

The Role of Agriculture in the Rural Development of the Municipality of Skenderaj

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Summary

This study analyzes of the role of agriculture in the rural development in Kosovo's municipality of Skenderaj, which implements measures by central institutions, including development policies aimed at strengthening rural development, further development of agricultural and livestock farms, and improvements in sustainable and competitive agriculture. The analysis of direct payments and grants in the agricultural sectors was performed, and the drafting of policies for rural development in Kosovo was presented. The study presents data on the agricultural sector which have had a positive impact on increasing agricultural productivity, improving working conditions and creating new jobs. A number of methods, including qualitative, quantitative, and action research approaches, have been utilized in this study through discussions with farmers. Secondary data analysis was performed, and a comparison of Skenderaj's data with data at the national level was also performed.

Keywords: Rural Development, Direct Payments, Grants.

JEL: Q22

1. Introduction

During the 1990s war, rural areas suffered considerable damage, where the rural population was forced to leave their homes, machinery, and animals. In the post-war period, local agriculture continued to suffer from the war's devastation; on the one hand, many areas of agricultural land remained unused and uncultivated, while on the other, the lack of basic tools for tillage and the lack of quality inputs (seeds, fertilizers, pesticides) etc. were a challenge to agriculture's recovery. While a large part of the country's population traditionally has been found in rural areas, agriculture – the main area for strengthening Kosovo's post-war economy has faced major developmental problems that have not allowed this sector of the economy to be of interest and profitable to those wishing to make their living with this activity. Post-war assistance in Kosovo and the emergency redevelopment phase was marked by a flood of donors with their strategies and projects, which include

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improving and strengthening agriculture and rural development.

The overall objectives of the Agricultural and Rural Development Strategy for Kosovo (ARDP) are based on the Europe 2020 strategy and its long-term strategic objectives of contributing to: the development of a competitive agro-food sector based on innovation which leads to increased production and productivity capable of producing high quality products and meeting EU market demands, contributing to food security and safety; and pursuing economic and social/ environmental goals by fostering employment and developing human and physical capital. With the ARDP strategy in mind, this study will seek to identify any increases in the efficiency of sub-sector farms and to determine which of them are supported, based on available data. Moreover, the results of this research are relevant to all stakeholders in the sector, from farmers to young scientists (MAFRD, 2020).

The municipality of Skenderaj is located in the center of the Drenica region of Kosovo, it has an area of 378 square km, and to the north it borders with the municipality of Mitrovica, in the east with Vushtri, in the southwest with Drenas and Klina, and in the

west with Burim. Important highways pass in this municipality, which connect it with other centers of Kosovo. Skenderaj has a hilly-mountainous configuration with an average height of 500 - 700 m, while the highest point is the peak of Qyqavica with a height of 1117 m. (e.g. KAS, 2011). Agriculture has traditionally been part of the daily lives of many people living in Skenderaj, and more than half of the population lives in rural areas (LEDS, 2013-2017).

The total land area is 37441 ha, it consists of 52 cadastral settlements, and in relation to the number of inhabitants, the figure is about 0.74 ha per capita. Skenderaj's macroclimate is characterized as a continental one with hot summers and very harsh and cold winters, it is a hilly mountainous territory, and the Meteorological Station which provides data measurement for this municipality is stationed in Mitrovica. Dominant winds in Skenderaj have a northwest direction, while summer and spring winds blow from the south. During the year, the average rainfall is 604.8 mm, where the maximum annual amount is 850.9 mm and the minimum annual amount is 394.9 mm, and the average relative humidity is 62.5% in summer, 72.6% in spring and 81.6% in winter.

Table 1. Population Census during the years 1961-2011

Years	Country	Population	Municipality	Population	Percentage of Population of the Municipality of Skenderaj at the national level
1961	Republic of Kosovo	963,988	Skenderaj	31,406	3.26
1971	Republic of Kosovo	1,243,693	Skenderaj	36,660	2.95
1981	Republic of Kosovo	1,584,440	Skenderaj	47,827	3.02
2011	Republic of Kosovo	1,739,825	Skenderaj	50,858	2.92

