

THE “PROFITABLE AGRI-BUSINESS” CONFERENCE / ACHIM IRIMESCU,
MADR:

“The European Commission does not approve the project for the sale of land to individuals”

The European Commission does not agree to the project promoted by the Romanian authorities concerning the sale of land to individuals, said Achim Irimescu, secretary of state in the Ministry Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR), and he said that European officials will help us in drawing up a better document in that area.

Achim Irimescu said: “Among other things, we were proposing capping the surface an investor would be allowed to buy at 100 hectares and requiring five years of agricultural expertise. Producers have agreed with us, but the European Commission has a different approach, but it has assured us that we will assist us in drafting up a new version”.

The draft law stipulates that individuals will be able to buy plots of land outside the city area only if they provide proof that they have agricultural knowledge.

Foreign individuals are not currently allowed to farmland in Romania, an interdiction which is set to expire on January 1st, 2014.

Achim Irimescu stressed the fact that the authorities need to pay special attention to young farmers and to support their growth, saying that “without young farmers, we will not have any food tomorrow”.

In his opinion, the banks can not afford to ignore the agricultural sector any longer, which is so important for the country’s economic development.

According to the official, financing is one of the major problems of the sector: “Whereas we used to have a budget of 300-400 million Euros, we have now come to the point where we allocate yearly 3-4 billion Euros, but it is still not enough”.

In his opinion, it would be a good thing if Romania had a single mutual fund for insuring farmers against calamities or pests, meaning it would have a far greater capital together. A threat that our agriculture is faced with concerns the artificial conditions. In that regard, Mr. Irimescu said: “There is a great risk of the EC resorting to a lump sum penalty. There are cases, in Romania of artificial conditions in the case of several measures. This is a new obsession that the European Commission resorts to in order penalize the member states and to get its money back from them, and Romania is a tell-tale case in that regard”.

The agricultural authorities intend to launch the National Rural Development Program (PNDR) in the second half of 2014, and until then it will send each chapter to the European Commission for approval.

According to Mr. Irimescu, the instability at the Ministry, where ministers have been frequently replaced, is harmful for the activity of the institution, and thus affects the development of the agricultural sector.

EMILIA OLESCU
