

Section 3. Economics of population and demography

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POLICY, LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF AGRICULTURE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN ALBANIA

Abstract

The purpose of the study is to shed some light on the current situation and needs for agriculture vocational education in Albania. Youth in Albania represents the greatest employment potential considering that the country has the second youngest population in Europe. Yet, agriculture remains a non-attractive business for young people; even though the sector employs almost half of the population. The Albanian youth considers agriculture as “old fashion” and has steadily been migrating to urban centers for more opportunities. New funding availabilities and a shift in government strategic priorities have put a focus on a sector with increasing potential. This study complied with a pre-approved methodology that combined one hand desk research of national and international legislation, institutional and policy framework on agriculture and VET, and the other data collected on the main actors related to agriculture vocational education and training.

Keywords: Policy, agriculture, education in Albania.

Introduction

Youth in Albania represents the greatest employment potential considering that the country has the second youngest population in Europe. The Albanian youth considers agriculture as “old fashion” and has steadily been migrating to urban centers for more opportunities. New funding availabilities and a shift in government strategic priorities have put a focus into a sector with increasing potential. In Albania, agriculture remains the main sector in terms of employment and contribution to the overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Agriculture accounts for 18% of the national GDP, and about 48% of the workforce is employed in this sector. According to INSTAT

official data in Albania, there are approx. 355,000 farms of which about 300,000 are mixed with crops and livestock production. Farm size has increased from 1.14 ha to 1.20 ha, while parcel size has maintained the same level, about 0.27 ha, implying not only small farm size but also high level of fragmentation, which characterizes the agriculture sector in Albania.

According to the official Labour Force Survey over the year 2018, the estimated labour force was 1,222,594 persons of which 37.4% were employed in the agriculture sector. Meanwhile, the official employment rate for the age-group 15–29 years old, in 2018 was 50.1%. This situation remained equal in the second quarter of 2019.

In annual terms, employment increased in services by 5.7%, in the industry by 4.4%, and in the agriculture sector by 2.2%. Still, further total employment was dominated by this sector, being clear the high potential and impact that Albanian agriculture has. For the year 2018 according to the same source “Employment by sex and economic activity” shows over total employment that 42.3% of agriculture employees are women and 33.5% men. The large employment share of the Agriculture sector and the major need for the upgrade of older technologies toward European standards, calls for new technical skills to manage the transition.

The strong and positive relationship between individuals’ education and skills level toward labour market outcomes shows that a focus shall be paid to ameliorating education opportunities and skills in this field. Guidance for youth toward VET plays an important role in orienting them toward employment options and decreasing irregular migration. According to the official Labor Force Survey for the academic year 2017–2018, the vocational education students as% of all students in secondary education is 20.6% compared to 79.4% in general education. Further improvement and development of vocational education and training system will enable the country to achieve its full growth potential.

Taking into account the above-mentioned situation is intervention aims to make a screening of the overall situation, problems, and needs on agricultural vocational education in Albania in the cities of Shkodra, Fieri, Korça, Kavaja, Cërrik, Pogradec, Kamza, and Tirana. Furthermore, this study aims to propose concrete actions for the upcoming years. Particular attention will be given to the challenges for conceptualizing the areas of intervention and raising questions for policy development as to how, when, and the means that needed to be used by the Albanian government and all the other relevant actors, with the main aim to find a solution for the skills gap.

The finalization of this study would not have been possible without the collaboration and contribution of all relevant actors in the field, such as the Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Development, Ministry of Finance and Economy, National Agency of Employment and Skills, Regional Employment Offices, National Agency of Vocational Education, Training and Qualifications, all the Municipalities of the

project area, Agricultural Vocational Schools, international partners and businesses operating in this field.

Methods and results of the study

This research complied with a pre-approved methodology that combined one hand desk research of national and international legislation, institutional and policy framework on agriculture and VET, and the other data collected on the main actors related to agriculture vocational education and training.

As core elements, it contains a summary of all existing advising documents in the field, with data and statistics on this issue as well as other relevant materials; a list of providers of professional training and education in agriculture, as well as the list of donors that are involved. In order to make an appropriate assessment four tailored questionnaires were prepared, which included closed, semi-closed, and open-ended questions, in order to entail data on the socio-economic background of students, reasons why they choose to follow this sector, future professional plans, teacher qualification, and curricula needs, and if these qualifications/needs are aligned with labor market demands.

Importance of agriculture in the Albanian economy

Agriculture remains one of the main important sectors in the development of the Albanian economy, with a 17% of share the national GDP, and about 48% of the workforce employed in this sector¹. Based on INSTAT official data there are approx. 355,000 farms in Albania, of which about 300,000 are mixed with crops and livestock production. Farm size has increased from 1.14 ha to 1.20 ha, while parcel size has maintained the same level, about 0.27 ha, implying not only small farm size but also a high level of fragmentation, which characterizes the agriculture sector at the domestic level².

