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Agrifood competitive performances within Romania's foreign trade pattern: evaluation and alerts

Mirela-Adriana Rusali^{a*}

^a*Institute of Agricultural Economics, Romanian Academy, Calea 13 Septembrie no.13, code 050711, Bucharest, Romania*

Abstract

Research output consists in analyses of the major changes induced in the model and structure of agricultural and food trade of Romania during decisive historical stages, with emphasis on recent impacts as a member of the European Union, based on : Romania is net exporter of basic agricultural products, while importer of processed products for over two decades; main alerts concerning agrifood competitiveness are given by the dependence on imports, comparative trade disadvantages in relation to the EU, particularly concerning the quality of exports and trade policies inefficiency revealed by cheaper exports than imports, with negative impact both on Romanian consumers and producers' incomes.

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1. Introduction

The study is part of the researches aiming at grounding methodologically and analytically the agricultural trade policies by identifying drivers and drawback factors of agrifood external competitiveness. The methods included empirical analysis based on relevant specific trade indices and of the potentials expressed by competitive products.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +4-021-318-2411; fax: +4-021-318-2411.
E-mail address: m.rusali@yahoo.com

The research purpose consists in analyses and evaluations of the potentials, needs and prospects of increasing the competitiveness of Romanian agrifood products that experienced inflections and periods of decline under pressure of political metamorphoses of the transition and of foreign competition during pre- and post-accession to EU.

2. Results and discussions

2.1. Romania's agri-food trade performance from historical stages retrospective

Agriculture represented the main branch of the Romanian economy by the early twentieth century and the beginning of the Second World War. Most of Romania's exports consisted of agricultural products: over 80% raw materials - grains (76%), logs (4%), 15%, intermediate products, and the remaining 4.6% of finished goods, i.e. canned fruit (Axenciuc, 2004). Between years 1938-1939, after overriding the 1929-1933 pre-war crisis, agricultural production had a positive development, which favored the creation of a disposable export (Fig. 1).

Evaluations based on statistics from 1938 show that international trade in agricultural products accounted for 41.7% of Romania's total exports and 6.6 % of imports (Fig. 2). But historical developments led Romania to economic orbit of Germany, marking the destination of Romanian exports substantially in that direction. After the war, Soviet influence has fundamentally changed the direction of trade flows, as in the Stalinist period of the 60s and 70s socialist liberalization, when the main destinations for exports were then USSR and the socialist countries.

Geographical distribution of foreign trade have had the following structure: between the years 1950-1960, most of the trade for over 83% was achieved with the socialist countries and in the period 1970-1989, the share of trade with the socialist countries fell, ranging between 56%-62%, while increasing the share of other countries (OECD, 2000). Whereas the previous command economy period agriculture provided a significant part of export revenues, the share declined progressively in the years 80s, to 5 % , until the dramatically collapse of exports in 1990, reaching only 1.5% of Romania's total exports.

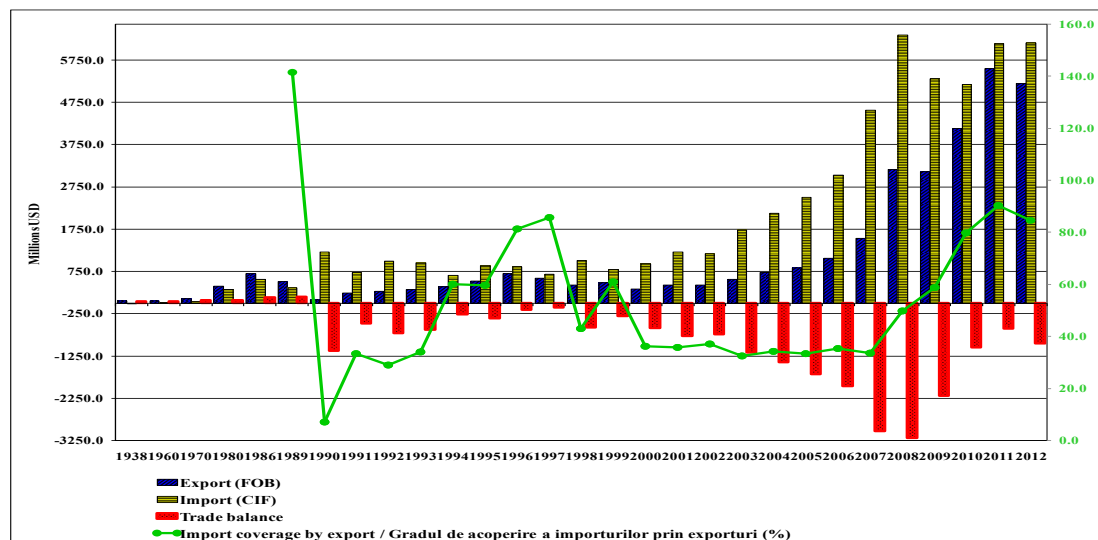


Fig.1. Level indicators and efficiency of the food trade of Romania during 1938-2012

Until 1989, Romania was a net exporter of agricultural products, although the share of foreign trade registered a downward trend until 1990, which marked the fracture of agrifood trade balance. The agricultural trade share occupied in the Romanian foreign trade had fluctuations determined by variations of exports and imports of the country, by changes in domestic supply and trade and macroeconomic policies influence. In 1989, agrifood sector net trade income worth Euro 139 million, however, until now evolved into deficit.

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