

# REVIEW

by **Prof. Dr. Todorka Stoyanova Atanassova-Kalaydzhieva**

with scientific specialty "Organization and management of production (enterprise management, agricultural management)", PN 3.7 "Administration and management",  
Department of Management, Faculty of Economics, Thracian University, Stara Zagora

on

the materials submitted for participation in a competition for the academic position "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 3. Social, economic and legal sciences, professional field 3.8. Economics, scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Agribusiness)"

In the competition for associate professor, announced in the State Gazette, issue 43 / 21.05.2021 and on the website of VUARR - Plovdiv for the needs of the Department of Economics and Finance at the Department of Economics and Management, as a candidate participates **Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Angel Stankov Sarov** from the Institute of Agrarian Economics (IAE), Agricultural Academy (AA), Sofia.

## 1. BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Angel Stankov Sarov was born on August 21, 1974 in the city of Sofia.

In 1993 he graduated from the Vocational High School of Agriculture and Forestry (BUZEMA) in Sofia with a degree in Plant Breeding and graduated with a professional qualification of technician-technologist.

From October 1994 to July 1998 he studied at the University of National and World Economy, Sofia and graduated with a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Economics.

In 1999 he obtained a Master's degree in Economics from the University of National and World Economy, Sofia.

From January 2013 to February 2017 he was a doctoral student in part-time study at the Institute of Agrarian Economics at the Agricultural Academy, Sofia and acquired the ONS "Doctor" in Economics and Management (by industry). The topic of the successfully defended dissertation is "Management of agricultural cooperatives - challenges and prospects" (Diploma № 0119/13.03.2017).

From December 2013 to October 2017 he was an assistant at the IAE at the AA, Sofia. From October 2017 until now he has held the academic position of assistant and chief assistant at the IAI. From January 2019 to January 2021 he was also head of the Department of Economics and Management of Agriculture, Food and Agricultural Policy at the IAE.

Angel Sarov has conducted four specializations abroad: November 2014, July 2015, August 2016, March 2017 under the Erasmus + program at Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany in the Department of Agricultural Cooperatives and Cooperation, and in the latter he also gives lectures on the thematic course "Management and Marketing of the Cooperative Enterprise".

In September 2018 and in May 2019 he twice specialized in the University "St. St. Cyril and Methodius", Skopje, Republic of Northern Macedonia at the Institute of Agrarian Economics at the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food.

Dr. Sarov is a member of the Tobacco Advisory Board at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

Participates in the editorial board of the magazine "Agricultural Cooperative", published by the National Union of Agricultural Cooperatives in Bulgaria.

He is a member of the Union of Agrarian Economists in the Republic of Northern Macedonia.

He speaks 3 languages: English, French and Russian, and has very good computer skills.

## **2. COMPARISON OF THE MINIMUM NATIONAL REQUIREMENTS UNDER ART. 2B, PARA. 2 AND 3 OF ZRASRB AND THE REQUIREMENTS OF PPZRAS IN VUARR WITH THE RESULTS OF THE SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITY OF THE CANDIDATE FOR ACQUIRING THE ACADEMIC POSITION "ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR"**

Chief Assistant Dr. Angel Stankov Sarov for the participation in the competition for "Associate Professor" has presented documents that are in accordance with the scientometric indicators in Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LASRB), the Regulations for its implementation (PPZRASRB) and the Regulations for implementation of ZRAS in VUARR (PPZRAS) as follows:

- **Category A** (min. Requirements of 50 points) - materials for 50 points are presented.
- **Category B** (min. Requirements of 100 points) - presented a monograph "Assessment of management sustainability of agricultural holdings in Bulgaria", ISBN 978-619-239-210-9; COBISS.BG-ID -1291067620, corresponding to 100 points.
- **Category G** (min. Requirements of 200 points) - materials for 315.3 points are presented.
- **Category D** (min. Requirements of 50 points) - the submitted materials correspond to 65 points.