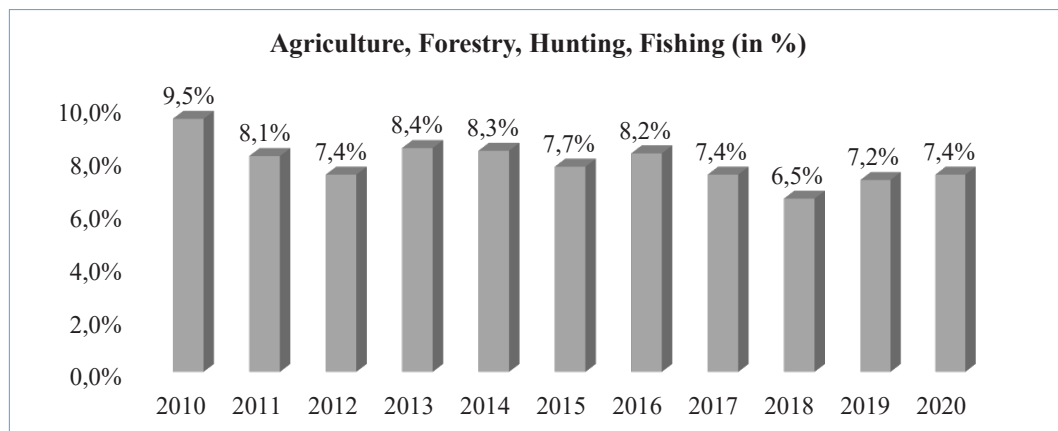
Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS)

According to the census, the municipality of Skenderaj in 1961 housed 3.26% of the total national population, in 1971 it contained

2.95%, in 1981 the figure was 3.02% while in 2011, 2.92% of Kosovo's population lived there.

Employment in this municipality is mainly in the fields of agriculture and industry, and although it is known that some people work outside of the municipality of Skenderaj,

there is a lack of accurate data due to the informal economy and the lack of research from relevant institutions [KAS].



Source: MAFRD Green Report 2021

Figure 1. Participation of agriculture in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) according to the years 2010-2020

(Figure 1) shows the participation of the agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing sector in the Gross Domestic Product GDP. As shown in the diagram, GDP in 2010 was

the highest with 9.5% share, while in other years there was a slight decline and increase in GDP.

Table 2. Total area per hectare at country level and at municipal level 2021

Country/Municipality	Area per hectare (ha)	Area per hectare (ha)	Participation in the total land area presented in percentage (%)
Republic of Kosovo	1040000		96.4
Municipality of Skenderaj		37441	3.60

Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS)

The municipality of Skenderaj is one of the 38 municipalities in the Republic of Kosovo and it contains 3.6% of the total land area. This municipality has very suitable conditions for the development of agriculture, since it has a large amount of agricultural land, a suitable climate (including hot summers), enough agricultural power, and enough water for irrigation, etc. The river Klina passes through Skenderaj, which originates in the

village of Kuqicë and flows in the north-south axis, and passes through the entire territory of the Municipality, as well as in the center of the city of Skënderaj, with a length of 40 km. The rivers Sitnica and Drenica flow in the east and southeast areas of the municipality, which also has a large number of streams which flow into the river Klina, but there is no natural or artificial lake in the municipality.

As stated, agriculture is the main pillar of the municipality's economy, because of the natural conditions it possesses, including a favorable climate that is suitable for the cultivation of many agricultural crops, good agricultural land, water, clean air, new workforce, etc. Agriculture is still one of Kosovo's main economic sectors in terms of contributing to GDP and has always been a key sector for Kosovo's economy (Gjokaj, E., et al., 2017).

2. Theoretical Background

Rural Development in the Municipality of Skenderaj - Rural areas are defined on the basis of ecology, economy or political administration (e.g. Hoggart, K., 1990). Ecologically, the landscape of rural areas consists mainly of plains, pastures, forests, rivers or mountains where the settlements are scattered with minimal physical infrastructure. In economic terms, the majority of the rural population works in agriculture, livestock, forestry and fishing, implying somewhat a high incidence of poverty. While rural areas are relatively easier to recognize from an ecological and economic perspective, they are vaguely defined from a political administrative perspective. The definition of rural administration in many countries does not refer to the ecological character of those areas, and trying to make a clear distinction between rural and urban becomes more complex because economic transformation has created urban areas where rural and urban characters are mixed (Baker, T., and Friederike Welter., 2018).

