

Opportunities and Conditionality in the Development of Fishing Communities in the Lower Prut

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Among all the factors that determine the development of the Romanian economy, alongside measures and levers used on the macroeconomic level, a particular importance is given to the development and application by local communities of strategies that take into account some particularities, restrictions and opportunities of the socio-economic environment, but also their opportunities of strategic action. In this context, taking into account the transformations that dominate the socio-economic environment and the previsions of the evolution of the local economy, we can identify a number of elements that can generate some performance in the fishing industry and complementary activities that could be initiated in rural areas related to this perimeter of the lower Prut floodplain.

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1. Introduction

Lower Prut Basin fisheries areas have a special importance in terms of economic and social, [1] of their size, diversity of natural and human resources that we have, impacting directly and indirectly in social development and ensure profitability rural economy. Moreover, fishing can be a profitable activity for the area's economy, given that there are legitimate concerns to ensure economic sustainability, halting poaching, adaptation to permanent changes of nature, etc.

In general, fishing areas are economically weak, with few jobs, from causes related to lack of income or reduced income earned by the population in these areas, deficient public services and infrastructure, limited access to information, [2] as well as the low representation of community interests among local authorities. On the other hand, awareness of the human and material potential is not a sufficient condition for development of rural communities in general, and of the fishery, in particular, but it involves the transformation of the peasant into a key element of the regional economy, and encouraging their entrepreneurial spirit.

Promoting traditional activities as activities generating opportunities for local economic development and diversifying and sustaining activities complementary to fishing is a socio-economic necessity for medium and long term. Such an approach can be an motor of economic growth by creating new jobs and increasing incomes for the rural population, but attention should be focused on economic and social potential of each locality in part by creating and developing modern market infrastructure, adapted to the specificity of the homestead[3].

Considering the genuine potential of the fishing area of Lower Prut due to the existence of a rich, valuable and attractive, natural and human heritage, there can be developed a wide range of activities complementary to fishing, activities that may give an additional value to the economy of the area and which may be a prerequisite for socio-economic development. Fisheries activities have developed a multifunctional dimension [4] and a relevant role in areas such as environment, culture, recreation and tourism, science, energy and education.

The fishing communities in the Lower Prut perimeter play a very important economic and social role in the development of the area. By their specificity, these areas have exploited fishery resources and water surfaces appointed as hatcheries and fish farms, which allow implementation

under appropriate conditions of fishing activities, particularly recreational fishing, recreational and sports fishing.

2. Description of the development framework of fishing communities

The settlements in the territory of the lower Prut floodplain are poorly developed economically and socially, some communes or villages in this area still holding some potential that is not exploited but with many material resources, natural and human. which remain inactive. Within this perimeter there are delineated two territorial structures, each with specific well defined features: a structure located near the city of Galați, with relatively more pronounced economic and social development, with a younger population, whose employment opportunities are given by steel company Mittal Steel, the shipyard Damen, and various public institutions and trade, and the second territorial structure includes towns in northern perimeter, at a considerable distance from Galați, less developed economically and socially which has an aging population, and the main sources of employment of labor are provided by agriculture in a proportion of 80-90%, livestock, fisheries.

Throughout the territory for the lower Prut floodplain there are many problems caused by inadequate management of ponds landscaped as fish farms, but the situation is also difficult in the case of land left derelict or puddle, as Lake Pochina from Rogojeni. In general, municipalities are characterized by an obvious restriction of fishing activities due to various causes, such as the low level of the Prut River, the absence of fish species in the river, numerous privately owned ponds, etc. On the other hand, commercial fishing is practiced in this area for dozens of fishermen, mostly, recreational fishermen, grouped in associations. The fisheries sector is "down" after 1990, causing the bankruptcy of the company Pescogal, and the privatization process was slow, mainly due to the uncertain status of land under water. Currently, there are a few farms that are "fighting" for survival, such as Șovârca farm near Oancea and farm Vlădești. The recreational and sport fishing sector is managed by the County Association of Hunters and Anglers, who took over a few years ago the former production farm Mața – Rădeanu, in the north of the Galați county.