With the required 400 points, the candidate Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Angel Sarov presented scientific products and materials for participation in the competition totaling **530.3 points**, ie. exceeds the permissible minimum by 130.3 points or 32.6%. This gives me reason to claim that the candidate Dr. Sarov meets the requirements of Art. 2b, para. 2 and 3 of ZRASRB and those of PPZRAS in VUARR for participation in the announced competition for the academic position "Associate Professor".

## **3. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SUBMITTED MATERIALS**

According to the submitted documents and "List of publications of Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Angel Stankov Sarov after defending a doctoral dissertation" the total number of scientific papers is 53, 28 of which were selected by the candidate as a basis for participation in the competition. They are subdivided into the following categories:

1) *Independent monographic works* - **2** with a total volume of 437 pages in Bulgarian (from List of publications: № I. 3 and 4);

2) *Participation with chapters from collective monographs* - **12**, incl. 4 are published in English and 8 - in Bulgarian (from List of publications: №VI. 1-10; № IV.3 and 4)

3) *Studies* - **7** issues, 2 of them are published in Bulgarian, 1 in Russian and 4 in English. Of the total number of studies, 4 are visible in SCOPUS and Web of Science, and 2 of them have a total SJR - 0.45 (from List of publications: №III. 1-4; №V 1-3);

4) *Scientific articles* - **16** of which 10 are published in Bulgarian and 6 in English. Of the total number of articles - **8** are visible in SCOPUS and Web of Science, and 3 have a total SJR - 0.715 (from List of publications: №II. 1-8; №IV 2, 6, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18);

5) *Scientific reports* - **14** of which 6 are in Bulgarian and 8 in English (from List of publications: №IV 1, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24);

6) *Textbooks* - **2** developed in co-authorship in Bulgarian, in which Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. A. Sarov is the second author (in List of publications: № I. 1 and 2).

The distribution of the relative shares of each category in the total number of scientific papers of the candidate is: 26.4% are monographs and chapters of monographs; 13.2% - studios; 30.2% - scientific articles; 26.4% - learn reports; 3.8% - textbooks.

Of the total number of scientific papers of Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Sarov **12** publications are in referenced and indexed global databases, as their relative share is 22.6%.

The independent scientific works of the candidate for the academic position "Associate Professor" are 17. They are 32.1% of the total number or almost 1/3 of his scientific works. The

remaining 36 or 67.9% of the publications are co-authored. In 16 (30.2%) of the scientific works Dr. A. Sarov is the first author; in 12 (22.6%) publications he is the second author; in 6 (11.3%) publications he is a third author, and only in 2 (3.8%) of collective publications he is in later positions.

Of the total number of scientific papers, 22 have been published in English, 1 in Russian and the remaining 30 in Bulgarian, or their ratio is as follows: 41.5%: 1.9%: 56.6%.

Dr. A. Sarov has published scientific articles in renowned Bulgarian journals:

- "Bulgarian Journal of Agricultural Science", published by the Agricultural Academy (Scopus SJR, 2020 - 0.248) - 3;
- "Economics and Management of Agriculture", published by the Agricultural Academy - 6;
- "Economic Research", published by the Institute for Economic Research at BAS (Scopus SJR, 2020 - 0.2) - 2.
- "Economic and social alternatives", published by UNWE (Simple Impact Factor, 2020 - 0.11) - 1.

The candidate has published scientific papers in publications of leading Bulgarian universities and research institutions: Yearbook "Economics and Business" of the New Bulgarian University, Sofia - 2 copies; Scientific papers of the Agricultural University, Plovdiv - 2; Proceedings of a conference, published by the University of Economics, Varna - 1; Proceedings of a conference, published by UNWE, Sofia - 1; Scientific papers of the Institute of Agrarian Economics at the AA - 5 pcs.

Dr. Angel Sarov has scientific papers published in several international journals: "AGROFOR International Journal" - 1; "International Journal of Sciences and Arts" - 1; Journal of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (JAFES) -1.; International scientific-theoretical journal "Bulletin of the Belgorod University of Cooperation, Economics and Law" - 1 and in the publishing house: "Springer" - 1.