Since the municipality of Skenderaj is a small municipality and its industrial sector is underdeveloped, there are more opportunities in agricultural production for farmers in the sectors of horticulture, cereals, beekeeping,

orchards, livestock, dairy, meat and poultry, etc. There are many challenges for small and medium enterprises in the Municipality of Skenderaj, so managing innovation in the food sector is very important. The food processing industry is under pressure to improve the quality and pace of its innovation processes. All of these can be handled by increasing the opportunities of creative enterprise in food processing. Entrepreneurship contextualization is important to understand when, why and how entrepreneurship occurs (e.g. Shepherd, A. 1998).

Greater agriculture development is clearly an important solution for the challenges facing rural areas, and different approaches to be taken in order for rural development to be successful and sustainable. The challenges facing farms and farmers are related to finance, marketing and technologies identified in production and agro-processing. Producers' incentives regarding rural development, and how the producers perceive the preconditions for their farms and their way of life are found to be the main drivers of investment decisions, which is important for local development (e.g. Shepherd, A. 1998).

The concept of rural development actually encompasses a broad picture of rural society and its changes, and even a simple observation shows that there are various aspects related to rural areas and their components which have long been subject to change by many factors. The main characteristic features of any society – rural or urban – are based on economic, social, cultural, religious changes, beliefs, attitudes, organizational and even political changes, in addition to technological changes. Therefore, rural development must be viewed as a multifaceted and multidimensional phenomenon of rural society and its changes which can be seen and,

accordingly, the literature on the subject can be examined in several ways (e.g. Singh, K. 1999).

Agricultural Economy in the Municipality of Skenderaj - The municipality of Skenderaj has not been fortunate enough to attract and benefit from investments that would create new jobs and expand the range of industrial development sectors, while agriculture has been and remains the foundation of the economy and rural development. Thus, the municipality's economy is based on family farming, with small farms producing more for family needs and less for the market, while the private sector is based mainly on small businesses. In addition, several factories and manufacturing companies have recently been set up that include:

- a factory for processing and production of dairy products "Drena"
- a factory for gathering and processing of wheat "Grunori"
- a factory for processing goose meat
- a factory for collecting and processing mountain fruits and medicinal and aromatic plants "Agro-Florentina"
- a company plant for the production of seedlings "Agro-Bora".

There are also six milk collection points, and there are different associations according to the sectors of economy and agriculture (DAFRD, 2021).

3. Methodology and Methods

The methodology used in the preparation of this paper includes both desk research and field discussions with farmers, and includes statistical data in "green reports" from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development (MAFRD), Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS), annual reports of the municipality of Skenderaj, as well as various

data from the analysis of researchers for this paper. The purpose of this study is to analyze the impact of agriculture on rural development. The study started with discussions that were conducted with farmers in the municipality of Skenderaj while the problem was posed in theoretical, principled, methodological and statistical terms. A number of methods have been prepared in this study, the methods used are: discussions with farmers, qualitative, quantitative, and action research methods. The data in this paper are presented in a descriptive and comparative way.

The methodology used for the study includes work and analysis from primary and secondary data, including statistical analysis enriched with case studies, research, and discussions. In this paper there is abundant data, which cover this segment and are oriented towards the concentration in the internal environment of rural development.

4. Results

The data from the last census conducted by the Statistical Agency of Kosovo in 2011, shows that 44246 inhabitants or 75% of the total population of the municipality live in rural areas, while the rest of the population lives in urban areas. According to the Kosovo Statistical Agency (KAS), there are 6205 agricultural holdings in the municipality of Skenderaj, while the workforce is estimated at 15548 (e.g. KAS, 2011). The definition of "rural areas" used by the KAS for the 'Kosovo Population and Housing Census 2011' and other statistics is "a non-urbanized geographical area – defined at settlement level – characterized by a lower population density and typically where much of the land is devoted to agriculture in comparison to surrounding areas" (e.g. Gjokaj, E., et al., 2021).

Table 3. Total area of the Republic of Kosovo (2001)

Land Destination	Area in Hectare (ha)	Percent (%)
Agricultural Land	585000	56
Forestry Land	455000	44
Total	1040000	100

Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS) year 2001

Table 3 presents the total area in the Republic of Kosovo where 585000 ha are arable land while 455000 hectares are forest land.

