

REVIEW

by prof. Virginia Ivanova Zhelyazkova, DSc, Ph.D., VUZF University

of dissertation work for the award of a scientific degree "Doctor of Science"
in Higher Education Area 3. Social, economic, and legal sciences
Professional field 3.8. Economics

Author: Dr. Robert Jurczak

Topic: "MECHANISM FOR INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT IN THE AGRICULTURAL
AND FOOD SECTOR IN THE CONTEXT OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION"

1. General description of the presented materials

By order No. 136 of March 27, 2024 of the Rector of VUZF University, Prof. Boris Velchev, DSc, Ph.D., I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury to ensure a procedure for the defense of a dissertation on the topic: "Mechanism for Innovative Development in the Agricultural and Food Sector in the Context of Regional Economic Integration" for the acquisition of a scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" in the area of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.8. Economics.

The author of the dissertation is Dr. Robert Jurczak - a candidate for the "Finance and Insurance" department at VUZF.

The materials handed over by Dr. Jurczak include the following documents directly related to the present procedure:

- curriculum vitae
- a copy of the diploma for the acquired Ph.D. degree
- dissertation for the award of the scientific degree "Doctor of Science", developed in English
- abstract of the dissertation in Bulgarian and English languages
- a list of the candidate's scientific publications
- certificate of fulfillment of the national minimum requirements for awarding the Doctor of Science degree
- summaries of the candidate's scientific works
- reference to the citations of the candidate's scientific works
- a declaration by the candidate about the originality of his dissertation for the award of the Doctor of Science degree.

In his report on the implementation of the national minimum requirements for the award of the Doctor of Science degree according to the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB) and the Regulations for its implementation, the candidate has submitted a total of 33 articles, 4 chapters in collective monographs and a monograph.

Notes on the documents layout:

- some of the titles of the candidate's works, including his Ph.D., are presented in Polish language, which made it necessary to search for a translation into Bulgarian and this complicated the review work;
- some of the articles were incorrectly referred to the section "published in journals, referenced and indexed in world-renowned databases with scientific information", which distorts the

reporting of the indicators under the LDASRB and necessitated additional work on their recalculation. The candidate has enough points to meet the minimum requirements, but they were not presented in the individual categories correctly;

- the candidate submits for participation in the current procedure a book of the main part of his dissertation work for the award of the "Doctor of Science" degree. It has not been taken into account in the assessment of his scientific output for objective formal reasons - the requirement in LDASRB, to be considered for the needs of the procedure, is that the work has already been defended and only then published as a book, and not that this has happened in advance, before the jury's assessment of its qualities.

2. Brief biographical data about the candidate

The applicant in the present procedure, Dr. Robert Jurczak, was born in 1970 in Poland. He holds a Ph.D. in economics from the West Pomeranian University of Technology. Dr. Jurczak has a wide range of practical experience, holding various positions both in business organizations and in the municipal administration in the town of Konin. In addition, from 2015 to the present, he has led classes in various disciplines from the field of economics and management at the Academy of Applied Sciences in the city of Konin.

Dr. Jurczak has evolved as a person with sound knowledge and scientific pursuits, which is evident from the qualities of his dissertation for the award of the "Doctor of Science" degree.

3. Topicality of the research and appropriateness of the set goals and tasks

The dissertation submitted for review is on the topic: "Mechanism for Innovative Development in the Agricultural and Food Sector in the Context of Regional Economic Integration" and was written in English. It consists of 334 pages, of which 291 are the main text, divided into an introduction, four chapters, conclusions, a list of references, and appendices.

The topic undoubtedly has a dissertation potential, the research presented within the dissertation represents a completed serious scientific analysis of a significant and current problem for modern European economic policy and practice in the undoubtedly most important sector for any economic system - the agricultural sector related to food production.

4. Knowledge of the problem

The text of the dissertation shows the candidate's knowledge of the matter. The list of literature used consists of a total of 178 sources of diverse nature and in different languages, which indicates that Dr. Jurczak is relatively well acquainted with the research of other authors on the subject of his work.

5. Research methodology

I believe that the methodology chosen by the candidate is completely suitable for his work. It is hybrid - methods from both qualitative and quantitative analysis are used and the research results are logical and correct.

6. Characterization and evaluation of the dissertation work

The dissertation is logically structured for the research. In its framework, the candidate has presented an in-depth analysis of the agricultural sector and more specifically the food production sector in the EU in recent years, paying special attention to the situation in Poland. The main problems facing the sector, their causes, as well as its development, are analyzed based on rich factual material. It is particularly valuable that the candidate presents and analyzes the latest trends and phenomena in the sector, such as the pursuit of the bioeconomy

in relation to the climate-neutral policy of the EU, its impact on the development of the sector, the types of bioeconomy and some main problems before its deployment, as well as the impact of digitization in its various forms on this sector. From the analysis of these latest phenomena in their most current dimensions, the candidate's commitment to the issues, the object of his research, and his active attitude to what is happening in the agriculture and food production sector is evident.

It is noteworthy that the work is enriched with a wide range of illustrative elements - a total of 55 tables and 65 figures. This adds value to the research as it visualizes its main results in a very relevant and visual way.

The dissertation consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, a list of references, and appendices.