According to the official Labor Force Survey over the year 2018, the estimated labor force was 1,222,594 persons of which 37.4% were employed in the agriculture sector. Meanwhile, the official employment rate for the age-group 15–29 years old, in 2018 was 50.1%³. This situation remained equal in the second quarter of 2019⁴.

According to World Bank data of 2017 agriculture share in the Albanian economy is the highest of the region and the second ranked in Europe. If we refer to the same data agriculture share in the total GDP of Northern Macedonia was 7.9%, 6.8% in Montenegro, 6.1% in Turkey, 6% in Serbia, 5.6% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and 9.1%

¹ INSTAT. Gross Domestic Product 2017. URL: http://www.instat.gov.al/media/5404/produkti-i-brendsh%C3%ABm-bruto-final-2016-gjysm%C3%AB-final-2017_final.pdf/ (consulted on 25.10.2019).

² INSTAT. Statistical database. URL: http://databaza.instat.gov.al/pxweb/sq/DST/START__BU/BU0003/?rxid=064b9ffa-365f-4748-8d23-6c4a9fde9fdf/ (consulted on 25.10.2019).

³ INSTAT. Labour Force Survey 2018. URL: <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/5305/atfp-t4-2018.pdf/> (consulted on 25.10.2019).

⁴ URL: <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6210/atfp-t2-2019.pdf/> (consulted on 25.10.2019).

in Kosovo¹. This trend remained more or less stable vary between 19.85% (2016) to 17% (2017), with an average share of 18% for the years 2010–2018².

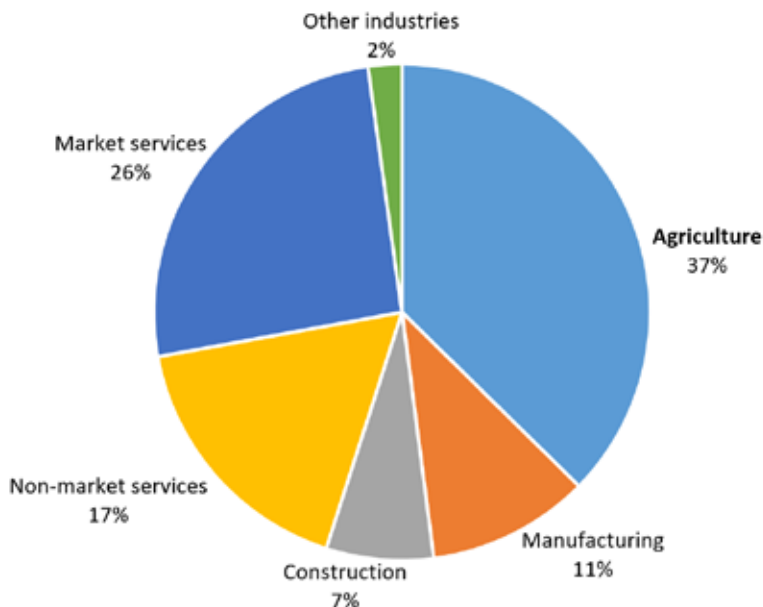


Figure 1. Employment by economic activity

Source: INSTAT

Referring these figures and the macro-economic changes occurred after the fall of the communist regime in the early 1990, the Albanian Government tried to focus its policies to make a further progress in the sector. However, the progress made according to European Commission yearly reports (The European Commission yearly Progress Reports for Western Balkan countries who aspire to join the union starting from the opening of the negotiations for the Stabilization and Association Agreements, for Albania 2003), was moderate compared to needs and standards of the EU common market, principally handling only horizontal issues³.

The principal governing law no. 9817 “For Agricultural and rural development”⁴ was adopted in 2007, after the entry into force of the Stabilisation and Association

¹ URL: <https://www.monitor.al/ekonomia-e-shqiperise-primitive-bujqesia-dominon-19-te-pbb-se-me-e-larta-ne-europe/> (consulted on 25.10.2019).

² URL: <http://wdi.worldbank.org/table/4.2#> (consulted on 25.10.2019).

³ URL: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201311/20131105ATT7395/20131105ATT73959EN.pdf/> (consulted on 25.10.2019).

⁴ Law no. 9817 dated 22.10.2007 “For Agricultural and rural development”.

Agreement and was not amended since then. It implies the objectives, measures and policies in agriculture and rural development. The law is accompanied with a set of other legal acts such as those regulating the implementation of the foreign assistance under the Instruments of Pre-Accession (IPA)¹ with the European Union, and the sectorial assistance Programmes for Agriculture and Rural Development (IPARD)², accompanied with by-laws.

