

Socio-Economic Changes Induced By the SAPARD Rural Development Programme in Suceava County

Diana Alexandru

Abstract

During the last years, the rural Romanian space has suffered important structural and shape alterations. On one hand, all these changes were determined by the input representing the financial non-refundable help given to the population according to already established eligibility criteria, and on the other hand by the output found in the real material results materialized after the active rural population invested that financial help. We can highlight the changes in the number of rural inhabitants becoming active in a specific economic environment. The economic specificity is given by the raw materials available for processing in the studied area, while the economic progress directly depends on the quality of the infrastructure as a support for an integrated development of a space. Real adjustments come up about the human component in accordance with the territorial one thus creating the frame of a sustainable rural development.

Key words: rural development, structural changes, active population, economic specificity

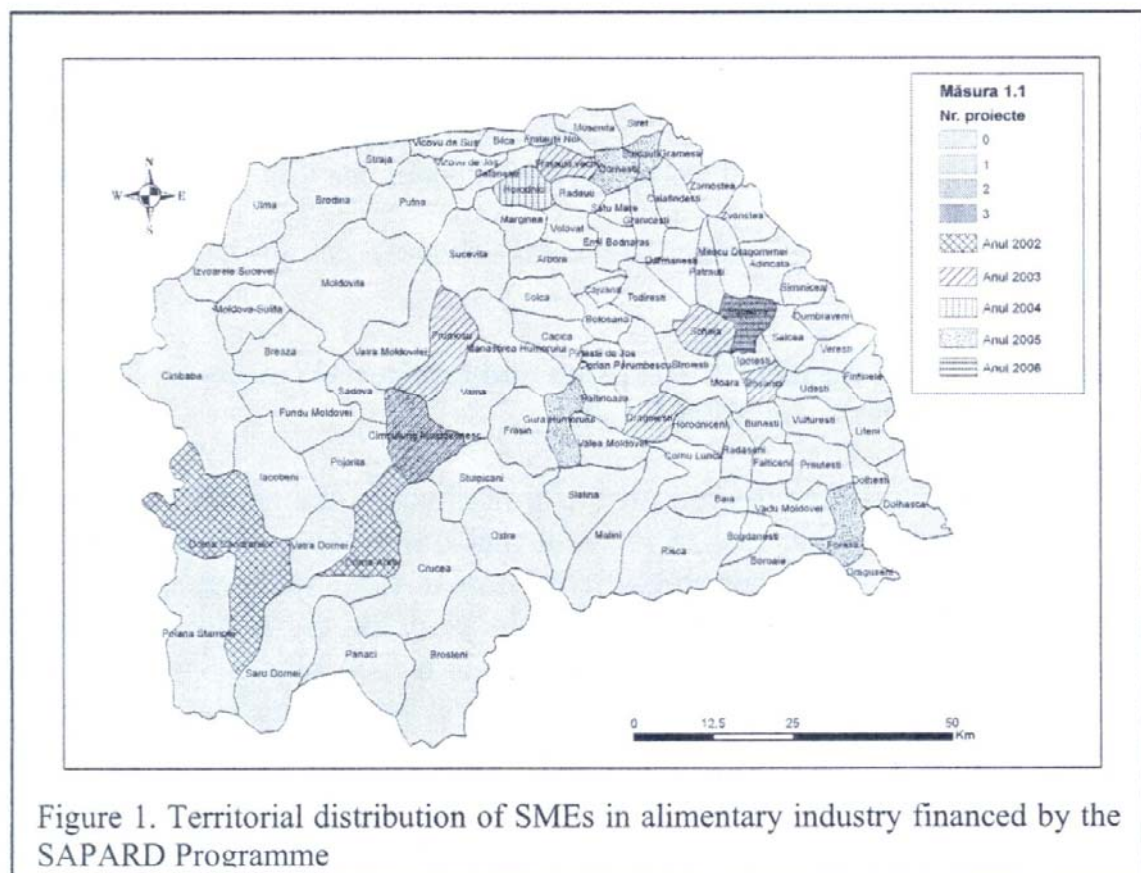
The evolution of financial absorption and territorial results on SAPARD measures and priorities in Suceava County

As premises of our research on Suceava County, the actual socio-economic context is worth mentioning, due to the fact that the process of rural development mainly evolves within it. Furthermore, the Romanian rural space and, implicitly, its socio-economic development stand as the main plan for the national development policy. Another element that cannot be neglected is the financial factor, the financial input being significant both during the pre-accession period and along the following period, at least until 2013.

