

**STRENGTHENING FOOD SECURITY BY DEVELOPING  
ASSOCIATION AND COOPERATION IN AGRICULTURE AND  
OPTIMIZING THE VALUE CHAIN IN THE REPUBLIC OF  
MOLDOVA**

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**Abstract.** *The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between food security and the current level of association and cooperation in agriculture, as well as how the functionality of the value chain influences the competitiveness and sustainability of the agri-food sector in the Republic of Moldova. The main findings show that the low degree of association and cooperation limits the access of agricultural producers to external markets, modern technologies and sources of financing, which affects the competitiveness and quality of products. At the same time, the lack of consolidated value chains reduces the ability to comply with international food safety standards. In contrast, where there are functional cooperatives and partnerships, there is a better integration of production with quality requirements, an increase in farmers' incomes and a direct contribution to food security.*

**Keywords:** food security, sustainability, agri-food sector.

**Cercetarea a fost realizată în cadrul proiectului științific:**  
**25.80012.5107.20SE Impactul reglementărilor privind siguranța alimentelor  
asupra competitivității producătorilor locali din Republica Moldova.**

**Introduction.** Modern agriculture in the Republic of Moldova faces major challenges due to limited access to markets and insufficient financing. Farmer associations and cooperation are essential solutions for increasing the

competitiveness and efficiency of the sector. The majority of Moldovan farmers are small producers, which makes it difficult for them to access external markets and European funds. International studies show that the formation of cooperatives improves bargaining power, increases investments in modern technologies and ensures sustainable development.

**Literature review.** The change in vision of the development of the agricultural sector in the Republic of Moldova, also reflected the fact that farmers, agriculturists, have begun to be asserted as important actors in local/rural development. Special attention to this subject is given by international agencies such as PNUD, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture (FAO), German Cooperation GIZ-Moldova, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), International Cooperation Alliance (COOP). Among the most recent publications developed by FAO and OECD consultants during their mission to the Republic of Moldova is the Guidance for Responsible Agricultural Supply Chains. It provides a common, globally applicable framework to support agricultural businesses and investors in their contribution to sustainable development by identifying and reducing negative impacts. At the end of 2022, FAO launched the report on agricultural cooperatives, responsible sourcing and risk-based due diligence, to help cooperatives understand what they can do to address sustainability challenges in global agribusiness trade. The Republic of Moldova conducts research and provides periodic studies in the field of agricultural cooperation, implements and supports development programs in the process of food security.

### **Research methodology.**

In the course of the investigation, a set of theoretical and empirical methods were applied and combined, which made it possible to research the state's interest in consolidating the relations of producers and farmers involved in the field of cooperation in agriculture and rural development in the context of the economic development of the Republic of Moldova in a multidimensional framework, always through the direct and indirect involvement of cooperatives of producers in sustainable economic development of the Republic of Moldova by attracting foreign investments and various projects aimed at local and rural development.

**Main results.** The efficient management of the agro-food value chain is crucial for the ultimate valorization of agricultural production. In Moldova, a large part of the country's art is devoted to rhyming matter, without redress, the value of the name is significantly reduced. A well-structured value chain would increase the profits of farmers, generate income in the rural environment and minimize crop losses. Successful models from countries such as Italy, the Netherlands and Ireland demonstrate that integrating production with processing and distribution brings substantial economic and social benefits. From a scientific point of view, this research contributes to the specialized literature on partnership models and efficient value chains, analyzing international case studies and adapting solutions to the Moldovan context. At the grassroots level, it establishes support mechanisms for farmers, cooperatives and authorities, identifying barriers and opportunities for the development of an efficient agri-food value chain.

**Discussion and conclusions.** The agri-food value chain represents the totality of interrelated activities that contribute to the production, processing, distribution and marketing of agri-food products, from the farm to the final consumer. The concept is essential for understanding how value is added at each stage of the agri-food chain and how the economic and social efficiency of the agricultural sector can be maximized. It is very important to note that although they are often confused, the value chain and the supply chain are distinct entities, each with specific roles in agri-food management and rural development strategies, namely, the value chain focuses on value creation and efficient integration of actors (from field workers to skilled processing workers), while the supply chain to focus more on the logistics of delivering products from producer to consumer (optimizing the agri-food distribution chain allows for shortening delivery times and reducing losses between producer and consumer). In the agri-food sector, the value chain also integrates social objectives, such as farmer-driven, local development or sustainability. Example: An agricultural cooperative that produces, processes, packages, labels and sells under a brand creates value at many levels. Therefore, the development of the agro-food sector cannot be realized without a clear understanding of the difference between the supply chain and the value chain. Although the rhyme reflects a logistical and operational need, the second is a strategic approach, aimed at the integration of these stories, the creation of added value and the stimulation of development sustainable villages. A competitive and resilient agriculture needs to function harmoniously in all its components. As with all this, in the context of current challenges and European objectives regarding sustainability, building and consolidating value chains becomes a priority – not only for economic efficiency, but also for social well-being and the revitalization of rural communities. For an agri-food value chain to function efficiently, it is absolutely necessary to identify all critical points and bottlenecks that can affect the timely operation of processes. These vulnerable elements are present at all stages – from primary and secondary agricultural production, to processing, distribution or marketing – and generate major imbalances throughout the system. By recognizing and analyzing these bottlenecks, concrete solutions can be developed to create economic reform, reduce losses and support sustainable development in the agri-food sector. Thus, a strategic and careful approach to these blockages becomes an essential tool for strengthening the resilience of the entire chain. These critical points often occur along the entire chain, from primary production to market access, negatively influencing competitiveness, food security and sustainable rural development. The key to identifying problems and critical points in the agri-food value chain is to optimize the entire production and distribution flow, from farm to consumer. By understanding and addressing existing blockages, favorable conditions are created for streamlining economic activities, reducing losses, and ensuring a constant and safe flow of agri-food products. At the same time, a careful analysis of these deficiencies allows to increase the comprehensibility of the lost products, while improving the health, the planting of the crops and the consolidation of the presence of the internal networks and eternal. Main critical points in agri-food value chains: 1. Primary production. 2. Storage and disposal. 3. Processing. 4. Distribution. 5. Market access. 6. Regulation and

bureaucracy. 7. Finance. Blockages in agri-food value chains: Fragmentation of producers; Lack of coordination in the value chain; Incoherent fiscal and public policies; Health safety and traceability issues; Cumulative effects on the development of the sector. All these blockages affect economic efficiency, limit market access and reduce investment attractiveness. To build functional and sustainable value chains, a strategic and coordinated intervention of the state, business environment and farmers' organizations is necessary. The main conclusion is that the optimization of value chains are determining factors for increasing the resilience of the agricultural sector and strengthening food security in the Republic of Moldova.

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