

Opinion about the dissertation

of Ing. Basel Abbas

“The Effect of European Partnership on the Agricultural Policy of Syria”

The Ph.D. thesis deals with a topic which is of a high importance for both European Union and its neighbour countries. The thesis consists of totally 165 pages (including annexes), the main part of the dissertation covers 130 pages and is divided into 9 chapters which include theoretical as well as own analytical part. The thesis is written in clear and understandable language. Only occasional use of expressions such as: “I need to ...” or “I apply ...” is not well suited for this kind of scientific work.

Literature review which covers about 50 pages describes agriculture in the context of the Syrian and EU economy, EU-Syrian relations, public policies analysis; gives an overview about Syrian agricultural policy, and explains theoretically the Policy Analysis Matrix. This part gives the reader sufficient information about issues which are analysed in following chapters. Only minor deficiencies can be found in this part (e.g. p. 14 – Financial Solidarity – funding of the CAP is currently provided not only by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development but the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund manages much more financial sources for the agricultural policy; tables 3 and 5 do not enable comparison of overall Syrian trade and trade with EU due to different time series, currencies and commodities). Chapter 2.5.4 Trade Policy is dealing generally with the foreign trade and should be better shifted before agriculture issues.

Objectives of the thesis are relatively simple but clear and have a potential to answer important questions usable by formulating future Syrian agricultural policy. The following hypotheses correspond to the aims and are sufficient with respect to the topic of the thesis.

Methodology of the thesis is described in the chapter 4. The first part (Application of the Policy Analysis Matrix) develops and partly repeats information from the chapter 2.7 (Policy Analysis Matrix). An incorporation of the chapter 2.7 into the Methodology would be more understandable and clearer for the reader. The table 12 is just extended table 11; their merging would avoid duplication of information. The reader would also appreciate to find some links between terms used in the policy analysis matrix and explained terms of financial and economic profitability (p 67). Economic indicators (p. 69) could be presented in more transparent way by unifying their description (indicators are described partly in a table and partly as a text).

Chapter 5 is dealing with policy and production in Syria. Characteristic of agricultural commodities' prices is partly repeating information presented in the chapter 2.5.3. Repeating information is a disturbing element of more parts in analytical chapters (e.g. explaining private and social costs, p. 85). Some tables use not explained abbreviation – S.P (probably Syrian Pound). The table 28 (p. 99) is probably a combination of originally two different tables into one because the columns “Revenues, Input and Factor” give no sense in the lower part of the table. Above mentioned shortcomings are not of fundamental, they only disturb an easy reading and clear understanding.

The analytical part keeps often on theoretical level and does not exploit results from presented model as much as it could. For example, chapters 5.3.5 (Results of PAM Application) or 5.3.6 (Evaluation of Costs and Benefits of the Partnership Agreement) are mostly theoretical and findings

from the performed analysis are used just sporadically. The same applies to conclusions in following chapter 5.4.

The main analytical part which is dealing with the dissertation objectives consists in the chapter 6 (Modelling a Situation after the Partnership Agreement), and chapter 7 (Effects of the Partnership Agreement). It is a pity that information obtained from the analysis is not widely synthesized for a purpose of drawing conclusions and final discussion. It does not mean that the aims of the thesis are not fulfilled; nevertheless, the potential of the dissertation is not fully exploited to bring a greater added value.

I have following questions to the Ph.D. thesis:

- Can the author comment and compare economic indicators calculated for current situation in Syria and for situation after entering the Partnership Agreement into force, and justify and support final recommendations in the chapter 8 (p. 122)?
- How the author evaluates activities and overall purpose of the Union for the Mediterranean with respect to economic development of the region? Should the Union change its future priorities and orientation after stabilisation in the Arab countries?

Despite of above mentioned shortcomings, the dissertation of Ing. Basel Abbas has fulfilled its aims and has given adequate statements to formulated hypotheses. The dissertation fulfils standards requested from Ph.D. thesis. Ing. Basel Abbas has proved that he can apply economic theories to solve practical problems at an appropriate level. Current situation in Syria does not enable to perform guaranteed predictions, but the future of the country will require sophisticated approaches in research and development, and experts who will be able to provide them. Ing. Abbas has proved an adequate erudition in his thesis. From these reasons I recommend to defend the dissertation in front of the committee, and in case of a successful defence, to grant to Ing. Basel Abbas the title Ph.D.

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