

FUNDAMENTAL PREMISES FOR SECTORAL SUPPORT OF TABLE GRAPE PRODUCTION

LOCALIZĂRI FUNDAMENTALE PENTRU SPRIJIN SECTORIAL ÎN PRODUCȚIA DE STRUGURI DE MASĂ

MOCANU Natalia,

Universitatea de Stat din Moldova,

ORCD: 0000-0002-8523-1080,

E-mail: mocanunatalia@gmail.com

BOTEZATU Andrei,

Universitatea Tehnică a Moldovei,

ORCD: 0009-0006-2189-6418

E-mail: andrre2011@yahoo.com

MATEOC - SÎRB Nicoleta,

Universitatea de Științele Vieții „Regele Mihai I”

din Timișoara, România

ORCD: 0000-0002-6023-9668,

E-mail: mateocnicol@yahoo.com

Abstract

The wine sector is the business card of the Republic of Moldova, which emphasizes and highlights its social and cultural values and economic potential, especially wine tourism and international commercial relations formed by promoting wine production and export. The wine sector contributes to the socio-economic character of the country and is attractive from several points of view, including business development and investment. Over the years, the wine industry has gone through various major crises, which have had negative effects on exports, reduced the size of businesses and generated significant losses for producers, affecting financial performance and leading to recessions in the sector. Among the strategic challenges of the wine sector is the need to improve the quality of the products and comply with quality standards and competitiveness on international markets. In order to achieve these objectives, an extensive process of reform and modernization of viticulture was launched. The purpose of the given article consists in the complex and deep study of the strategies, oriented towards the modernization of the wine sector, fundamental premises of sectoral support of the production of table grapes, the adaptation of research methods to the factors, processes and current phenomena, particular to the sector and the development of recommendations, which would contribute to sustainable development at the sector level.

Keywords. Sustainability, wine sector, pergola, development, development premises, rural, efficiency

Introduction

The wine sector constitutes a significant source of income for a large part of the country's population, especially for the rural population, being a factor that contributes to maintaining them in the localities of origin. It offers professional training opportunities and supports the development of businesses directly related to viticulture or related to it. At the same time, the wine sector has an

important influence on the socio-economic profile of the country, being attractive from several perspectives, including that of business development and investments.

Over time, the wine sector has gone through multiple major crises, with negative effects that have affected exports, reduced the size of businesses and generated significant losses for producers, leading to deficiencies in financial performance and sector recessions. Among the strategic challenges of this sector is the need to improve the quality of products and align them with quality standards and competitiveness on international markets. To achieve these objectives, a complex process of reform and modernization of viticulture was initiated.

The surface of table grape plantations in the country registered a gradual decrease, shrinking by 2.7 thousand ha in the last 8 years, from 19.9 thousand to 17.2 thousand ha. However, the yield per hectare has increased, which suggests the adoption of modern technologies in the cultivation of table grapes. [1] The quality and diversity of grape varieties are also on the rise. Since 2009, the Republic of Moldova has placed a special emphasis on improving the quality of table grapes. The government adopted a decision establishing technical regulations regarding quality and marketing requirements for fresh fruits and vegetables, including table grapes, thus ensuring the maintenance of high standards in this sector. [2]

The Pergola system for growing table grapes, used extensively in viticulture since the 19th century in European countries, especially Italy, has the main purpose of improving the productivity and quality of grapes. This system contributes significantly to the increase in grape production. Although there are studies that analyze the application of the Pergola system, the implementation techniques and its impact on the harvest [3, 4, 5 etc.], the research is often restricted to certain regions and varieties, thus the available information only provides an overview of this system, without covering all possible aspects

Methodology

To fulfill the established objectives, a varied set of methods specific to economic research was used, including the analytical method, the descriptive method, the synthesis method, the economic-mathematical method, as well as graphical and tabular methods. In that work, the method of analyzing scientific literature was applied, and during the study, the universal method of dialectics and its procedures were applied: deduction and induction, synthesis and analysis, analogy, correlation, scientific abstraction. At the same time, such methods as: comparative-critical analysis of literature, constructivist approach, positivist approach, mathematical methods were used. The data were taken from the database of the National Bureau of Statistics and from the reports of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry of the Republic of Moldova, as well as from the information collected directly from the producers of table grapes.

