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ANALYSIS OF AGRICULTURE IN VÂLCEA COUNTY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

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Abstract: The authors of this paper analyze the state of agricultural development in Vâlcea County and propose strategies for sustainable development in line with the current needs of the rural economy and European agricultural policies. The study highlights the main characteristics of the agricultural sector by analyzing crop and livestock production, as well as how existing natural resources are utilized. The research identifies the main trends and shortcomings of local agriculture, driven by the fragmentation of farms, low levels of technological adoption, and difficulties in accessing markets. Based on the results obtained, the paper proposes a series of strategies aimed at modernizing agricultural holdings, diversifying production, developing organic farming, forming producer associations, and promoting local products.

• **Introduction**

Agriculture is an essential area of the Romanian economy, contributing significantly to ensuring food resources, the efficient use of natural resources and supporting the development of rural areas. Vâlcea County has natural conditions favorable to agricultural activities, due to the diversity of the relief, climatic conditions and the existence of various natural resources. The county's agriculture is characterized by a mixed structure, with both plant and animal husbandry activities being practiced.

• **Material and method**

In order to carry out the research, statistical data and information from official sources and specialized literature in the field of agriculture and rural development were used. The main data sources used were the National Institute of Statistics, the Tempo Online database, as well as specialized documents and reports. To highlight the evolution of agriculture, statistical data related to the analyzed period were used, which were processed and interpreted using tables and graphical representations.

• **Results and discussions**

Vâlcea County is located in the central-southern part of Romania and belongs to the South-West Oltenia Development Region. The county's relief is varied, consisting of mountainous, sub-mountainous, hilly and depression areas, an aspect that directly influences the development of agricultural activities.

Agriculture is an important activity for the rural economy of Vâlcea County, but this sector is influenced by a series of factors such as the fragmentation of agricultural holdings, the low level of mechanization and climate change.

Next, the main components of agricultural production in Vâlcea County are analyzed, namely crop production, animal production and agricultural services, as can be seen in the following figure.

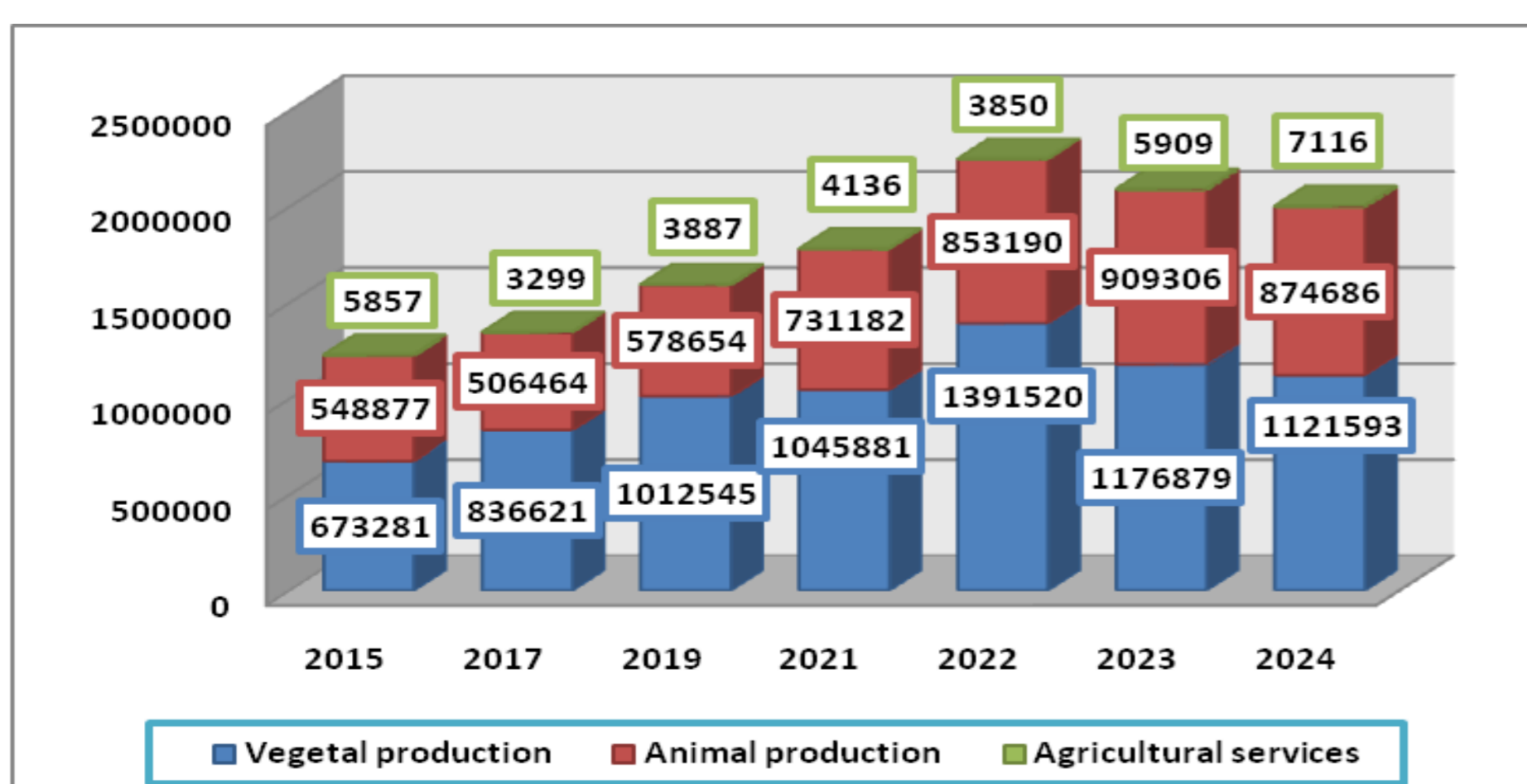


Figure 1. Evolution of agricultural production in Vâlcea County, during 2015–2024

