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DOES SMART AGRICULTURE GO DOWNSTREAM IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN?

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays it seems to be imperative for smart farms to go downstream in the Supply Chain (SC) to supplement the revenues of their underlying product sales. Using the well-structured database of Eurostat Supply tables for EU-27, this study intends to verify what products the Agricultural sector is offering beyond its core business activity to diversify its portfolio. The findings demonstrate that Agriculture is going downstream in the SC, predominantly moving towards its traditional activities: food processing, agro-tourism, and recreation. Green energy is the newcomer. Smart farmers should innovate in the mainstream of their secondary activities, using the leverage of lucrative activities and rethinking their vertical integration.

- Keywords: agricultural portfolio diversification, farmer choices, supply chain, growth and share matrix, supply tables, secondary production -

Research on Food Supply Chain (FSC) entails various difficulties. Prevailing among these is the quantification of the production value obtained by agriculture from outside its core activities, such as from: food processing, accommodation and food services, wholesale and retail, and other services. These concerns are general problems that likewise involve every other industry. When evaluations are done, they often appear to be very partial (being limited to a specific product e.g. an organic one), unstructured (e.g. applying un-standardised and non-homologated classifications), and suffering from duplication (e.g. the turnover from direct sales which is already included in the value of primary agricultural materials, as noted in KEAFSEY *et al.* (2013). What is needed, therefore, is the provision of a complete, standardised and certified database, without any duplication, specifically such as the one described hereafter. Over the last 5 years, Eurostat has disseminated a new set of input-output tables, named Supply and Use, in conformity with NACE and CPA classifications within the framework of the ESA-95 system, and harmonised with the UN-System of National Accounts and the ISIC classification (EUROSTAT, 2008). In this database, the Supply table provides the value of core business production for each industry, as well as of secondary productions that are, in the main, core competences of other sectors. Contextually, the Supply table provides the value of a group of homogeneous products (e.g. Agricultural products) supplied to the economy as a whole by each sector, broken down by the industries that deliver it as a principal product. Two annual time series have been utilised: the first encompasses the 2000-2007 period, and was compiled using the NACE rev. 1.1 classification, while the second has recently been published (in 2013) according to the NACE rev. 2 classifications, and contains EU-27 and EA-17 tables for 2008-2009, as well as with data limited to 12 EU countries for 2010. This study utilises the first series for an inter-temporal comparison (2000-2007), and the second series for an up-to-date evaluation relating to the last available year (2009).

The study objectives are as follows: 1) to quantify the value of activities included in the Agriculture portfolio that are classified by Eurostat as primary and secondary production, which pertain to the core business of other industries; 2) to create a Boston Consulting Group (BCG) Growth-Share Matrix in order to verify farmers' choices and expectations regarding downstream paths of diversification in the FSC (HENDERSON, 1970); and 3) to evaluate the difficulties facing Agriculture in its attempt to diversify its portfolio, and offer suggestions about potential opportunities in this regard.

This study utilises the EU-27 Supply matrixes that reflect the primary characterising and secondary non-characterising production activities of industries. Generally, survey results mainly concern enterprises with numerous secondary activities, and it is the principal activity of an enterprise that determines its allocation to a specific industry classification. The columns of the Supply matrix present the production program for each industry, including the output of its primary and secondary productions. For each bundle of products listed in the rows (following CPA classifications), it is possible to find the industries that produce those goods as their primary or secondary production listed in the columns. The principal activity or production of an industry is reported on the diagonal of the Supply matrix while secondary activities are listed off the diagonal (EUROSTAT 2008).

For the period 2000-2007, the European tables, published up to 2012, were using the NACE rev 1.1 Classification of Economic Activities. Until 2004 the geographical reference was EU-15 countries, and EU-25 or EU-27 thereafter. The national accounts domain as a whole has implemented the NACE rev 2. Classification of Economic Activities (harmonised with UN ISIC rev. 4), and has applied this since the 2008 reference year. The latest input-output tables were published in 2013, and concern the 2008 and 2009 years for EU-27 and EA-17 countries. These tables have been built on the basis of the new industry classification.

