

**PRIORITIES IN THE ORGANIZATION OF CONSULTING
ACTIVITIES MEANT FOR MEETING
THE FARMERS' REQUESTS**

**PRIORIT I ORGANIZATORICE PENTRU ADAPTAREA
CONSULTAN EI DE SPECIALITATE LA CERIN ELE
PRODUC TORILOR AGRICOLI**

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***Abstract:** In agriculture-advanced Western European countries, Governments and political entities have always appreciated and still consider progress in agriculture as the main way to prosperity, including continuous training of those who perform agricultural activities. In these countries, the agricultural production is assisted by strong consulting organizations which, by specific means previously tested by farmers, get involved in all agriculture-related domains, management included. In Romania, a performing agriculture and a competitive food industry to meet the quality and safety requirements of the European Union can be obtained through a complete restructuring of consulting activities, both in terms of organization and topics. The diversification of consulting activities and a tight link to agricultural exploitations and the problems the farmers are facing with turn the farm - the main processing unit of agriculture into the pillar of lasting development in the rural area.*

***Key words:** agricultural consultancy, organization framework, relationships, head of agriculture exploitation, diagnostic-analysis, organization type, representative structures.*

INTRODUCTION

Starting with the second half of the 18th century, agriculture has been considered – in many of the European countries that developed at high rate – as the main way of prosperity and this is the reason why their Governments and political factors searched for proper solutions and supported various practical modalities of stimulating and developing

agriculture, by means of training those who performed agricultural activities.

Training matters have become more and more important, especially during the post-war period, when Western European countries that had already reached a high development level and considered agriculture as the economic branch capable to solve the many war traces, focused a great deal on the organization of agricultural training and consulting activities meant for stimulating production while meeting market requirements.

Thus, Western European countries with an advanced agriculture offered their expertise by assisting agricultural production through strong consulting structures which, by specific means previously tested by farmers, get involved in all agriculture-related domains, including management which, in a free market economy governed by tough competition laws, must be active, efficient and performing. Agricultural consulting activities in Western European countries still prove to be the main vector for developing agriculture in accordance with the new common policy regulations, in terms of multi-functioning, rural development, general welfare; by achieving its priority objectives, agricultural consulting brings science and technologies to the farmers (see Fig.1).

Fig.1

Frame-objectives of agricultural consulting within European Union

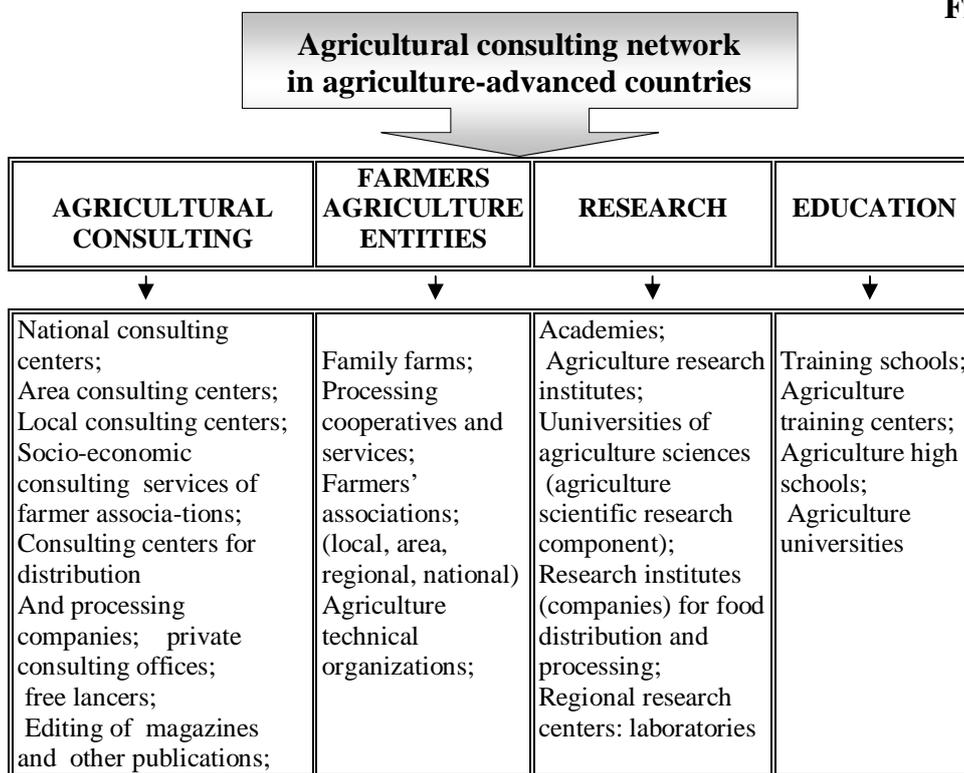
Objectives, topics, working domains	
≈	Representation of associate members' interests;
≈	Dissemination of information;
≈	Education and training activities;
≈	Management, financing-accounting, technical, legal consulting;
≈	Assessments and evaluation;
≈	Marketing consulting;
≈	Labor, social and environment legislation;
≈	Consulting activities for company setting up or termination;
≈	Implementation of special farm programs;
≈	Organization of the farm guild (sector).

