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CHARACTERISTICS AND TEMPORAL GAPS OF THE RURAL SPACE

ABSTRACT

Among the activities of vital importance for any economy, an important place is held by the knowledge, research and identification of alternatives for rural area development, a complexity derived both from the rural area size and from the share of the population employed in productive activities of services, social-cultural and habitat, etc. Although rural development is an issue that can be considered as perennial as the agricultural activity, as it has quasi-permanently accompanied agriculture development, this emerged as a problematic domain, at least in the European area, mainly in the 1990s. The share of the rural population and of the rural space contributed to the national and international importance of the rural area development and planning, on the one hand; on the other hand, the importance of rural life was also a core issue, up to the level to which, in many European countries, in the European Council and the European Union, rural development became a basic pillar of the Community policy.

Key words: gaps, rural space, regionality.

JEL Classification: R10, R11, R12.

1. INTRODUCTION

The complexity of the development and planning of rural area derives, among others, from the fact that, in essence, this implies a balance between the need for the preservation of the economic, ecological and social-cultural space in the countryside and the tendency towards rural life “modernization”, under the background of the main goal of each country, to maintain and preserve the national character of the rural space. The specialty literature refers to the practice of different countries to bring their own definitions of the rural space, often based on socio-economic criteria (agricultural patterns, population density per km², share of rural population, etc.), corresponding to the perception of space heterogeneity and of the changes that can be produced in different periods of time.

2. CONSIDERATIONS ON THE GOAL OF THE RESEARCH ISSUE

Starting from the rural area importance both in terms of its size and of its resources involved in the economy, the present approach intends to make a diagnosis of the rural area at the level of the development region South-Muntenia, focusing on the following aspects:

- a) Conceptual approaches and the main functions of the rural structures;
- b) Spatial distribution (dimension) of the rural area, specific to the South-Muntenia Region;
- c) Structural evolution of the rural systems after 1989;
- d) Identification of certain sustainable rural development alternatives at local (regional) level.

3. METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

From the methodological point of view, the present analysis is based on public statistical information from the National Institute of Statistics through the Tempo-Online data base, and also from Eurostat data base of the European Union. We must specify that our approach refers to the period 1990-2014, and the limits of this period can be modified, in the case of certain indicators, depending on data availability. The motivation of such a limitation can be explained by the fact that at regional level, most often the availability of public data does not keep the pace with those at national level, certain gaps existing in their publication. We must say that the present approach is based on the utilization of some well-known statistical methods, of dynamics and comparisons type, with the presentation of results mainly under table form, justified by the need of highlighting the information at territorial level.

4. OBTAINED RESULTS

4.1. THE RURAL SPACE – CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE RURAL STRUCTURES

Any analytical approach to the rural space, meant to reveal the functions of the rural space and the defining characteristics that should be taken into consideration, presupposes a previous outline of the “rural space” concept including the “shifts” of its content in time or in different organizational European

entities. As a first definition¹, the rural space denotes the “agricultural land where crops are grown and animals are raised and the non-agricultural land for other utilizations than agriculture, namely the habitat and the human activity in the rural area”. The association of the agricultural land and of the natural space into a unitary whole attributed to the rural space has not eliminated the relatively equivocal character of the definition. In an attempt to redefine it,² “the rural space contains the interior and coastal area and includes the small villages and towns, in which the largest part of land is used for agricultural and forestry purposes, the mountain areas for recreational purposes, natural reserves, other dwelling or handicraft activities”. The merit of this definition is that it subsumes the agricultural and non-agricultural segments of the rural space to an entity distinct from the urban space, characterized by great concentrations of inhabitants and vertical and horizontal structures. Another definition³ circumscribes the interior or coastal area comprising the small villages and towns to the rural space, where most of the land is used for: a) agriculture, forestry; b) economic, social and cultural activities of the inhabitants from these areas (handicraft, local industries and services); c) non-urban areas equipped with leisure time facilities (or natural reserves); d) other utilizations (except for dwellings).