Importantly, both fishing communities and local stakeholders are aware of the untapped potential natural and human resources, somewhat caught in a certain "inertia" inherited and perpetuated, potential that can be engaged in various activities complementary to fishing, activities that can raise the standard of living of residents. It should be noted that in some places in this area there have existed but no longer exist, various kinds of "business" initiated mainly by foreign investors, who have been successful, but for relatively short periods of time - for example in the village Rogojeni there was a crayfish farm, a mushroom farm, and an unfinished initiative of building a typical peasant household to receive amateur fishermen in the surroundings of Galați.

On the fishing communities of the lower Prut floodplain area there was conducted a study where there were applied and synthesized information gathered through a questionnaire.

In order to have a more complete and complex image on the development of economic, social life in the fishing communities, there was considered necessary to conduct this study, which had the following **objectives**:

- shaping community profile and the current limits of fishing activities;
- identifying the target group attitude towards the way in which local authorities are involved in activities specific to local economy;
- establishing the importance and place that would be occupied by activities other than the traditional ones in the developing of fishing communities;
- defining complementary activities in the economy of each locality;
- structuring new insights into economic and social development within the entire perimeter of the lower Prut floodplain;
- identifying possible activities that could be initiated and developed within each locality and ways to improve living standards and life of humans within local economies.

The representative sample was composed of 83 respondents from towns Galați – Port area, Tulucești, Frumușița, Foltești, Măstăcani, Vlădești, Oancea, Suceveni and Cavadinești. In this research, we chose a relatively complex approach, namely issues related to the activities currently carried out in the towns located along the lower Prut floodplain, the role of community - local authorities in the rural economy, the appreciation of the current economic and social context, the role of the processes of information - communication in relation fishermen - factors with local responsibility, the academic community, etc..

3. Analysis of fishing communities in the current socio-economic context

The analysis of the questionnaire highlighted the following characteristics of fishing communities in the analyzed area:

- fishing is a traditional activity, important for rural communities, practiced since ancient times for family maintenance, feeding and environmental protection;
- fishing areas are economically weak, with few jobs and low income;
- fishing activities are developed "gradually" being correlated with the existing and future development of settlements located along the lower Prut floodplain;
- the relationship local community - local authorities is "shaky", even non existent in some localities of the examined area;
- the need to identify opportunities for business development in the fishing sector and the complementary one, based on the existing social and economic context;
- expectations of members of fishing communities are related to issues which can considerably increase discretionary income, which can generate new jobs and which can contribute to the optimism of residents.

The questionnaire launched to establish the actual framework of fishing communities was structured on a set of nine open questions, from simple to complex, which covered the whole range of objectives set initially. Following data collection and processing, the most representative aspects that were revealed are:

- linked to employment of the respondents in the analyzed territory, it has been found that there exists a concentration and distribution of responses, depending on the degree of local development. Thus, places the least developed economically and socially are from the northern perimeter analyzed: Cavadinesti with a 1% within respondents, Suceveni respectively Rogojeni village with a rate of 5% and the place Vlădești with only 7 %, for the situation to change as the settlements are located in the municipality of Galați: Oancea, 31%, neighborhood Port Galați, with a percentage of 22%, Frumușița 14% and an equal percentage of 10% localities Foltești and Tulucești.