The most important component that we concentrate upon is the human resource, category which entirely and directly relies on development as a complex process, whose elements continuously interact. The category of beneficiary active population in the process of development is represented by the young workers that are permanently but insufficiently engaged in the economic activities of the rural human settlements. Having in mind the basis on which all the social and economic processes develop, the lack of productive activities and the insufficient number of young active population in the main activity sectors, as well as the number of aged and feminine population that predominates in the rural space, there is a well constructed policy that sustains and engages young people, predominantly farmers, in the process of rural development. It had been designed both for assisting them and for creating a favourable environment for their investments, thus re-inhabiting the rural agricultural

and non-agricultural functional space and motivating the permanence of the young within the rural boundaries.

The main structure of the study frames the cumulative effects of the SAPARD rural development programme registered within the territory of Suceava County, structured according to the evolution of absorbing the funds and accessing projects at the level of different measures during the entire period of pre-accession. An elaborated analysis allows us to thoroughly observe each measure through which real, viable projects were financed. Our conclusions should reflect the accomplishments realized by the inhabitants of this rural space having as reference the time coordinate, at a communal level.



The financial support given through this measure particularly aims at improving the performances of the alimentary production from the points of view of both the quality standards and the diverse range of processed products, so that, in the end, many malfunctions that persist on the specific market would be exempted or at least would diminish. The priorities previously established for the national rural territory somehow selected themselves in basis of the resources and the traditional activities the inhabitants here disposed of. Initially, they followed the main activities and products

of the primary sector, such as: milk and milk products, meat and meat products, vegetables, fruit and potatoes, fishery products and textiles.

Therefore, taking into account the priorities established by the national plan for rural development that should have been achieved through measure 11 (processing the agricultural and fishery products), and also the level of adaptability of the rural inhabitants in the analysed area, we can mention some of the results of a qualitative analysis of public data, according to which there existed a few differentiations regarding the preference towards a certain sector in agriculture or other economic activities. In this case we can notice the relatively small number of projects for modernization or construction of units for processing or storing the alimentary products. Nevertheless, we couldn't help noticing the emphasis on the development of milk and meat alimentary sector against all other products. All in all, one of the most expensive measures cumulated a number of 19 projects.

Measure 1.1 specifies and encourages the financing of projects for modernizing or building new production units that process cheese and other milk products, meat and meat products, fruit and natural juices. We should emphasize the prevalence of these small and medium size enterprises in the *suburban* areas of Suceava and Câmpulung Moldovenesc Municipalities. In fact, they both have benefited from two and respectively three investment projects of this kind in 2003, 2005 and 2006, due to the flexibility offered by the eligibility conditions set by this measure. At the same time other industrial units are spread within the rural space, especially in Obcinele Bucovinei area and in Dorna Basin. Despite the small number of specialized units for processing, collecting and storing fruit and natural juices registered in the area and having in mind the already existing premises in Suceava Municipal City and Dornelor Commune, we can forecast a probable short or even medium term development of the sector in the near future.

