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ANALYSIS BASED ON QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE SITUATION OF FRUIT PRODUCERS IN THE SOUTH AND SOUTH-EAST AREA OF THE COUNTRY

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Abstract: *The paper is part of the research undertaken under ADER Project 16.1.2 - Models of development of short chains of valorisation on the pathway primary production-services-warehousing-processing-marketing, Stage 3. To diagnose the situation of fruit producers, a number of 153 questionnaires were applied in 5 counties from representative areas for fruit production, namely Dâmbovița, Argeș, Prahova, Vâlcea, Constanța. After centralizing the results, it emerged that 79.1% of the fruit growers surveyed started their activity after 1990, and 55% of them are not registered in any legal form. Regarding the size of holdings owned, three-quarters of farmers hold between 1-5 ha. As a structure, the apple orchards rank first (29%), followed by plums (26%), the rest are pear, peaches, nuts and others. 65% of the orchards are cultivated exclusively with native varieties, the planting material being mostly self-produced and only 1% have exclusively imported varieties. Mechanized agricultural works are carried out in a proportion of 76% by own means, and in terms of land fertilization, 63% of respondents apply both chemical and organic fertilizers and only 26% apply only natural fertilizers. Organic phytosanitary treatments are only applied by 12% of producers and 80% do not irrigate orchards.*

Keywords: *fruits, questionnaire, apple, orchards*

JEL Classification: *D13, D23, L11*

INTRODUCTION

In the fruit production domain, our country owns 6.2% of the total production area in the European Union, with an area of 137.514 hectares of fruit orchards. The total number of fruit trees in the year 2016 was 75.4 million, of which 34.7 million plums and 24.7 million apples. According to statistical data, the total fruit production of the previous year was 1242 thousand tons, of which plum production rank first (513 thousand tons), followed by apple production (467 thousand tons). With these results, Romania is among the top 5 fruit producers in the EU.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The paper is a part of the research carried out under ADER Project 16.1.2 – "Models of development of short chains of valorisation on the pathway primary production-services-warehousing-processing-marketing", Stage 3 - Design and experimentation of models of development of the short chains of fruits valorization, carried out by the Research Institute for Agriculture Economy and Rural Development, in partnership with the Academy of Economic Studies and the University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine. For a diagnosis of the the fruit producers situation, to identify the problems they face, 153 questionnaires were applied in 5 counties in representative areas for fruit production, namely Dâmbovița, Argeș, Prahova, Vâlcea, Constanța. In addition to these questionnaires, there have been meetings with producers in different production areas, during which, besides dissemination activities within the project, discussions took place in which the producers made known their achievements and problems they facing with.

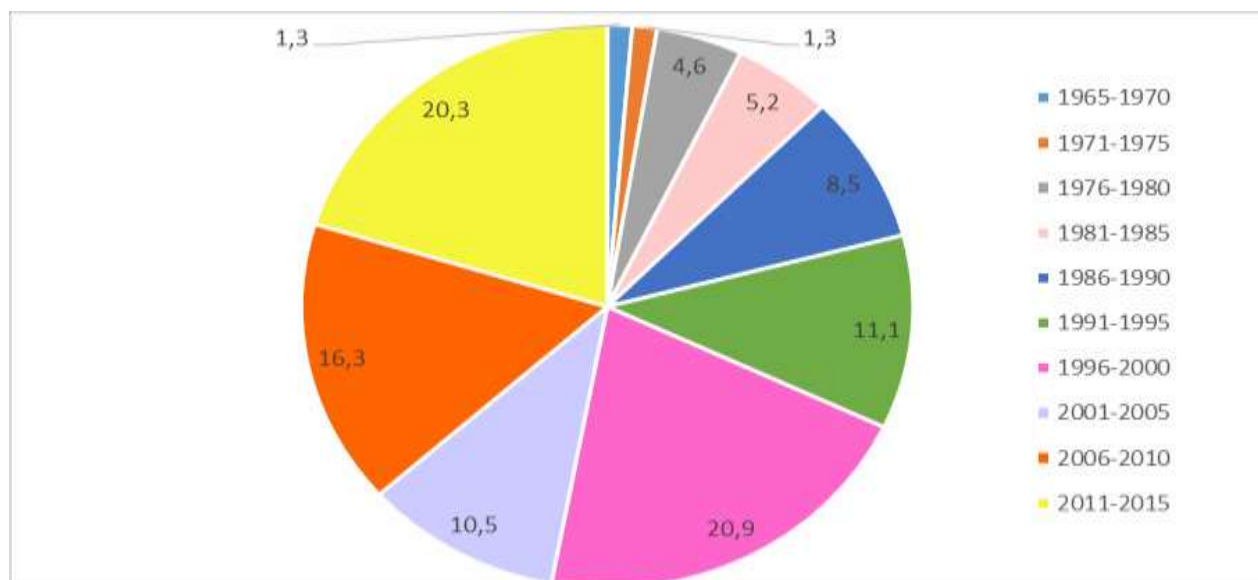
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RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