Results and discussions

The national economic framework and the specifics of the economy play a crucial role in the development and implementation of cluster support policies. The government needs to be particularly active both in the initial stages of cluster development and in the final stages by managing the political and institutional obstacles that hinder the progress of the table grape production sector and the business environment. Various public entities can support or co-support cluster formation initiatives, either independently or in collaboration with international development agencies. However, it is essential to establish an initial test period (of 3–4 months) to understand the linkages between the clusters and their impact on the employment rate, economic growth, exports and specialization across the economy.

In this context, we believe that, in order to stimulate the production and export potential of table grapes, it is essential to rely on two fundamental premises:

- 1) There is an immediate and operative need for sectoral support for the production of table grapes;
- 2) A medium and long-term approach to the development of policies to stimulate the formation of clusters in agriculture is necessary.

In our opinion, the solutions to address the challenges and constraints felt by both table grape producers and the wine sector as a whole, can be structured by categories (groups), according to different criteria:

I. Regulations and public interventions.

II. Developing the value chain and increasing competitiveness.

III. Formation of clusters.

Next, we propose a series of measures related to public regulations to support the table grape sector (table 1).

Current public interventions focus mainly on developments in the wine sector and address more general issues. The table grape sector (edible grapes) has not benefited from the same attention. It would be useful to develop partnerships between wine producers and markets and develop a campaign to promote Moldovan grapes, similar to the efforts to promote local fruits in the EU. Introducing subsidies for the cultivation of local varieties of table grapes could also stimulate domestic production and consumption.

The measures listed in table 1 are aimed at creating a single favorable framework for the development of the table grape sector and removing obstacles to its positive evolution.

Table 1 Recommendations for measures related to public regulations to support the table grape production sector

Măsuri	Intervenții publice
Subsidies for producers of table grapes	Providing direct subsidies to producers of table grapes, in particular, that comply with quality standards and sustainable agricultural practices
The outlet market	Organizing local markets or fairs to sell table grapes, where farmers can sell directly to consumers. This could increase their income and facilitate a closer connection between producers and consumers.
Promotion of exports	Implementation of campaigns to promote table grapes in foreign markets with PDO (protected designation of origin) and IGP (protected geographical indication), ensuring the alignment of table grape quality with international standards.
Investments in infrastructure	Development of transport and storage infrastructure to facilitate farmers' access to markets and reduce post-harvest losses.
Education and training programs	Adjusting study programs to international standards; organizing courses and workshops for farmers on various topics (e.g. modern table grape cultivation techniques, efficient resource management, marketing strategies for agricultural products, etc.).
Research and development support	Collaboration with research institutes to develop disease-resistant and climate-adapted varieties, thus ensuring sustainable production of table grapes.

Source: developed by the authors.

Regarding the development of the value chain and increasing competitiveness, it is important to focus on the constraints related to the elements of the value chain, the quality, price and delivery capacity of table grapes. Most of the deficiencies in establishing foreign markets stem from the inadequate competences of Moldovan exporters in international trade and the inability to meet the requirements of quantity, quality and delivery on time. In addition, existing associations do not provide adequate support in the field of international trade, and trade fairs and exhibitions should be supplemented with practical tools that facilitate the follow-up of established partnerships. The solutions proposed to improve this situation are presented in table 2.

Table 2. Recommendations for measures to develop the value chain and increase the competitiveness of the table grape production sector

Elements of the value chain and competitiveness	Are the measures
Resource and service providers	- the creation of online platforms that facilitate the meeting between farmers and suppliers, offering a space for offering and searching for products and services; - encouraging partnerships between government institutions and the private sector to develop projects that support farmers and improve links with suppliers, such as transport infrastructure for fast deliveries.
Wine producers	- offering subsidies for the modernization of plantations, equipment and infrastructure; - the creation of credit programs with subsidized interest for farmers who want to invest in more efficient cultivation techniques or in the expansion of plantation areas; - offering financial incentives to farmers who certify their products as organic or sustainable, which can open up new markets and sales opportunities; - financing research projects for the development of grape varieties resistant to diseases and adverse climatic conditions, thus helping producers to adapt to climate change; - providing affordable insurance programs to protect farmers against losses caused by extreme or damaging weather conditions.
Research institutes	- the allocation of specific government funds for innovative projects in viticulture, such as studies on varieties resistant to climate change or techniques to improve the quality of table grapes; - creating partnerships between research institutes and companies in the wine sector, facilitating collaboration and the transfer of know-how; - providing subsidies or financial incentives for institutes that focus on viticultural research; - creating a scholarship program for students and young researchers, encouraging them to specialize in viticulture and contribute to research in the field; - encouraging collaboration between research institutes in related fields, such as ecology, agricultural economics and agricultural engineering, to develop integrated solutions to challenges in viticulture; - the creation of a well-defined national strategy to set research priorities in the table grape sector, with clear objectives and performance indicators.
merchants	- the implementation of favorable fiscal policies, such as VAT reduction for table grape sales or tax exemptions for small producers;

