

Strategic institutional development plan of the Institute of Agricultural Economics for the period 2025-2029

1. General institutional development framework

The Institute of Agricultural Economics (IEA) in its current form was established in the year 1990, but it took over the traditions, experience and also researchers from the Institute of Agricultural Economics that existed before 1990, which was subordinated to the Central Institute of Economic Research and the Academy of Agricultural and Forestry Sciences. At present, the Institute of Agricultural Economics (IEA) is subordinated to the Romanian Academy, capitalizing on the tradition of almost one century in agricultural economics research in Romania. Its roots date back to 1927, with the establishment of the Agronomic Research Institute of Romania, which included a Rural Economics Section. Over time, the institute has evolved into various institutional forms, consolidating itself as a distinct scientific entity in 1967, and since 1990 it has been a part of the National Institute of Economic Research “Costin C. Kirişescu”.

The mission of the Institute of Agricultural Economics, as a public scientific research entity, consists of carrying out fundamental and applied research in the following fields: agricultural economics, agri-food economics, rural economics and sociology, agriculture and environment, management of government action in sectoral and territorial profile, participation in the development of strategies regarding the development of agriculture and rural areas, depending on the complex challenges of the contemporary socio-economic context, challenges related to demographic development, climate change and vulnerabilisation of natural heritage and biodiversity.

Integration of the Institute's specific research directions into the national and European research - development and innovation area

The strategic development plan for the next five years considers both objectives related to increasing the scientific performance of the IEA and its visibility, and increasing its involvement in society through collaboration with public institutions, farmers' associations, universities. At the same time, the problem of available resources and especially that of financial and human resources in the Institute remains an acute issue in the current period, and a reasonable solution is absolutely necessary for the future functioning of the Institute. The long-term research priorities are consistent with the mission of the Institute of Agricultural Economics, in the sense that they

address topics from the area of fundamental and applied research in agricultural economics and related fields, namely rural economics and sociology, environmental economics, bioeconomy, management of government action in a sectoral and territorial profile. This comprehensive and transdisciplinary approach provides coherence and complexity to the research directions addressed by the Institute.

The long-term research thematics of the Institute of Agricultural Economics refers to:

- studying farm dynamics and policies for agricultural land restructuring and consolidation;
- studying the determinants of agri-food supply and demand and developments in the markets of the main production factors;
- insertion of Romanian agricultural markets in the European Single Market and the assessment of the impact of the Common Agricultural Policy implementation on the Romanian agri-food system;
- assessing the dynamics of socio-economic changes in rural areas and implementing the institutional models necessary for the dissemination of social innovation practices;
- studying the implications that current approaches to bioeconomy, circular economy and environmental protection requirements may have on agricultural productivity, food security and the general well-being of the population.

This research thematics is correlated with the organizational structure of the Institute, in the sense that the research activity is structured by three departments, namely: Economy and Rural Development, Agricultural Markets, Farm and Environmental Economics, as it can be seen from the organizational chart below.