In general terms, the rural space covers territories and communities, natural landscapes, agricultural land, forests, habitats and traditional cultures, this space being practically, the “depository” of most national economy resources. Considering the rural space being rather a geographical concept than an economic one, attributing to it areas identified as less populated and outside the urban area, with various economic activities, dispersed, and relatively independent from the direct influence of the urban areas, the OECD experts differentiate two hierarchical levels of the territorial unit: local (NUTS 5) and regional (NUTS 3), to which three groups of regions are attached: predominantly rural (over 50% of the population is living in rural communities); significantly rural (15-50% rural population); predominantly urban (under 15% rural population).

At the same time, the European Union⁴ differentiated the rural areas according to the criterion of their integration into the national economies, as follows:

¹ In conformity with Art. 2 of the Project of the European Chart of Rural Space, elaborated by the Agriculture and Rural Development Commission of the European Council.

² Effected by the Commission Amending the project of the European Chart of the Rural Space, after the European Forum in Verona (1995).

³ Considered as an ultimate meaning of the rural space, in the Recommendation no. 1296/96 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

⁴ European Commission (1998) “Rural development. Situation and Outlook”, Working Doc., DG VI, Bruxelles.

- Integrated rural areas, characterized by population growth, main employment in the secondary and tertiary sectors, agriculture being the essential land operation form. Being located near the big towns, they bear a pregnant urban print, with physical and social infrastructure that gives them economic development and diversification opportunities, yet unfavourable to rural authenticity or to the demographic stability and ecologic equilibrium;

- Intermediary rural areas, situated relatively at distance from the urban centers, with mixed economic activities in the primary and secondary sectors. It is here that the large-sized performant agricultural enterprises are found (associative private farms in the EU countries and agricultural associations or agricultural companies in the transition economy countries);

- Peripheral rural areas, characterized by very low demographic density, the lowest incomes of a population that is preponderantly elderly and dependent on agriculture. Endowed with improper infrastructure of services, these areas are subject to factors generating isolation (mountain relief, distance to the transport networks); the different natural economic potential and the distance of the agricultural land from the supply and sale centers have a strong influence upon the activity of the agricultural entrepreneurs in the establishment and maintenance of agricultural holdings.

Rural development⁵, both at national and regional level, must start from the rural space functions, namely: the economic, ecologic and socio-cultural function. The **economic function** is considered by most experts as having agriculture at its core. Other economic branches besides agriculture, such as the industries downstream and upstream agriculture, such as forestry, industry, mining, etc. develop and expand in these areas. Different analysts in the field of economics, sociology and political sciences both from the developed and developing countries underlined the major importance of the economic function of the rural space. In most theoretical approaches, the economists have treated this issue at a general level, associating it with two main concepts: economic growth and economic development. There have been different tendencies to define the two concepts, starting with their assimilation due to some common traits, but the conceptual delimitation of the terms is determined by certain differences that show that the two concepts are not identical from the perspective of the capacity of generalizing and reflecting certain social phenomena. The economic development of the rural space can be defined as an improvement of the rural population's welfare and of the contribution of rural resources to that of the whole population⁶. Two key components can be noticed in

⁵ Otiman, I.P. (1997) "Rural Development in Romania", Agroprint Publishing House, Timișoara.

⁶ Leon, Y.(1999): "Rural development: Which lessons from economic analysis?", The 9th EAAE Congress, Warsaw, Poland.

the explanation of the concept: the rural development first refers to people and not only to activities or space, while their welfare cannot be dissociated from that of the society in general.

There are also other components of the economic function that are equally important, among which we can mention: the production of recyclable raw materials for industry and energy production; meeting the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises in agriculture, industry, handicraft, commercial enterprises and providers of services; establishment of a leisure and tourism base, as well as the genetic resources preservation, as a basis for agriculture and biotechnology. Thus, the agricultural and non-agricultural segments from the componency of a rural space form a distinct entity, which is characterized by a strong concentration of inhabitants and of socio-economic structures, disposed on both a vertical and horizontal plan. In the rural development context, the economic size has a defining importance upon the cohesion between these areas. The economic development and competitiveness level of a given area is not represented only by the sum of available production factors.