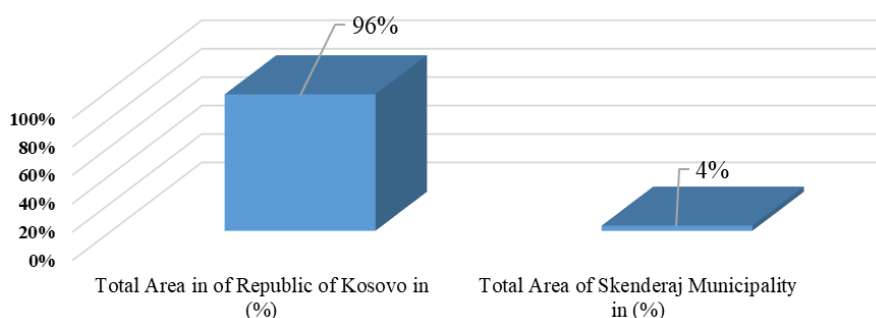
Table 4. Total area of the Municipality of Skenderaj year 2013-2017

Land Destination	Area in Hectare (ha)	Percent (%)
Non Agricultural Land	1606	4.3
Forestry	14685	39.2
Agricultural Land	17916	47.9
Meadows - Pastures	3234	8.6
Total	37441	100

Source: Local Economic Development Strategy 2013-2017

Agriculture is the main source of income for the population; the employees who engage in agricultural activities generally possess a secondary education, but of different qualifications. As stated the main crops that historically have been cultivated are Wheat, Corn, Oats, Barley, alfalfa, Potatoes, Fruits and Vegetables, etc. However, starting in 2018 and with support for the farmers from the municipality of Skenderaj and the Ministry of

Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development (MAFRD) through the rural development program plan 2013-2021, rural development in this municipality has taken a new direction, focusing on the use of new technologies and their introduction to the workforce, in order to produce higher quality products which can be more competitive for the domestic and foreign markets.



Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics (ASK)

Figure 2. Total land area in the Republic of Kosovo and the municipality of Skenderaj 2014

Figure 2 represents the total area of the municipality of Skenderaj that takes place in the Republic of Kosovo with this area in (ha and %), comparison of data in 2022.

Table 5. From the aspect of ownership, the structure of the entire surface of the Municipality 2013-2017

Ownership	Area in Hectare (ha)	Percent /%
Privately owned land	28747	77
Socially owned land	8694	23
Total	37441	100

Source: Local Economic Development Strategy 2013-2017

Table 5 presents the aspect of ownership in the municipality of Skenderaj, the property is divided into privately owned land 28747 ha while socially owned land is 8694 ha.

Table 6. Livestock, Poultry and Beekeeping year 2014 - 2021

No.	Number of animals in the Republic of Kosovo presented in total	Number of heads	Number of animals in the Municipality of Skenderaj presented in total	Number of heads
1	Dairy cows	261389	Dairy cows	14199
2	Buffalos	670	Buffalos	50
3	Sheep	212131	Sheep	4341
4	Goats	29557	Goats	673
6	Bees	262541	Bees	6576
5	Chickens	2691831	Chickens	107819

Source: Census of Agriculture in the Republic of Kosovo 2014

Meadows, suitable terrain for pastures, as well as the constant interest of farmers in livestock and poultry, are important elements supporting economic development and the mitigation of problems in the villages of the municipality of Skenderaj. It is worth noting that from the consequences of the war 21 years ago, the numbers of livestock have been damaged over 85% in the private sector.

Table 7. Agricultural crops in arable land, main area year 2014 – 2021

No.	Agricultural crops in the Republic of Kosovo	Area in Hectare (ha)	Agricultural crops in the Municipality of Skenderaj	Area in Hectare (ha)
1	Wheat	80473	Wheat	6936.96
2	Maize	39684	Maize	1988.84
3	Barley	1982	Barley	79.88
4	Rye	425	Rye	22.52
5	Oats	2009	Oats	242.78
6	Legumes	43	Legumes	5
7	Medicine Plant	200	Medicine Plant	7.00