Albanian agriculture and rural areas entered a new stage of development with the country's application for EU membership in 2010³. In order to fulfil its strategic objective of EU integration, and to meet the Commission requirements in line with obligations entailed by the candidate status since 2014, specifically regarding Chapter 11 on *Agriculture and rural development*, the Albanian Government adopted the Inter Sectorial Agricultural and Rural Development Strategy 2014–2020⁴ (ISARDS). Its main objective is to define the strategic framework to treat the challenges faced by the agriculture and agro-processing sector, as well as the development of rural areas in a sustainable economic, environmental and social manner, proposing similar policy instruments to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), in order to achieve economically viable farming, improved food security and sustainable rural development⁵. ISARDS is based in three main pillars: (a) policy framework on rural development; (b) national budgetary support schemes, (c) institutional and legal development, and implementation of the new framework⁶. The strategic approach of the government to meet EU standards and *aquis* requirement in this field was pointed out again in the reviewed National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI II) 2015–2020⁷, which together with National Programme for European Integration (NPEI) and the Action Plan for the alignment toward Agenda 2030 of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), support the sustainable socio-economic

¹ Law no. 37/2015 “For the ratification of the Framework Agreement between Albania and the European Commission”.

² Low no. 30/2016 “For the ratification of the sectorial agreement”.

³ URL: <http://www.fao.org/partnerships/resource-partners/investing-for-results/news-article/en/c/1132980/> (consulted on 25.10.2019).

⁴ Council of Ministers Decision no. 709 dated 29.10.2014 “The Inter Sectorial Agricultural and Rural Development Strategy 2014–2020”.

⁵ Zhllima E. & Gjeci, G. Research Project – National Policy Instrument and EU Approximation proces: Effects on Farms Holdings in the Western Balkan Countries “Albania: Agricultural Policy Development and Assessment”. – P. 2.

⁶ Official Gazette no. 169/2014. Council of Ministers Decision no. 709 dated 29.10.2014 “The Inter Sectorial Agricultural and Rural Development Strategy 2014–2020”. – P. 8485.

⁷ Official Gazette no. 86/2016. Council of Ministers Decision no. 348 dated 11.5.2016. “The National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015–2020”.

development of Albania and the EU integration process by reasserting the vision of ISARDS2014–2020¹.

The Albanian Government budgetary support for agriculture during the period 2008–2017, has been fluctuating, yet with an increasing trend. During a decade the average support value has reached 25 million of euro, or 1.4% of the gross value added². In the Medium Term Budgetary Programme 2020–2022 recently adopted by the Council of Ministers the estimated³, from which approximately 8.9 million euro are foreseen for the fiscal year 2020 in the draft law presented to the Albanian Assembly for approval⁴.

As regards the yearly review of the progress made, the European Commission emphasized that has some level of preparation in agriculture and rural development, especially regarding the establishment of structures for the pre-accession assistance (IPARD II)⁵.

Even though the entire policy framework related with agriculture, and the specific provisions of the ISARDS underline the importance of vocational education, technical programmes, and graduates for further development of the sector, they do not foresee any specific measures to improve the current situation in agriculture vocational schools⁶. It may be considered that this scenario is a consequence of the fact that ISARDS was not followed by a public Action Plan, and neither has a mid-term review.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As a result of the analysis, we present a number of considerations that may serve to promote the development of agricultural vocational secondary education in the area under study and beyond. The three questionnaires were designed to reflect the current situation in the vocational secondary education sector in the agricultural sector, the willingness to invest in the further development of agricultural vocational education, the business climate, the assessment of barriers, factors and policies in favor. to increase the flow of secondary education development in the agricultural sector.

- Concentration of educational institutions in the territory, poor accessibility of institutions leads to the recommendation that the possibility of opening vocational classes in agriculture in general secondary schools should be considered. Due to the fact that mainstream secondary schools enjoy a high reach

¹ IMAMI. – P. 9–10.

² IMAMI. Cited above, – P. 11.

³ PBA 2020–2022. NEXT WEEK FINAL.

⁴ Reference projekt ligji buxhetit.

⁵ SWDC. 215 final. Commission working document Albania 2019. Report, 2019.– P. 66–67.

⁶ Idem. – 8512 p.

in the territory and a higher accessibility, the offer of education is closer to the demand;

- It is recommended to increase business-school-student cooperation in the context of exchange of experiences and implementation of practices. This collaboration should be based on a legal and the regulatory framework that facilitates and facilitates interactions between the three actors (examples of business-school partnership contracts, Business-school Practices Contracts);
- In the context of strengthening the vocational education system in agriculture, it is recommended to provide scholarships to students in difficult socio-economic situations, with a view to their formation and integration into the labor market;
- It is recommended to evaluate the possibility of opening part-time education so that agricultural vocational education can reach a wider population, enabling the formation of people who are integrated into the labor market;
- It is recommended to develop courses, specific and thematic trainings, based on a collaboration with the National Employment Service (providing training and vocational training);
- It is recommended to re-evaluate the profiles of agricultural education management in order to increase profiles and market orientation;
- It is recommended to establish guidance, clarification and advisory structures in the lower cycle in order to introduce and absorb a high number of students in vocational agricultural high schools.

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