From the point of view of the **ecological function**, it is of crucial importance to develop an adequate infrastructure, rural population's education and training possibilities, the proximity of services, the innovation capacity, the entrepreneurship, efficient institutions and a favourable legal framework, in order to support the economic development. At the same time, the rural areas need to organize and mobilize their endogenous potential, as well as to develop their capacity to attract external resources under the form of investments, technical assistance and business services. The ecological re-equilibration, the return to a certain rurality standard, the removal of negative phenomena, provides a special importance to the ecological function of the rural area in the melioration process.

By the nature of the human activities and the intra- and inter-community relations complexity, **the rural space is a social space**. The relatively small size of the localities, the establishment of special connections between the community members, the mutual knowledge and the social hierarchization are some of the characteristics of the social relations in the rural area. The social life of the rural localities is deeply linked to the spiritual and cultural life, the traditions and customs being an undeniable patrimony of each rural region.

4.2. SHORT PRESENTATION OF THE REGION SOUTH-MUNTENIA

The region South-Muntenia, with an area of 31,335 km², accounting for about 14% of Romania's total area, is located in the South-South-Eastern part of the country, bordering on the Region Center in the North, on the Region South-East in the East, on Bulgaria in the South, with the limit being given by the natural border – the Danube River, and on the Region South-West in the West. The presence of the Danube in the South of the region gives it the possibility to have communications

with the 8 riverain countries; through the Danube – Black Sea Canal it has exit to the Black Sea and access to the Constanța Harbour – the main sea gate of the country. The proximity to Bucharest represents a real advantage through the existing social and institutional infrastructure and through the international airport Otopeni.

Not being an administrative structure, the Region *South-Muntenia* consists of 7 counties (Argeș, Călărași, Dâmbovița, Ialomița, Giurgiu, Prahova and Teleorman), 16 municipalities, 32 towns and 519 communes with 2019 villages.

The relief of the region, characterized by variety and disposition under amphitheatre form, comprises three major relief units: mountains 9.5 %, hills 19.8%, plain and meadows 70.7%.

While for the four counties in the South (Ialomița, Călărași, Giurgiu, Teleorman) the characteristic relief unit is the plain, the other 3 counties in the North (Argeș, Dâmbovița, Prahova) consist of both plain and hills and mountains; it is in this area that the highest mountain peaks of the country are found – the peaks Moldoveanu (2544 m) and Negoiu (2535 m) in the Făgăraș massif and the peak Omu (2505 m) in the Bucegi massif.

The rich hydrographic network is dominated by the Danube Delta, into which the main rivers of the region flow (Olt, Argeș, Dâmbovița, Ialomița and Prahova). This is completed by a series of natural and anthropic lakes with complex utilization. The region has rich and important water resources (3.4% of the region's total area), which, through the utilization in different sectors, have a special role in the region's economic development.

The various relief forms and their geological complexity contribute to the diversity of natural resources. The mountain and hilly areas concentrate important natural underground resources for the energy, chemical industry and the bulding materials industry.

Together with the subsoil resources, soil resources have a special importance and directly influence the development of certain economic sectors. The land areas under forests and forestry vegetation account for 19.6% of the region's area, representing an important source of timber and a proper habitat for the fauna of hunting interest.

4.3. THE SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE RURAL AREA SPECIFIC TO THE REGION SOUTH-MUNTENIA

In the period 1990-2014, the number of communes increased by 7.9% in the Region South-Muntenia (from 481 communes in 1990 to 519 communes in 2014); the county Giurgiu was on the first place, with a 20.4 percent increase, followed by the counties Ialomița (10.9%) and Teleorman (10.8%). This increase can be explained by certain villages complying with the necessary administrative and economic criteria to acquire the commune status.