The first chapter has an introductory nature to the problem. In it, the candidate analyzes the theoretical and methodological grounds for the creation of an economic mechanism for innovative development in the agricultural and food sectors. Here he examines innovation in agriculture in the context of the EU Common Agricultural Policy.

The subject of the second chapter is the state and trends in the development of the agricultural sector of the EU. The candidate critically analyzes some global practices and guidelines for innovative development in this sector. Next, he dwells on the modern models of agricultural development in the EU and the trends in this area in the context of sustainable development specifically in Poland.

The third chapter is devoted to methodological concepts for the assessment and regulation of regional food markets and the logistics associated with them. The exhibition unfolds and analyzes the state of food security in the EU countries, some characteristic features of the formation of the market of so-called organic products, and the emerging trends in the choices of consumers of innovative food products. The candidate then presents his vision for the direction of development of the common market of logistics services.

In the focus of the fourth, and last chapter of the dissertation, the candidate presents a conceptual model of innovative development of the agricultural and food sector in the context of digital transformation. Here he proposes the application of a risk management program in the agricultural and food sector, the formation of an institutional mechanism for the development of public-private partnerships in the context of the digital economy, and a conceptual model for sustainable innovative development in the field of the agricultural and food sector.

In the conclusion, the main inferences of the study are correctly presented. The work is distinguished by thoroughness, a very good knowledge of the issues, and a pronounced practical-applied character, aimed at providing solutions to complex problems in a key sector for each country, such as agriculture and specifically food production.

7. Contributions and significance of the dissertation to science and practice

I believe that the contributions of the dissertation submitted for review are primarily applied in nature. Among them stand out:

- The formulation of methodological approaches for the construction of inter-network innovation cluster structures, with their characteristics derived from the field of biotechnology, information, and computer technologies;
- The developed methodology for promotion and consumer choice of innovative food products;
- The proposed definition of "innovative food product" - a food product obtained by using technological innovations, which is characterized by the presence of new consumer properties (novelty, improvement, modification), ameliorating the quality properties of the food product or the technology of its production;

- The developed program for managing commercial risks in the agri-food sector, which could be applied directly in practice.

These contributions have a potential direct application in practice and would contribute to increasing the efficiency of management of the sector considered by the candidate.

8. Evaluation of publications on the dissertation work

The publications presented for review in connection with the present procedure show the prominent scientific activity of Dr. Jurczak and complement the contributions of his dissertation towards illuminating various aspects of the problems of modern agriculture and food production in the EU and Poland. It is noteworthy that some of the publications are co-authored with other scientists, which shows the collaborative nature of Dr. Jurczak and his ability to work in a scientific team.

Dr. Jurczak's publications are sufficient in terms of type and number to meet the national minimum requirements for a Doctor of Science award in the professional field 3.8 Economics.

9. Assessment of compliance with minimum national requirements

The candidate fulfills the national minimum requirements laid down in the LDASRB and the Regulations for its implementation for the award of the Doctor of Science degree.

10. Personal participation of the candidate in the development of the dissertations and publications

At the moment, no information would give grounds to doubt the authenticity of the work of candidate Dr. Jurczak. His dissertation as well as his works are the result of his efforts.

11. Abstract

The abstract of the dissertation work was developed by the generally accepted academic requirements for the compilation of such kind of works. It correctly presents the main points of the dissertation in a concise form.

12. Critical remarks and recommendations

1. I believe that the title of the work could be more precisely defined. So presented:

"Mechanism for innovative development in the agricultural and food sector in the context of regional economic integration" is not clear which integration the work is talking about. Based on the exposition, the title could be supplemented and specified upon subsequent publication of the paper or parts of it, for example in one of the following ways, at the discretion of the applicant depending on how much he self-assesses the relevance of his research specifically to Poland within the paper:

- "Mechanism for innovative development of the EU agricultural and food sector in the context of regional economic integration policies"
- "Mechanism for innovative development of Poland's agricultural and food sector in the context of EU regional economic integration policies".

2. In the abstract, "results" of the scientific research in the dissertation work are formulated, while also "contributions" should be highlighted. I believe that some of the results have the character of contributions and therefore I accept them as such.

I have the following questions for the candidate:

- What is the role of circular economy in the agricultural sector? Please give an example from the practice in Poland.

- Is it possible to achieve a satisfactory amount of harvest of the different types of crops, if only forms of organic farming are applied?

13. Personal impressions

I have no personal impressions of the candidate.

14. Recommendations for future use of dissertation contributions and results

I would recommend the candidate to publish parts of his dissertation or the whole work in English to create prerequisites for achieving higher recognition of his scientific results and of himself as a scientist.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation contains scientific, scientific-applied and applied results, which represent an original contribution to science and meet the requirements of the LDASRB and the Regulations for its implementation. The presented materials and dissertation results correspond to the specific requirements of the Rules for the terms and conditions for obtaining the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" at VUZF University.

The dissertation shows that the candidate, Dr. Jurczak, possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in professional field 3. 8. Economy, demonstrating qualities and skills for independent conduct of scientific research.

Due to the above, I give my positive assessment of the conducted research, presented by the above-reviewed dissertation, abstract achieved results, and contributions, and I propose to the honorable scientific jury to award the scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences" to Dr. Jurczak in the area of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences; professional field 3. 8. Economics.

19.04.2024

Reviewer:

(prof. V. Zhelyazkova, DSc., Ph.D.)