No.	Agricultural crops in the Republic of Kosovo	Area in Hectare (ha)	Agricultural crops in the Municipality of Skenderaj	Area in Hectare (ha)
8	Potato	3771	Potato	25.61
9	Alfalfa	18329	Alfalfa	1734.75
10	Vegetable	19243	Vegetable	99.57
11	Grasses	217102	Grasses	694.66

Source: Census of Agriculture in the Republic of Kosovo 2014 – 2021

Table 8. Orchard plantations data from 2014 – 2021

No.	Orchard plantations in the Republic of Kosovo	Area in hectare (ha)	Orchard plantations in the Municipality of Skenderaj	Area in hectare (ha)
1	Apples	3068	Apples	94.55
2	Pears	614	Pears	7.23
3	Plums	2201	Plums	20.52
4	Quince	91	Quince	0.30
6	Cherry	233	Cherry	1.34
7	Cherry	108	Cherry	0.52
8	Peaches	48	Peaches	5
9	Apricots	22	Apricots	3
10	Nuts	1295	Nuts	15
11	Hazelnuts	390	Hazelnuts	10

Source: Census of Agriculture in the Republic of Kosovo 2014 - 2021

5. Farm Size in the Municipality of Skenderaj

Regarding the size of farms, data on agricultural land use are presented in the following ways: area (ha), share in (%), and number of agricultural holdings, and their share in (%). The information has been obtained from the KAS which conducts the Agricultural Survey (AEB) on an annual basis (e.g. KAS, 2015).

In 2014, there were 19700.73 ha of arable land in the municipality of Skenderaj. The land used by farms in that year accounted for almost 100% of the total used area of agricultural land, including open field vegetables (first

crop) and greenhouse vegetables (first crop). Based on the size of the arable land area, the farm structure is classified into four main categories:

1. Farms with very small size (less than 1 ha) make up 4.87% of the farms and had a total area of 958.61 ha.
2. Farms of less than 5 ha had a weight of 39.42%, and represent about 7766.48 ha.
3. Farms with sizes ranging from 5 ha to less than 20 ha, had a representation of 39.23% and an area of 7729.51 ha, and;
4. Farms with an area of 20 ha and more comprised 16.48% covering an area of 3246.13 ha (e.g. KAS, 2015).

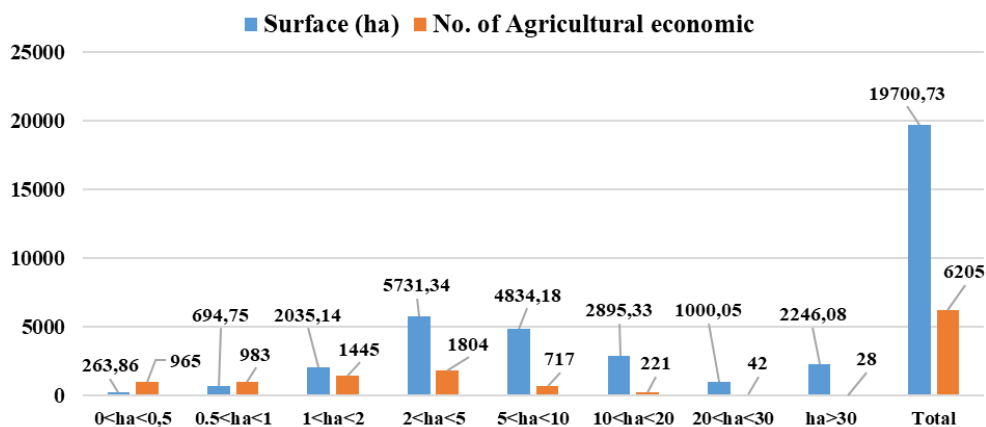
Table 9. Data on the size of agricultural holdings in 2014 by area of arable land, share in (%), and number of agricultural holdings and their share in (%).

