

SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE ROMANIAN RURAL AREAS PROCESS OF ACTIVITIES FOR RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

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Abstract

SWOT analysis is a method of investigating the countryside and the activities within this framework, based on methodological elements and forms of application and follow an objective assessment of the current situation. This method is summarized key points of the countryside, by grouping the problems and benefits based on the four elements of the SWOT - strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, which allows easier identification of strategies and ways to develop and non-agricultural activities in rural areas.

SWOT is one of the most commonly used methods to analyze the performance level of the economic unit of the development of an area, region or countries. SWOT analysis is also a way to analyze a production position in relation to its competitors. Its purpose is to identify major factors affecting competitiveness, developing a strategy for future. SWOT analysis presents a very simple methodology of application and can be adapted to various studies economic, social etc.

Also, SWOT analysis can be applied to more complex problems existing in a farm with a production capacity of small or underdeveloped level, being able to identify concrete problems they face and their solutions. Effectively, the method is targeted objective assessment of the current activities and the level of rural development for the purpose of human activities, including tourism, responsible, sustainable and consistent with sustainable development.

Keywords: SWOT analysis, the Romanian rural areas, responsible tourism.

INTRODUCERE

The social and economic systems in rural Romanian, understanding the complexity of farm activities, forecasting and response of the external environment on rural development actions, and the ability to design strategies and organizational processes of sustainable rural development can be achieved through an investigation based on the SWOT analysis.

SWOT analysis is a method of investigating the countryside and activities in this framework, based on methodological elements and forms of application and tracking of an objective assessment of the current situation. This method summarizes the key points of

rural areas by grouping problems and advantages based on the four elements characteristic SWOT - strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, which allows easier identification of strategies and ways of developing agricultural and non-agricultural activities in rural areas.

SWOT method is one of the most commonly used methods to analyze the performance level of an economic unit or degree of development of an area, region and country. SWOT analysis is also a way to analyze a manufacturing position in relation to its competitors. Its purpose is to identify the major factors affecting competitiveness in order to develop a future strategy.

SWOT analysis provides a very simple methodology of application and can be adapted to the various studies economic, social etc. Also, SWOT analysis can be applied to more complex problems existing in a farm with a low production capacity or level of underdeveloped areas, being able to identify concrete problems and solutions for this. Effectively, in this way, it aims an objective assessment of the current level of activities and rural development.

COMPONENTS OF SWOT ANALYSIS

- **Strengths** of a territorial areas / units are those values and those factors which give it a competitive advantage and gives attractiveness. Represents internal forces, ie forces distinct characteristics related to location, resources, strategies etc.

- **Weaknesses** are those factors or tendencies that create obstacles to economic and social development. In case of agricultural holdings weaknesses can form social, financial, regulatory, operational etc. These can be divided into weaknesses that can be corrected in the short term, long term or are difficult to correct.

Strengths and weaknesses are internal factors considered area / unit or endogenous factors.

- **Opportunities** is refers to those external factors that facilitate the development of competitive advantage (strong point), such as favorable market circumstances, opportunities for expansion into new markets, the integration of new technologies or traditional intensive farm activities etc.

- **Threats / risks** are considered as external factors (exogenous) and internal (endogenous). For this reason they are treated as unfavorable trends, external development unit / area, and so on, leading to the decline of its competitive advantage. Changing external conditions are a menace or opportunity, depending on the local conditions of the area.

SWOT analysis is able to summarize the key points of a farm. First, grouping problems and advantages based on the four categories of questions allow for simpler ways of strategy and business development. In addition, the method can be simply adapted to the specific needs of various marketing and management processes applicable in rural areas. And if SWOT analysis will be considered and issues: farm organization, its performance, products / services and key strategic markets. SWOT analysis allows key focus on rural areas and making assumptions (assumptions) on which areas are less detailed knowledge. Following this analysis can decide whether farm or rural area that can be developed, with whose methods and under what conditions.

To ensure that policies and programs meet the needs of developing farm or area within limitations require local resources available for accessing EU funds that support rural development policy and regional development strategies imposed local . In this context, it is possible that some "opportunities" and "threats" at the level of farms or rural areas appear as "strengths" and "weaknesses" in other areas or farms.

The SWOT analysis can be identified three **priority** principles that must guide the design strategy for sustainable rural development, namely:

- *Economic life of the rural community*, which must be constantly refreshed and developed in all its areas: agriculture, animal husbandry, industry, trade and forestry.

- *Rural infrastructure*, which requires continuous improvements, investments must be made according to certain economic criteria in order to produce beneficial effects on: the safety of the inhabitants of rural areas (from calamities) report the amount of investment / financial products and economic effects, report investment value / number of beneficiaries.

