

Regional aspects of the SAPARD programme implementation in the Slovak Republic

Regionálne aspekty implementácie programu SAPARD v Slovenskej republike

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Abstract: The article presents the analysis of regional distribution for the approved and completed projects by 2004 under the SAPARD programme in the Slovak Republic. The distribution of funding strongly favoured powerful (innovative) business subjects which increased their competitiveness and gained the “advantage of technology advance” (which, in time may change into the rent of technology advance) associated with growth in labour productivity and high probability of investment return. The implementation of the SAPARD programme provides a strong impetus to the restructuring of businesses in agrifood industry, it accelerates and improves the selection among the businesses and economical differentiation. The bulk of the approved funding for projects under the individual measures for agriculture and processing industry within the SAPARD programme was distributed among western and southern regions of Slovakia. The implementation of the SAPARD programme, on one hand, has helped to reduce regional disparities in the vertical spatial approach by the diversion of the bulk of funding to the economically less favoured southern areas of Slovakia lagging behind in terms of infrastructure. On the other hand, though, it has increased the regional disparities in the horizontal spatial view with regard to the fact that most of the funding is spent in the developed regions of western Slovakia. Eastern Slovakia thus has become a disadvantaged and minority recipient of the financial assistance under this programme.

Key words: SAPARD programme, projects, regional implementation, beneficiaries, financial assistance, regional development

Abstrakt: Príspevok analyzuje regionálne rozloženie schválených a ukončených projektov programu SAPARD do roku 2004 v Slovenskej republike. Rozdeľovanie finančných prostriedkov prebiehalo výrazne v prospech ekonomicky silných (inovatívnych) subjektov, ktorí si tak výrazne zvyšovali svoju konkurencieschopnosť a získavajú „výhodu technologického predstihu“ spojenú s rastom produktivity práce a s vysokým predpokladom návratnosti investície. Implementácia programu SAPARD výrazne stimuluje trend podnikateľskej reštrukturalizácie v agropotravinárskom sektore, zrýchľuje a prehľbuje medzipodnikateľskú selekciu a ekonomickú diferenciáciu. Výrazná väčšina schválených finančných prostriedkov projektov jednotlivých opatrení z poľnohospodárstva a spracovateľského sektoru programu SAPARD sa rozložila do západných a južných regiónov Slovenska. Implementácia programu SAPARD na jednej strane pomáha znižovať regionálne disparity vo vertikálnom priestorovom prístupe, tým že majoritný objem financií sa rozdelil do ekonomicky znevýhodnených a infraštruktúrne zaostalých južných oblastí Slovenska, ale na druhej strane zvyšuje regionálne disparity v horizontálnom priestorovom pohľade, vzhľadom k tomu, že väčšina prostriedkov ide do vyspelých oblastí západného Slovenska. Východné Slovensko sa tak v tomto programe dostáva do znevýhodnenej pozície menšinového príjemcu finančných podpor.

Kľúčové slová: program SAPARD, projekty, regionálna implementácia, beneficianti, finančná podpora, regionálny rozvoj

INTRODUCTION

The SAPARD programme (Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development) is

a pre-accession programme designed to support development of agriculture and rural areas in candidate countries.

Under the SAPARD programme, it was possible to support activities within the following 9 measures:

- Measure No 1 Investments in agricultural enterprises (sectors: sheep, poultry, fruit and vegetable, cattle and pigs)*
- Measure No 2 Improving the processing and marketing of agricultural and fishery products (milk processing and dairy products industry, processing of meat, poultry, fruits and vegetables, readymade meals, fish and fishery products)*
- Measure No 3 Support to establishment of producers' marketing organizations*
- Measure No 4a Diversification activities in rural areas for non-infrastructure investments*
- Measure No 4b Diversification activities – infrastructure investments not generating substantial net revenue*
- Measure No 5 Forestry*
- Measure No 6 Agricultural procedures targeted at protection of environment and landscape*
- Measure No 7 Land consolidation*
- Measure No 8 Human resources development*
- Measure No 9 Technical assistance*

As of May 2004, the SAPARD Agency does not conclude any new financial assistance contracts under the SAPARD programme. However, the funding for the approved projects is scheduled to continue until the end of 2006.