Farm size	Surface (ha)	Participation (%)	No. of Agricultural economic	Participation (%)
0 and less than 0.5	263.86	1.34	965	15.55
0.5 to less than 1	694.75	3.53	983	15.84
1 to less than 2	2035.14	10.33	1445	23.29
2 to less than 5	5731.34	29.09	1804	29.07
5 to less than 10	4834.18	24.54	717	11.56
10 to less than 20	2895.33	14.70	221	3.56
20 to less than 30	1000.05	5.08	42	0.68
30 and more	2246.08	11.40	28	0.45
Total	19700.73	100	6205	100

Source: KAS (2015): Agricultural Census in the Republic of Kosovo 2014

Based on the table presented above, it results that about 44.29% of all farms in the municipality of Skenderaj and less than 5 ha of utilized agricultural area and together these small farms constitute 8725.09 ha of utilized agricultural land. Farms with an area of 5 ha

and less than 30 ha, totaled only 8729.56 ha or 44.31 % of the used land area. When we talk about farms larger than 30 ha and more, they had only 2246.08 ha of agricultural land with a share of 11.40%.



Source: KAS (2015): Agricultural Census in the Republic of Kosovo 2014

Figure 3. Number of agricultural units by arable land area, 2014

Regarding the number of agricultural holdings, about 965 or 15.55% of the total agricultural holdings have farms with less than 0.5 ha of arable land. The other largest groups include farm size from 0.5 to less

than 1 ha and from 1 ha to less than 2 ha, consisting of 2428 agricultural holdings or 39.13% of the total number of agricultural holdings 1804 farms (or 29.07%) have an area of 2 to less than 5 ha. Based on the analyzed

data, it is clear that the municipality of Skenderaj in 2014 can be presented in three main categories of farm sizes: Approximately 83.76% of the agricultural economy (or 5197 holdings) belong to the categories of farm size less than 0.5 up to less than 5 ha. When it comes to farms with a larger area of arable land, it is found that only 15.79% or 980 agricultural holdings have farms with dimensions from 5 to less than 30 ha. Only 0.45%, i.e. 28 agricultural holdings have farms with an area of 30 ha and more.

6. Agricultural Policies, Direct Payments to Agriculture and Rural Development Support, Programs, Measures, Budget, Grants and Subsidies

At the national level support for the agricultural sector began to be accelerated in 2013 and continued in 2021, when the agricultural sector began to be supported through direct payments and rural development measures. Support through direct payments is

made for agricultural crops, livestock heads and inputs (seedlings), while investments in the primary sector, the processing industry, and tourism development in rural areas are supported by grants (e.g. DAFRD, 2021).

Traditionally, Kosovo supports three main agricultural sectors – cereals, horticulture and livestock – broken down into 21 subsectors: 11 crops (annual and permanent, e.g. existing orchards and vineyards), horticulture (open field vegetables), wine, and organic products; and 10 livestock sectors and milk (e.g. Kostov, P., et al., 2020).

During 2013-2019, rural development projects implemented by the MAFRD and the Agency for Agricultural Development supported farmers in rural areas with grants in all sectors of agriculture, which will be presented in the table below. Entrepreneurship in rural areas is the subject of growing interest among researchers, consultants and “policy makers” in Bulgaria and Kosovo. Entrepreneurs are a natural engine of economic development in many countries (Kopeva, D., Sterev, N., Gjokaj, E., & Halimi, K. 2019).

Table 10. Total Grants for Developing Rural Development in Skenderaj Municipality by MAFRD from 2013 to 2019.

NO.	Supported sectors	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
1	Horticulture	10	8	11	14	21	15	10
2	Livestock	7	5	17	7	6	11	9
3	Beekeeping	3	4	3	5	1	6	6
4	Orchards	11	5	5	5	16	1	6
5	Poultry				4		1	
6	Tourism						1	
7	Storehouse						3	4

Source: Agency for Agricultural Development (AAD)

The data in Table 10 present the number of grants distributed by sectors and years from the support measures of the MAFRD.

The creation of new jobs has been defined to meet the criteria in open calls for grants from MAFRD. From 2013 to 2019, farmers in

rural areas were supported with 241 grants in the agricultural sectors, while the increase of capacities and the improvement of conditions created the opportunity for new jobs.

Some 723 new full-time jobs and long-term contracts have been created in rural areas,

while 3615 new seasonal jobs have been created. The municipality of Skenderaj has given priority to full agriculture, considering it as one of the most important pillars of economic development.

