivating the public character of agricultural policy are provided; 2.3. *What do we expect from agriculture as public policy?* The section is a brief analysis of consumers' expectations regarding the role agriculture should play; 2.4. *Dilemmas and challenges of agriculture as public policy*. Here I present a synthesis of the dilemmas and challenges that I have identified along the along the research stages, which again highlights the bidding nature of this study area, opening the invitation to future research topics. Last subchapter 2.5. *Final remarks* brings to the forefront some of the conclusions of this section, Part II.

In the presentation of the last section, *Career Development Plans*, I started from the premise that we are all in a continuous process of personal

and professional development. This becomes even more evident when it comes to a continually changing area: agricultural and environmental legislation and policies. This is the scientific field in which I aim to develop my professional career in the coming years, taking into account the principle of continuity. The permanent professional objective is to strengthen individual and organizational prestige, while the general objectives for university career development have been identified as follows:

- To improve and strengthen the existing skills and expertise in teaching and research areas;
- To acquire new knowledge, skills, and competences, by addressing new research topics and to reach a level of excellence in the context of a highly competitive academic environment;
- To harness knowledge and skills through their application in practice.

To achieve these goals, I identified some areas for career development, which were divided into research / project proposals, scientific and editorial activities, and teaching directions. The plan for building a professional career is based on a series of values – communication, responsibility, lifelong learning, flexibility, and teamwork– which are in line with the guidelines of the Doctoral School of Agricultural Engineering Sciences of the University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Cluj-Napoca.