In terms of the SAPARD financial assistance, the projects funded from the SAPARD may be divided into two groups – projects where private investments are required, and those that do not call for such investments. Measures No 1, 2, 4 and 5 are among those where private investments are required. Other measures No 3, 4b, 6, 7, 8 and 9 do not call for private investments and the projects are fully covered by public funding, with 75% of funding provided by the Community and 25% by the state budget.

Project funding under the SAPARD programme is based on the refund principle. This means that the beneficiary of financial assistance may only receive a refund for eligible expenses in the project if such expenses have been paid already.

METHODOLOGY

The work is based on the secondary analysis of statistical data structured in horizontal and vertical spatial aggregation, at the level of NUTS III and/or NUTS IV. Primary data were provided by the Agricultural

Paying Agency (APA) aggregated by numerous aspects (such as regional aggregations, legal structure of enterprise, etc.).

The basis of working methodology used the following approaches:

- regionally differentiated analysis (on the level of NUTS III and NUTS IV) for distribution of *number of projects* (approved and completed) under SAPARD programme;
- regionally structured (on the level of NUTS III and NUTS IV) *financial allocation of projects* (approved and completed) under the SAPARD programme.

The following methods were used during the work:

- mathematical-statistical data analysis
- secondary analysis of available analytical data for these issues, statistical data from the APA and other basis materials

The regional analysis used dichotomic spatial aggregation for the horizontal (east-west) and vertical (north-south) views:

- western and eastern regional aggregation was created in the **horizontal spatial view**. This horizontal dichotomy is based on territorial units on NUTS III level. **West** regional aggregation included the Bratislava, Trnava, Nitra, Trenčín and Žilina regions. The **East** area included the Banská Bystrica, Prešov and Košice regions.
- The **vertical spatial structure** comprised of the northern and southern regional aggregations. These were based on the level of NUTS IV regions. The regional **South aggregation** comprised of these districts: Bratislava I–V, Malacky, Pezinok, Senec, Dunajská Streda, Galanta, Hlohovec, Piešťany, Senica, Skalica, Trnava, Myjava, Nové Mesto nad Váhom, Partizánske, Prievidza, Trenčín, Komárno, Levice, Nitra, Nové Zámky, Šaľa, Topoľčany, Zlaté Moravce, Banská Štiavnica, Krupina, Lučenec, Poltár, Revúca, Rimavská Sobota, Veľký Krtíš, Zvolen, Žarnovica, Žiar nad Hronom, Gelnica, Košice I–IV, Košice-okolie, Michalovce, Rožňava, Sobrance, Trebišov. The territorial **North aggregation** comprised of the remaining districts in the Slovak Republic: Bánovce nad Bebravou, Ilava, Považská Bystrica, Púchov, Bytča, Čadca, Dolný Kubín, Kysucké Nové Mesto, Liptovský Mikuláš, Martin, Námestovo, Ružomberok, Turčianske Teplice, Tvrdošín, Žilina, Banská Bystrica, Brezno, Detva, Spišská Nová Ves, Bardejov, Humenné, Kežmarok, Levoča, Medzilaborce, Poprad, Prešov, Sabinov, Snina, Stará Ľubovňa, Stropkov, Svidník, Vranov nad Topľou.

The aim of the presented work is to provide a subject-specific mid term evaluation focused on the regional aspects for implementation of programmes under the SAPARD and the Sectoral Operational Programme Agriculture and Rural Development, with critical assessment for the first results of implementation until 2004, whereas the work has not yet included the most recent impacts.