Table 11. Total Grants for Rural Development Support in the Municipality of Skenderaj from DBPZHR from 2018 to 2021

No.	Supported sectors	2018	2019	2020	2021
1	Horticulture	22	41	79	175
2	Livestock	81	51	42	70
3	Beekeeping	55	48	86	
4	Orchards	2	3		1
5	Medicinal Plant	16	1	6	
6	Equipment	32	38	183	154
7	Strawberries	6	2	12	
8	Poultry			39	32

Source: Annual Agricultural Report from the Directorate for Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development

The MAFRD had planned a detailed 2021 budget for direct payments to support agricultural and rural development in all

sectors of agriculture and the figures for each sector are shown below in Table 12.

Table 12. Agricultural sectors supported by direct payments in the year 2021

No.	Agricultural sectors supported by direct payments in 2021	Budget
1	Direct payments for sown areas of wheat and the quantity produced / delivered of wheat	4,187,713.50 €
2	Direct payments for sown areas of wheat seed	131,751.30 €
3	Direct payments for planted barley areas	39,108.60 €
4	Direct payments for rye planted areas	17,361.00 €
5	Direct payments for planted areas of oats	117,509.40 €
6	Direct payments for planted corn areas	2,540,000.00 €
7	Direct payments for sunflower planted areas	3,610.80 €
8	Direct payments for existing vineyards	1,842,870.00 €
9	Direct payments for wine produced and officially declared	137,070.90 €
10	Direct payments for existing orchards	1,119,719.90 €
11	Direct payments for the delivered / sold quantity of raspberry fruits	162,315.90 €
12	Direct payments for the production of planting material of fruit trees and grape vines	47,508.12 €

No.	Agricultural sectors supported by direct payments in 2021	Budget
13	Direct payments for areas planted with vegetables	1,650,422.60 €
14	Direct payments for medicinal herbs / BMA	114,512.40 €
15	Direct payments for organic farming	412,231.20 €
16	Direct payments for agricultural insurance premium for the agricultural crop of raspberries, apples, plums, grapes, strawberries, peppers and walnuts	30,000.00 €
17	Direct payments for dairy cows and buffaloes	3,417,603.77 €
18	Direct payments for sheep	1,914,960.00 €
19	Direct payments for goats	206,112.00 €
20	Direct payments for bees	2,076,237.00 €
21	Direct payments for milk by quality categories	758,792.20 €
22	Direct payments for hens	333,175.61 €
23	Direct payments for quail	7,103.40 €
24	Direct payments for doses in reproduction	23,340.00 €
25	Direct payments for reported cattle slaughter	14,580.40 €
26	Direct payments for aquaculture	20,393.00 €
27	Direct payments for fattening calves	300,000.00 €
Total Budget for 2021		21,626,003.00

Source: MAFRD Direct Payments Program Plan for 2021

7. Rural Development Projects – Investment Grants

As stated, the national and municipal governments are supporting agriculture, which is considered one of the sectors of special importance through which rural development aims can be achieved, and this is being done through the use of grants which help to increase productivity and the quality of products, as well as their value. With this support, the government also aims to achieve general public policy objectives for providing the highest standards and improving the quality of various agricultural products. These governments are trying to introduce policy support and incentives to promote

business opportunities in this area, aiming to enable Kosovo to rely more and more on its local products in the near future (e.g. Wongprawmas, R., et al., 2018).

Developing the agriculture sector is one of the Kosovo Government's priorities in the medium and long term, with the objective of building the economy at both the national and local levels, increasing productivity, reducing imports of agricultural products, and increasing the employment rate in this sector. Therefore, most of the interventions in this sector are aimed directly at supporting agricultural production, while simultaneously introducing policy measures for facilitating the further development of the sector (e.g. Gjokaj, E., et al., 2017).

The overall strategic objectives for agriculture and rural development in Kosovo are defined as:

- Development of the agro-food sector, which is based on competitiveness and innovation, resulting in increased production and productivity, greater ability to produce high quality products and meet the demands of the EU market, further contributing to the provision and security of the food supply, and by pursuing economic, social and environmental goals through the promotion of employment and development of human and physical capital;
- Protection of natural resources and the environment of rural areas, by: addressing

the challenges of climate change, thereby attaining more sustainable and efficient use of land and forest management, and by introducing agricultural production methods for preserving the living environment; improving the quality of life and diversification of employment opportunities in rural areas by promoting employment, social inclusion and balanced territorial development of rural areas (e.g. Gjokaj, E., Leeds, S., Halimi, K., 2018).

