Romania’s fishing policy competitiveness in European integration context

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Abstract — The main objective of the present paper is to analyze the evolution of the fisheries sector in Romania as well as this industry’s development stage in the European integration context. Fisheries in general and aquaculture sector in particular could be regarded as an advantage for Romania in the European competition. As a result of the EU accession in 2007, Romania is now subject to the Common Fisheries Policy; part of the EU integrated maritime policy, being in the stage of developing a strategy for maritime security, planning and management, which includes the fight against illegal activities on the Black Sea. The policy applied in fisheries is integrated into the Romanian agricultural policy, which in turn must be integrated into the CAP. The main problem of the Romanian agriculture is its unsatisfactory competitiveness both regarding the domestic and European market.

Keywords — fishery production, aquaculture resources, competitiveness.

I. INTRODUCTION

Romania’s accession to the European Union in 2007 marked a new era in its agricultural and rural development economy. In this context, Romania should quickly adapt its agricultural and rural development economy in order to integrate into the EU internal market and to adopt the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Romania’s adhesion to the EU is probably the most powerful pressure factor for rapid reform of its agriculture and rural economy, taking into account the need to integrate successfully into the European rural economy. The European model of agriculture is based on a competitive market-oriented sector, which meets at the same time the requirements of other public functions, such as protecting the environment, providing more convenient residential locations for people living in rural areas as well as integrating agriculture and the environment and forestry. CAP has moved its focus from direct subsidies granted to agriculture to the integrated development of rural economy and environment protection.

Romanian rural economy mainly dominated by agriculture has been unsatisfactorily integrated in the market economy. In the current context of the market economy, the rural and urban citizens and farmers’ welfare depend on the way of understanding marketing techniques and on their application.

II. EUROPEAN POLICY IN FISHERIES

In 2008, the EU fishing industry was the second largest in the world, providing 7.3 mil. tons of fish annually [1]. On this level fisheries contribute to gross domestic product by 1%, providing 260.000 work places in the EU. The current results are the effects of a European common fisheries policy created in 1970 by decision of the EU fishermen free access to all Member States waters.

As a result of the legislative transformations from January 1st 2003 [2], the European Union enjoyed a new fisheries policy, due to the need for reform because of the lack of efficiency in fish population conservation, protecting the marine environment, providing quality food to consumers. Therefore in search of a long-lasting fisheries policy and taking into account the negative impact of the old policy not only fishermen but also on the marine ecosystem, the reform imposed in 2003 mainly focused on the protection of marine mammals, birds, sea turtles and also on young and vulnerable species of fish.

Even since 2002 when the bases of fisheries reform were set up, attempts had been recorded of applying the precautionary principle in order to protect and conserve the living aquatic resources and to minimize the impact of fishing activities on marine ecosystems. The Commission proposed a revision of the Common Fisheries Policy in 2008, based on an analysis of the policy’s achievements and shortcomings [3] which had been applied during that period following to seek future directions of development.

The European Commission issued a Green Paper in April 2009 concerning the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy [4] which highlights as the main policy changes in 2002 the following:

− transition towards the long-term perspective on fisheries management by introducing and recovery management plans;
− increased insurance commitment and integration of environmental concerns into fisheries management;
− stakeholders involvement by setting up the Regional Advisory Council (RAC);
− a new fleet policy, that has as mandatory targets the cancellation of their capacity reduction and replacing them with national ceilings in which the Member States are free to decide the policy fleet management;

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introduction of the fishing, such as limiting the days a vessel can operate at sea, as a fundamental tool in fisheries management, particularly in the context of multi-annual recovery plans.

The Commission’s proposals concerning the fisheries policy for 2020 are the following:

- reform of the control policy in order to ensure that decisions are implemented properly and that there is a equality level between Member States;
- unceasingly activity of combating illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, in order to eliminate illegal fishing in European waters and the importation of any products originating in those fishing areas;
- new initiatives to eliminate discards and to protect vulnerable species and habitats;
- a new strategy regarding aquaculture to eliminate the obstacles that hinder this developing sector;
- long-term setting up and application of the plans to reduce fishing pressure on overexploited stocks and to restore the maximum sustainable yield;
- increased transparency for consumers and additional improvements for production traceability along the marketing chain.