When it comes to measure 2.1 that facilitates the financing of projects for modernization of communal roads, the extension and construction of sewerage, sewage systems and water networks, respectively of networks for the evacuation of waste waters, we perceive one of the most stringent issues of Suceava rural space. This does not represent a particularity of the studied area, but it extends to the rural national level as well. The poor quality of the infrastructure is real fact, but we cannot afford omitting or not noticing that even from the beginning of the financing period in 2002, most of the local administrations tried to access at least one project for the modernization of the local roads within their localities. Furthermore, some of the administrations, after period of four years, repeated their action, being obviously stimulated by the success they had with the previous experience. Within the entire territory of Suceava County, the official data register works for the modernization of 47 local roads, with a total length of about 228,707 km, each one of them having its own specifics and importance. At a local level we can observe the abundance of projects in the Eastern half of the county, especially in the hill and plateaux area along

the border separating Suceava County and Botoșani County, and in mountain area of Dornelor Basin.

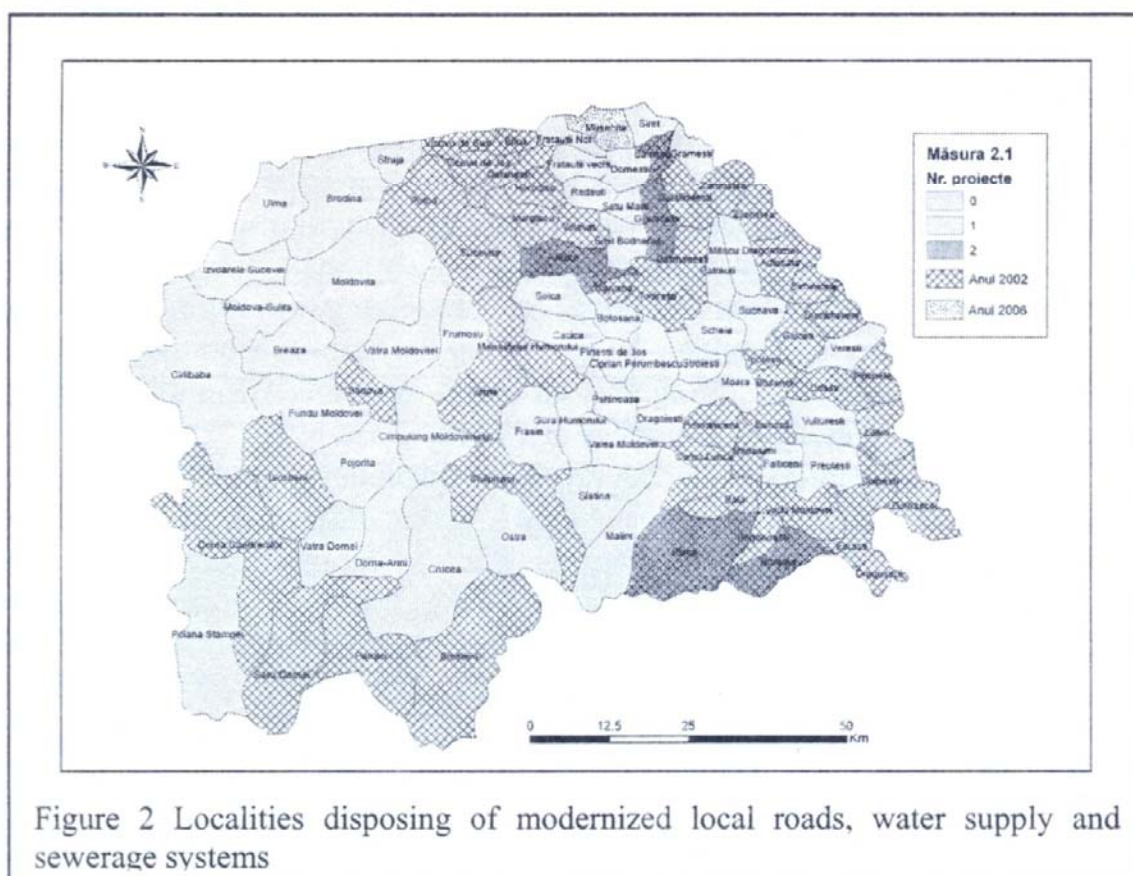


Figure 2 Localities disposing of modernized local roads, water supply and sewerage systems

The cartographical representation fully reflects the territorial distribution. Suceava County registered the highest number of projects for the modernization of the rural infrastructure in the North-East region of Development. This shows that there was a positive feed-back of the inhabitants towards their rural infrastructure problems, meaning the bigger the necessities the larger the number of contracted projects.