From the fruit growers responses to the questions, it turned out that only 20.9% of those interviewed started their activity before the revolution, the remaining 79.1% - after 1990 (see Chart 1).

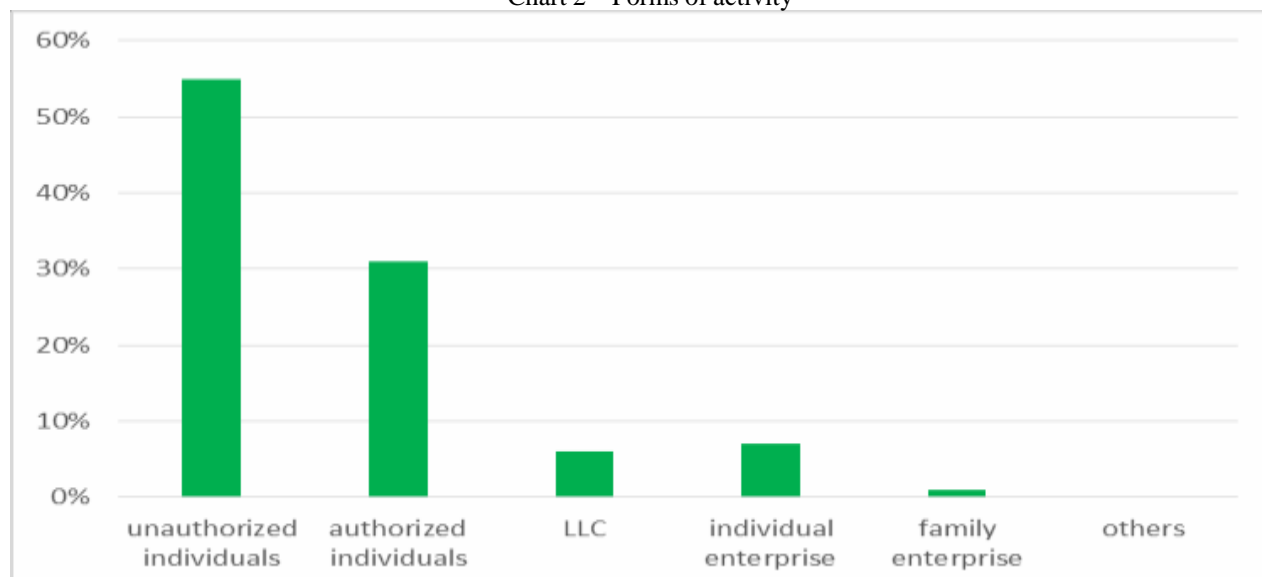
Chart 1 – Establishment periods of the fruit production holdings



Source: Own calculations following questionnaires data

To mention that unauthorized individuals represent the majority of the respondents to this questionnaire (55%), authorized persons represent 31% and 14.4% are into other forms of activity (Chart 2).