With the inclusion of measures and sub-measures for different sectors of agriculture, the Division for Approval of Rural Development Projects has implemented the RDP as presented below.

Table 13. The planned budget for the implementation of the rural development program for 2018 was 19 million euros. The rural development program in 2021 consisted of the following measures.

Support measures	Supported sectors	The Budget for 2021
Measure 101	Investing in physical assets of agricultural households	17,620,000.00 €
Measure 101 covers these sectors and agricultural crops	1. Fruit tree sector - apples, pears, plums, cherries, apricots, peaches and quinces; 2. Greenhouse sector including storage of potatoes and vegetables; 3. Beef sector - beef, pork sector fattening; 4. Dairy sector - dairy cows, sheep and goats; 5. Collection point sector; 6. Grape sector; 7. Poultry sector for eggs.	
Measure 103	Investing in physical assets in the processing and marketing of agricultural products	6,800,000.00 €
Measure 103 covers these sectors and agricultural crops	1. Dairy processing sector; 2. Meat processing sector; 3. Fruit and vegetable processing sector and 4. Wine production sector	
Measure 302	Farm diversification and business development	3,850,000.00 €
Measure 302 covers these sectors and agricultural crops	5. Beekeeping Sector - honey production / processing and trade; 6. Processing Sector - of cultivated agricultural products and trade 7. Sector for Development - of craft activities and their trade; 8. Sector for Development - rural tourism and farm tourism. 9. Sector for Irrigation of agricultural lands;	

Support measures	Supported sectors	The Budget for 2021
Measure 303	Local Action Groups (LAG)	389,000.00 €
Measure 303 covers these sectors and strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acquisition and promotion of skills of the inhabitants of the territories of the LAGs. 2. Design and implementation of local development strategies, LEADER approach - for selected LAGs 3. This sub-measure will start at a later stage, once the LAGs are well structured, their employees are trained and the residents of their territories have demonstrated the capacity to benefit from these activities. 	
Measure of Irrigation	Irrigation of agricultural lands	800,000.00 €
Planned budget to support farmers in the agricultural sectors in 2021		29,459,000.00 €

Source: Rural Development Program (RDP) 2021

8. Conclusions

Based on this study we reached some important conclusions regarding the impact on rural development in the municipality of Skenderaj. Agricultural production manages to increase from year to year, after support with grants and subsidies from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, but also from the local institutions Municipality of Skenderaj through the Directorate of Agriculture Forestry and Rural Development. These supports aims to empower and encourage farmers in the increased efficiency and productivity of high quality agricultural products for domestic consumption and also for placement in markets to meet the needs of international consumers of agricultural products. Despite these initiatives and the support of farmers in rural areas, much remains to be done, because farmers still cannot meet the needs of the market with agricultural products.

The most important factors which can provide greater sustainable development in the municipality of Skenderaj are the creation of adequate development policies which will support farmers with grants and direct payments and which will create favorable conditions for the production of agricultural

products. Local government policies should be clearly directed at the development of rural areas by creating additional and more useful infrastructure facilities as well as creating additional opportunities for irrigation of agricultural lands, as there is not enough water in the municipality of Skenderaj for irrigation of agricultural lands, and currently, irrigation is mostly done through wells operated by the farmers themselves.

There is a possibility that with the creation of development policies, a dam will be built which would have a high capacity to supply 200,000 inhabitants with drinking water and also provide for the irrigation of all agricultural lands in the municipality of Skenderaj. Policymakers need to help farmers provide technical assistance, promote and create a measure based on the collaborative grant plan, which will lead farmers to more efficiently manage their inputs.

The national program for the support of sustainable rural development, implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development and the Agency for Agricultural Development, has adopted a series of thorough measures to support rural development such as: Measures 101, 103, 302, 303 and irrigation of agricultural

lands, through which farmers in rural areas have been supported from 2013 to 2021. Through these grants, investments have been increased and agricultural farms have been developed which now have facilities which seek to perform and produce in accordance with European standards, using state of the art agricultural technology and tools for the production and processing of agricultural and livestock products. From the research results, we conclude that these measures have had a very significant effect in achieving the objectives of sustainable rural development, as well as the creation of new jobs.

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