Agricultural consulting activities in agriculture-developed Western European countries are organized function of national peculiarities: traditions, agricultural exploitation organization system, farmers' asso-

ciative organization methods, farmers' education background and training, organization and location in the territory of scientific research – in connection with the coordinates and priorities of the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP).

In the EU countries, the education and training process of the farmers in the domain of agricultural consulting has evolved and adapted itself to the market requirements, while passing from budget subventions to self-financing and orienting its activity towards economic and financial consolidation of farms and farmers. Consulting organizations are operating under the direct coordination of the farmers who play an active role in their managing and financing, by means of subscription fees, payable services.

Fig.2



The agricultural consulting activity in agriculture-advanced countries is deeply connected to reality and to the requirements of modernization and development of this sector of vital importance for mankind.

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Agricultural consulting is meant for solving the major problems of farmers and processors, from accounting and budget-related matters to the multitude of farm aspects (planning, optimization, increase of efficiency, animal nutrition, reproduction etc.) up to the farm management and the drawing up of special programs related to the production, environment protection, optimization of flux purchasing of raw materials, distribution and networking etc. The way agricultural consulting gets involved into the farm present and future problems differs from one country to another, function of the consultants' potential, the concrete technical and organization conditions and the requirements of the domestic market.

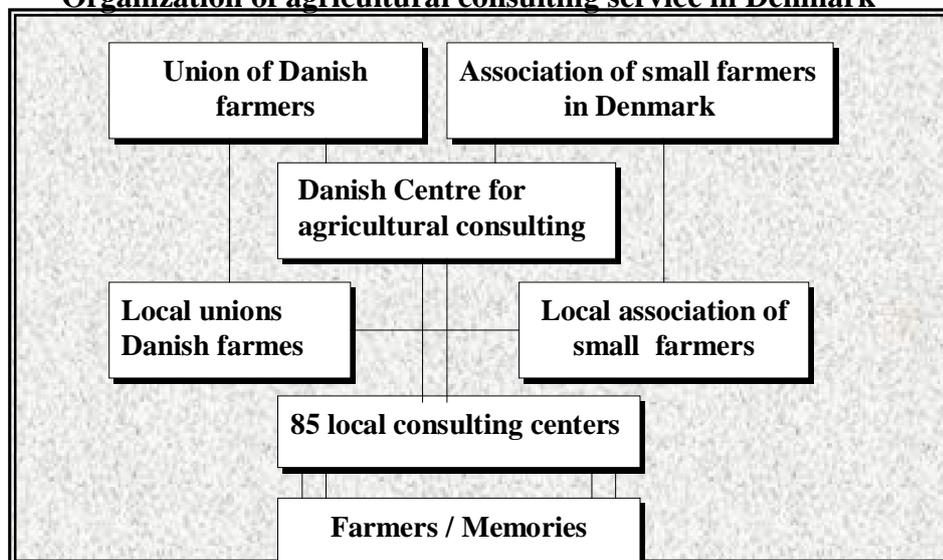
The organization system of agricultural consulting, as it is in agriculture-advanced countries (see Fig.3), makes the connection to the farms, the farmers' associations and entities, including the agriculture organizations at national level. It operates as a "scientific agent" that takes over the results of scientific research and transfers them to the agricultural environment, while using the new science achievements, technologies and management techniques within the farm, with positive effects on the agriculture production and efficiency. The territorial organization model of agricultural consulting in the EU countries and in all agriculture-advanced countries of the world confers an important role to the local / area consulting centers / offices in the dissemination of new technologies and in ensuring a direct link with the farms' managers who perform consulting activities for the benefit of the agriculture production.