In the year 2014, the county Argeş had 18.4% of the total number of communes in the region, followed at small distance by the county Teleorman (17.7%) and Prahova (17.3%) (Table 1). It must be mentioned that in the period 1990-2014, the county Argeş followed a downward trend in terms of the share of communes in total region by 1%; the county Giurgiu was at the opposite pole with an increase of its share in total communes from the Region South-Muntenia by 1.2%.

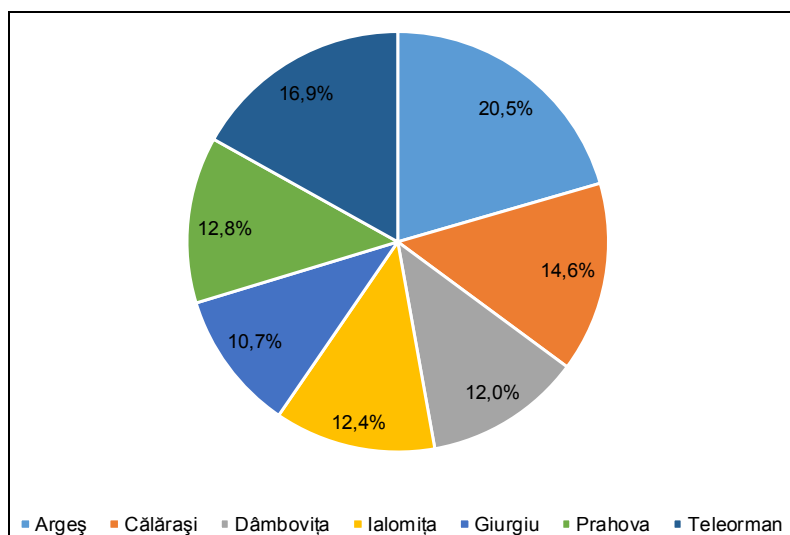
Table 1
Share of counties in total Region South-Muntenia in terms of the number of communes
in the period 1990-2014 (%)

	Argeş	Călăraşi	Dâmboviţa	Ialomiţa	Giurgiu	Prahova	Teleorman
1990	19.3	10.0	15.8	9.6	10.2	17.9	17.3
1991	19.3	10.0	15.8	9.6	10.2	17.9	17.3
1992	19.3	10.0	15.8	9.6	10.2	17.9	17.3
1993	19.3	10.0	15.8	9.6	10.2	17.9	17.3
1994	19.3	10.0	15.8	9.6	10.2	17.9	17.3
1995	19.3	10.0	15.8	9.6	10.2	17.9	17.3
1996	19.3	10.0	15.8	9.6	10.2	17.9	17.3
1997	19.3	10.0	15.8	9.6	10.2	17.9	17.3
1998	19.3	10.0	15.8	9.6	10.2	17.9	17.3
1999	19.3	10.0	15.8	9.6	10.2	17.9	17.3
2000	19.3	10.0	15.8	9.6	10.2	17.9	17.3
2001	19.3	10.0	15.8	9.6	10.2	17.9	17.3
2002	19.3	10.0	16.0	9.5	10.2	17.8	17.2
2003	19.5	9.8	16.0	9.6	10.2	17.6	17.2
2004	18.7	9.4	16.1	10.0	10.2	17.5	18.1
2005	18.4	9.5	15.9	9.9	11.2	17.4	17.8
2006	18.3	9.6	15.8	9.8	11.4	17.3	17.7
2007	18.3	9.6	15.8	9.8	11.4	17.3	17.7
2008	18.3	9.6	15.8	9.8	11.4	17.3	17.7
2009	18.3	9.6	15.8	9.8	11.4	17.3	17.7
2010	18.3	9.6	15.8	9.8	11.4	17.3	17.7
2011	18.3	9.6	15.8	9.8	11.4	17.3	17.7
2012	18.3	9.6	15.8	9.8	11.4	17.3	17.7
2013	18.3	9.6	15.8	9.8	11.4	17.3	17.7
2014	18.3	9.6	15.8	9.8	11.4	17.3	17.7

Source: calculations on the basis of Tempo-Online data, NIS, 2015.

