ANALYSIS OF FINANCING OF AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS AT THE LEVEL OF BIHOR COUNTY, ROMANIA

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Abstract. *The article presents the analysis of agricultural and rural financing trends related to Bihor County. The empirical analysis was carried out through statistical simulations. The results of the analysis demonstrate that the most important impact on agro-rural development, through external funds, is the measure for young farmers, which has the largest number of contracted and completed projects. Financing young farmers is of critical importance for agricultural development, having a significant positive impact on rural development and communities. The high project completion rate reflects the success of the measure in achieving agricultural and rural development objectives. The low number of terminated projects suggests that this financing is well managed and sustainable, contributing to the sustainable development of agriculture in the region.*

Keywords: Agricultural and rural financing; young farmers; European funds; Bihor County; project implementation.

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1. Introduction

Agricultural project financing supports farm modernisation and the rural economy by enabling investment in production capacity, technology and diversified activities. European funds can reduce beneficiaries' financial constraints and support the development of farms and rural communities [3, 7].

In Romania, funding provided through the National Rural Development Programme (NRDP) has created opportunities for agricultural investment and rural business development [6]. Assessing this funding requires examining both contracted resources

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and implementation progress. The numbers of contracted, completed, ongoing and terminated projects, together with their corresponding financial values, provide indicators of how available support is translated into implemented investments.

Support for setting up young farmers is a relevant component of agricultural financing [2]. Developing viable businesses is important for the long-term competitiveness and sustainability of agriculture. Generational renewal also depends on access to land, professional training and opportunities to develop viable farms. May et al. [10] show that financial incentives interact with social and motivational factors in young farmers' willingness to remain in farming.

The relevance of this funding direction to Bihor County is also reflected in the literature. Cuc et al. [5] analysed applications under Submeasure 6.1 in mountain areas, including Bihor County, using project selection reports. Their study highlights interest in setting up young farmers and provides a starting point for examining the territorial distribution of support. Local research helps relate funding instruments to the characteristics of beneficiaries and the areas where projects are implemented. Research on financing trends among young farmers in Romania also provides a broader context for this county-level analysis [4].

Assessing agricultural financing at county level makes it possible to identify frequently accessed support measures and differences between implementation stages. Comparing project numbers with funding values can reveal distinct support profiles: a measure with numerous projects does not necessarily account for the largest financial value. Interpretation must therefore combine quantitative project indicators with the financial scale of investments. This territorial perspective is also relevant to regional development planning [1].

This article analyses agricultural and rural project financing in Bihor County by support measure and implementation stage. It examines project numbers, financial values and payments to identify the main characteristics of funding uptake and implementation, with attention to support relevant to young farmers.

Materials and methods

The research was designed as a quantitative, descriptive and comparative case study of Bihor County. The documentary material consisted of administrative data from the Agency for Financing Rural Investments (AFIR), reproduced in the doctoral thesis, concerning projects funded through the NRDP. The analysis examined the distribution of projects and financial resources across support measures and implementation stages. National statistical sources provide wider agricultural context [8, 9].

The indicators included the numbers of contracted, ongoing, completed and terminated projects, the corresponding financial values, and payments made. Financial values were

expressed in euros. The unit of analysis was the funding measure, for which the available county-level aggregated data were examined.

Data processing compared measures by project numbers and funding values. Descriptive statistical analysis covered absolute frequencies and percentage shares, with results summarised in tables. Each measure's share was calculated against the total for the corresponding indicator to establish its contribution to the structure of agricultural and rural financing in the county.

Comparison of implementation stages aimed to describe project progress and identify differences between support measures. Project numbers were analysed together with financial values, since a high project frequency does not necessarily imply the largest share of funding. Contracted projects were treated as the reference total and were not added to the implementation categories, thereby avoiding double counting.

Particular attention was paid to Measure 6 and support for setting up young farmers. Interpretation respected the level of data aggregation, distinguishing Measure 6 results from those specifically attributable to Submeasure 6.1 whenever the available information allowed this distinction [2, 5].

The results were interpreted as indicators of funding structure and administrative implementation progress. The aggregated nature of the data limits assessment of effects on individual farms and does not allow a causal economic impact to be attributed solely to the financing examined. The findings describe a portfolio snapshot; its reporting date was not specified in the source section.

Results and discussions

The analysis of agricultural and rural project financing in Bihor County reveals differences between support measures in both project numbers and contracted values. At the reference date of the administrative snapshot, 5,232 contracted projects were recorded, with a total value of EUR 322.98 million. Of these, 3,605 were completed, 1,175 were ongoing and 452 were terminated. Table 1 presents the distribution of projects and financial values by implementation stage.