APPROVED PROJECTS UNDER SAPARD PROGRAMME

By the end of 2004, 948 financial assistance contracts were completed in the total amount of SKK 4.6 billion for assistance provided by public funding under the SAPARD programme. Of the total of nine measures, seven had regional dimensions – they were implemented in numerous regions within the Slovak Republic. Throughout the monitored period (until 2004), the bulk of approved projects was concentrated under Measure 1 (370 projects, i.e. 39%) and Measure 2 (204 projects, i.e. 22%). Out of these 2 measures, the approved projects accounted for almost two thirds (61%) of the total number of approved projects. Most of the projects (211, i.e. 23%) were concentrated in Nitra region and, as a result, almost every fourth approved

Table 1. Regional distribution of approved projects for measures No 1–7 (total) under the SAPARD programme in 2004

Regional aggregation Slovak Republic	Number of projects, total	Share of the total number of approved projects (%)
West	615	67
East	309	33
North	273	30
South	651	70

Source: APA, own calculations

project under the SAPARD programme (measures 1 through 7) in 2004 originated in this region¹

Over two thirds of the projects under Measures 1 through 7 – total (Table 1) were allocated to the west (67%) and to the south (70%). The most significant shift in distribution of the projects to the west and south was observed mainly for Measure 1 and 3.

The overall majority shift to west and south (Table 2, Map 1 and 2) was typical for all measures (with the exception of measures 4b and 5). Insufficient distribution of projects in the east has resulted in unbalanced spatial distribution of businesses and associated risks of permanent regression in the development of agricultural businesses in these less economically favoured regions; with subsequent impact on spatial economic and social development. Within the framework of the regional development, the SAPARD programme has shown the minimum horizontal absorption ability of the capital for agricultural businesses in eastern areas.² On the other hand, the increased distribution of projects into southern areas has had a positive effect on the increasing competitiveness of agricultural

Table 2. Majority regional distribution of the number of approved projects under SAPARD programme, by individual measures

Measures	Number of approved projects	Regional concentration west-east (%)	Regional concentration north-south (%)
Measure 1	370	West (78)	South (85)
Measure 2	204	West (65)	South (61)
Measure 3	6	West (100)	South (67)
Measure 4a	38	West (74)	South (63)
Measure 4b	150	East (51)	South (71)
Measure 5	36	East (53)	North (72)
Measure 6	10	West (60)	South (50)
Measure 7	110	West (59)	South (56)

Source: APA, own calculations

¹ The leading position of the Nitra region is logical, given the fact that the share of agricultural production in 2004 in the region amounted for 25.6% of the total volume of agricultural production in the Slovak Republic, and the number of registered farms (legal entities and private individuals) in 2003 made one fourth (26.1%) of the total number of registered farms. The share of land acreage used by these farms amounted to one fifth (19.5%) of the total land used in the Slovak Republic (Chrastinová 2004, Gubová 2004).

² The forecasts for future are equally unfavorable. Despite the statements by the Slovak government to streamline the investments further east to Slovakia, the implemented steps were inadequate and so far failed to mitigate the growing regional differences. No major investments were reported for the Prešov region which is the most underdeveloped region with above average rate of unemployment. By contrast, the number and volume of anticipated investments in western Slovakia is much higher. The bulk of investments are provided without state assistance and most of the investments are destined for Bratislava and western Slovakia as confirmed by the official FDI figures from the National bank of Slovakia. Also, the differences in quality of investments began to emerge. Over the last two years, the Bratislava region has become the target for investments into research and services (www.nbs.sk).