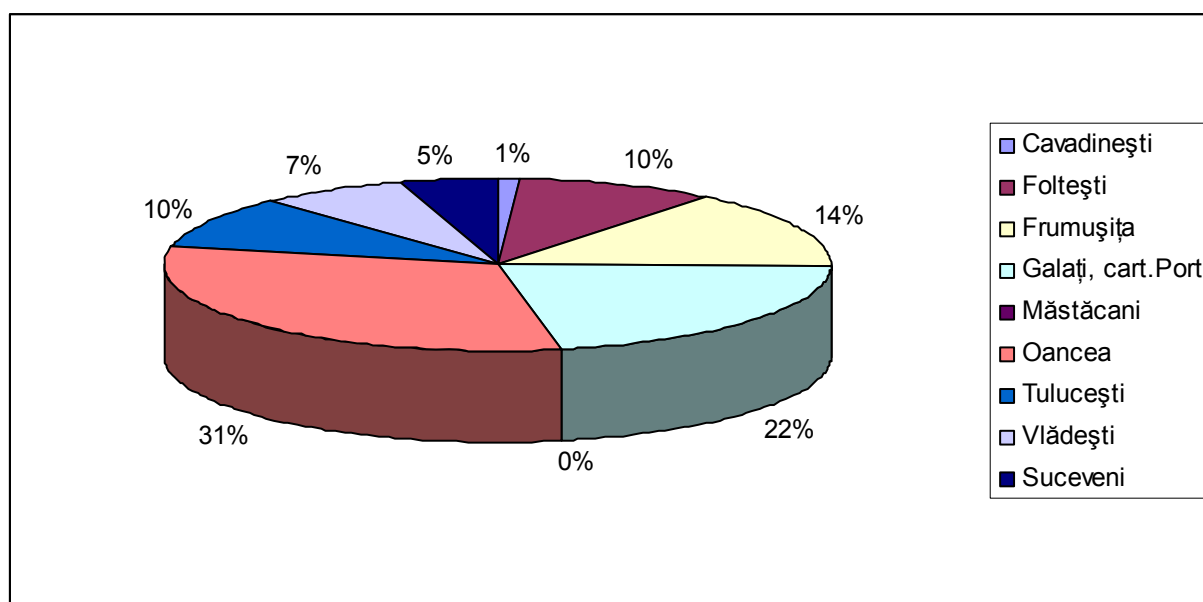


Fig.1.1. Target group representation in the territorial profile

- another important milestone of the study was assessing the degree of development of fishing activities in the locality. Responses to this question were structured on a rating scale with five steps, and after processing the information, there was noted an upper limit of 26 respondents who value these activities as developed to a large extent, followed by a number of 20 respondents who rated the fishery activities as developed to a very great extent. The lower limit is between 10-19%

and is given by people who claimed that such activities are developed in a much lesser extent in the localities analyzed.

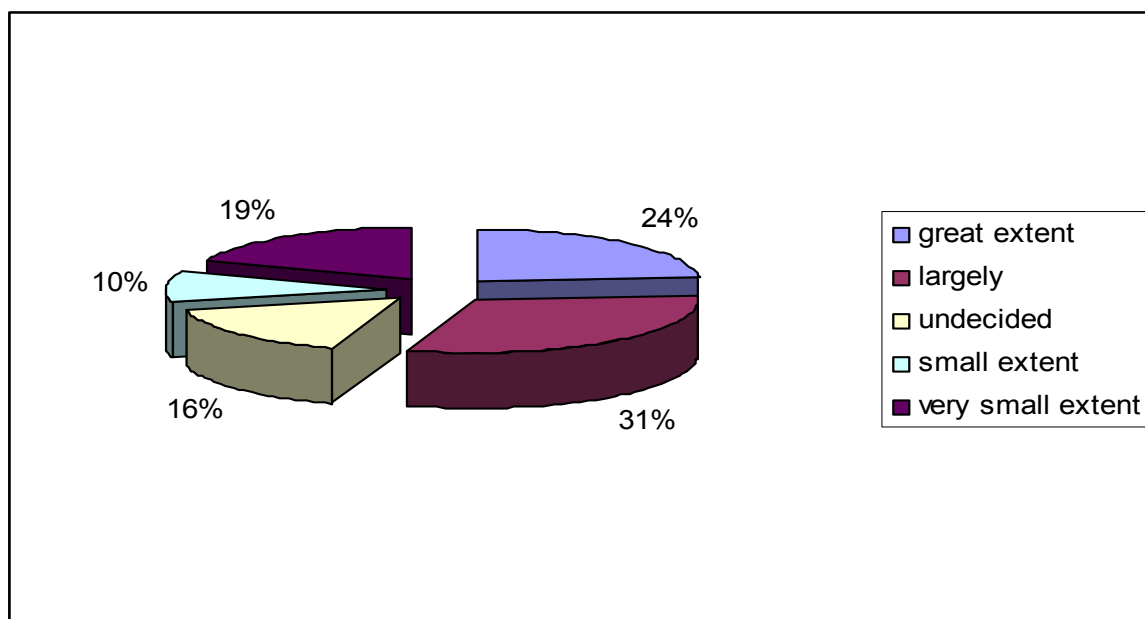


Fig.1.2. Representation of the degree of development of fishing activities in the village

- assessing the place and role of activities complementary to fishing in the development of local economy in the current context, divided into five levels of assessment, from strongly agree to strongly disagree, revealed that there is an upper limit with a high percentage of 59% of the responses that were in total agreement on the important role that such activities may have on the future development of cities and a lower limit of 8% of all respondents that disagreed with this statement of the question.

