Role of Agriculture in Strategic Planning of Regional Development in Regions of the Czech Republic

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Abstract: - The paper deals with a strategic planning of the regional development on the regional level of the Czech Republic with a focus on the theme of the agriculture. The main aim of this paper is to explore and compare Region’s approach to this issue based on information provided in the basic strategic documents. The results of the analysis show that the topic of the agriculture occurs in all reviewed documents. This “quantitative” point of view was complemented by a “qualitative” one that showed some partial insufficiencies. The paper also fulfilled the secondary objective of identifying typical priorities and activities for the development of the agriculture sector which are contained in strategic parts of analysed documents.

Key-Words: - Strategic planning, Regional development, Regional planning, Agriculture, Public administrative, Regions of the Czech Republic, Basic strategic documents

1 Introduction
The main objective of this paper is to analyse and compare the approach of regions of the Czech Republic to the agriculture sector development within the frame of their regional development strategic planning processes, based on information gained from basic strategic documents of individual regions. The documents are medium or long term strategies, strategic plans or development programs which define the development priorities in different thematic areas (e.g. transport, social care, education, environment or agriculture) in the territory of individual regions. The secondary aim of this paper is the possible identification of typical priorities and activities leading to the development of the agriculture sector which are contained within the analysed strategic documents.

The paper is structured as follows. The second chapter briefly introduces the initial theoretical framework concerning the strategic planning of the regional development in the public administration and shortly mentions the theoretical approaches describing influence of agricultural sector on the regional development of a selected area. The methods used when creating this paper are also described. The third chapter is devoted to the analysis of the basic strategic documents of the Czech regions themselves. The concluding fourth chapter discuss the main findings related to the topic.

2 Strategic planning of regional development and the agriculture
Strategic planning of regional development is nowadays particularly widespread method used where the regional development is concerned on levels of both regions and municipalities in the Czech Republic. Process of strategic planning combines the starting position of a subject with a specified target situation where the subject chooses long term ways and objectives of development and means of achieving them [11]. During the strategic planning process the idea of what a subject (in this case a region) wants to deal with in the future and which needs of stakeholders (businesses, citizens and visitors) need to be satisfied and prioritized. It creates a vision and at the same time a way to realize the vision [17]. Similarly, strategic planning can be defined as an attempt to make fundamental decisions and actions that shape and control what the organization or other entity is, what it does and why it does it [4]. The strategic planning process intertwines thinking about the future, objective analysis and subjective evaluation of various indicators, objectives and priorities. The result is determination of future directions and activities which should provide to the designated public body its efficiency and ability to add specific value to the public [14].

Regional development is associated with the theme of agriculture since the early 19th century when the classical theories of localization by Thünen or Ricardo were published. The authors have dealt with the deployment of agricultural production and related usage of agricultural land, respectively [5]. Binding of agriculture and regional development is widely discussed and investigated in recent years, too. [9] studies the possible forms of influence of agriculture activities on regional growth. Issues related to agricultural sector development planning and land use in the U.S. including government actions in this area are studied by [10]. In China, the need to specialize in certain regions in the agriculture arose within the concept of comparative advantage [19]. Certain importance is attributed to the agricultural sector for the development of African countries and their poverty reduction [6]. Agricultural development is often associated with the more general concept of rural development. Countryside however is not only agriculture but these two concepts are often mistakenly confused in development policies of public administration or are not adapted to each other [3]. The effects of such policies on regional development are a general problem then, see e.g. [2, 12].

As part of strategic planning and not just in the European Union the opportunity is recently perceived especially in the development of multifunctional agriculture which does not focus on economic (production) function only but also its social, ecological and environmental values [18]. Modernization of agriculture is accompanied by certain difficulties that are associated not only with the lack of financial resources but also with some stereotypes of the traditional perception of agriculture [13]. [7] elaborates on the example of Mexico within the concept of learning regions whose regional development is based on innovation and knowledge creation in organic agriculture (so-called knowledge-based development). Similarly, the possibilities of promoting organic farming and regional context of sustainable development are discussed [15, 16].

2.1 Methodology
As part of the analysis basic strategic documents of all 14 regions of the Czech Republic including Prague were studied. Background papers for the analysis were obtained from the official websites of individual regions. The currently valid versions of the document at the beginning of April 2012 were always evaluated. Altogether 20 regional papers, 6 of which falls into the category of long-term development strategies and 14 in the category of medium-term development programs were analysed (see Table 1). The evaluation of documents of the Czech regions from the defined views was carried out using basic descriptive and comparative analytical methods.