6 scientific reports at national scientific conferences and 9 reports at international scientific conferences held in Bulgaria and abroad are presented in the "List of publications".

From the analysis of the presented scientific papers it can be summarized that Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. A. Sarov has a sufficient amount of scientific production with the required quality, corresponding to the profile of professional field 3.8 "Economics" and the scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Agribusiness)".

#### **4. REFLECTION OF THE CANDIDATE'S SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS IN THE LITERATURE (CITED)**

In the documents and in the "Information on the implementation of minimum national requirements" for participation in the competition Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Angel Sarov presents a total of 9 citations of his scientific works. Of these, 2 citations are in scientific journals, referenced and indexed in world-famous databases or 22% of all. The other 7 (78%) citations of the candidate's scientific publications are in unreferred journals with scientific review. The ratio of cited publications by Bulgarian authors to foreign authors is as follows: 6 to 3. Respectively, 66.7% of the citations are found in works of other Bulgarian researchers, and 33.3% in foreign ones.

The above gives grounds to claim that the scientific works of Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. A. Sarov are of interest to the scientific community not only in the country but also abroad. The author's name is already recognizable in the research circles, both in Bulgaria and abroad.

#### **5. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CANDIDATE'S ACTIVITY**

##### **5.1. Educational and pedagogical activity**

Educational and pedagogical activity of Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Angel Sarov is expressed in the development (co-authorship) of 2 textbooks: 1) Introduction to CRM, University Publishing House "St. Kliment Ohridski"; 2) Raising awareness of the protection of the marine environment in

the Black Sea; Publisher: Institute of Agrarian Economics. The total volume of the published study material amounts to 250 pages.

Based on the presented certificate (signed by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ivan Boevski) it is proved that in the period 2016 - 2018 Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Sarov has given lectures and exercises at UNWE and NBU in 4 disciplines in the Bachelor's degree: 1) Customer Relationship Management (in 2 specialties); 2) Business process management; 3) Financial innovations in the real estate market; 4) Stakeholder management, as well as 3 disciplines in the Master's degree: 1) Innovations in the real estate business; 2) Strategies for business and rural development; 3) Strategic management of the enterprise. He has participated in the semester exams in the listed disciplines.

In March 2017, during his stay at Humboldt University, Germany, the Department of Agricultural Cooperatives gave lectures on the course "Management and Marketing of the Cooperative Enterprise", together with Assoc. Prof. Dr. I. Boevski.

In summary, Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Angel Sarov realizes teaching activities at two leading Bulgarian universities, which corresponds to his scientific qualification and research work.

## **5.2. Scientific and scientifically applied activity**

The scientific and research activity of Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Angel Sarov is in two directions: 1) the development and publication of scientific papers of different nature, and participation with reports in scientific forums at national and international level; 2) participation in research projects.

1) The monographic work "*Assessment of the management sustainability of agricultural holdings in Bulgaria*" deserves high praise. This is an independent and in-depth study with a scientific structure, including an introduction, a theoretical chapter, a methodology, an analytical part, conclusions, recommendations and a bibliography. Its goal, related to clarifying the theoretical and methodological aspects of sustainability, is formulated in order to propose an approach and to test tools for assessing the management sustainability of agricultural holdings in Bulgaria, and as a result, proposals are made to improve agricultural policies. I believe that the topic of the monograph is relevant and important for agricultural science, and very necessary for agricultural practice, as it has not been thoroughly studied in Bulgaria. The theoretical part reveals the essence of management sustainability and has developed a methodological toolkit of indicators for its evaluation, reflecting the characteristics of the agricultural sector. Based on empirical research and analysis of the results obtained in the second part of the monograph it is established which are the leading factors influencing the level of management sustainability of Bulgarian farms. The conclusions made in the third part are correct. They are the basis for formulating recommendations for increasing managerial sustainability, which on the one hand are aimed at improving the institutional environment in the country, and on the other hand, oriented to the internal environment of the agricultural holding. A positive aspect of the scientific work is the author's attempt to connect managerial sustainability with the concept of the regenerative economy.

