

# Supporting of disadvantaged areas from Romania through agri-environment measures of the RDP 2007-2013

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**ABSTRACT:** Rural development policy of the European Union provides funding for a wide range of measures that Member States use for supporting the sustainable development of rural areas with the aid of rural development programs (RDP) at national level according to their needs. In this respect, Romania has drafted in accordance with Community legislation in effect the National Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 to improve the balance between economic development and sustainable use of natural resources. In addition to this, it was created the legal basis of agri-environmental measures, measures which encouraged particularly the farmers to protect, to maintain and to improve the environmental quality by promoting a sustainable management of farmland and of forest surfaces. But, at the national level, the results of analysis indicate a low degree of implementing these measures due to very small number of projects completed.

**KEY WORDS:** European funding, rural area, sustainable development, projects, investments

## 1. Introduction

The intensification of agriculture since the second half of the 20th century has caused severe declines in farmland biodiversity, which may impact on the delivery of ecosystem services (Scheper et al., 2013). And today, the promoting the reinforcement and utilisation of local resources from central sources is difficult and problematic. (Nemes, 2005)

As regards nature protection, many accession countries have recently enacted legislation on protected areas which complies to various degrees with existing European Union legislation. Many also have legislation on the protection of wild animal and plant species. (Zellei, 2001). Improvement effects always deal with changes on agreement land itself; that is, improvements of certain specified environmental values depending on a change in agricultural practices on a given piece of land. (Phrimdahl et al., 2003)

According to European Commission (2005) the agri-environment measures began in a few Member States in the 1980s on their own initiative, and was taken up by the European Community

in 1985 in Article 19 of the Agricultural Structures Regulation. This measure was designed to encourage farmers to protect and enhance the environment on their farmland and the agri-environment payments were co-financed by the European Union and the Member States with a contribution from the Community budget of 85% in Objective 1 areas and 60% in others.

Kleijn and Sutherland consider an agri-environment programme to be the collection of schemes implemented in a country because the objectives of these programmes usually reflect a combination of the main environmental, ecological and socio-economic problems associated with agriculture, as well as the political situation in each country.

Nevertheless, the agri-environment measures are established by Member States or Regions and submitted to the Commission for approval as part of their Rural Development Plans. (Mircea, 2007) These measures are designed to support disadvantaged or less favoured areas which are characterised by poorer quality of resources compared to other rural areas, by remoteness and distance from the main population centres, and are mostly concentrated in hilly and mountainous areas. (Apostolopoulos and Mergos, 1997)

Regarding the present research approach, this is based on programmatic analysis of official documents and reports and datasets available that refer to the current state of implementation of the *National Rural Development Programme 2007-2013* in Romania. Limits approach, based on the chosen methodological perspective, for a technical perspective, primarily descriptive in order to obtain an overview enabling outlining a diagnosis at some point in time and space. As a general objective, the present study aims to provide an overview of the prospects of development of Romanian rural environment in close connection with the measures promoted by the European Union through Common Agricultural Policy on supporting disadvantaged areas in Romania.

## 2. Methods

To achieve this scientific approach we will use thematic mapping, considered a component of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), because the software used is aimed to facilitate the registration of any information relating to elements localized in space to facilitate the study and the graphic representation of their characteristics.

The statistical data provided by the *Payment Agency for Rural Development and Fishing* were analyzed with the program Philcarto by using the following types of maps:

- ⇒ The maps in colored surfaces scientifically called "choroplèthes maps" represent the numeric variables excluding amounts. This type of map requires a mesh of the surface of the study area in areal spatial units represented by polygons. To translate geographically, changes in data studied, each polygon is colored depending on numerical variables. In case there are several values, they are divided into classes, and each class is assigned a color selected from the color range.
- ⇒ *Proportional circles maps* are intended to represent quantities or numbers. The use of this mode of representation is more difficult than it appears at first: a circle calibration is necessary in most cases and many trials are often required to obtain a satisfactory result. This mode of representation is therefore truly effective when the spatial units are not too many (a few hundred at most), and that they are spread relatively evenly in space.