Agricultural consulting in agriculture-advanced countries and not only, must assist agricultural policies in relation to production, food quality and safety, environment protection, exploitation of products, efficiency and farmers' welfare. The countries that have recently joined the EU or the candidate countries must establish special priorities in terms of quality, efficiency competitiveness and lasting rural development.

To achieve a "radiography" on the agricultural consulting organization system in certain agriculture-developed countries, able to offer a convincing image of the importance of consulting activities for the agriculture process and the farm management and, at the same time, to highlight the organization elements which ensures efficiency and continuity, means to analyze certain organization models in countries where they proved their efficiency as a fundamental element for the development and success of community agriculture.

Fig. 3

Organization of agricultural consulting service in Denmark



Source: Organization, consulting, education. Danish model, 2002

Fig. 4

Alignment of EU agriculture to production and competitiveness standards

- Production and competitiveness standards- agriculture in UE -**
- ✓ Increase of decision competences for farms, cooperative associations and representation entities;
 - ✓ Strengthening rationalization of agricultural production;
 - ✓ Use of modern agriculture, communication and data processing techniques;
 - ✓ Increase of agricultural products quality;
 - ✓ Large scale and homogenous quality products;
 - ✓ Establishment and consolidation of producer groups;
 - ✓ Clear, accurate rules for production, quality and sales;
 - ✓ Promotion of efficient marketing;
 - ✓ Efficient system of local and regional cooperation;
 - ✓ Continuous and production-oriented training;
 - ✓ Orientation towards EU standards;
 - ✓ Promoting young, private, independent farmers;
 - ✓ Lasting rural development.

Source: Adjustment, Romanian-German Symposium (Banat University for Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Timisoara), 2002.

The consulting organization is drawing up – as unique activity – the accounts for its clients, the farmers, fact of utmost importance because it summarizes and presents the essential data the other types of services depend on. Thus, the service related to the farm administration is directly integrated to the accounting department. This type of consulting entity which is specific for the Danish agriculture is directly organized, supported and managed by the farmers, while benefiting from a small financial contribution from the State. To this end, state subventions are continuously diminished.

The specialists provide the farmers with objective and practical consulting activities, in accordance with the requirements of each farm. Moreover, they encourage the changes of experience and good practice among farmers as well as other types of practical and demonstrative activities aimed at stimulating progress in the agricultural production and the farm management. Consultants must teach their beneficiaries, the farmers, how to deal with their problems by themselves, as farm managers are supposed to take all decisions and they are responsible for the consequences of the decisions taken.

In Romania, the agricultural consulting has been an almost unknown notion until 1990. During the period between the two World Wars, the chambers for agriculture had specialists who guided farmers in working their lands or growing their animals. Under the communist regime, the agricultural consulting was carried out under various “masked” forms, through professional advice given by specialists during training meetings or through indications or orders given by the state leaders; there were no institutionalized consulting entities or professionals.