In summary, the monograph with which he participated in the announced competition Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Angel Sarov has the character of a habilitation thesis and qualities of a complete scientific research with contributions in theoretical and practical aspect.

The second independent monograph of Dr. Sarov entitled "*Governance structure of agricultural cooperatives in Bulgaria - in search of a balance between theory and practice*" was published a year earlier on the basis of a dissertation. It is very well structured, with properly constructed purpose, subject and object of research, research methodology and analysis. Having the necessary depth of the research, correct interpretation of the results and formulated conclusions, originality in the recommendations made. In this monographic work scientific contributions are also found both in theoretical and practical aspect.

Dr. Angel Sarov has participated with developed chapters in collective monographs. Their focus is mainly on research and analysis of individual factors and conditions influencing the

development of agricultural holdings in our country, in order to propose models, scenarios and policies for their more effective management in the future. Despite the collective nature of the research and analysis, the individual contribution of the author can also be highlighted here, who offers: scenarios for the impact of the RDP measures on rural unemployment; model for increasing the competence of agricultural holdings; economic-mathematical model for studying the impact of the CAP on agriculture.

Positive side in the research work of Dr. Sarov is the development and publication of several studios in co-authorship (4 of them in publications present in Scopus and Web of Science). One of them impresses with the comparative analysis of the cooperative structures in Bulgaria and Russia. Such research, carried out in collaboration with researchers from another country, is a contribution that enriches the theory and acquaints Bulgarian agricultural practice with foreign experience.

Another study, in which Dr. A. Sarov is the lead author, offers an empirical approach to optimizing the production structure of a farm operating in a mountainous area. Scientific developments of this type are relevant and very necessary to increase the production and economic results of Bulgarian farms.

In several of the studies, scientific publications and reports presented at scientific forums (some of which are independent or Dr. Sarov is a lead author) the focus of research and analysis is cooperation. In general, these scientific developments are characterized by depth of research, accuracy of interpretations and conclusions, correctness of the recommendations made. The author's competence in the multifaceted issues related to the management of agricultural cooperatives is evident.

The scientific work "*Transformation of the management of the Bulgarian cooperative movement: values, principles, practices and satisfaction of the members*", published in English in a scientific publication, visible in Scopus, with SJR for 2020 - 0.248, deserves high praise. The author examines the changes in the management structure of agricultural cooperatives in Bulgaria from the establishment of the modern cooperative to the present, and connects the satisfaction of member cooperatives with the degree of application of cooperative principles and values. The results prove that the transformation of the management structure, in accordance with the cooperative principles, values and practices, directly affects the Bulgarian agricultural cooperatives and the degree of satisfaction of their cooperative members. These conclusions are essential and a contribution to cooperative practice, aimed at improving governance to ensure the successful development of cooperatives in the agricultural sector.

In one of the scientific reports Dr. Sarov co-authored the results of a study of the governance structure of agricultural cooperatives in Bulgaria. The main conclusion is that the presidents centralize the power and resources of the cooperatives in our country. This creates distrust in the member-cooperators and they terminate their membership. As a result, some of the Bulgarian cooperatives are being transformed into commercial companies, which explains the continuous decrease in their number in our country.

In co-authorship, as a result of several scientific publications Ch. Assistant Professor Dr. Sarov researches and analyzes the topic of agricultural sustainability. This is a complex issue with great relevance and significance for practice. Through scientific developments an attempt is made to deepen the scientific knowledge in this field and to present a comprehensive methodological framework for research and assessment of agricultural sustainability.

It is noteworthy that several of Dr. Sarov's co-authored publications are related to the topic "Customer Relationship Management (CRM)", a research area with dynamic development. Based on the general in its essence, role and advantages, the topic very precisely focuses on more specific sectors, such as Bulgarian agriculture, family businesses and agricultural cooperatives, as well as rural areas. The reasons for its imposition in the activity of the agrarian organizations are also identified. It is concluded that this provides these structures with competitive advantages, growth and sustainable development.