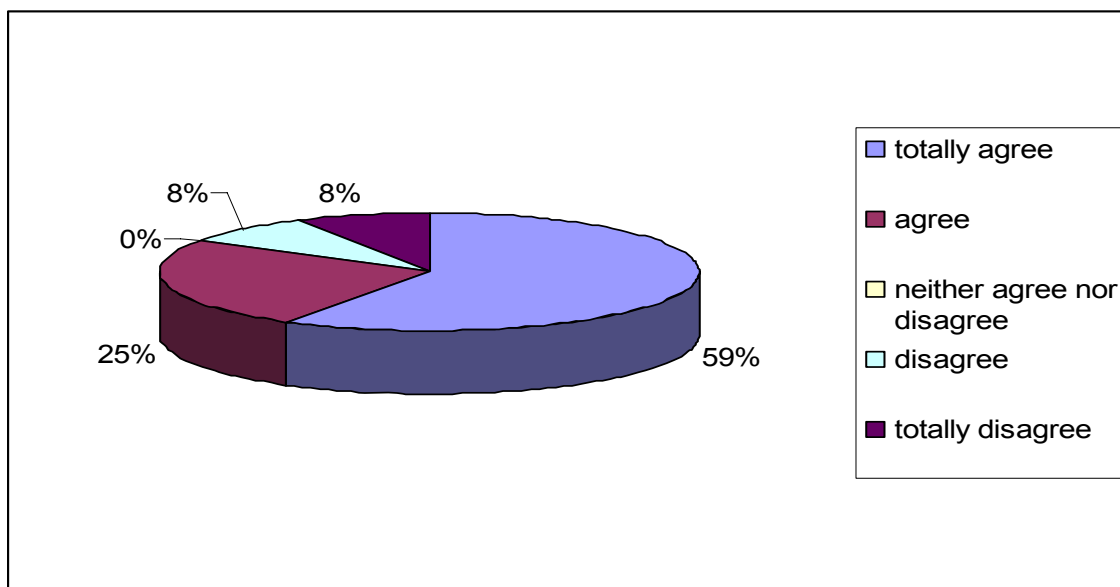


Fig.1.3. Representation of the role of complementary activities in the local economy

- another major element of the study regarded the expectations of fishing communities concerning the development of activities that are complementary to the traditional which can generate benefits to all members of municipalities and a higher income.

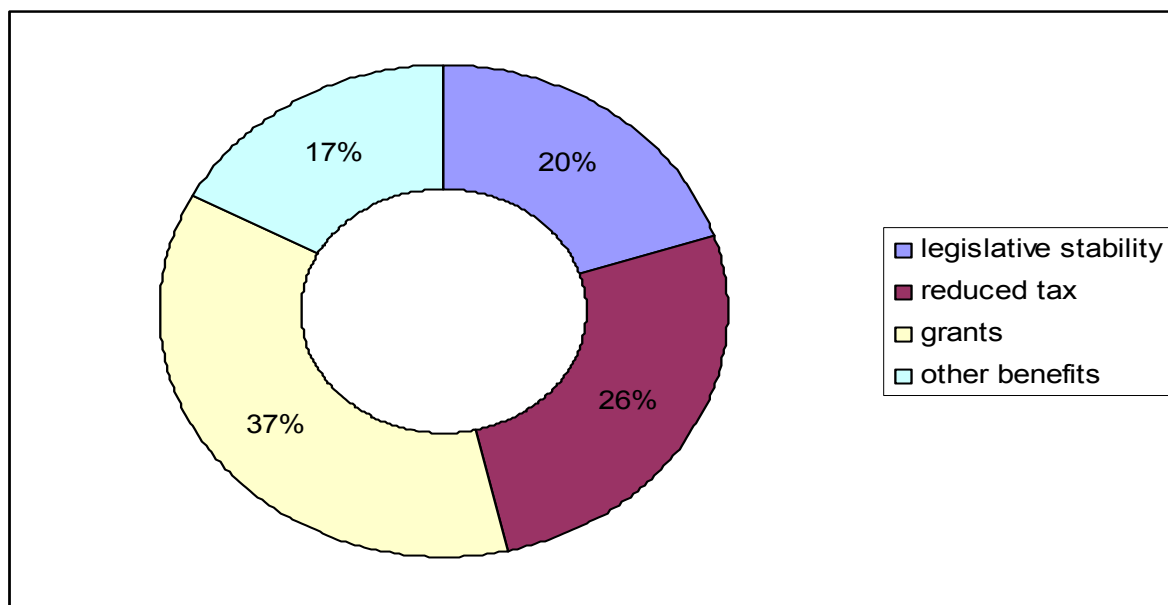


Fig.1.4. Representation of the expectations of target group in connection with complementary activities