3 Analysis of strategic documents
Table 1 provides a brief overview of the basic strategic documents at regional level of the Czech Republic, where each regional document analysed is described by the title of the document and for its processing or approval (or its update).

| Table 1 - Summary of basic strategic documents of regions of the Czech Republic |
| Region | Document’s Title | Year |
| Prague | Strategic Plan for Prague - update 2008 | 2008 |
| Central Bohemian | Central Bohemian Region Development Program | 2009 |
| Přerov | Update of the Přerov Region Development Program | 2008 |
| South Bohemian | South Bohemian Region Development Program | 2008 |
| Ústí nad Labem | Ústí nad Labem Region Sustainable Development Strategy 2006 - 2020 | 2010 |
| | Ústí nad Labem Region Development Program 2008 - 2013 (update 2010) | 2010 |
| | Hradec Králové Region Development Program 2011 - 2013 | 2010 |
| | Liberec Region Development Program 2007 - 2013 | 2007 |
| Pardubice | Pardubice Region Development Program | 2011 |
| Karlovy Vary | Karlovy Vary Region Development Program 2007 - 2013 | 2011 |
| South Moravian | South Moravian Region Development Strategy 2006 | 2010 |
| | South Moravian Region Development Program 2010 - 2013 | 2010 |
| Moravian-Silesian | Moravian-Silesian Region Development Strategy 2009 - 2016 | 2009 |
| | Moravian-Silesian Region Development Program 2010 - 2012 | 2010 |
| Vysočina | Vysočina Region Development Program | 2011 |
| Olomouc | Olomouc Region Development Program | 2011 |
| Zlín | Zlín Region Development Strategy 2009 - 2020 | 2009 |
| | Zlín Region Development Program 2010 - 2012 | 2010 |

Source: author based on [1]

A brief evaluation of individual regional documents follows further. They are evaluated from the point of view of the agriculture sector. Both analytic and strategic (i.e. planned approach to the development of agricultural sector in the implementation of regional development) parts of the documents are assessed as part of the examination of relevant documents.
Strategic Plan for Prague reflects on the topics dedicated to agriculture only marginally which is understandable given by the urban nature of much of its territory. The analytical part of the document only mentions the issue of conversion of agricultural land to building land which leads to loss of agricultural land of high quality. Strategic part of the document then responds to this finding within the fourth priority titled "Environment" which contains activity aimed at land protection of high-quality farmland from annexation and building conversion. In a fifth priority titled "Infrastructure" the activity is mentioned which declared the cooperation of Prague with agricultural businesses, water supply companies, municipalities and regional authorities in the area of water management.

The Central Bohemian Region Development Program is devoted to the agriculture rather closely. The analytical part gives detailed information characterizing the region, including the agricultural sector including inter regional comparison (e.g. agricultural employment, wage level and structure of agricultural land). Again the threats to agricultural land by construction of new logistics, storage and business areas or suburbanization processes in larger cities are mentioned. The strengths of the region are listed in good conditions for agricultural production and quality tradition of farming and the non-productive (landscaping) functions of agriculture are also mentioned. Strategic part of the document pays particular attention to agriculture in the third priority titled "Rural development, multifunctional agriculture and forestry" which contains a wide range of objectives and activities to promote development of the agricultural sector (especially ensuring the maintenance of farmland, the development of non-productive functions of agriculture or development support competitive and environmentally friendly agricultural production).

In the case of the Plzeň Region and its initial strategic document a brief description concerning the agricultural sector can be identified indicating some specific problems (lower quality land, inappropriate farming methods, unused and neglected areas of former agricultural enterprises). The analytical part is reflected in proposals within the fourth priority titled "Countryside" (activities aimed at revitalization of unused agricultural areas) and a fifth priority "Environment" (activities to promote environmentally friendly farming practices).

The development program of the South Bohemian Region emphasizes in the analytical part the agriculture as a traditional characteristic of the economy and the region which also plays an important role in the maintenance and creation of landscapes (non-production function). Among the problems inappropriate use of agricultural land in some parts of the region or marketing of agricultural products are named by contrast, the opportunities lie in the increase in organic farming and the development of non-productive functions of agriculture. Strategic part reflects the topic of agriculture within the fifth priority titled "Rural Areas" which among other things contains specific measures, objectives and activities focused on agriculture (improvement of cooperation with related sectors, support for non-production functions, the development of ecological agriculture, strengthening the competitiveness by further development of technical potential and promoting innovation processes, support the introduction of new management tools, marketing and sales of agricultural products, improve the knowledge level of workers in agriculture).