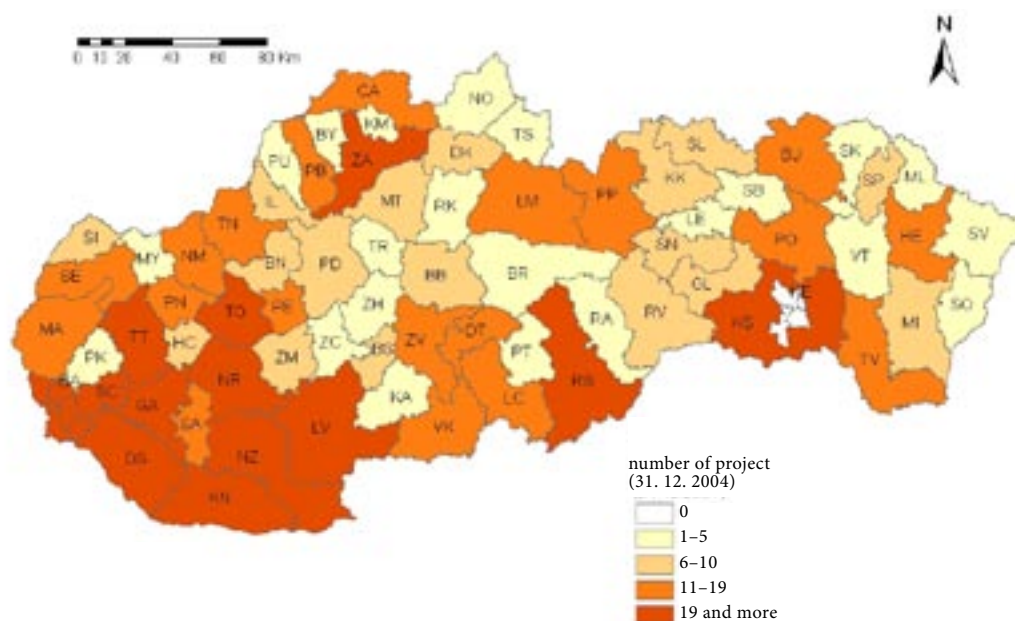


Figure 1. Approved projects distribution of the SAPARD programme (total measures 1–7) in districts of Slovakia

Source: APA, author the RIAFE

businesses in the generally underdeveloped regions in the south of Slovakia. Approved projects in the SAPARD programme were regionally distributed in such a way that they do not contribute to mitigation of the horizontal differences between regions. The regional shift to the regions of western and southern Slovakia occurred mainly in measures 1 and 2. Most of the successful projects were provided by the most developed businesses, mainly due to the fact that they fulfilled the requested criteria of economic viability. The viability criteria have proved to be somewhat discriminative as it excludes from competition those entities that would need to be involved. On the other hand, with regard to the rate of return and efficiency of investments, the rational and logical solution is to support entities that are most likely to improve their competitive position in the market. To a certain extent, the country faces a dilemma “development of competitiveness vs. spatial regional balance”. We believe that the SAPARD programme is internally differentiated to this end. The aim of the supportive measures for producers and processors is mainly to support their competitiveness; while measures associated with general development of rural areas (e.g. environment protection, land modifications) and infrastructure development (development of rural municipalities) tend to remove the differences between regions. On the other hand, though, the SAPARD key objective is not to remove and counterbalance the differences between regions. The dominant measures are targeted rather at increasing competitiveness than to saving

weaker entities. The conditions also stipulate that the support may only be provided to such a business that can prove its viability (new member states were given a concession for eligibility of companies that may prove their viability at the end of project). As a result, the task of the agrifood sector in this programme (especially in primary production) is not to generally remove regional disparities. On the other hand, it should not increase the regional disparities (with adverse effect on regional competitiveness), mainly in rural regions lagging behind.

Measure 1 and especially Measure 2 were typical in their accumulation of several projects into one business entity. In average, almost 3 projects under Measure 2 were attributed to one beneficiary. In terms of legal structure, the leading beneficiaries were partnerships which made up for two thirds of the total number of business beneficiaries.

Total volume of costs for all projects approved under the SAPARD programme in 2004 amounted to SKK 8.604 billion. Financial assistance provided by the SAPARD (the EU contribution + SR) amounted to SKK 4.622 billion (i.e. 53.7%). These were dominant measures, both in terms of number of projects and in terms of the volume of approved funding. The high concentration of projects per beneficiary was also reflected in the highest average value of costs per beneficiary under Measure 2 (one beneficiary of projects under Measure 2 received 2.6 times more in funding than one beneficiary of projects under Measure 1).