The first part of this study refers to the activities (included in the NACE rev.2 classification under Section A, Division 01) denoted as "Crop and animal production, hunting, and related service activities", which encompass seven groups, articulated as follows: 01.1 Growing of non-perennial crops; 01.2 Growing of perennial crops; 01.3 Plant propagation; 01.4 Animal production; 01.5 Mixed farming; 01.6 Support activities to agriculture and post-harvest crop activities; and 01.7 Hunting, trapping, and related service activities. These groups are then further articulated in 25 classes (EUROSTAT, 2008a). Secondary activities/productions are all those which are not included in the above definitions, and which are appropriately classified under other industries/groups of products, according to the same NACE rev. 2/CPA classification.

After having calculated the economic importance of primary and secondary Agriculture production for EU-27 (2009), articulated by the core competences of industrial sectors, the methodology of BCG has been applied. This last consists of the construction of a Growth-Share Matrix (GSM), modified appropriately for the purposes of this study. For EU-27 in the 2000-2007 period (adopting the old NACE rev. 1.1 classification), the compound growth rate of each ex-

tra-agricultural production (y-axis of the GSM graph), as well as the logarithm of its share (in %) of agricultural secondary production (x-axis of the GSM graph), has been calculated for 2007. This is an alternative application of GSM, since the aim is to establish the position of agricultural secondary activities in the farmers' portfolio rather than their competitive position in the destination market. However, the results obtained have allowed the classification of Agricultural secondary production under the 4 classical typologies from left to right on the graph, being: a) 'Stars', which are fast-growing investments by Agriculture outside its core business which have a high impact on its secondary activities. A star might only be cash-neutral, despite its strong position. Large amounts of investment may be required to defend their position against competitors; b) 'Question Marks' are fast-growing investments with low share of Agricultural secondary production. Substantial net cash input is required to maintain or increase their production share; c) 'Cash cows', that have a high secondary production share, but are slow growing. These should generate substantial cash inflows ready for use in other investments; and d) 'Dogs', that are secondary productions with low production share and slow-growing investments which generally regard mature product in the final phase of life-cycle. These investments tend to have a negative cash flow, which is likely to continue. However, these typologies are only the result of past investment trends by Agriculture in specific extra-agricultural activities. They do not provide indications of a farms' capability to successfully develop new strategic paths for further downstream diversification in its portfolio of secondary products in the FSC. To overcome difficulties, there is a need for the height of the entry barriers in the destination markets to be determined through specific indexes that are described below. In the literature there are other barrier indexes, but these are not suitable for the purposes of this study (ORR, 1974; MANN, 1966). The originality of the Chang indices (compare CHANG and ISEPPI, 2012) is essentially that: (i) each industry/country is compared using a reference system of economic or geographical average behaviour; (ii) the symmetry is fundamental: it considers both the insulation ability of each sector in building up entry barriers, and the invasion ability of other sectors to enter the core business area of the reference industry; and (iii) it also highlights the balance between the performance of entry barriers and the invasion ability. These indices have been applied in order to determine whether the markets of industries into which Agriculture is entering and hoping to expand market share have high or low entry barriers that prevent or allow penetration. These indices allow for both an ordering among individual sectors and individual countries, and for the investigated phe-

nomena to be measured. For each country (and for the complex of countries), the Supply matrix is taken by product and by industry. For a given industry i (n is their number), P_i denotes the proper production (namely the production in the industries' primary field of competence), S_i represents the industries' secondary production in all the remaining group of products, and A_i is the total secondary production of all the other industries involved in the core business of the given industry i . It is necessary to normalise the indexes, specifically:

$$p_i \text{ is } P_i \text{ normalised by } \sum_{j=1}^n A_j \quad (1)$$

$$\alpha_i = A_i \quad \text{normalised by } \sum_{j=1}^n P_j \quad (2)$$

$$s_i = S_i \quad \text{normalised by } \sum_{j=1}^n S_j = \sum_{j=1}^n A_j \quad (3)$$

The first index is the Chang Entry Barrier Index:

$$\Phi_i = \frac{\lg \frac{\alpha_i}{p_i}}{1 + \left| \lg \frac{\alpha_i}{p_i} \right|} \quad (4)$$

The value ranges from -1 to +1. If $\alpha_i = 0$, no penetration happens, hence the index attains the maximum +1. The minimum -1 represents a theoretical case limit in which the entire production of an industrial sector is the secondary of the other sectors.