Measure 3.1 of the SAPARD programme stands at the top in matters of the significant number of projects accessed, respectively 30 for creating new constructions or modernizing old livestock farms and 16 for purchasing equipment for agriculture practices, the rest of 10 projects having as object of activity other types of activity in agriculture. It motivated the first attempts of the inhabitants to ease their field works by using mechanical equipment, high technologies, thus succeeding in putting into practice a new agriculture, meaning clean, non-affecting the environment, protecting the livestock and the fields, more organized and more competitive field exploitation and animal breeding. As for the financial absorption, it begins with a boom in 2004 and continues at a constant rate until the end of the programme. Having in view, that one of the conditions for accessing such a project of investment and becoming a beneficiary is to be able to support about 50% of the expenses; we can observe that the

multitude of investments made in the Eastern half of the county proves the level of initiative of the inhabitants and also their financial status.

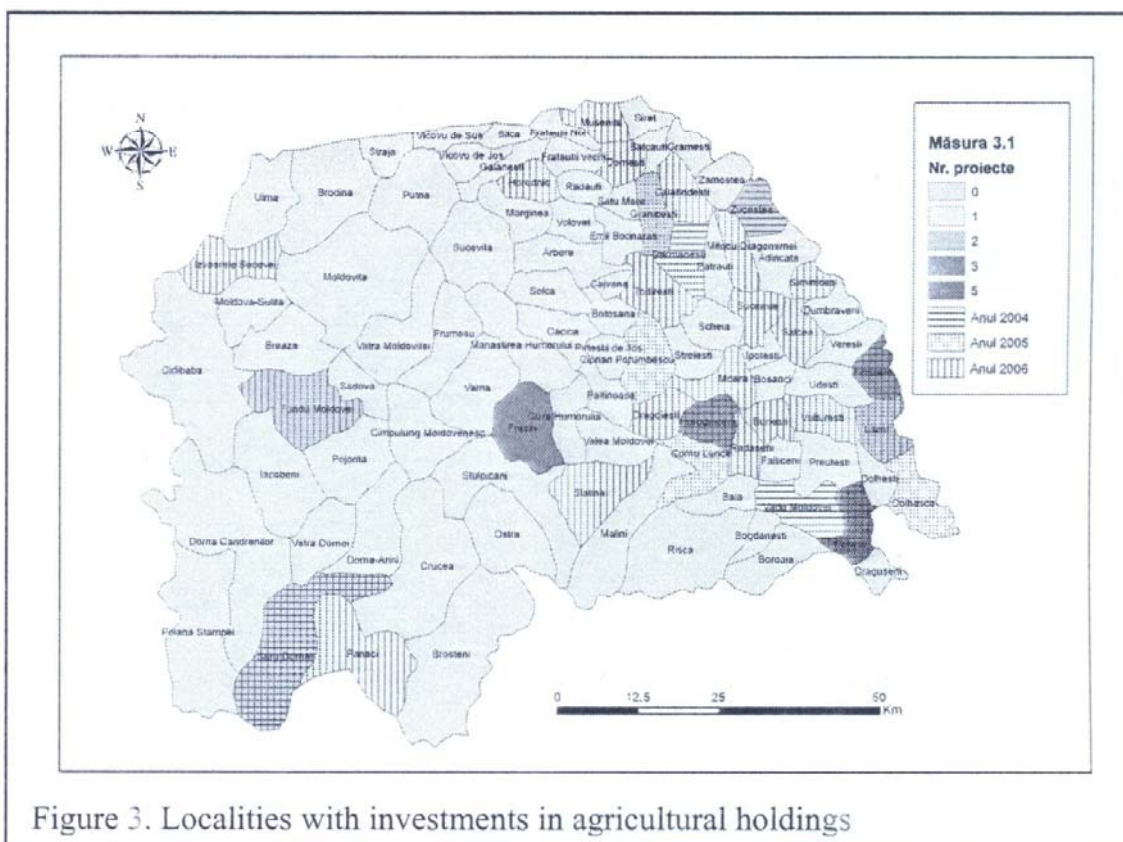


Figure 3. Localities with investments in agricultural holdings

The visible preference for accessing projects regulated by measure 3.4 (that implements the financing of building and modernization of accommodation units for tourists - rural boarding houses, holiday houses, agro-tourism houses) is a priority of the policy for promoting tourism, with emphasis on rural tourism and the facilities offered by the geographical space, traditions and heritage. The Bucovina area differentiates among the national tourism areas, previously known as a tourism destination, by providing various activities and types of practices being visited and exercised by both categories of tourists, autochthonous and foreign, through the diversity of opportunities for tourism activities. Another opportunity given by the SAPARD Programme is that of encouraging the practicing of other types of tourism, diversifying the offer of activities, thus providing and promoting fishing, cycling, hiking, horse riding, cultural and recreational activities. At the same time, keeping alive the traditional wood handicraft is another important goal of this policy. The novelty of this measure, as well as of the entire programme in the field of alternative economic activities, is represented by the new practices of growing snails, other species of fish, cultivating mushrooms, and of course building units for conserving and storing berries. Once again, Suceava County registers the maximum absorption of

funds within the North-East Region of Development, its inhabitants realizing a number of 73 projects of investment.