The analysis of the information collected revealed the following structure of the expectations relating to starting activities complementary to fishing: 42 respondents have expectations connected to obtaining grants to facilitate the start of complementary activities, 31 respondents aim to achieve a low-taxation, which bring them more discretionary income households and only 23 respondents considered a legislative stability that lead them to initiate and different activities outside the traditional communities in which they belong.

✚ establishing the options of the members of fishing communities in relation to the types of complementary activities that could be initiated and developed in areas of meadow of lower Prut, activities that would have a significant contribution to the future development of local economy there could be highlighted some such activities "approved" in the local economy. The highest share in this respect, is held by angling with a percentage of 26% of the total, craft activities with a total of 20%, while agritourism is appreciated at a rate of only 7% of the total and repairs for boats 5% of the total of 83 interviewed.

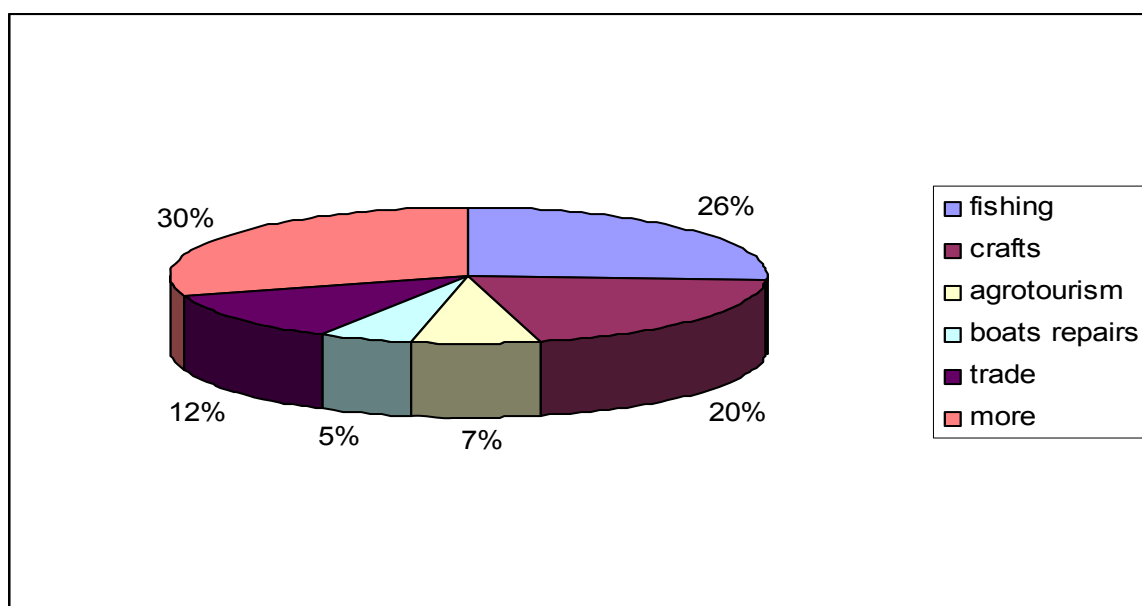


Fig.1.5. Representation of types of complementary activities that could be initiated

The involvement of the rural population in economic, cultural and social activities, increases economic opportunities for those with low incomes, facilitates intercultural experiences, boosting the preservation of representative traditions and values amplifies and enhances the capacity of rural communities and fisheries to decide how to manage their own resources in the spirit of the connections between past, present and future.

4. Conclusions

The durable economical and social development of rural areas is linked to understanding and adapting all the traditional or complementary activities to the dynamism of daily life by initiating actions to prioritize and promote the traditions, customs, values through marketing communication that can strengthen the bridge between past, present and future and provide to the community extra energy, value and openness. Integrated development of rural areas, educating people in this environment and their orientation towards complementary economic activities, as well as the increase in the growth potential of this type of activity will inevitably lead to increasing employment and improving quality of life. The increase of employment opportunities by supporting new forms of occupational rural communities, promoting entrepreneurial culture in the development of non-agricultural activities form a durable and sustainable community development.

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