The second index is the Chang Invasion Index.

$$\sum_{j=1}^n P_j$$

This compares the differences between external secondary activities and internal (incoming) secondary activities, and normalises them with the whole of the balance of secondary activities for all the sectors.

The Chang Invasion Index is:

$$I_i = \frac{(n+1)(S_i - A_i)}{\left(\sum_{j=1}^n |S_j - A_j| \right) + n|S_i + A_i|} \quad (5)$$

(refer also to index 13 in CHANG and ISEPPI, 2011). The index ranges from -1 to 1.

"Of course negative values mean that the invasion undergone by the industry is greater than the penetration it performs, 0 (zero) means balance, positive values mean that it expands more than it is invaded. Thus the index is not only connected to entry barriers, but also tied to the capability or interest to overcome the entry barriers of other sectors" (CHANG and ISEPPI, 2012).

RESULTS

In the EU-27 whole economy (2009), total domestic production at basic prices amounts to €22,028.66 billion. Adding imports of €1,465.66 billion and Direct purchases made abroad by residents, and Subtracting the Cif/fob adjustments on imports, it is possible to obtain a figure for EU total supply of goods and services of €23,649.94 billion, including exports. In respect to domestic production, the percentage share of primary production, corresponding to the sum of core business activity of every industry, accounts for 92.6% of the total production, with a total value of €20,398.84 billion. EU-27 Secondary production amounts to only €1,629.82 billion, corresponding to 7.4%.

In this context, the industry named by NACE rev. 2 as "Crop and animal production, hunting, and related service activities" (hereafter Agriculture) has a total production of €350.42 billion, of which €327.16 billion pertains to primary production (93.36%), and €23.25 billion (6.64%) to secondary production. As can be seen, the incidence of primary production of the Agricultural Industry is above the EU average (93.36% vs. 92.6% respectively), whilst the contrary is the case for secondary production (6.64% vs. 7.4% respectively). This implies that Agriculture is less able and capable to undertake activities outside of its core business than the mean for the economy as a whole. At the same time, the group of products (CPA), named Products of agriculture, hunting, and related services (hereafter Agricultural Production), derives its total production from the activities of both Agriculture and all other industries. The value at ba-

sic prices of agricultural products produced by other industries amounts to only €3.36 billion, being only 1.02%, of total Agricultural production, whilst Agriculture produces the overriding part (98.98% vs. 92.60% of the whole economy production). This is a clear signal that agricultural activity is very difficult to undertake, and that exogenous and endogenous barriers to entry in the agricultural core business are very high. In synthesis, EU Agriculture has the potential to enter the field of primary activity of other industries, but until now it has not even been able to achieve the average share of diversification of the economy as a whole. In the meantime, the above result demonstrates that entering farming's core business is very hard for most firms.

Regarding the diversification of the Agricultural industry, ten groups of products absorb the major part of its efforts, considering those that furnish at least 1% of its secondary production (Table 1). These product groups represent 94.8% of Agriculture secondary production, whilst the remaining 55 groups of products together represent only 5.2%.

The principal fields of secondary activity in EU-27 Agriculture are Food, beverages, and tobacco products, whose value in this field are worth €15.83 billion, being about 68.1% of farmers' total Secondary production. This is a signal that European farms are pursuing an obsolete model of downstream vertical integration, already dismissed by the same manufacturers who now identify the most lucrative downstream activities specifically as services provision rather than transformation of raw materials such as agriculture. This is the profit imperative! (WISE and BAUMGARTNER, 1999).

Table 1 - Agricultural Industry Secondary and Primary Production in the Supply Chain (EU-27, 2009).