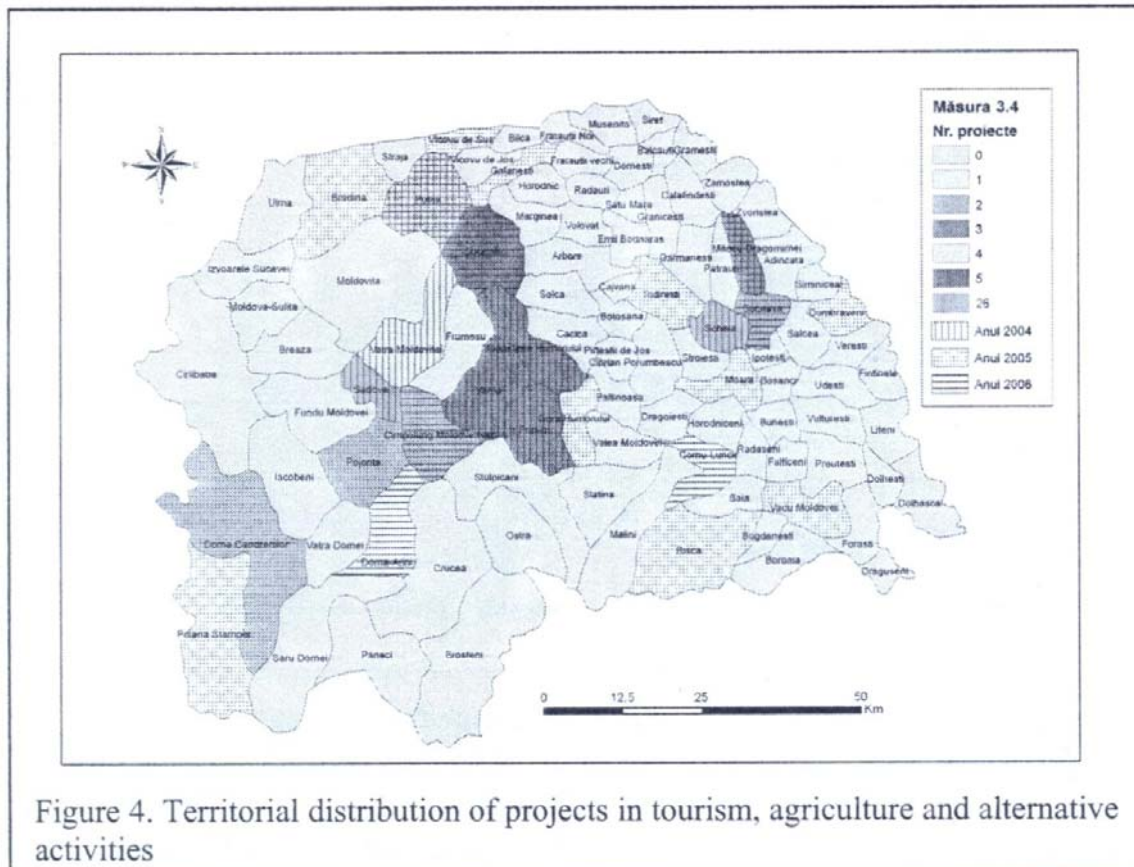


Figure 4. Territorial distribution of projects in tourism, agriculture and alternative activities

Beginning with 2006, two new measures became eligible but at a slower rate than the others. In the field of forestry, measure 3.5 promotes activities of modernizing the forest roads and preserving the natural forest areas, while measure 1.2 facilitates the construction of new laboratories and the modernization of the old ones for sanitary veterinary tests, in order to ensure the protection of human, animal and plant health. Improving the structures that provide this kind of services for quality control, related to food safety (bacterial contaminants, pesticides, inspection and labeling) so that the alimentary products would become healthier, is compulsory for adopting the Acquis Communautaire adopted by the member states of the European Union. To fulfil this aim numerous and completely refundable investments are necessary. It also includes specialized computer-softs for the domains of animal and plant health (phytosanitary) and their specific pests and diseases. These laboratories were supposed to be located in all of the development regions within the national territory, two per each, in the areas with agriculture exploitations and units for processing animal and vegetal products. This constitutes an attempt to cover effectively the entire tourism area. Despite this, in

May 2006, Suceava County, as a territorial element of the North-East region of Development, benefited of funds for only one of the two imposed laboratories, located in Suceava Municipal City.

