

Abstract

of habilitation thesis

“Researches regarding the economic valuation of protected areas -entities of rural area”

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The habilitation thesis entitled „Research regarding the economic valuation of protected areas – entities of rural area” briefly presents the main scientific and professional results achieved after obtaining the Ph.D. degree in Agronomy (2008) until present, as well as the planning for my professional career.

The first part of the thesis presents the scientific, professional and academic achievements and it is structured in two chapters. Chapter 1 is dedicated to scientific achievements, being discussed the following main research topics: the economic valuation of national and natural parks in Romania using the non-market valuation methods; and the evaluation of the economic impact of agriculture in Natura 2000 sites. The main part of this chapter is devoted to the first research topic, presented in Chapter 1.1, in which are discussed the most relevant results obtained by the research project „Impact of using the economic values in the management plans of national and natural parks in Romania” (PD 271/2010). Starting from acknowledging the importance of estimating the economic values of protected areas, a conceptual framework was built for the use of the economic values in the management plans of the Romanian national and natural parks (Chapter 1.1.1). The conceptual framework was developed based on the main stages of strategic management and the methodology for evaluating public goods. The economic values were estimated as welfare measures based on the stated and revealed preferences of tourists, by using three non-market valuation methods. The choice experiments method was chosen to estimate the preferences of potential tourists with regard to the characteristics and facilities of the parks, the data being collected by means of hypothetical scenario. The analysis of the choice sets using the multinomial logit model allowed the estimation of the marginal willingness to pay for the attributes offered in the scenario, showing the impact on the indirect utility of the tourists (Chapter 1.1.2). The contingent valuation method leads to the estimation of the willingness to pay for trips when the vehicle payment is the increase in travel costs, based on data collected in a hypothetical framework by addressing three single-bounded dichotomous choice questions, and the random effects probit model for estimation as it allows for the analysis of multiple responses per respondent (Chapter 1.1.3). The travel cost method was used to

estimate the consumer surplus per trip starting from the current behavior of tourists with regard to the actual trip, this indicator being obtained by estimating the Poisson model (Chapter 1.1.4.). While the choice experiments method and the contingent valuation method are based on data that allow the prediction of tourists' behavior, the travel cost method is based on data that describe the actual trip revealing the benefits obtained while traveling.

Chapter 1.2 presents the studies carried out in the area of evaluating the economic impact of agriculture in Natura 2000 sites, protected areas that generate major interest due to the maintenance of certain species and habitats in a favorable condition by adopting traditional low intensive agricultural practices. Thus, it focuses on the results obtained within the ongoing research project „High Nature Value Farming: Learning, Innovation and Knowledge”, financed by the European Union under the program Horizon 2020. It refers to identifying innovations that may improve the socio-economic viability and the ecological efficiency of the High Nature Value farming systems and of the surrounding rural communities as well. In the same time, it was conducted a survey in one of the ten pilot areas established at the European level, the Eastern Hills of Cluj, to identify the profile of stakeholders who are interested in such innovations and which could help the process of adopting and promoting the High Nature Value farming.

Chapter 2 describes the key moments in the development of my academic career by concisely presenting the scientific and professional evolution. Briefly, the research and publishing achievements since obtaining the Ph.D. degree until the present time are as follows: 2 scientific books; 1 chapter in scientific book; 1 book as co-editor; 2 teaching books, from which 1 as main author; 3 teaching materials for practical work; 8 articles in journals indexed ISI with impact factor, 8 articles in journals indexed ISI Proceedings; 62 articles in journals indexed in IDB; 69 citations excepting self-citations; 2 national research contracts gained through competition as director; 10 research projects as member; member in editorial board and reviewer of two journals indexed IDB.

The plan of my scientific, professional and academic career is revealed in Part II of the habilitation thesis, the main objectives being mainly motivated by the wish to build a strong and successful research group in the field, through training and guidance of young people with academic and research abilities and interests in their master and doctoral studies.