In the analytical parts of the strategic documents of the Ústí nad Labem Region the lower proportion of agricultural sector in total employment in the region is recognized in the context inter regional comparison. The main problems are also included (unused and neglected areas of the former agricultural production or large areas of overgrown agricultural land). Strategic part of the development strategy of the region contains only one measure aimed at strengthening the protection of agricultural land from development within the second priority of "Balanced land use." Strategic part of the follow-up development program includes third priority titled "Environment and Agriculture" with measures aimed at the development of multifunctional agriculture and promotion of the competitiveness of agricultural production, including strengthening of its non-productive functions (e.g. through support for promotion of agriculture in the region, the promotion of practical education of students of agricultural fields or encouragement of investment in modern agricultural technology).

The Hradec Králové Region cites particularly low productivity, low level processing of agricultural products to primary producers, lack of marketing or the existence of abandoned former agricultural areas in their territory as major problems in agriculture in its initial strategic documents. Strategic parts of the documents then react to the findings within the third priority called "Countryside and Agriculture" which states increase the competitiveness of agriculture as one of the specific objectives. The specific activities under this objective include the introduction of new
technologies in agriculture, protection of good agricultural land from the construction or the annexation, the promotion of agricultural activities and incentives for organic farming, promotion of activities aimed at increasing interest in studies of agricultural fields, support for continuing education of agricultural entrepreneurs, support and promotion of local agricultural products and promoting alternative farming activities (e.g. agro-tourism or activities in tourism).

The Liberec Region in the analytical parts of its strategic documents cites as positive aspects of agricultural development in particular the potential of non-production functions of agriculture and experience in organic farming and its development potential. The negatives include decline of investment in agriculture, relatively high proportion of unused agricultural land, development of construction activity at the expense of agricultural land or non-conceptual state agricultural policy. Strategic parts of documents include the topic of agricultural development in the first priority with the title "Dynamic and competitive economy" where one of the measures aims at support of functions of agriculture, forestry and water management sectors. The measure is further elaborated into specific activities (support for non-productive functions of agriculture, strengthening the competitiveness of agriculture, promotion of local agricultural production, education support, counselling and education in agriculture, promotion of organic farming). To protect agricultural land is the focus one of the measures within the fourth priority of "Healthy environment with no drain."

The Pardubice Region Development Program in its analytical part shows a relatively strong position in the agricultural sector in the region mainly due to favourable natural conditions. The damage to the landscape in some parts of the region thanks to inconsiderate intensive agricultural activities in the past is deemed the greatest negative. The problems of agriculture are reflected in the third priority by name "Healthy Environment" one of whose measures aims to support multifunctional agriculture (through specific activities directed at promoting regional production of agricultural products and marketing activities in support of the farmers).

The analytical part of the development program of the Karlovy Vary Region sees no stronger role of agriculture in the region due to natural and economic conditions. The document even states the agriculture is in decline and stresses the ever more important non-productive functions of the sector. Within the strategic part the problems of agriculture are only marginally mentioned within the first priority titled "Business Development" (general support for projects of small and medium-sized enterprises including those from the agriculture sector).

Development Strategy for South Moravian Region deals in great detail with the agriculture in its analytical part (the range exceeding several times the range of documents of other regions). Among the positives are ranked above average physical-geographic conditions for the development of regional agricultural production function, negatively is evaluated the poor economic situation of agricultural businesses. Opportunities are seen in agricultural production for non-food purposes or in the development of non-productive functions of agriculture (in particular the maintenance of landscape). Strategic part declares the importance of agriculture for the integrated development of rural areas in order to perform balanced production, environmental and social functions especially within the first priority axis titled "Economy" which includes a number of priorities and among other "Agriculture and forestry" priority. Specific activities include the stabilization of medium and large farms, focusing on some basic commodities that are competitive, the development of horizontal and vertical cooperation among entities and the introduction of new technologies. The newer regional development program basically follows the strategy only it emphasized the increasing pressure from investors and developers on the occupation of agricultural land and the strategic part is complemented by actions for support for organic farming.