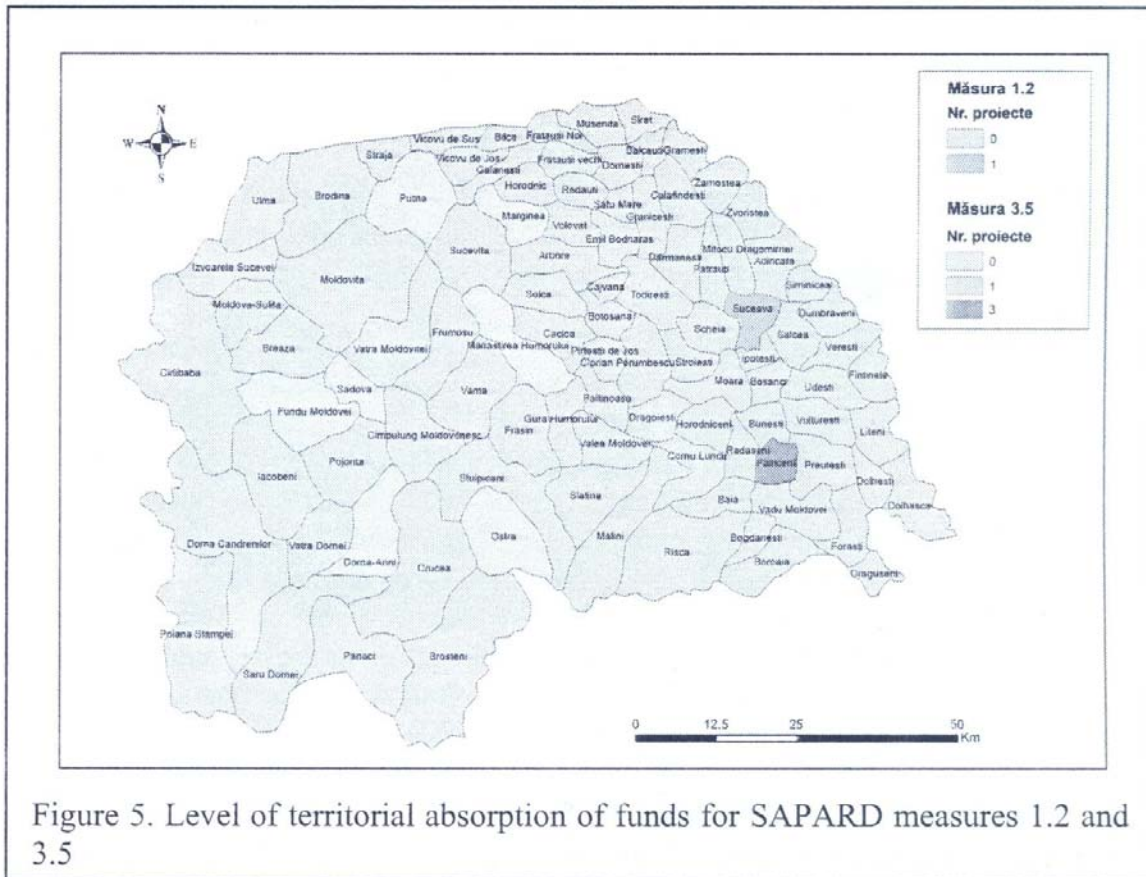


Figure 5. Level of territorial absorption of funds for SAPARD measures 1.2 and 3.5

In case of measure 3.5 a number of 11 projects was registered, three of which were located in Falticeni town and the rest scattered in the rural Western half of the county. Half of the last mentioned, were implemented in localities included in the assisted Bucovina Mining area.

The last cartographical representation illustrates a superposing of the existent economic territorial situation, resulted from the accessing of projects financed through the SAPARD Development Programme, over the assisted mining area within the county, which is in its initial phase of development. The small number of investment projects registered here proves the need to have further support for a coherent sustainable development.

This research tried to accomplish a complex and synthetic socio-economic analysis of Suceava County, mainly emphasizing upon the quantitative and qualitative results registered in the territory. It was meant to underline its real potential of development, and the level of initiative of each type of beneficiary involved directly in this process of rural economic development. The time dimension maintains its importance as well,

so that the reaction of the population would be properly reflected in the practicing and developing of economic activities in the territory.