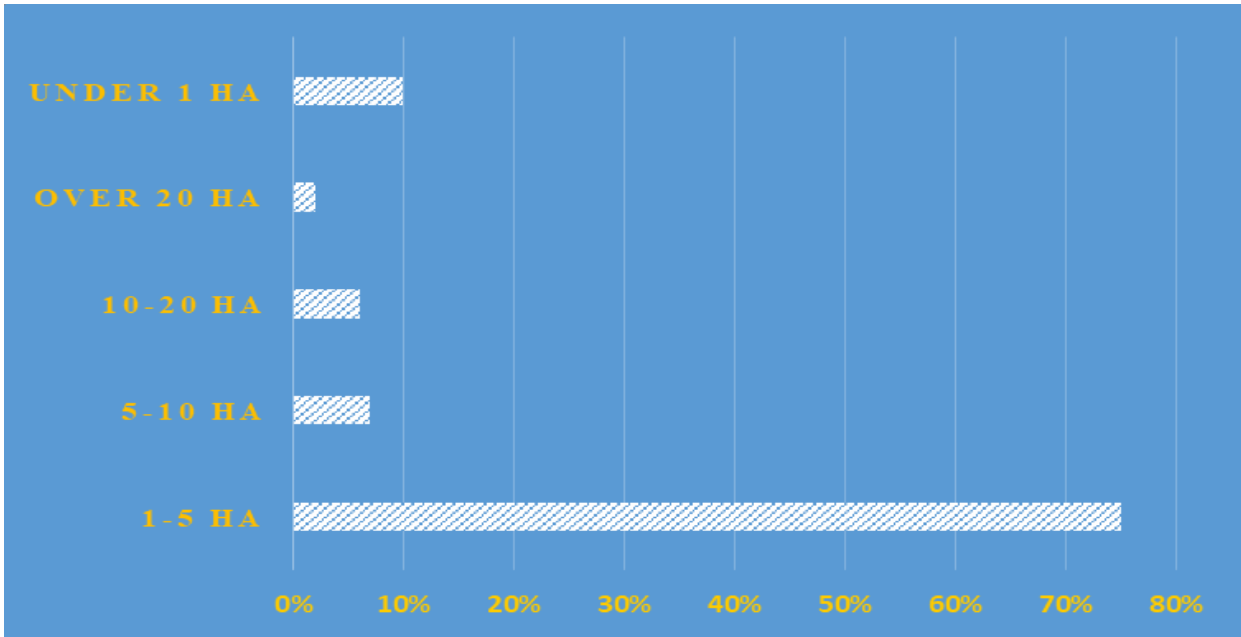
Chart 2 – Forms of activity



Source: Own calculations following questionnaires data

Regarding the area of the holding, three quarters (75%) of these hold between 1-5 hectares, 7% have between 5-10 hectares, 6% between 10-20 hectares, 2% exploit over 20 hectares, and those who have areas under one hectare represent 10% of respondents (Chart 3).