No	Code	Secondary Products (CPA) of Agricultural Industry	Million of Euro	% Share
5	CPA_C10-C12	Food products, beverages and tobacco products	15,830	68.08
36	CPA_I	Accommodation and food services	1,265	5.44
27	CPA_F	Constructions and construction works	1,178	5.07
51	CPA_N77	Rental and leasing services	981	4.22
29	CPA_G46	Wholesale trade services, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles	967	4.16
31	CPA_H49	Land transport services and transport services via pipelines	461	1.98
60	CPA_R93	Sporting services and amusement and recreation services	424	1.82
54	CPA_N80-N82	Security and investigation services; services to buildings and landscape; office administrative, office support and other business support services	367	1.58
24	CPA_D35	Electricity, gas, steam and air-conditioning	339	1.46
40	CPA_J62_J63	Computer programming, consultancy and related services; information services	226	0.97
		Agricultural Industry main fields of activities	22,038	94.78
		Other industries < 1% on the Total	1,214	5.22
		Total Secondary Production	23,252	100.0
		Principal Production	327,163	
		Total production of Agricultural Industry	350,415	

Moreover, Agriculture performs downward vertical integration with some service activities, but only marginally, and only in the fields in which it has some sort of traditional experience either in a conservative frame or in up-to-date evolution. These activities are: Accommodation and food services; Rental and leasing services; Wholesale trade services; Land transport services and transport services via pipelines; Sporting services and amusement and recreation services; Security and investigation services; Services to buildings and landscape; Office administrative, office support and other business support services; and Computer programming, consultancy and related services and information services. Construction and construction works are also in the experiential tradition of agriculture, while the activity of Electricity, gas, steam, and air-conditioning is a newer field of activity, encouraged by strong incentives for Green Energy.

This is the state-of-the-arts Agriculture Portfolio. The above reported activities, considering that farmers are mainly conservators, are expected to be considered for further expansion, although the effects of the economic crisis has lead to a general contraction that may upset current trends. There are, however, also innovators among farmers who are considering going deeper into the SC downstream. Like smart manufacturers, they may create new business models to capture profits at the end of the value chain, and to provide steady ser-

vice-revenue by processing, packaging, and marketing commodities and service (Piccinini *et al.*, 2015). This would allow them to capture a larger share of income in subsequent phases of SC (HOLLAND and BRUCH, 2010). From the classification of the Growth and Share Matrix built on EU-27 figures for Agriculture in the 2000-2007 period, the composition of its Secondary production portfolio results in Fig. 1:

1 - the Food and beverages industry is the main source of cash flows, having been classified as a Cash Cow, while still having great potential as a Star. It is a safe investment, although it is growing to a lesser extent than other secondary activities of Agriculture. On the other hand, its cash flow can provide funds for further investments, such as in the areas of quality wines for direct sale, and of luxury farmhouses for rural tourism (RIZZO and GIUDICE, 2013). It also appears (Table 2) that the "Food and beverages" industry has medium-high barriers to entry but this notwithstanding, it is being invaded by other industries. The reason could be that this industry is heterogeneous and, especially in the field of experience goods, niches arise in its market. This is the case with the invasion of Agriculture and its quality wines and olive oils;

2 - Land transports, Real Estate and Other Services are Dogs that Agriculture is now reducing in its investment plan. Although these are markets with low barriers to entry and are sub-