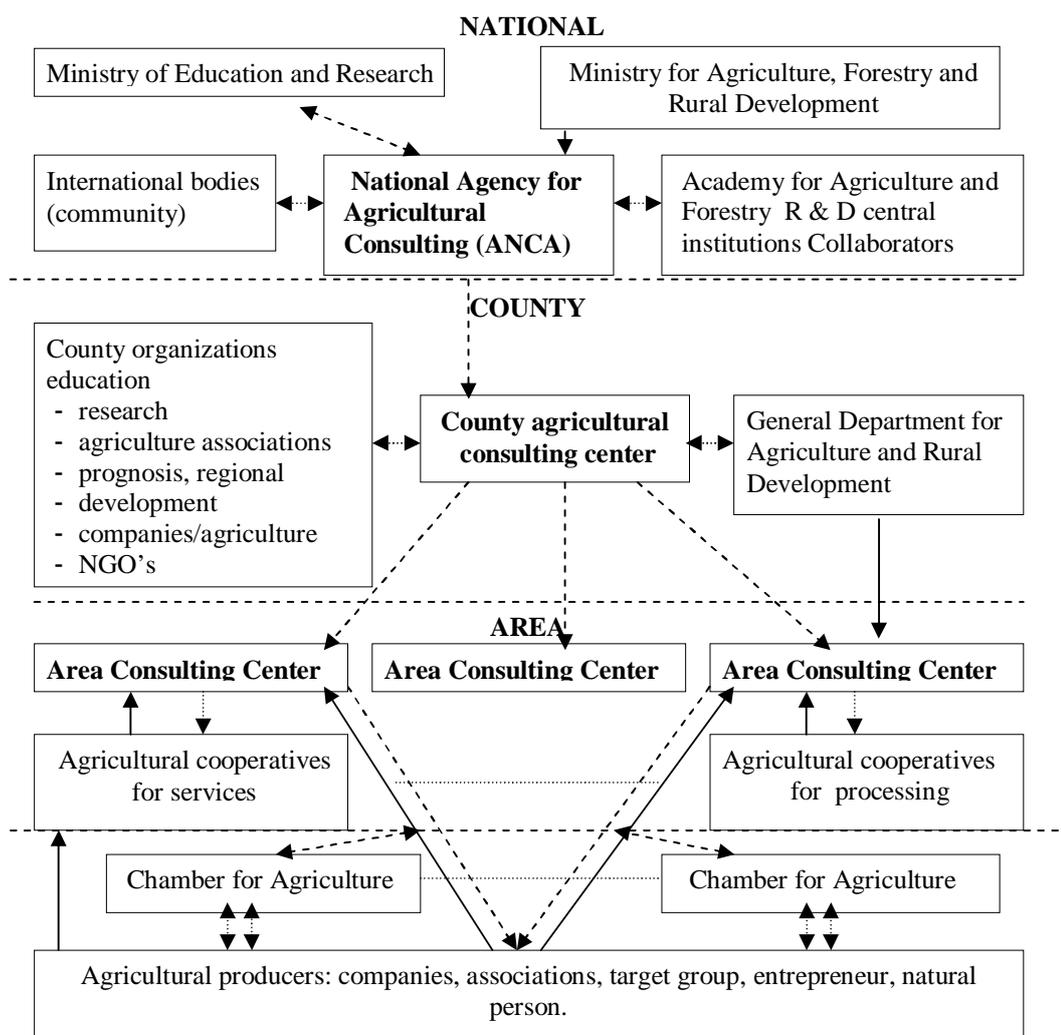
The training centers for the specialists working in state agricultural institutions (at Crevedia) or production agricultural cooperatives (in B neasa) and for mechanics (in tef ne ti, Ilfov County) and accountants (in Drobogostea, Arge County), established after 1944, are worth mentioning. There were also some territorial entities called “casa agronomului” (house of agricultural engineers) that carried out consulting and training activities at small scale and politically oriented.

The first agricultural consulting entities were established after 1990 by the National Agency for Agricultural Consulting. Unfortunately, they have been functioning under a hybrid structure and various tutelary

organizations. Under these circumstances, the agricultural consulting in Romania is still far from the European standards.

Romania's new status as member country of the European Union and consequently of the European agro-food structures has led to re-organizing and re-structuring agricultural consulting, in order to become competitive and exert its role as "promoter and engine" of Romanian agriculture.

Organization of agricultural consulting in Romania



Representation and protection of farmers' interests

- ✓ **Self-governing (independence)** of county agricultural consulting centers, in the sense they are not coordinated by the territorial Departments for Agriculture and Rural Development. They are in a constructive cooperation relationship, in all domains and matters concerning agricultural consulting, agriculture, farmers and rural development;
- ✓ **Logistics** necessary to the functioning of area consulting centers is ensured by the assets of former communist agricultural entities (CAP, IAS, ILF, AEI etc.);
- ✓ **State-financing** of agricultural consulting activities is gradually completed with the self-financing system of "member subscription" and "service fee". When agricultural exploitations consolidate their position and area agricultural consulting centers are able to ensure their resources, the state will gradually diminish its financing. That moment, agricultural entities will take over the consulting activities and services and, implicitly, the financing obligations;
- ✓ **Obligation** for the managers and specialists of county agricultural consulting centers to be members of the managing bodies of agricultural research institutions or universities in the territory.

The regulation or law on the functioning of agricultural consulting entities in Romania, in the sense of the above-mentioned, shall provide the concrete ways of cooperation with the local mayoralities, the representatives of chambers for agriculture and other local actors who deal with agriculture, so that the access to information and training should be concrete, direct, diversified and, most important, more effective.

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