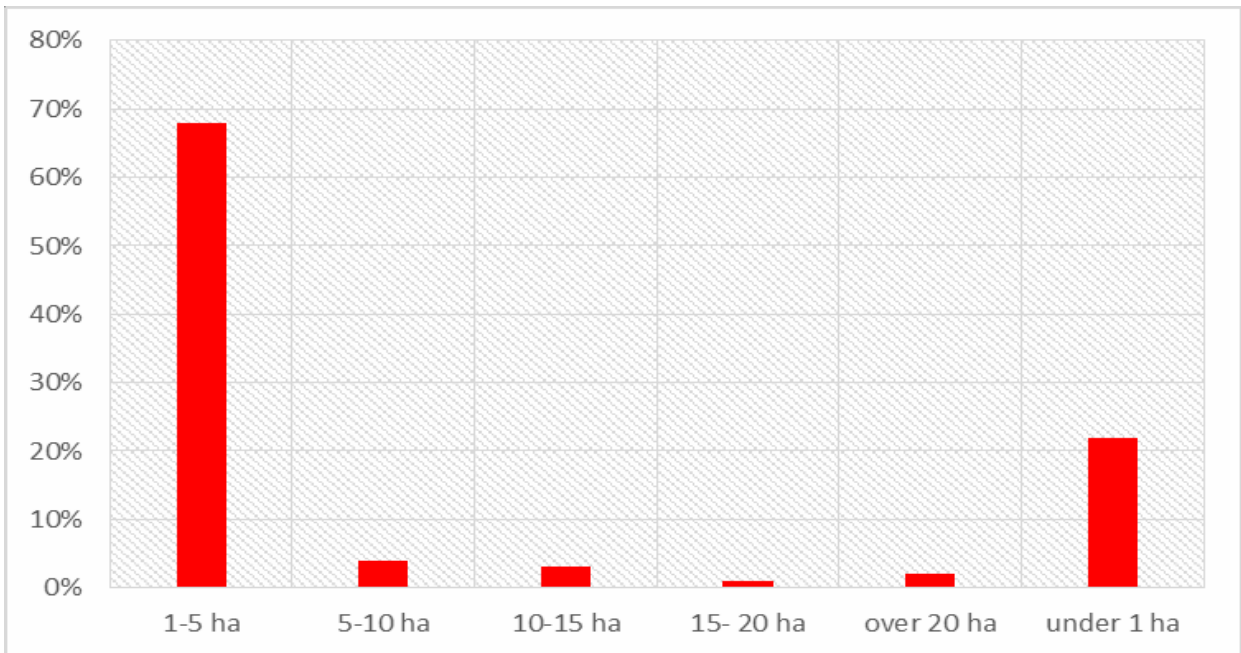
Chart – Surface of holding



Source: Own calculations following questionnaires data

Most of the farmers surveyed (68%) have orchards on areas between 1-5 ha and 22% of them have orchards on an area of less than 1 ha. Those who have orchards over 20 hectares account for only 2% (see Chart 4).

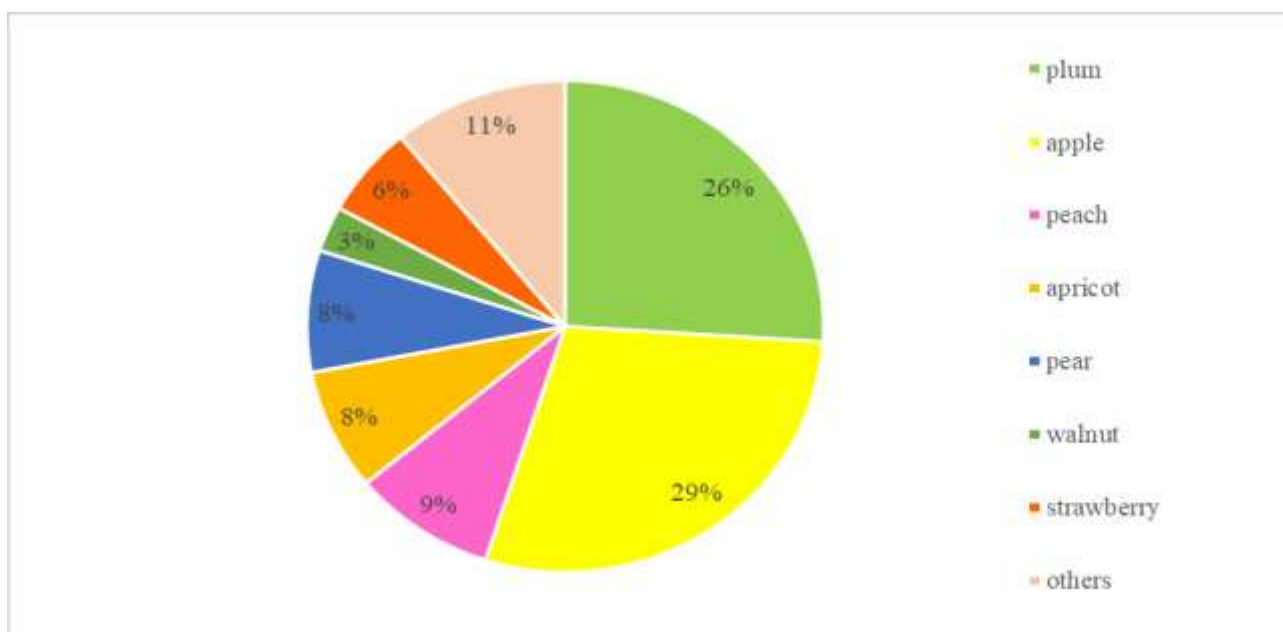
Chart 4 – Surface of orchards



Source: Own calculations following questionnaires data

Regarding the orchards structure, more than half of them are dedicated to apple and plum trees, accounting for 29% and 26%, respectively. The rest of the areas are covered by orchards with peaches, apricots, pears, walnuts, and strawberry crops occupy 6% (see Chart 5).