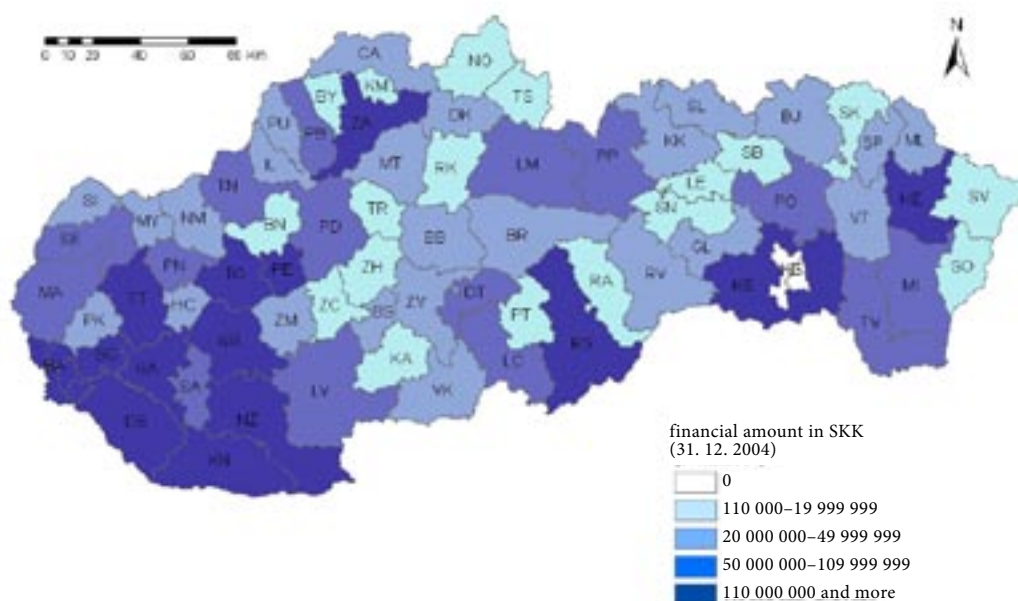


Figure 2. Financial assistance distribution of the SAPARD programme (approved project of measures 1–7) in the district of Slovakia

Source: APA, author the RIAFE

The bulk of the approved funding for projects and individual measures under the SAPARD programme was distributed among western and southern regions of Slovakia. The largest shift into these regions was observed for Measures 3 and 1 (Table 3).

With respect to the indicated regional aggregation in 2004, the SAPARD programme provided for the following distribution of public funding: SKK 2.999 billion to the western (65.4 %) and SKK 1.588 billion (34.6%) to the eastern regions. In terms of vertical regional aggregation, northern regions received SKK 1.301 billion (28.4%) and the south received SKK

3.287 billion (71.6%) in public funding. In terms of the horizontal regional aggregation two thirds of the approved funding were allocated to the west and in terms of vertical regional aggregation, almost three quarters of regionally identified funding were allocated into the southern regions (Table 4).

Distribution of funding from the SAPARD programme mostly favoured larger entities. The SAPARD programme was not used as an instrument to achieve regional balance (although it played this role in the vertical spatial terms), rather it affected the selection and differentiation of businesses and contributed to the acceleration of business restructuring in agrifood industry. This is a logical and rational approach, given the rate of return and affectivity of investments. The programme helped to increase the competitiveness of viable businesses, contributed to growth in technology and labour productivity. In agrifood industry, the

Table 3. Majority regional distribution of the volume of public funding for approved projects under the SAPARD programme, by individual measures

Measures	Regional aggregation west-east (%)	Regional concentration north-south (%)
Measure 1	West (81)	South (89)
Measure 2	West (60)	South (61)
Measure 3	West (100)	South (85)
Measure 4a	West (70)	South (72)
Measure 4b	East (53)	South (72)
Measure 5	East (51)	North (81)
Measure 6	West (55)	South (59)
Measure 7	West (60)	South (61)

Source: APA, own calculations

Table 4. Regional distribution of approved public funding for Measures 1–7 of the SAPARD programme in 2004

Regional aggregation Slovak Republic	Financial assistance by SAPARD in SKK (EU contribution + SR)	Share (%)
West	2 999 688 194	65.4
East	1 588 245 220	34.6
North	1 300 831 350	28.4
South	3 287 102 064	71.6

Source: APA, own calculations

SAPARD programme increased regional differences. On the other hand, though, these effects are mitigated by direct payments which act to the contrary, i.e. they counterbalance regional differences by their general (horizontal) regional approach.