As regards the number of villages, in the year 2014, from the 2019 component villages of the Region South-Muntenia, the county Argeş had 28.5% (576 villages), followed by the county Prahova with 20.1% (405 villages) and Dâmboviţa (353 villages). Practically, the three counties together have 66.1% of the total number of villages from the Region South-Muntenia.

The rural area of the region South-Muntenia totalled 3134 thousand ha in the year 2014 and this area remained unchanged in the period 1990-2014; from the seven counties of the region, the rural area of the county Argeş was on the first place as regards its size, with 643 thousand ha, followed at small distance by the county Teleorman (529 thousand ha) (Figure 1).



Source: calculations on the basis of Tempo-Online data, NIS, 2015.

Figure 1. The share of the rural area by counties in the total rural area of the region South-Muntenia in the year 2014 (%).

4.4. THE STRUCTURAL EVOLUTION OF THE RURAL SYSTEMS IN THE POST-REVOLUTION PERIOD

The measurement of the structural gaps of the rural systems after 1989 starts from a methodological specification. More exactly, we speak about the limitation, in certain cases, of the analysis interval at the period 1992-2014, having in view that the territorial statistics makes available a complete data series only for this period. The approach to the structural gaps is limited to the following systems:

a) The demographic system – as component part of the social systems, in relation to the demographic indicators;

b) The economic system – in relation to the gross value added in the agricultural sector;

c) The preservation and management of natural resources, as component part of the ecological system – in relation to the population connected to the sewerage systems with waste water treatment.

From the demographic point of view, in 23 years' time, the population from the rural area of the Region South-Muntenia diminished by 10.2%. In a classification of counties, Teleorman is on the first position as regards the decrease of the number of inhabitants by 22%, followed by Giurgiu and Ialomița. Specific for these counties, and also an explanation to population's decrease, is the fact that there are mainly plain counties, with a narrow range of economic activities, including agriculture (Table 2). The rural population's diminution, correlated to a strongly negative natural increase⁷, with a noticeable and intense demographic ageing of the population, is not an advantage for the sustainable development of each given area.

Table 2
Evolution of the population in the rural area of the Region South-Muntenia
in the period 1992-2014 (mil. inhabitants)

	Region South-Muntenia	Argeș	Călărași	Dâmbovița	Ialomița	Giurgiu	Prahova	Teleorman
1992	2.092	0.360	0.207	0.381	0.216	0.186	0.418	0.324
1993	2.071	0.355	0.205	0.379	0.213	0.185	0.416	0.319
1994	2.057	0.351	0.203	0.377	0.211	0.184	0.415	0.316
1995	2.042	0.348	0.202	0.376	0.208	0.183	0.413	0.312
1996	2.031	0.345	0.201	0.375	0.206	0.183	0.411	0.310
1997	2.018	0.343	0.201	0.373	0.205	0.182	0.409	0.306
1998	2.011	0.341	0.200	0.373	0.203	0.182	0.408	0.303
1999	2.004	0.339	0.200	0.373	0.202	0.182	0.408	0.300
2000	2.003	0.339	0.201	0.373	0.201	0.183	0.407	0.299
2001	1.974	0.339	0.200	0.365	0.200	0.166	0.407	0.296
2002	1.988	0.337	0.200	0.372	0.199	0.182	0.406	0.293
2003	1.978	0.336	0.199	0.370	0.197	0.181	0.405	0.289
2004	1.948	0.336	0.198	0.363	0.196	0.164	0.405	0.286
2005	1.940	0.336	0.197	0.362	0.195	0.164	0.404	0.282
2006	1.934	0.335	0.198	0.362	0.194	0.163	0.404	0.278
2007	1.929	0.336	0.198	0.361	0.193	0.162	0.404	0.275
2008	1.927	0.338	0.197	0.361	0.192	0.161	0.404	0.273
2009	1.920	0.337	0.197	0.362	0.192	0.161	0.404	0.269
2010	1.913	0.336	0.196	0.362	0.191	0.160	0.403	0.266
2011	1.906	0.335	0.195	0.362	0.190	0.159	0.403	0.263
2012	1.900	0.334	0.194	0.362	0.190	0.158	0.401	0.260
2013	1.889	0.333	0.193	0.361	0.189	0.157	0.400	0.256
2014	1.878	0.331	0.192	0.361	0.188	0.156	0.398	0.253
2014/1992 (%)	-10.2	-7.9	-7.2	-5.3	-13.3	-16.3	-4.8	-22.0