Strategic documents of the Moravian-Silesian Region contain almost no mention of agriculture sector. Only in the analytical part there is a brief interregional comparison of some statistical indicators. The strategic parts do not reflect agricultural sector at all.

The Vysočina Region development program describes agriculture characteristics in detail in its analytic part. It states average status of the regions. The emphasis is on the issue of agricultural brownfields including the necessity to solve this problem, poor economic situation of enterprises operating in agriculture or aging technologies. Opportunities are seen in supporting the non-production functions of agriculture and in promoting of organic farming while the as a threat the continued lack of interest of graduates of agricultural schools to work in the sector of agriculture is named. Strategic part responds to the findings in the fourth priority titled "Countryside,
multifunctional agriculture and forestry" by means of specific activities (stabilization of the agricultural sector, employment stabilization and increase the professional level of actors in the agricultural sector and increase in the competitiveness of regional agricultural products, promotion of the agrarian sector, promotion biotechnology, the development of non-productive functions of agriculture, including the revitalization of the landscape and non-food uses of agricultural products).

The Olomouc Region Development Program emphasises greater role of agriculture in comparison with other regions (due to natural conditions and historical reasons). In the strategic part the theme of agriculture appears within the first priority entitled "Business and Economics" (support of diversification of agricultural enterprises in the terms of tourism services and support for improving the quality of production, distribution and utilization of agricultural production, organic farming and special arrangements of business) and the fourth priority "Quality of Life" (sustainable use of agricultural land, support of competitive, diversified and multifunctional agriculture, improving the quality and sales support).

According to the Zlín Region Development Strategy and following Development Program the agricultural sector is in decline in terms of activities and employment. The overall social and economic conditions in countryside worsen, too. Also the untapped potential of regionally typical agricultural activities and products is identified. The agriculture is dealt with under the third priority entitled "Effective infrastructure and rural development", which contains specific measures aimed at strengthening the competitiveness of agriculture (farm modernization, training of workers in agriculture, support small farmers' cooperation, and focus on emerging products).

4 Conclusion
The main objective of this paper was to analyse and compare the approach of regions of the Czech Republic to the agriculture sector development within the frame of their regional development strategic planning processes. The analysis of available strategic documents proves that the topic of agriculture is in different forms included in documents of all 14 Czech regions which can be regarded very positively in terms of further agricultural development. This “quantitative” point of view must be complemented by a “qualitative” one. The detailed analysis showed some partial insufficiencies and raised further questions.

In some documents issues of agriculture and its development were examined in the relatively short and general form (Prague and the Moravian-Silesian Region). On the contrary, some were devoted to regional agriculture in great detail (the South Moravian Region, the Central Bohemian Region or the Vysočina Region). Generally it can be argued that a larger space within the analysed strategic documents has been devoted to agricultural problems in regions with a significant position of this sector in the economy. More serious shortcomings have not been identified in strategic parts of documents that should follow the findings of the analytical parts (with the exception of the Moravian-Silesian Region which does not reflect the agricultural sector in the strategic part at all).

The most frequently mentioned problems of agriculture in the analytical parts of the regional documents include threats to agricultural land by the new construction, agricultural brownfield issues, inappropriate use of agricultural land and generally poor economic situation of the actors in the sector. On the contrary, opportunities for development of agriculture in the future are seen mainly in sustainable multifunctional agriculture which is not focused on food production only eventually on the expansion of organic farming (compare with theoretical approaches in the second chapter).

The comparison also fulfilled the secondary objective of identifying typical priorities and specific activities for the development of agriculture in strategic parts of documents. The agricultural development is most often solved within the framework of the development priorities aimed at rural areas, agriculture, environment and forestry (at this point we can draw attention to a relatively common theme linking between the development of agriculture and rural development in general - compare with the second chapter). The development of agriculture, however, appears also in the other priorities that are focused for example on the economy and business, infrastructure and quality of life. The most commonly cited specific measures to develop agriculture in the documents examined include:

- support of non-productive functions of agriculture,
- support of regional production,
- support of marketing activities of agricultural subjects,
- strengthening cooperation within the industry,
- support the development of organic agriculture,
• training of workers in agriculture,
• investment in modern agricultural technologies,
• revitalization of unused agricultural areas,
• protection of agricultural land.

Roughly speaking, the analytical part findings of the strategic documents and activities in the strategic parts of documents related to the topic of agriculture show in a comparison of regions a relatively low degree of variability and limited scope (compare with [8]).

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