- *The economic factor* with respect to: increasing the attractiveness of rural areas, socio-economic facilities and leisure on offer or you could give them, so the standard of living and social comfort of the inhabitants to be improved.

The advantage of such investigations SWOT analyzes can effectively emphasize knowledge of the actual situation, design and determining the amount of investment, and finally a diversification of activities in rural areas.

Key elements of the SWOT analysis results can be presented as a matrix, based on which can be formulated as the main lines of action and concrete steps for developing localities of a rural area, based on specific critical issues that exist in each zone areas and influence all tourism activities. It may refer to the:

- tourist destination which is mostly Bran - Moeciu area;
- lack of touristic marks required in each community;
- ratio between the price of tourism products and quality services;
- lack of policies to promote tourist territories Rucar sub-areas;
- little interest in developing small artisan crafts, traditional products to be integrated in agro-network.

SWOT ANALYSIS OF ROMANIAN RURAL AREA IN THE CONTEXT OF RESPONSIBLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

SWOT analysis of the Romanian rural area included in the National Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007-2013 highlights the following:

a. Strengths:

- the potential significant agricultural (6% of the UAA of the EU-27);
- large areas with conditions favorable to agriculture, allowing also the crop diversification;
- much of OR (28%) is already used by large commercial farms, which mostly are competitive;
- introducing dynamic organic farming in Romania;
- the wide range of renewable energy from agriculture (energy crops);

- irrigation infrastructure that covers a significant part of the agricultural area;

b. Weaknesses:

- agricultural productivity, which is below potential (food and non-food);
- an important part of or used by the subsistence and semi-subsistence bad (45% and 16% respectively);
- segment sized commercial farms (11% of UAA) working below potential;
- poor crop diversification (eg: dependence of grain);
- low level of compliance with EU norms;
- endowment low and poor quality especially in small farms;
- low energy use from renewable sources;
- inadequate agricultural infrastructure, including irrigation structures inefficient;

c. Opportunities:

- the availability of a large market, in full development, both domestically and on the European level that could be exploited (including organic products);
- bringing underperforming agricultural sector to the real potential by facilitating efforts to modernize and restructure it;
- the priority of the European Union, the use of renewable energy;
- improve energy efficiency and hydraulic irrigation infrastructure through rehabilitation;

d. Threats:

- inability to solve the missing markets for commercial holdings (land market, credit, advisory services, marketing);
- weak capacity to absorb EU funds;
- foreign competition (including organic products);
- climate change;
- natural disasters;
- disease outbreaks;
- increasing energy prices and low hydraulic efficiency of infrastructure to support increased irrigation costs.

KEY ASPECTS OF NATIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES ACCORDING TO SWOT ANALYSIS¹

Rural development strategy chosen by Romania, according to the elements of SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) is centered on three issues - key, namely:

(1) Facilitate the transformation and modernization of the dual structure of agriculture and forestry, and related processing industries to make them more competitive and contribute to economic growth and income convergence in rural areas (where possible), while ensuring the living and environmental protection in these areas.

¹ Processed materials based on NRDP (National Rural Development Programme) 2007-2013.

(2) Maintain and improve environmental quality in rural areas of Romania, through the promotion of sustainable management both on agricultural land and in the forest.

(3) Managing and facilitating the transition of labor from agriculture to other sectors to ensure adequate living standards of socially and economically.

This requires a comprehensive approach to ensure the complementarity between NRDP (Rural Development Programme) and other sectoral operational programs (POS), such as the: Regional Development, Human Development, Environment etc. and national development programs (eg: pensions and social assistance programs, national program of land registration etc.).

To address the first key issue, NRDP should focus primarily on how to address and mitigate structural disadvantages in agriculture and forestry, to modernize, consolidate and restructure, which achieves a high level of competitiveness and sustainability of environmental perspective. This will provide a powerful mechanism for preserving rural life, range of viable jobs both on the farm and beyond and contributing to the objective of income convergence while preserving the social fabric. Then, it is envisaged to support initiatives of farmers associations, to avoid excessive capital intensity and high fixed costs, while allowing capture economies of scale, along with the efficient use of scarce capital resources and funds provided by the European Union.

To address the second key issue, NRDP will focus on improving the balance between economic development of rural areas and the sustainable use of natural resources by maintaining and increasing the attractiveness of rural areas - as a basis to diversify holdings and identify activities economic alternative. In order to achieve this, is to support further agriculture in disadvantaged areas, thus addressing the problem of land abandonment, also farmers will be assisted to enter / continue to apply agricultural practices that do not affect the environment. Particular attention will be paid to the support provided to farmers and foresters that they can handle the disadvantages and obligations arising from the implementation of Nature 2000.