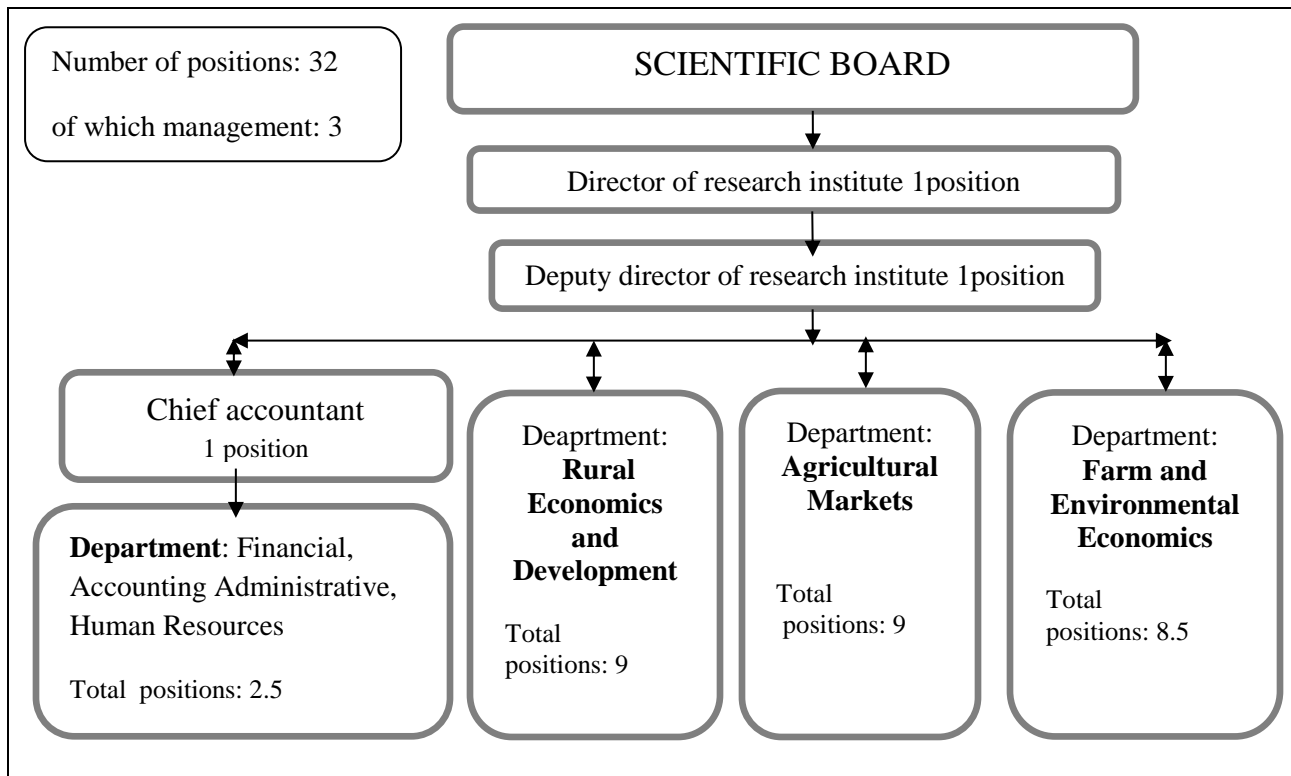


Figure 1. Organizational chart of the Institute of Agricultural Economics for the year 2025

The IEA's research objectives and themes are based on societal needs in the field of agriculture and rural area resulting from both the SWOT analysis and the analysis of the main strategic documents covering the implementation period of this strategic plan.

Thus, the reference framework for the research directions of the Institute of Agricultural Economics for the period 2025-2029 is based on a set of strategic documents formulated by national and international bodies. The IEA's priority research directions are in line with national and European priorities regarding sustainable development, adaptation to climate change, innovation and increasing the competitiveness of the agri-food sector, mentioned in the following documents:

- a) ***Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development***¹
- *Objective: Outlines 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at global level.*
 - *Relevance: Underpins all national and EU strategies on sustainability, including agriculture and rural development.*

¹ <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>;
<https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/publications/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>

b) *National Strategy for Romania's SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2030*²

- *Objective: Establishing a framework for Romania's sustainable development, in line with the UN 2030 Agenda.*
- *Relevance: Guides national policies on green economy, environmental protection, rural development and social inclusion.*

c) *National Action Plan for the implementation of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Romania*³

- *Objective: Operationalization of the national strategy through concrete actions, deadlines and responsibilities.*
- *Relevance: Provides tools for monitoring and evaluating progress in key areas such as agriculture, environment and rural economy.*

d) *National Strategy for Research, Innovation and Smart Specialization 2022–2027*⁴

- *Objective: Development of research and innovation, with a focus on smart specialization and integration into the European Research Area.*
- *Relevance: Prioritizes areas such as bioeconomy, sustainable agriculture, digitalization and technology transfer.*

e) *National Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change for 2024-2030, with a perspective to 2050*⁵

- *Objective: Adaptation of economic and social sectors to the effects of climate change.*
- *Relevance: Directly relevant to research on the resilience of agricultural systems, natural resource management and bioeconomy.*

f) *A vision for rural areas towards 2040 (A long-term vision for the EU's rural areas – Towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas by 2040)*⁶

- *Objective: Development of stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas.*

² <http://romania-durabila.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/strategia-nationala-pentru-dezvoltarea-durabila-a-romaniei-2030.pdf>