III. ROMANIAN POLICY IN FISHERIES

According to the Operational Programme for Fisheries, Romania 2007-2013, Romania has an exclusive economic zone of 25,000 km² at the Black Sea and a coastline of 250 km. The hydrographic network is 843,710 ha, which represents approximately 3% of the total area of the country. The production capacity of Romanian fisheries sector includes: 400,000 ha of natural lakes (including the Danube Delta) and reservoirs, 84,500 ha of fish farms, 15,000 ha of nurseries, 66,000 km of rivers, of which 18,200 km in the mountains and 1,075 km the Danube river.

Romanian fisheries sector includes aquaculture, marine fishing and inland fishing activities as well as processing and marketing activities. However the most important activity is aquaculture in fresh water, followed by fishing in inland waters. Fishing in inland waters is more developed than the coastal Black Sea fishing.

Nevertheless Romanian fishing industry yields only a marginal contribution to Romanian GDP nowadays, more than half of domestic fish supplies come from aquaculture and the rest from fishing [5]. This is due to the fact that the Black Sea fishing lasts from March to October and the number of valuable species is small. Along the Romanian coast there are approximately 20 species that are endangered, vulnerable or threatened by extinction.

Romanian fisheries sector received € 200 million euros in support from the EU between 2007 and 2013. EU investment programme objectives are the following:

- ensuring fisheries viability;
- development of the fishery products market;
- support the sustainable development of fisheries and improve the quality of life in those areas;
- proper delivery and support of the Operational Programme under the Common Fisheries Policy.

All this money should be used for the development of marine fishing, inland fishing and aquaculture.

**Fishery production**

The sea fishing activities has been carried out along the Romanian coast, in marine areas up to 60 m isobaths, due to the vessel characteristics and their limited autonomy [6]. Trawl fishery is seasonal and is related to the presence of fish in fishing areas. In 2009 the marine fishing activity included 633 employed persons (97% men). The age demarcation was the following: 37.44% between 40 and 60 years, 58.93% between 20 and 40 years and 3.63% under 20 years. Romania’s fishing capacity on the Black Sea is of 439 ships and boats working out at 2,604.86 tons and 8,691.79 kw registered in the ships and fishing vessels register.

Black Sea fishing vessels unfortunately have outdated equipment and facilities; they do not provide security and do not meet current operating requirements, because they do not have ice and storage facilities. Due to the nature of construction and equipment, these vessels operate only under favorable weather.

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Concerning inland fishing, commercial fishing in inland waters accomplished a 3,310 tones production in 2009. Inland fishing is practiced in particular as a principal and permanent activity, performed by traditional fishermen, but in some cases it has become a way of life for people who do not have enough income from other activities [6]. More than 2,500 fishermen (of which 98% are men) fish in Romania’s inland waters using 2,256 registered boats.

Production resulted from inland fisheries was of 4,042 tones, representing only 44.67% of the catch recorded in 1995. However, this represents an increase of 24.18% compared with the previous year (2008). There is doubt that a significant amount of fish catch resulted from inland fishing had not been recorded. According to the National Strategic Plan for Fisheries 2007-2013, in Romania, the total surface of protected areas is approx. 1,866,705 ha, covering about 7.83% of the country ("Danube Delta" Biosphere Reserve – 576,216 ha, 13 National Parks – 318,116 ha, 13 Natural Parks - 772,128 ha, 981 Natural Reserves – 179,193 ha and 28 Special Protection Areas for Birds – 21,052 ha).

Employees in the fisheries sector

Fig. 3 employees in the fisheries sector

In terms of aquaculture [5], this is a food production sector that has witnessed the fastest development, supplying almost half of the worldwide-consumed fish quantities. On the European level, aquaculture accounts for nearly 20% of the fish production and provides jobs for about 65,000 people. European aquaculture is recognized for its products and production methods high standards. However, this level of excellence does not mean an increase in production. It has maintained almost a constant level since 2000, whereas on the world level it increased by one third. At a closer look, we can see that aquaculture’s various sectors have developed in almost opposite directions. While large fish production has continued to increase, the shellfish and freshwater fish have been declining steadily.

The European funding provided through the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) or through the research community programs aimed at developing an aquaculture industry which is more competitive and more environmental-friendly. In 2009, the Commission proposed a strategy for European aquaculture sustainable development.

The new strategy was developed taking into consideration the following three main objectives [5]:

- to help this particular industry to become more competitive;
- to guarantee the sector’s durable character;
- to improve its management and to maintain an environment conducive to entrepreneurs at all levels.