Data analysis highlights a fluctuating, but generally upward, evolution of total agricultural production in Vâlcea County during the period 2015–2024

In addition to the crop sector, an important role in the agriculture of Vâlcea County is also played by the livestock sector, which contributes significantly to the development of the rural economy and the valorization of existing natural resources. Therefore, we will continue to analyze the evolution of the existing livestock in Vâlcea County, as follows:

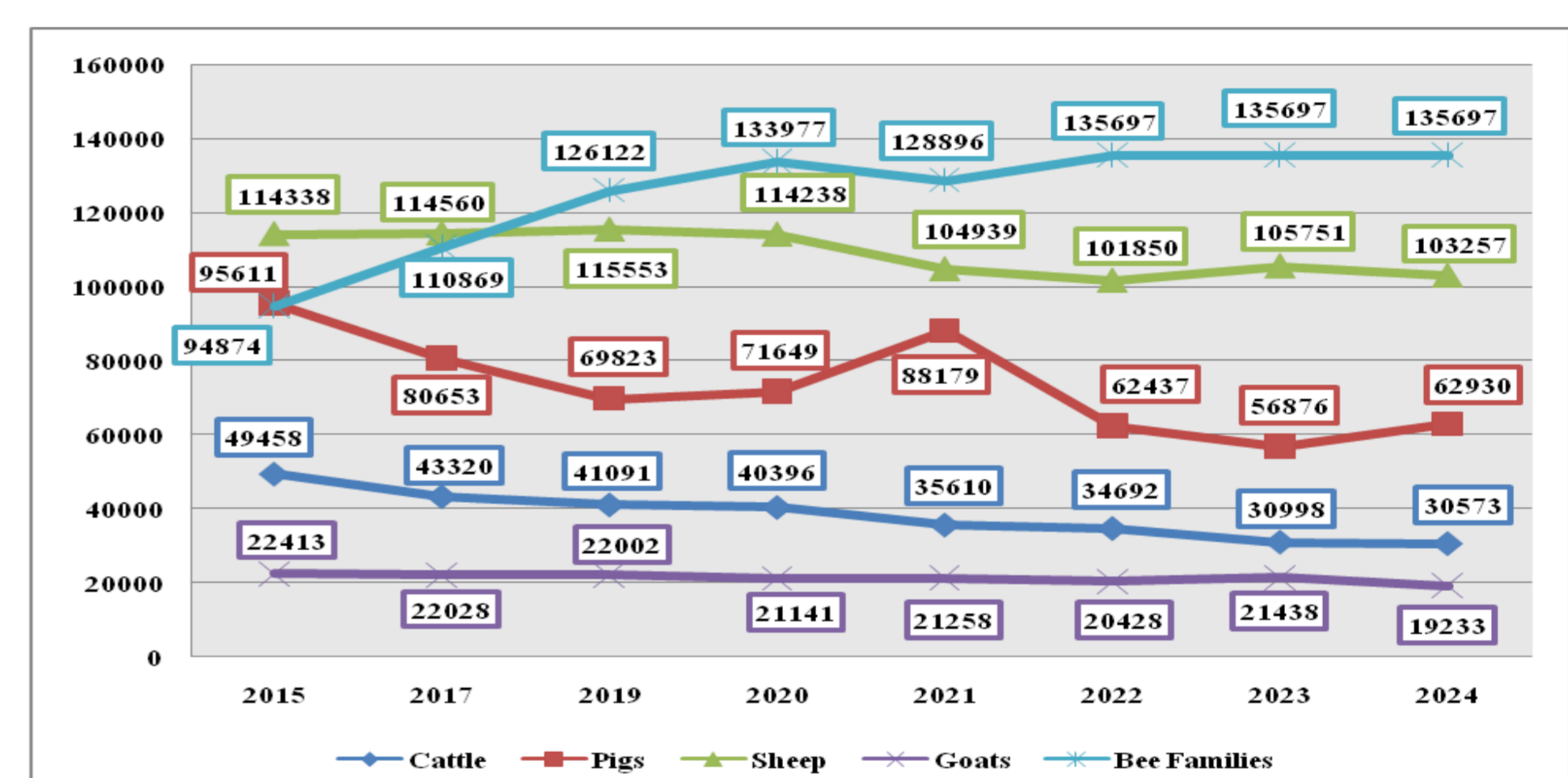


Figure 2. Evolution of main livestock categories in Valcea county

Data analysis highlights the fact that livestock in Vâlcea County recorded fluctuations during the analyzed period. Cattle and horse herds show a decreasing trend, while sheep herds remain at relatively high values throughout the entire analyzed period.

Based on the results obtained from the analysis of the plant and livestock sector, a series of strategies aimed at the sustainable development of agriculture in Vâlcea County were formulated, presented in the diagram below.



Figure 3. Sustainable development strategies for agriculture in Vâlcea County

By implementing the proposed strategies, agriculture in Vâlcea County can more efficiently capitalize on existing resources, thus contributing to the sustainable development of rural areas and increasing the competitiveness of the agricultural sector.

• **Conclusions**

Agriculture in Vâlcea County represents an important sector of the local economy, playing a significant role in the exploitation of natural resources and in supporting economic activities in the rural area. The research results show that agricultural plant production holds an important share in the county's agriculture, with cereal crops occupying the largest cultivated areas.