	- creation of export programs to help table grape producers access foreign markets, including assistance in obtaining the necessary certifications for export to various countries; - simplification of administrative procedures for the marketing of table grapes, including the elimination of unnecessary bureaucracy and complex certification requirements; - the development of digital platforms that directly connect producers of table grapes with consumers, facilitating online sales; - encouraging partnerships between producers and retail networks to ensure better exposure and sale of table grapes in supermarkets and shops; - organizing marketing campaigns to encourage the consumption of local products, including table grapes, to stimulate demand on the domestic market.
Quality	- offering subsidies to farmers who adopt ecological methods of cultivation; - organizing training courses for farmers on the best practices in table grape cultivation, such as pruning, water management and pest monitoring, which contribute to higher quality production; - building processing and storage centers to maintain the quality of table grapes, such as cooling rooms and sorting facilities; such an infrastructure can reduce losses and ensure the delivery of fresh products; - implementing a labeling system to inform consumers about the origin of table grapes and the cultivation methods used. Thus, consumers will be able to make informed choices, supporting quality products.
Costs - price	- providing subsidies for fertilizers, pesticides, planting material and other resources that can reduce production costs for table grape producers; - the creation of credit programs with favorable interest for producers of table grapes, allowing them to purchase modern equipment and technologies for more efficient production; - investing in efficient irrigation systems that could help table grape producers reduce water use costs, especially in drought-affected regions, such as drip irrigation; - encouraging producers of table grapes to organize themselves in cooperatives to benefit from joint purchases and to reduce distribution costs.
Delivery terms	- investment in transport infrastructure, such as roads and storage facilities, to facilitate the rapid delivery of table grapes; - creating partnerships between producers and distributors to ensure a constant flow of deliveries; - establishing clear regulations regarding quality standards and delivery times, so that all participants have uniform expectations.

Source: developed by the authors.

Government measures to develop the value chain of table grapes are essential to increase competitiveness and ensure the sustainability of the sector. Through these measures, the Romanian government supports farmers, but also contributes to the growth of the local economy and to the preservation of the country's winemaking tradition.

Constant communication with the partners and customers of the cluster is essential for the optimal functioning of the cluster. This requires an information system adapted to the needs of the target group and which provides a series of useful information. A practical solution would be to

register the clusters on the platform of the European Cluster Observatory. It offers a European online space dedicated to cluster stakeholders (cluster organizations, political decision makers and other actors in the cluster ecosystem) and represents an essential contact point for actors from third countries who want to work with European partners. [6]

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Conclusion

In this context, it is proposed to form a national cluster registration platform to increase the degree of awareness of clusters and to facilitate efficient cooperation between the interested parties. This platform will also allow the establishment of regional partnerships. In addition, the information available on this platform will allow to evaluate the performance of peteren clusters.

Evaluating the performance of grapevine clusters is important for several reasons. For example, it improves the quality of the products. The comparative evaluation allows winemakers to discover the most effective methods that contribute to obtaining a higher quality grape. Performance evaluation also facilitates the identification of synergies between group members. A specific example is the collaboration between winemakers and universities and research institutes, which can lead to the development of drought-tolerant food grape varieties, which is essential to cope with climate change. Performance measurement also emphasizes sustainability practices. For example, the introduction of innovative irrigation technologies, such as drip irrigation, can improve the quality of table grapes while conserving water. Thus, the evaluation of the performance of the winegrowing groups not only optimizes the production, but also contributes to the sustainable development by increasing the competitiveness on the market. The evaluation of the competitiveness of agricultural production, including table grapes, is complex and requires the use of a significant number of indicators. All these indicators can be analyzed from different perspectives. By analyzing these indicators, it is possible to build an overall picture of the competitiveness of the production of table grapes. This is essential for the adaptation of the development strategy of the wine sector. The refore, it can be concluded that groups are an effective political tool for entrepreneurship and regional development. Clusters allow the strategic concentration of resources and funds in areas with high development potential and have an impact on neighboring regions. International examples of economic clusters show that the connections between newly established enterprises and research institutions and universities can generate innovation and economic prosperity, while stimulating the development of neighboring communities and contributing to the economic well-being of the region [8; 9].

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