

EDITORIAL

AGRICULTURE...is back but needs to be driven further forward! _____

_____ ***Prof. Asoc. Dr. Elvin Meka*** _____

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Albania is one of the few countries in Europe, and also in the Western Balkan region, whose economy has a strong dependence on agriculture. In fact, it is the most important sector in Albania, in terms of value added and employment. According to data from the Institute of Statistics, INSTAT, its contribution to Gross Domestic Product reached 19.3 percent last year, from 18.9 percent in 2019. The agriculture production has showed continuous increase, during the last five years (some 14.4%), but not enough to be a real game changer in the national economy. Despite the promising development of recent years, it still remains the least advanced and developed sector of the economy, in terms of applied technology, modern management and organizational schemes and financial support.

Given that it constitutes as the main daily activity for almost half of the country's population residing in rural areas, and the fact that, it occupies the largest share of the number of businesses in the economy (with 30% of the total), they speak for the lower living standard it provides for population in rural areas and still-low productivity, but in the same time, for the substantial and unexploited potential, compared to other sectors of the national economy. In this regard, proper policy mechanisms and a revolutionary approach, in terms of its development model, form a fragmented to an integrated value chain model could have a particularly strong impact on reducing poverty and increasing the supply of fresh products in the domestic market, while substituting imports. On the other hand, by increasing employment and income in agriculture we could stimulate demand for non-agricultural goods and services, thus providing a real positive drive for non-agricultural rural income, as well. Last years' figures could serve as a promising starting base for a positive thrust towards a more developed

¹ Dean of Faculty of Economics, Business and Development.

and competitive agricultural sector. However, such thrust could happen following concerted and coordinated efforts and endeavors from all stakeholders of the triple helix: Government, Business and Academia.

Frankly speaking, the agriculture in Albania faces numerous challenges, from property titles, informality, tax incentives, applied modern methods, to financing models, as it is not a usual business, like any other business, but contrary to other businesses, it strongly provides and ensure a sustainable economic development. Such a feature makes agriculture quite unique and highly strategic, in the frame of national economy, because as the first U.S. President, Mr. George Washington, once quoted: **“I know of no pursuit in which more real and important services can be rendered to any country than by improving its agriculture, its breed of useful animals, and other branches of a husbandman’s cares!”**