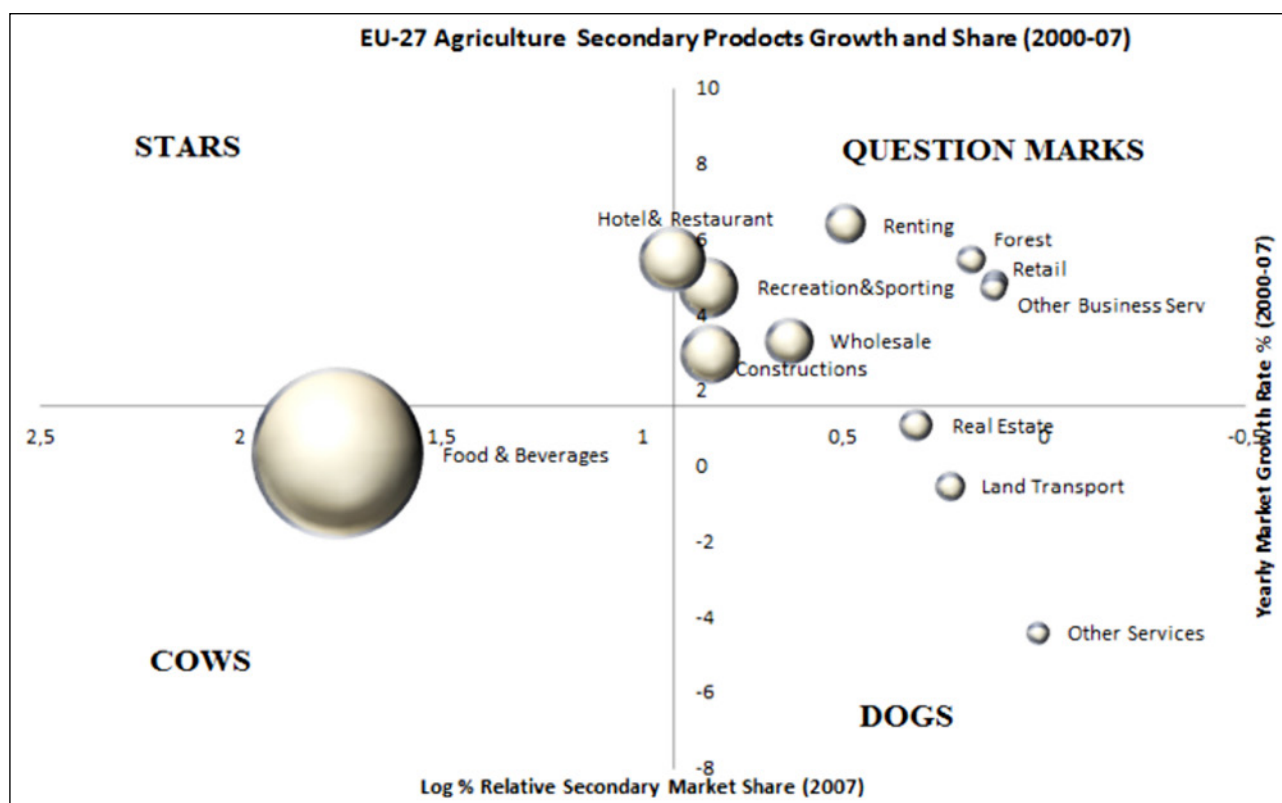


Fig. 1 - Growth and Share Matrix of Secondary Production of EU-27 Agriculture (2000-07). Source: Authors' elaboration on Eurostat data.

Table 2 - Classification of the markets in which EU Agriculture performs its Secondary production.
Source: Authors' elaboration on Eurostat data.

Industries/Groups of products	Chang Entry		Position of Barriers in the		Chang Invasion		Position as Invader in the		Classification	
	Barriers	Index	EU Economy	Ranking (Quartile)	Index	EU Economy	Ranking (Quartile)	Barriers	Capacity to	Invade/ Being Invaded
Products of agriculture, hunting and related services	45		I		47	I		Very High	Strong Invader	
Electrical energy, gas, steam and hot water	39		I		52	I		Very High	Strong Invader	
Construction work	22		II		-12	IV		High	Heavily invaded	
Recreational, cultural and sporting services	21		II		33	I		Medium High	Strong Invader	
Products of forestry, logging and related services	18		II		2	III		Medium High	Invaded	
Food products and beverages	15		II		-4	III		Medium High	Invaded	
Real estate services	0		II		-65	IV		Medium Low	Heavily invaded	
Hotel and restaurant services	-3		III		-28	IV		Medium Low	Heavily invaded	
Land transport; transport via pipeline services	-7		III		-4	III		Low	Invaded	
Retail trade services, except of motor vehicles	-10		III		21	III		Low	Invader	
Other business services	-18		III		-52	IV		Low	Heavily invaded	
Wholesale trade and commission trade services	-27		IV		-3	III		Very Low	Invaded	
Other services	-33		IV		-43	IV		Very Low	Heavily invaded	
Renting services of machinery and equipment	-40		IV		-65	IV		Very Low	Heavily invaded	

ject to being invaded (the former) or heavily invaded (the other two) by new entrants (Table 2), these activities proceed at much lower costs because they are operated by well-structured consolidated incumbents;