Source: calculations on the basis of Tempo-Online data, NIS, 2015.

⁷ In the year 2014, the rural area of the Region South-Muntenia had a natural increase of the population of -13705 persons, Teleorman county being on the first place among the seven counties, with the highest negative natural increase of the population, by -3508 persons.

From the economic perspective, the European statistics supplies information on the gross value added obtained in the agricultural sector by each component county of the Region South-Muntenia. Although, the time period is limited to 2000-2012, it can be noticed that in 13 years' time, the sectoral gross value added increased by 84.4% per total region; this increase was generated by the positive trend in all seven counties, from 47.4% (Prahova) to double (Călărași – 108.5) (Table 3). The positive trend of the gross value added obtained in agriculture puts into evidence the fact that the agricultural sector can be one of the driving engines of local development, through production diversification and development of certain related activities generating surplus value.

Table 3

Evolution of gross value added obtained in the agricultural sector in the period 2000-2012 (mil.euro)

	Region South - Muntenia	Argeș	Călărași	Dâmbovița	Ialomița	Giurgiu	Prahova	Teleorman
2000	673.63	110.03	102.7	116.55	66.16	89.85	91.21	97.13
2001	1080.56	147.94	175.51	159.51	130.36	126.79	118.75	221.7
2002	860.63	119.96	127.92	151.9	99.97	111.38	89.93	159.58
2003	951.43	158.96	137.55	184.04	95.1	126.68	127.4	121.7
2004	1421.82	193.78	241.13	208.91	158.36	206.86	168.28	244.51
2005	1130.27	186.91	148.25	220.75	123.84	144.38	139.88	166.26
2006	1235.07	217.17	150.8	248.03	121.65	157.1	150.46	189.86
2007	927.44	188.32	85.24	287.02	65.06	75.5	127.96	98.34
2008	1513.79	207.79	242.79	257.86	181.94	231.77	192.28	199.37
2009	1167.17	194.93	183.19	192.08	148.64	148.78	150.29	149.27
2010	1259.15	182.85	177.29	236.36	157.14	184.44	146.79	174.28
2011	1648.18	238.75	274.04	261.02	184.87	253.31	180.37	255.81
2012	1241.85	183.21	214.14	214.94	119.64	197.74	134.44	177.74
2012/2000 (%)	84.4	66.5	108.5	84.4	80.8	120.1	47.4	83.0

Source: calculations on the basis of Eurostat data, 2015.

As indicator of conservation and protection of natural resources, the number of inhabitants connected to sewerage systems with waste water treatment increased by 13.7% in the period 2006-2014 per total South-Muntenia region, the county Prahova having the most important increase among the seven counties, i.e. by 36.5%, the rest of the counties ranging from +0.5% (Călărași) to 12.3% (Giurgiu). Although the connection to the sewerage systems with waste water treatment has followed an increasing trend, both in terms of population and by component counties, only about one third of the inhabitants of the Region South-Muntenia benefit from these services, and the differences by counties are quite significant. Except for the counties Argeș and Prahova, where the share of the population connected to modern sewerage systems exceeds the regional average, the percentage shares of the other five counties oscillate around 20 % (Table 4).