COMPLETED PROJECTS UNDER SAPARD PROGRAMME

By the end of 2004, 327 projects were completed under the SAPARD programme (i.e. one third of the total number of approved projects). About one fourth (27.2%) of projects (of the total number of approved projects) in agriculture was completed, together with three quarters (71.4%) of projects in processing industry, more than half (58.3%) of forestry projects and one third (30%) of projects in rural municipalities. These included projects under measures 1, 2, 4a, 4b and 5. Of this number, two thirds of the projects were distributed among both west and south (Table 5).

The general majority regional shift to the west and south was typical (Table 6) for all measures (with the exception of Measure 5 – forestry, where a logical ma-

jority shift to northern areas took place). Most of the completed projects were concentrated under Measure 2 (150 projects) and Measure 1 (91 projects). Out of those 2 measures, completed projects amounted to almost three quarters (74%) of the total number of completed projects over the year in question.

In terms of legal structure, the leading beneficiaries were partnerships which made up for three quarters (73%) of the total number of business beneficiaries (cooperatives comprised 15% and private farmers 12%, i.e. one eighth). The partnerships completed 5 times more projects than the cooperatives.

By the end of 2004, the public funding from the SAPARD programme (EU contribution + SR) for the completed projects amounted to SKK 1.57 billion, which represents one third (34.2%) of the approved package SKK 4.6 billion of financial assistance to be paid by SAPARD (measures 1–7, i.e. without measures 8 and 9). This means that until 2006, more than SKK 3 billion must be withdrawn, i.e. 65.8% of the contracted amount of funding.

The allocation of public funding from the SAPARD programme saw substantial eccentric shift into southwestern regions, mainly under Measure 1. The companies in the east and north received a substantially

Table 5. Regional distribution of the completed projects under measures 1, 2, 4a, 4b and 5 (total) and funding of the SAPARD programme in 2004

Regional aggregation Slovak Republic	Number of completed projects, total	Share of the total number of completed projects (%)	Financial assistance by the SAPARD in SKK (EU contribution + SR)	Financial assistance by the SAPARD (%)
West	216	66	985 241 161	63
East	111	34	585 413 494	37
North	114	35	564 652 262	36
South	213	65	1 006 002 393	64

Source: APA, own calculations

Table 6. Majority regional distribution (number and funding) of the completed projects under the SAPARD programme, by individual measures, in %

Measures	Number of approved projects	Number of projects (%)		Volume of financial assistance under the SAPARD (%)	
		regional aggregation west-east	regional aggregation north-south	regional aggregation west-east	regional aggregation north-south
Measure 1	91	west (73)	south (76)	west (75)	south (84)
Measure 2	150	west (65)	south (59)	west (57)	south (57)
Measure 4a	20	west (80)	south (70)	west (86)	south (70)
Measure 4b	45	west (62)	south (82)	west (62)	south (79)
Measure 5	21	west (52)	sorth (76)	west (64)	sorth (75)

Source: APA, own calculations

lower portion of funding (SKK 585 million and SKK 565 million, respectively). The distribution of funding from completed projects was the same as the regional distribution for approved projects, i.e. a substantial vertical geographical differentiation was recorded (Table 5).

Over the period, *the businesses in processing industry withdrew two thirds (65.4%) of the total volume of approved financial assistance from the SAPARD, compared to the agricultural businesses, which withdrew only one fifth (22.1%) of the approved volume of public funding from the SAPARD.* This means that the processing companies shall withdraw only about one third (34.6%) on funding from the SAPARD by 2006 and new projects must be transferred into the Sectoral Operational Programme Agriculture and Rural Development which has assumed the tasks of the SAPARD after the accession into the EU. The acceleration in the actual drawdown was caused by the response to the strict sanitary and hygienic EU standards, by the modernisation and innovation efforts in production, effort to increase labour productivity and thus quickly react to the opportunities in opened markets of the integrated EU. Besides, financial position of these businesses and availability of credits is by far better than for the businesses in primary agricultural production. This swift response was typical mostly for the major entities which accumulated numerous projects.³ As a result, production has concentrated into the major business entities using modern technology and innovations.