### 3. Results

In Romania, the *National Rural Development Programme 2007-2013* is the document which complies with the strategic lines of the European Union rural development points, by which it can be accessed *European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)*. Once the programming was made at Member State level, the financial allocation between the different axes, was the following:

- Axis I "Increasing the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry" received 36% of the EAFRD, for supporting the agricultural development and physical and human potential;
- Axis II "Improving the environment and the countryside" has received 46% of the EAFRD, for the sustainable use of agricultural and forest lands;
- Axis III "Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy" received a lower percentage, ie 18% of total EAFRD to improve living conditions in rural areas;
- The percentage of Leader axis was 6% of European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

At the national level, the average indicative support of EAFRD for the entire duration of implementation of Axis II was 82% of the public support for the following measures:

#### 3.1. Measure 211 "Support for mountain areas"

This measure took into account financial support and agricultural land located in areas with lower agricultural production due to natural conditions, induced by altitude and slope. In addition, financial support to farms in mountain areas has completed the differences in income and costs compared to natural conditions in other areas that were not disadvantaged. (Council Regulation no. 1257/1999)

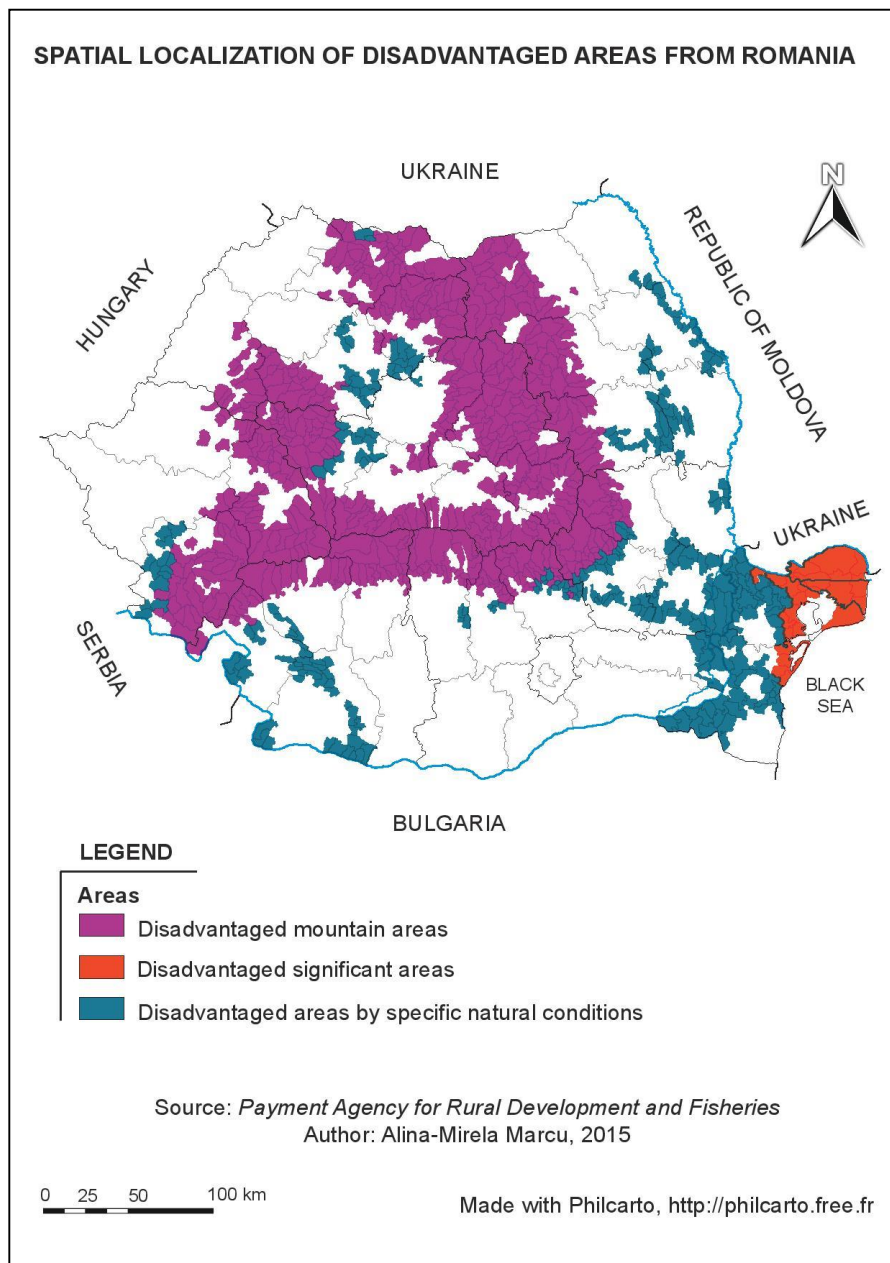
#### 3.2. Measure 212 "Support for disadvantaged areas - other than mountain area"