Table 4

The share of the population connected to sewerage systems with waste water treatment in total population in the period 2006-2014 (%)

	Region South - Muntenia	Argeş	Călăraşi	Dâmboviţa	Ialomiţa	Giurgiu	Prahova	Teleorman
2006	24.6	39.7	21.3	18.6	16.8	20.4	25.0	18.9
2007	26.1	39.1	21.6	19.5	17.5	19.5	30.8	19.2
2008	25.8	38.0	19.7	18.2	18.3	19.8	31.1	19.6
2009	25.9	38.6	19.7	18.4	18.5	20.9	31.1	18.8
2010	26.5	39.5	20.1	19.2	18.6	21.8	31.3	19.3
2011	26.6	38.9	20.6	18.6	18.7	20.8	32.5	19.9
2012	27.2	40.0	21.2	19.8	18.9	21.8	32.3	20.3
2013	27.9	39.9	21.5	20.1	19.2	21.9	34.3	21.2
2014	29.0	43.0	22.1	20.5	19.5	21.4	35.2	22.3

Source: calculations on the basis of Tempo-Online data, NIS, 2015.

4.5. SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES IN THE SOUTH - MUNTENIA REGION

The approach to the complex development of a heterogeneous region from the point of view of the characteristics of the component counties involves a certain difficulty induced by the natural question: how can pluriactivity be generated in an area with so many different specificities? Even though, at first sight, the issue could be considered as relatively marginal, in reality, at least two essential “operators” have participated to the complex development of the rural area: agriculture, *per se*, and the remaining national economy. Agriculture, because when it has reached the performance stage, it becomes capable to generate a surplus supply compared to the necessary local consumption, available for re-distribution in other deficient areas or for processing. The national economy, in the sense that by the different non-agricultural activities developed in the rural area it generates alternative incomes for the excedentary rural population. These considerations support the option to consider agricultural production as a first “pillar” of the complex development of the rural area from the Region South-Muntenia. The rationale is relatively simple: by the intensification of agricultural production, the necessary zonal critical mass of raw products can be obtained that economically makes it worth investing in agri-food processing and marketing activities.

Starting from the premise that regional development, in general, and rural development, in particular, take place almost exclusively by local initiatives, we consider that, by identifying certain development opportunities in the agri-food sector, practically the main pillars of the complex development of the rural area from the Region South-Muntenia can be set up. In this respect, we consider that

among the priorities of the complex development of the rural area from South-Muntenia, derived from the rural priorities at national level, we can list at least three priorities with direct impact on performance and sustainability, namely:

- Acceleration of the process of small and medium-sized farms restructuring and their transformation into viable farms from the economic point of view and the improvement of the economic performance of the farms and processing sector, in order to increase the market integration of quality products and for import substitution;
- Maintaining and improving the natural environment quality by a sustainable management of the natural resources and by fighting against climate changes;
- Diversification of economic activities, job creation, improvement of infrastructure and services for a better life quality in the countryside.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The increasing interest in the rural area issues has been lately intensified, generating specific policies and strategies. In fact, the existence of the rural development concept, in European terms, is closely linked to the existence of community programs, being assimilated to the rural development policies. Practically, the structural adjustment became a stringent issue both from the economic and social point of view, under the background of the intensification of the migration flow from villages to towns, as well as of the increase of rural population's pauperization.

Having in view the position held by agriculture and rural area in the economy, the design of the agricultural and rural development policies represents a main responsibility for each government. In this respect, the relations in approaching the rural development issue must be based on consultation, cooperation and complementarity, on expanding the partnership in order to ensure a harmonious growth, not only by national initiative, but mainly by local initiative.

With regard to the sustainable development of the rural area from the Region South-Muntenia, we consider that the intervention of the decision-makers is necessary both as regards the outline of strategic local development priorities, according to the specific characteristics of each area, and mainly as regards the effective collaboration with the local authorities, in order to identify the activities generating gross value added. The implementation of the National Regional Development Strategy 2014-2020, corroborated with the measures proposed under the National Rural Development Program for the period 2014-2020, will result in the long term development of the region, while taking into account the specificities of each component county.

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