Romanian fish production has been carried out exclusively in traditional arrangements such as ponds and lakes, where extensive and semi-intensive growth technologies have been applied. However due to the bio-productive and technical potential this type of arrangement is rather limited, so that they can not be a solution for Romanian aquaculture aligning to the European and world standards.

In terms of strategies pursued in the fishery sector, for aquaculture the following directions should be taken into account [7]:

- aquaculture development and modernization;
- marine aquaculture development;
- implementation of new technologies to increase fish and other aquatic creatures in super-intensive systems;
- introduction of high economic value species;
- setting up family fish farms to exploit the land on which they are located and promoting fishing tourism activities;
- production increase to meet market demands;
- promote fishing industry employees training.

The projects designed for aquaculture development may benefit of 60% co-financing of European funds and the state budget. Due to this measure, the increase aquaculture production is targeted by up 80% until 2013 as well as the profit increase up to 50%.

Currently [8], more than 70,000 hectares of landscaped pools are used in Romania for semi-intensive aquaculture. These production capacities that we have are considered a great advantage in view of developing aquaculture in Romania. However they should be re-orientated and upgraded in order to increase productivity per unit area. Besides the traditional aquaculture that has been carried out in earth ponds, there is also potential for the development of intensive aquaculture, especially in mountainous areas for intensive trout farming. According to some estimates, Romania has great potential for small and medium-sized trout farms development, for trout being an increasing demand on the market. An activity of this type is very important for mountain areas, since it can contribute to population stabilization in the region by increasing their income.
Objectives:

- competitiveness development concerning the aquaculture units, inland fisheries and fishery product diversity in terms of food safety and quality;
- supporting the sustainable development of Romanian aquaculture;
- modernization of inland fisheries;
- increase of processing efficiency and marketing activities in accordance with the EU standards.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Once Romania has joined the European Union, the fishing policy has benefited of incentives both regarding the regulatory aspect taking into account the numerous provisions in the field and financially as a result of the Operational Programme for Fishery 2007-2013 [8], [9].

The production costs of the Romanian producers from aquaculture and fishing sector are much higher than in EU countries, as they pay royalties to the state since they do not own the land, besides they pay taxes and also fees for water they used. In 1988, Romania achieved a production of 78,000 tons over and currently only 12,000 tons from aquaculture and it imports about 50 to 60,000 tones of oceanic and marine fish. The fish consumption worldwide increased from 45 million tons in 1973 to more than 130 million tons in 2000 and it is estimated to increase to 170 million tons in 2030 under the circumstances of maintaining the current rate of consumption.

About 75% of the most valuable stocks of the world marine and ocean fish species are harvested taking into account the recovery possibilities or even harvested in excess. For this reason, emphasis is increasingly put on aquaculture. In recent years the increase rate of worldwide aquaculture has been of 8-9% annually and only 3-4% in the EU. Therefore EU plans to issue some regulations for this sector so that to reach an increase rate of 9% in the coming years.

What happens with the fisheries sector in Romania?

There are weaknesses and strengths, opportunities and threats.

Weaknesses could be:

- low labour productivity
- low competitiveness
- insufficient equipment and obsolete technologies
- poor organization of the producers and the sector
- insufficiently developed administrative capacity
- limited access to credit and cumbersome procedures in accessing funds
- poorly developed infrastructure
- weak management skills
- poor implementation of research results

Strengths are:

- good market for local species
- potential of the development of internal market
- existence of surfaces for aquaculture
- low cost of workforce
- existence of research centres in the fishery sector
- privatization of fish farms

Threats:

- competition on the EU market for aquaculture products
- no satisfactory absorption of funds
- environmental pollution
- weak public administration
- demand of local species do not increase or even decrease

Opportunities

- important public financial support
- new species introduced
- potential for rural tourism, ecotourism and other related activities
- life’s stand increasing

In conclusion, fisheries and aquaculture can be developed in a sustainable manner to generate food and jobs and improve the income and livelihoods of rural and urban populations, thus alleviating hunger and poverty. The aquaculture is considered a good contributor to the country’s overall economic growth through the supply of food, employment and foreign exchange and the creation of infrastructure, especially in rural areas. The aquaculture represents a component of rural development policies, providing the perspective of multisectorial development in rural areas.

Although the EU has allocated about 105 million euros for Romanian aquaculture sector between period 2007 and 2013, Romania has faced certain constraints, which prevent it from being competitive on the European market, and from exploiting the existing potential, despite funds allocated from the Community money [4].

However, the aquaculture sector has potential and can be the starting point of the relaunch of Romanian foreign trade.

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