Table 1. Distribution of projects and contracted values by implementation stage in Bihor County

Project status	*Number of projects*	*Share of projects (%)*	*Value (EUR million)*	*Share of value (%)*
Completed	3,605	68.90	126.74	39.24
Ongoing	1,175	22.46	184.23	57.04
Terminated	452	8.64	12.01	3.72
Total contracted	5,232	100.00	322.98	100.00

Completed projects represented 68.90% of the total number of contracted projects, indicating that most had reached the end of implementation. However, their value accounted for only 39.24% of total contracted value. Ongoing projects represented 22.46% of contracts but concentrated 57.04% of their value. This difference indicates that projects still being implemented were, on average, financially larger than completed projects. Assessing progress therefore requires simultaneous examination of project numbers and financial values.

The distribution by measure shows the predominance of Measure 6 in terms of project numbers. It comprised 4,288 contracted projects, representing 81.96% of the county total. By comparison, Measure 4 included 207 projects and Measure 7 included 121. The ranking differed in financial terms: Measure 4 held first place, with EUR 151.82 million, or 47.01% of total contracted value (Table 2).

Table 2. Project numbers and contracted values for the main funding measures

Measure	Contracted projects	Share of projects (%)	Contracted value (EUR million)	Share of value (%)
M4	207	3.96	151.82	47.01
M6	4,288	81.96	84.27	26.09
M7	121	2.31	68.45	21.19
Other measures	616	11.77	18.43	5.71
Total	5,232	100.00	322.98	100.00

Together, these three measures concentrated 94.29% of total contracted value. Measure 6 was characterised by numerous projects with relatively low individual values, averaging approximately EUR 19,653 per contracted project. The corresponding average was approximately EUR 733,447 for Measure 4 and EUR 565,733 for Measure 7. These differences illustrate distinct funding profiles and show that numerical predominance does not imply financial predominance. The averages describe the portfolios examined and do not represent individual support ceilings.

Within Measure 6, 3,034 of the 4,288 contracted projects were completed, 840 were ongoing and 414 were terminated. Completed projects represented 70.76% of the measure's contracts, slightly above the county-level share of 68.90%. Measure 6 also accounted for 84.16% of all completed projects, confirming its major contribution to the number of projects implemented.

Termination figures nevertheless require careful interpretation. The 414 terminated projects under Measure 6 represented 9.65% of its contracts and 91.59% of all terminated projects in the county. Although completed projects predominated, the proportion of terminations within the measure exceeded the county-level figure of

8.64%. This finding supports further examination of termination causes and beneficiaries' support needs during implementation. The available aggregated data do not identify the specific reasons for contract termination.

In financial terms, terminated projects were worth EUR 12.01 million, representing 3.72% of total contracted value. This share was below their numerical share of 8.64%, indicating a lower average value for terminated contracts than for the portfolio as a whole. The indicator expresses the value of terminated contracts and should not be interpreted as an actual financial loss of the same amount.

Payments totalled EUR 212.99 million, equivalent to 65.95% of total contracted value. This ratio describes the financial progress of the portfolio examined and is not the absorption rate of the entire programme. Payments are not confined to completed projects and may include amounts disbursed for projects still being implemented.

The findings support the relevance of Measure 6 to the structure of agricultural and rural financing in Bihor County. However, the data are aggregated by measure and do not allow all projects to be attributed to support for setting up young farmers. A separate assessment of this beneficiary category requires Submeasure 6.1 data. The distinction is important when relating the present findings to research specifically addressing young farmers [4, 5, 10]. Accordingly, the results describe project concentration and implementation progress, while effects on productivity, income and rural community development require additional beneficiary-level indicators.

Overall, Measure 6 predominated numerically and Measure 4 financially. The findings highlight the need to monitor high-value ongoing projects and examine terminations to improve beneficiary assistance.

Conclusions

The analysis of agricultural and rural project financing in Bihor County identified a portfolio of 5,232 contracted projects worth EUR 322.98 million. Completed projects represented 68.90% of the total number, ongoing projects 22.46% and terminated projects 8.64%. These findings indicate substantial implementation progress while also demonstrating the need to continue monitoring unfinished projects.

The distribution of financing reveals differences between the numerical and financial importance of support measures. Measure 6 concentrated 81.96% of contracted projects and 26.09% of total contracted value, whereas Measure 4 accounted for 47.01% of contracted value. Assessment should therefore consider project numbers, investment scale and implementation stage together.

Within Measure 6, the share of completed projects was 70.76%, above the county-level proportion. Nevertheless, terminated projects represented 9.65% of the measure's contracts, supporting further investigation of beneficiaries' difficulties and

improvements in implementation assistance. Results aggregated under Measure 6 cannot be attributed entirely to the submeasure supporting young farmers.

Payments amounted to EUR 212.99 million, equivalent to 65.95% of contracted value. Ongoing projects concentrated 57.04% of total contract value, highlighting the importance of completing financially larger investments.

Separate monitoring of submeasures, investigation of termination causes and assessment of farm performance after completion are recommended. The findings describe funding structure and implementation progress; effects on productivity, income and rural development require beneficiary-level data.

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