3 - there are no activities in Stars for which Agriculture should aim to find more Cash Cows to be milked for future investments;

4 - Question marks are numerous, namely the investments made by agriculture to diversify its portfolio of assets, which are growing at a rate higher than average and represent a real opportunity, albeit at different levels of development and portfolio share. Those which deserve to be examined for their relevance are Hotel and Restaurant (HOTREST) and Recreational, cultural and sporting services (RECREAT) which are on the borderline of being Stars as they are the most dynamic in terms of growth, and it is upon these that EU agriculture focuses its investments. HOTREST has low entrance barriers and a very high predisposition to be invaded; in consequence, Agriculture should have no problems to further expand its sphere of influence in rural tourism. RECREAT has, on the contrary, high barriers to entry and is an invader of other activities, but Agriculture has the means to circumvent these barriers since it possesses land and infrastructures to develop this type of activities (CHANG *et al.*, 2013). Among the other Question marks, namely Rental, Wholesale, Construction, Retail, Forest, and Other business services, only the first two have resisted the economic crisis to remain among the Question marks, while all the others have slipped down into the Dogs' domain. The "real estate bubble" has negatively affected some secondary activities of Agriculture because they do not have enough market share to face, through economies of scale, the challenge of the incumbent crisis. From 2007 to 2009, the number of Question marks dropped from 9 to 5, and this has frozen some agricultural expectations.

CONCLUSIONS

The managerial implications of this study are the following: firstly, it confirms the idea that entering farming's core business could be very hard for newcomers. In a stagnant market, high entry barriers and stability may influence firms, helping them to adopt a long-term viewpoint. This is the strategic element required to optimise rents deriving from firms' market share (RUMELT and WENSLEY, 1981; WERNERFELT, 1982). Secondly, it emerges that EU Agriculture has below average capabilities to engage in activities outside of its core business area. Consequently, specific measures aimed at empowering ancillary businesses should be adopted. This could be done by, for example, empowering internal operations with the implementation of pre and post-sales of in-farm services in order to familiarise and raise

awareness of new clients about its products, and deepen their knowledge of existing product-users respectively.

The final consideration is that if farms, particularly small and medium-sized, want to develop the scope of their direct sales in Retail, they must lean on Food, Hotels and Restaurants, and Recreational Activities, to create integrated projects to exploit their structures and take advantage of the conveyance of clients in proximity to wine and agro-tourism farms and to recreational estates. For example, the structures needed for the direct sale of goods and services require minimal investment and light facilities, and may become customer attractors. An empowered attractor can be an event marketing centred in rural areas, representing a fusion of the four groups: food & wine goods and services, entertainment, and retail trade. This has the advantage of concentrating the commitment of the farmers on the non-agricultural field in a short time, and of bringing a number of new potential customers. As McLuhan says in regards to these events, 'the medium is the message itself'; that is to say, the public essentially requires choral participation, and at the same time creates business (MCLUHAN, 1964).

The previous analysis indicates that farms, although following a traditional downstream model of vertical integration, may innovate along new paths in the mainstream of their secondary activities. Transactional resources such as inter-firm trade contacts (DROLI *et al.*, 2013) could help Agriculture to leverage highly lucrative markets in its portfolio such as Food, Hotels, Restaurants, and Recreational activities, to set up, plan, and organise productive business alliances (cooperation in competitive markets, partnership-based objectives, etc.).

This study does not intend to push the analysis beyond the important aspect of cash flows. Rather, it creates the necessary framework to make future investigation possible.

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GUIDE FOR AUTHORS

ITALIAN JOURNAL OF FOOD SCIENCE -IJFS

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Acknowledgments. Acknowledgments of assistance are appropriate provided they are not related to analyses or other services performed for a fee. Financial support, thanks for assistance, article number or thesis fulfilment may be included.

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