Financial allocation provided by Measure 212 was an action meant to counteract depopulation and maintain the tourism potential of these areas. (Council Regulation no. 817/2004)

Disadvantaged areas - other than mountain area were classified into two categories:

- Disadvantaged significant areas - represented by the administrative territorial units which overlapped in whole or in part with Biosphere Reserve "Danube Delta".
- Disadvantaged areas by specific natural conditions - represented by surfaces that presented particular natural characteristics.

At the national level, from the map of spatial localization of disadvantaged areas from Romania, we find that mountain areas are located in the Carpathian Mountains, where they meet high levels of altitude and slope, disadvantaged significant areas covers Danube Delta, because in this area, it accumulates a number of climatic factors and soil factors which strongly limits the agricultural activity, and disadvantaged areas by specific natural conditions present a scattered distribution due to various natural factors, which acting on the agricultural productivity. They are found mainly in the areas of Moldavian Plateau, Subcarpathians, Dobrogea Plateau, in the entry respectively exit areas of Danube in Romanian Plain, in the western part of Banat Mountains and of Transylvania Plateau, in Maramures Depression, some relatively compact areas are found only in the South - East of the country.



**Figure 1** Spatial localization of disadvantaged areas from Romania.

### 3.3. Measure 214 " Payments of Agri-environment"

Payments under this measure have encouraged farmers to serve society as a whole by introducing or continuing to apply agricultural production patterns compatible with the protection and improvement of environment, landscape, natural resources, soil and genetic diversity. (Article 27 of Council Regulation No. 1974/2006).

Financial allocation under this measure was based on existing packages in the list below:

- Package 1 - "Grasslands with high nature value";
- Package 2 - "Traditional Agricultural Practices";

- Package 3 - "Important grassland for birds" - pilot package;
- Package 4 - "Green Crops";
- Package 5 - "Organic farming";
- Package 6 - "Important grasslands for butterflies (*Maculinea sp.*);
- Package 7 - "Important arable land as feeding areas for red-breasted goose" (*Branta ruficollis*).

The beneficiaries of these measures 211, 212 and 214 were farmers. They were defined as natural or legal persons or groups of natural or legal persons, whatever legal status that groups or its members hold, who have practiced farming in production purposes or who have maintained agricultural land in good agricultural and environmental conditions.

### 3.4. Measure 221 "First afforestation of agricultural land"

Environmental sustainability was a basic principle under this measure. The support provided by this measure was granted with priority in areas with major problems of soil degradation (erosion, landslides, etc.) and in flood risk areas to combat these phenomena. Also, increasing of forested areas was and is necessary because it contributes to global objectives on reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to mitigate climate change and increase the use of renewable energy sources. (Article 30 of Annex II of Council Regulation No. 1974/2006)

Among the beneficiaries of the measure were included:

