

Enhancing Rural Integration into European Agriculture: Rediscovering Sustainable Agri-Food in Romania

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ABSTRACT: One of the factors that threatens the sustainability of rural areas is the hegemonic agro-industrial model with obvious environmental and social impacts which dramatically limits rural life. The study draws attention to the opportunities offered by alternative agri-food systems based on agroecology and food sovereignty as cultural heritage to support sustainable local development. The results of the study demonstrate how the recovery and promotion of traditional ecological knowledge can help increase the capacity of socio-ecological systems to cope with shocks and disruptions and maintain long-term resilience. At the same time, agro-ecological practises allow collective identities to emerge around characteristics of rural space, strengthening local life, focusing on the coevolution of the society-ecosystem of local identity. The case study analyzed in Romania counties shows that rural areas play a critical role in economic and social cohesion, in the resilience of regions and in the contribution of countless services in various local ecosystems, including food production, to their consolidation socio-economic prosperity, the ability to innovate, to achieve a sustainable and inclusive social economy. The types of policies promoted by Romania conceive agro-ecological practices as an intangible collective heritage with a significant potential for transformation towards local sustainability.

KEYWORDS: rural areas, rural tourism, sustainability, food security, Bran-Rucăr corridor

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