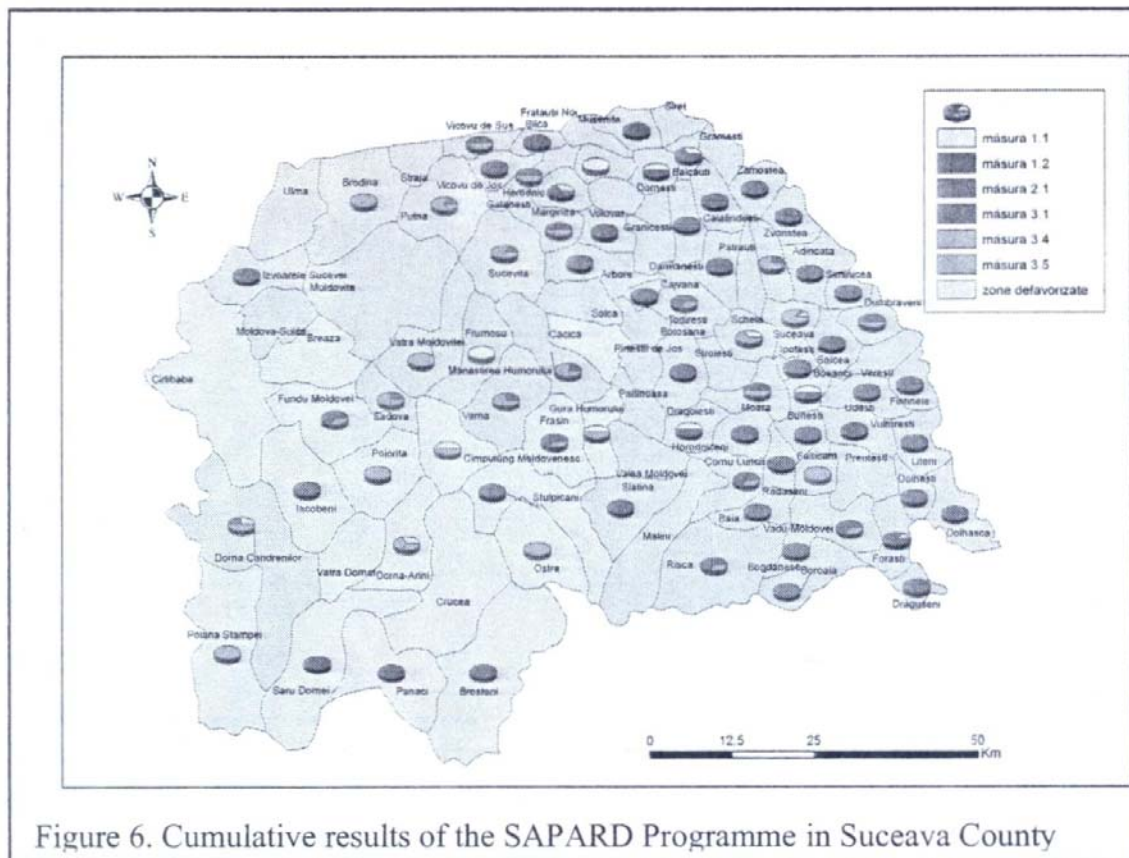


Figure 6. Cumulative results of the SAPARD Programme in Suceava County

Conclusions

The continuously developing economic sectors such as: agriculture, alimentary industry, alternative economic activities as well as tourism; evolving towards constancy, succeed to act and integrate in almost any space provider of natural and anthropic resources available for exploitation and management. Besides, they interdependently grow and interact one with another and with other adjacent and connected economic sectors such as. The socio-economic impact, therefore, appears at all structural levels that suffer alterations or that induce certain modifications to the other activities. Thus, the integrative process of economic development in which all these are framed as production activities, depends on a large range of economic activities. The process of modernization of the local technical infrastructure, of turning an economically unexploited space into a service provider space, and consequently, into a production space for the inhabitants, comes to sustain the local development from both the economic and social points of view. The quantitative results in what

population is concerned shows a number of about 995 new employed workforce, with an average age of 35 years old, most of them being local inhabitants but about 10% representing commuters, as well. Engaging a category of young and qualified population in new and competitive economic activities improves the overall social state of the area.

References

N.Popp, I. Iosep, D. Paulencu - (1973) – *Judetul Suceava*. Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste Romania, Bucuresti

*** (2005) - *Oameni, perseverență, schimbare*, Fact Sheet, Ministerul Integrării Europene, București

*** (2006) - *Planul de dezvoltare regională Nord-Est 2007-2013*, Fact Sheet, Agenția de Dezvoltare Regională Nord Est, Neamț

*** *Ghidul solicitantului, Măsura 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 3.1, 3.4, 3.5*, Agenția Sapard,

<http://www.sapard.ro/modules/freecontent/index.php?id=4>

*** *Council Regulation No 1268/1999* of 21 June 1999 on Community support for pre-accession measures for agriculture and rural development in the applicant countries of central and eastern Europe in the pre-accession period, in Official Journal of the European Communities, L 161/87,

http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/1999/l_161/l_16119990626en00870093.pdf

#search=%22%20council%20regulation%201268%2F1999%22

*** *Council Regulation No 1258/1999* of 17 May 1999 on the financing of the common agricultural policy, in Official Journal of the European Communities, L 160/103,

http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/1999/l_160/l_16019990626en01030112.pdf

#search=%22%20council%20regulation%201258%2F1999%22