To address the third key issue, it would be necessary to consider the needs of the rural areas. According NRDP has two categories of needs: retirement last population and active population, but employed part-time employment or unemployed. Regarding the first category, NRDP, supplemented by national programs will play an important role in facilitating the transfer of land between generations, based on market dynamics, the elderly farmers who currently hold 31% of the total area, the farmers more young. For the second category, the RDP will play an important role in facilitating the diversification of non-farm rural economy and agricultural sector development in part-time employment.

In Romania, currently holding individual prevails as a form of organizing agricultural production in Romanian countryside. With a share of over 90 % of current agricultural structures, it is easy to understand the importance that is given to this form of organization of agricultural production. They use over 50 % of the agricultural area of the country, with an average of less than 1 ha / farm. This average is a concern for policy in these tasks, especially since most of these farms (70 %) produced entirely for consumption. We infer, therefore, that they must be restructured, meaning to find an industry that have the vocation and can work in terms of economic efficiency .

In conclusion we can say that, you must create alternative sustainable rural development so that the local community economy must become multipurpose, to be able to strike a balance in the restructuring process of the individual farm. Thus, the creation of new activities, diversification of food products and increase their recovery, development of services downstream and upstream agricultural activities and the development of non-agricultural activities in order to capitalize on local resources.

CONCLUSIONS

(1) **The key issues facing the Romanian rural areas** are:

- rural income per capita 27% lower than in urban areas;
- poor rural infrastructure development (roads, water supply, sewerage, communications etc.);
- the migration of rural youth;
- poor development of complementary income generating activities;
- low possibility of promoting and selling craft items;
- poor use of local resources;
- the low education level of the rural population;
- poor promotion of areas of great interest and great tourism potential;

(2) In this context, **require urgent needs and objectives**:

- the transitional semi-subsistence farms to help their restructuring ;
- upgrading technology of cultivation and animal husbandry;
- the development of agricultural infrastructure ;
- increased productivity in agriculture and forestry;
- improving yield and quality and compliance with Community rules ;
- diversification of production to broaden channels less developed products ;
- modernization of processing enterprises;
- encourage regrouping (association) communication between farmers and farmers through help provided for the establishment and organization of producer groups;
 - acquiring knowledge for compliance with sanitary - veterinary, animal welfare and the environment, to improve the quality of agricultural products;
 - encourage and promote innovation and access to research and development;
 - maintain employment in rural areas and preventing the aging population in mountainous areas by motivating young people;
 - maintain traditional activities on the land;
 - achieving an optimal loading of animals per unit area;
 - increase in forest areas and improving forest management;
 - maintenance of traditional cultural heritage in mountain areas;
 - the need to develop sustainable agricultural systems to counterbalance the effects of intensive exploitation of land;
 - preservation of high natural value of agricultural land by maintaining traditional activities in rural areas ;
 - implementation of measures by farmers to reduce soil degradation phenomena;
 - diversification of economic activities in rural areas for non-agricultural and promoting new technologies;

- Improving rural infrastructure and services;
 - support the establishment and development of micro enterprises to promote entrepreneurship and increase local value added;
 - promoting rural tourism areas;
 - training of human resources to create local strategies that contribute to the horizontal development of rural;
 - improving basic public services and investments that make rural areas more attractive in order to reverse the downward trend and social economic and depopulation of the countryside;
 - renaissance social and cultural traditions lost under communism;
 - preserve natural and cultural heritage;
- (3) **SWOT analysis** indirectly leads to the selection of the following needs:
- The need to provide people leaving farming training related to new industry and job opportunities (1.1 million people left farming during the period 2002-2005).
 - The need to provide help to people who remain in agriculture in order to increase their income on increasing efficiency , ensuring effective transfer of knowledge and technology.
 - The need to develop the competitiveness of the agro-food sector by encouraging investment in new technologies and new products.
 - The need for development of agro-food sector to increase value added.
 - The need to promote environmentally friendly initiatives and biodiversity conservation.
 - The need to promote increased awareness of farmers about environmental issues and providing training / skill to achieve desired results in relation to the environment.
 - The need to encourage and facilitate agricultural diversification towards non-agricultural activities to meet the needs of the wider rural economy, such as tourism and agro-tourism development.
 - The need to improve the provision of services in rural areas, especially in less accessible areas.
 - Need to improve conditions in the villages and rural areas.
 - The need to create jobs in rural areas.
 - The need to encourage the development of local partnerships.

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