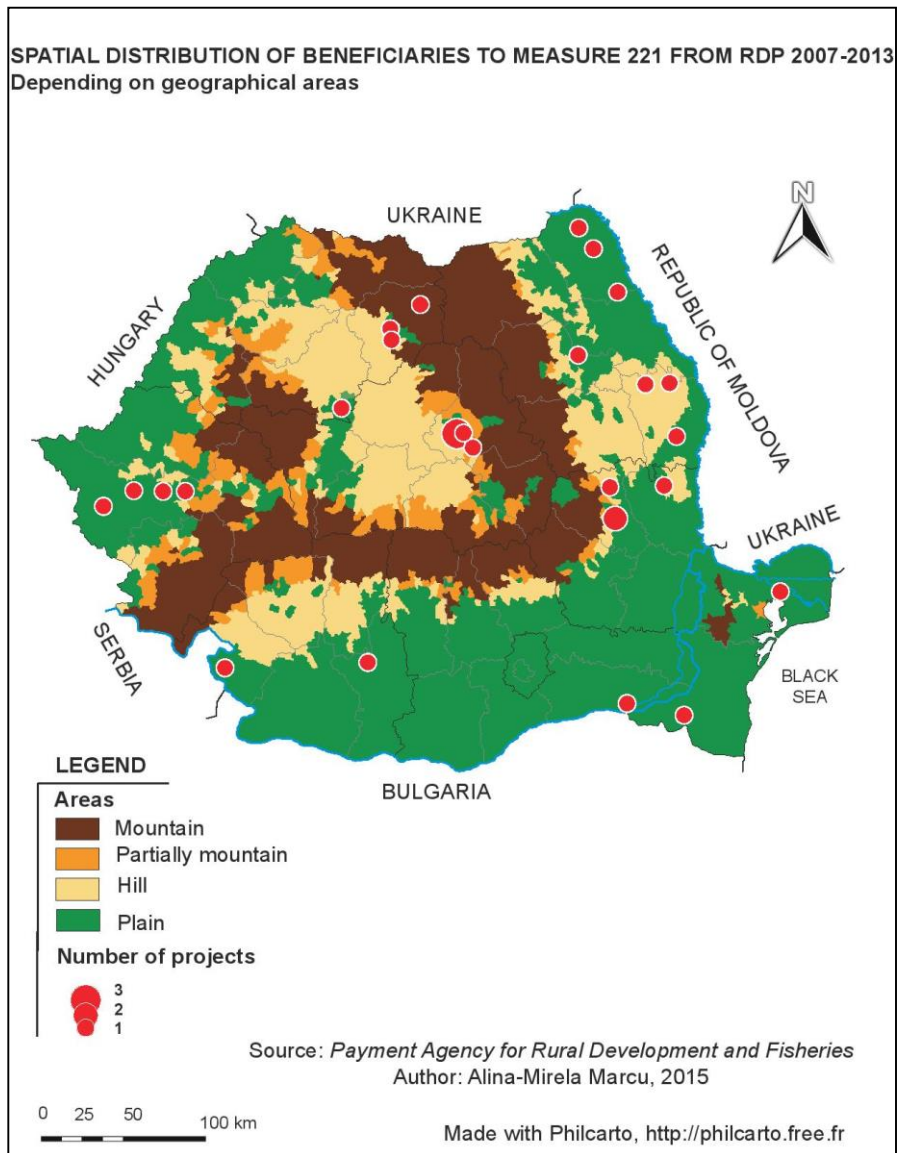
- Private owners of agricultural land for establishment the forest plantation and execution of maintenance for a period of 5 years, and a compensatory premium for loss of income through afforestation, determined ha per year and for a period of 15 years;
- Local authorities owning agricultural land, only to plantation creation.

Under this measure, the Agency of Payments for Rural Development and Fisheries has provided a database on the number of investiții conducted at national level in each county of Romania. The analysis of statistical data shows that most investment projects were carried out in Harghita county (localities: Dealu Lueta, Satu Mare, Zetea), Botosani county (localities: Dimacheni, Mileanca, Rauseni and Vlasinesti) and Timis county (localities: Balint, Dumbravioara, Recaș and Tomnatic).

From a geographical standpoint, the majority of investments were made in the lowlands of plain (Moldavian Plain and West Plain) and have supposed improvement the effects of harmful natural factors, reducing soil erosion, mitigating the effects of the global phenomenon of climate change, improve water retention, improve air quality, however to maintain ecological diversity.

## 4. Conclusions

In conclusion, we believe that the support given to deprived areas in Romania implied a territorial approach, especially in the case of Measure 212 because there was made a specific classification between specific deprived areas and other areas. Regarding to Measure 214, the financial support has contributed directly to the preservation of biodiversity by providing compensation for good practice through its various packages and and in the case of Measure 221, assured expansion of the area covered by forests by supporting the work of afforestation and plantation maintenance.



**Figure 2** Spatial distribution of beneficiaries to Measure 221 from RDP 2007-2013.

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