Chart 5 – Structure of orchards



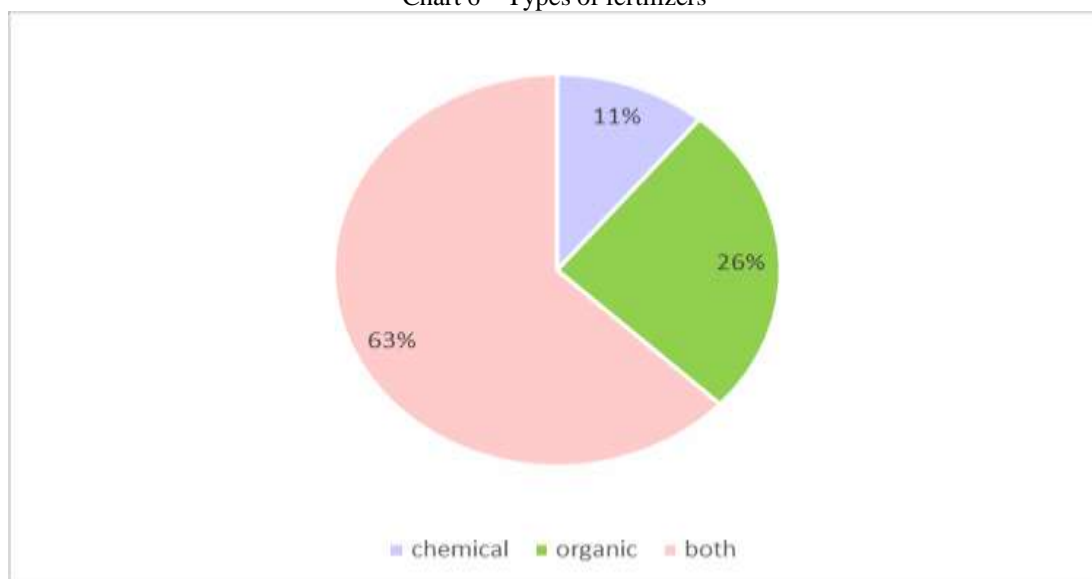
Source: Own calculations following questionnaires data

The varieties used in crop are 65% native and only 1% exploit exclusively imported varieties. 84% of the fruit growers use planting material purchased from third parties and only 16% produce it on their own farm.

Regarding the mechanization of orchard maintenance works, more than three quarters of the producers (76%) use their own means and very rarely (3%) employ companies specialized in the provision of services in agriculture. Almost a quarter of respondents work with private individuals. The structure of human resources used reflects the fact that, in the case of farms with reduced number of employees, family members are those who work on the farm, occasionally also working with seasonal workers. Also, the share of qualified workers is lower than that of unskilled workers.

The organic fertilizers used represent only 26%, 11% of the producers use only chemical fertilizers, the rest using both categories (Chart 6).

Chart 6 – Types of fertilizers



The responses received from the respondents indicated that overwhelming majority use conventional treatments, insecticides and pesticides (almost 90%). Irrigations are applied quite rarely, especially in strawberry crops, using drip installations (14%) or sprinkling (6%).

The fruit production selling of the 153 respondents is made exclusively on the domestic market, and only one of them sells exclusively in the supermarket, the rest of it being marketed at the farm gate or in the communal markets. Due to the inexistence of the optimal storage of fresh produce, not all the quantity is sold and losses of more than 35% occur. Farmers accuse the lack of support legislation for small and medium-sized producers, excessive bureaucracy in accessing all kinds of support.

CONCLUSIONS

ADER Project 16.1.2. - „Models of development of short chains of valorisation on the pathway primary production-services-warehousing-processing-marketing” meets the need of integrated valorization of fruit production on the short chain, offering an economically viable solution by developing a model of marketing cooperative that includes the stages of production, storage, processing and selling of processed products.

Fragmentation of farms involves small and inconsistent productions, which are reflected in the absence of contracts and low incomes. That is why, through the project, there are activities to popularize the need of association fruit producers in organized and integrated forms of production and management throughout the flow, from producer to consumer.

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