The assessment of Measures 1 and 2 (as the basic measures with the highest number of projects) in terms of west-east regional aggregation shows substantial regional imbalances for both approved and completed projects. The SAPARD programme, however, has failed to contribute to the balanced regional structure of businesses. The regions lagging behind did not receive substantial assistance and during the implementation of the SAPARD the territorial differentiation of businesses continued to increase, mainly in the horizontal spatial section. The regional disparities were mainly caused by the varied economic strength of business entities in regions, differences in production concentration and size of businesses (major corporations were more likely to see their projects to be approved) and the differentiated

production structure and/or allocation of processing industry (Regionálna analýza... 2005).

The clear winner of the SAPARD programme implementation were the business entities in the processing industry which withdrew two thirds of the total volume of approved financial assistance under the respective applicable measure; as opposed to the business entities in agriculture which withdrew only one fifth of the approved funding.

The SAPARD programme did not provide a substantial contribution to regional development through the balanced and general regional competitiveness. This was caused by the eccentric spatial allocation of the supportive funding and also by the fact that the supported business entities failed to generate new job opportunities (with the exception of Measure 4a) although they helped increase the labour productivity. The programme so far did not produce a major impact on regional prosperity, as well as on the social and economic level of regions in terms of their capability to generate the additional regional income and to maintain the rate of employment.

The public funding from the SAPARD programme thus increases the competitiveness of strong business entities (especially in some segments of processing industry) and they accelerate the restructuring of businesses in the agrifood industry of the Slovak Republic. In contrast to the general horizontal approach of direct payments, with lower effectivity of investments, the SAPARD programme represents a project-focused and selective approach geared towards support of competitiveness in agrifood industry with high effectivity and rate of return for the associated investments (Buchta 2004).

CONCLUSION

The SAPARD programme has fulfilled its objectives, especially in terms of training of administration staff involved in the programme implementation and has prepared the business public for the new system of support policy within the EU (Správa o implementácii... 2005).

The analysis of distribution for the approved projects under the SAPARD programme has shown a spatial shift towards "rich West", as opposed to the "poor

³ The average financial assistance by the SAPARD per 1 project (in the category of completed projects) amounted to SKK 8.2 million for projects in primary agricultural production and only SKK 6.5 million for projects in processing industry. The situation, however, changed for the average financial assistance provided by the SAPARD per beneficiary. One beneficiary received an average of SKK 10.7 million in the category of completed projects in agriculture and SKK 16.2 million in the processing industry. This proves the high concentration of several projects in processing industry into one business entity.

East". The regional shift to the regions of western and southern Slovakia occurred mainly in measures 1 and 2. On the other hand, the increased distribution of projects into southern areas has had a positive effect on the increasing competitiveness of agricultural businesses in the generally underdeveloped regions in the south of Slovakia.

In the medium term, the primary focus will be on business, rather than on the spatial and regional differentiation. The distribution of such funding strongly favours powerful (innovative) business entities which increase their competitiveness and gain the "advantage of technology advance" (which, in time may change into the rent of technology advance) associated with growth in labour productivity and high probability of investment return (Identifikácia predpokladov... 2004). The implementation of the SAPARD programme clearly contributes to the increase in competitiveness of business entities, mainly economically viable entities. It provides a strong impetus to the restructuring of businesses in agrifood industry, it accelerates and improves the selection among the businesses and economic differentiation. It does not contribute to balanced regional structure of businesses, rather it increases the regional disparities (especially in the east-west line). On one hand, the SAPARD has helped to reduce regional disparities in the vertical spatial approach by diversion of the bulk of funding to the economically less favoured southern areas of Slovakia lagging behind in terms of infrastructure. On the other hand, though, it has increased regional disparities in the horizontal spatial view with regard to the fact that most of the funding is spent in the developed regions of western Slovakia. Eastern Slovakia thus has become a disadvantaged and minority recipient of financial assistance under this programme. Even though the SAPARD programme and consequently, the Sectoral Operational Programme Agriculture and Rural Development, are not primarily meant as the instrument to remove regional imbalances, it should at least not increase those disparities. Therefore, the implementation of the SAPARD programme has brought about two antagonistic effects. It removes regional disbalances between north and south, but in east-west direction, it rather increases disparities.

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