In several of the publications and reports presented at scientific forums Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Sarov addresses the topic of bio-economy and related biological production methods, their impact on productivity and quality of agricultural products, as well as on the economic results of farms; the benefits and threats to society from wastewater management, etc. These are increasingly relevant aspects of eco-economy - a scientific field of great importance to society, which needs to deepen research in response to current challenges facing the agricultural sector.

From the analysis of the content of the scientific works of Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Sarov can be concluded that they are developed at a high scientific level and show the competence of the author to carry out in-depth independent research and analysis, as well as to work successfully on scientific issues in a team with other Bulgarian researchers.

2) With regard to the participation of Dr. Sarov in research projects is positively impressed by high activity. He is a participant in a total of **23 research projects**, of which: 2 are funded by external sources for Bulgaria (EF - Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Program; COST ACTION - 16114, Horizon 2020); 6 are funded by Bulgarian sources (Research Fund, National Scientific Program "Healthy Foods for a Strong Bioeconomy and Quality of Life"); 13 of the projects have been implemented within the Agricultural Academy; 2 of the project activities are in the form of contractual scientific and applied tasks (from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the Municipality of Bansko).

In summary, it can be argued that Dr. Sarov has gained significant experience in the development and implementation of various topics, contributing to the development of his scientific and practical competencies.

### **5.3. Scientific contributions**

The candidate for the academic position "Associate Professor" Dr. A. Sarov presents a detailed report on the scientific contributions in his works, which I accept (Habilitation Extended Report on the Scientific Contributions of Chief Assistant Dr. Angel Stankov Sarov). In view of those referred to in paragraph 5.2. contributing aspects of the analyzed scientific papers, here I allow myself to group the scientific fields of research and the contributions in them as follows:

1) *Management of agricultural cooperatives*: This is the scientific field in which the author has indisputable theoretical and methodological contributions due to his in-depth research and analysis, which are presented mainly through the two independent monographs (List of publications: № I. 3 and 4);

2) *Sustainable development of agricultural holdings and rural areas*: In this area the author has a theoretical and methodological contribution related to the development of a fourth pillar in the assessment of the sustainability of agricultural holdings, the so-called governance sustainability. At the same time, there are scientific and applied contributions concerning the optimization of the production structure of agricultural holdings, as well as in the direction of utilization of waste products in agriculture. (Bibliography of scientific works to the Reference - № 1; 3; 4; 5; 7; 10; 13; 15; 16; 20; 23; 25; 26; 28);

3) *Agrarian management*: In this scientific field are found mainly confirmatory scientific contributions and those of practical importance on the basis of empirical research, analysis and evaluation of various agricultural structures and the institutional environment in the country. Based on which measures / policies are proposed to overcome certain management problems to support agricultural practice. (Bibliography of scientific works to the Reference - № 2; 3; 4; 12; 18; 19; 24; 28).

## **6. CRITICAL REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

I believe that the works presented by Dr. Angel Sarov, with he participated in the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" meet quantitatively and qualitatively the requirements of ZRASRB, PPZRASRB and the Regulations for the implementation of the law on

the development of academic staff in VUARR. All scientometric indicators have been met, and some exceed the minimum national requirements. There are contributions to agricultural science and practice, which gives me reason not to make critical remarks.

I recommend the candidate to use the accumulated research experience and knowledge, directing his efforts in the development of independent teaching aids and textbooks to use in his future teaching activities. To take the scientific guidance of bachelors, masters and doctoral students, to whom to pass his experience.

## 7. CONCLUSION

**Based on the analysis of the teaching, scientific, scientific-applied and project activity of Chief Assistant Dr. Angel Sarov, I give with full conviction a POSITIVE assessment.**

**I allow myself to propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury to vote positively, and the Scientific Council of VUARR - Plovdiv to elect Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Angel Stankov Sarov for "ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR" in the field of higher education: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences; professional field: 3.8 "Economics" in the scientific specialty: "Economics and Management (Agribusiness)".**

date 02.09.2021



Reviewer:  
/prof. Dr. T. Atanassova-Kalaydzhieva/