³ <http://romania-durabila.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Planul-National-de-Actiune-format-electronic-1.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.research.gov.ro/programe-nationale/strategia-nationala-de-cercetare-inovare-si-specializare-inteligenta-2022-2027/>

⁵ <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/287810;>
<https://www.mmediu.ro/app/webroot/uploads/files/Monitorul%20Oficial%20Partea%20I%20nr.%20823Bis.pdf>

⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0345>

- *Relevance*: Inspires research directions on social innovation, rural infrastructure and integration of agricultural markets.

g) ***Action plan (for rural vision 2040)***⁷

- *Objective*: Implementation of the EU’s vision for rural areas through concrete actions.
- *Relevance*: Supports research projects and policies for integrated rural development.

h) ***A vision for agriculture and food. Shaping together an attractive farming and agri-food sector attractive for future generations (2025)***⁸

- *Objective*: Shaping a farming and agri-food sector attractive for the future generations.
- *Relevance*: Focus on sustainability, innovation, digitalization and attractiveness of a career in agriculture.

i) ***Horizon Europe strategic plan 2025-2027 analysis***⁹

- *Objective*: Orienting EU funding for research and innovation in priority areas.
- *Relevance*: Provides the framework for research projects in bioeconomy, circular economy, sustainable agriculture and digitalization.

j) ***European Green Deal. Striving to be the first climate-neutral continent***¹⁰

- *Objective*: Making Europe the first climate-neutral continent.
- *Relevance*: Involves transition to green economy, reducing emissions, protecting biodiversity and sustainable agriculture.

k) ***EU - Farm to Fork strategy***¹¹

- *Objective*: Creating a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system.
- *Relevance*: Guides research on food safety, value chains and production sustainability.

l) ***Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR) – Strategy for research-development-innovation in the agri-food sector in the medium and long term 2014-2020 / 2020-2030***¹²

⁷ https://rural-vision.europa.eu/action-plan_en

⁸ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52025DC0075>;
https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/overview-vision-agriculture-food/vision-agriculture-and-food_en;

⁹ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/b3baec75-fdd0-11ed-a05c-01aa75ed71a1/language-en#:~:text=publications-Horizon%20Europe%20strategic%20plan%202025%2D2027%20analysis>

¹⁰ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

¹¹ https://food.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-05/f2f_action-plan_2020_strategy-info_en.pdf;
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0381>

¹² <https://www.madr.ro/docs/cercetare/strategia-cercetare-inovare.pdf>

- *Objective*: Development of research and innovation in Romania’s agri-food sector.
- *Relevance*: Prioritizes thematic such as digitalization, bioeconomy, food security and adaptation to climate change.

m) **Romanian Academy. A new stage of development. Goals and actions for 2022-2026**¹³

- *Objective*: Supporting fundamental research with impact on the development of knowledge in Romania.
- *Relevance*: Prioritizes research themes and programs with real socio-economic impact.

The IEA’s research themes for the period 2025-2029 are circumscribed to the concerns and research themes of the EU and national programs on climate change mitigation, bioeconomy, sustainable development and agriculture resilience.

To reflect the proximity and connection of the IEA's scientific objectives to relevant trends in the field of agricultural economics, environmental economics and sustainable development, as well as to the needs of society, some of the NRRP objectives for the RDI sector are worth mentioning, namely: Climate change mitigation; Climate change adaptation; Sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources; Circular economy including waste prevention and recycling; Prevention and control of air, water or soil pollution; Protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems.

These add to themes proposed within the Horizon Europe Program, especially *Cluster 6 of the program*, which focuses on Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment, aiming to reduce environment degradation, halt biodiversity loss and improve natural resource management through sustainable transitions, whose calls for projects address topics such as: Biodiversity and ecosystem services; Fair, healthy and ecological food systems, from primary production to consumption; Circular economy and bioeconomy sectors; Resilient, inclusive, healthy and green rural, coastal and urban communities; Innovative governance, environmental observations and digital solutions in support of the European Green Deal. All this support the European Green Deal, the “Farm to Fork” strategy and the circular economy.

Environmental, climate, sustainable development issues prevail in the societal concerns in the current period and this seems fully justified due to the evolution of climate events in a socio-economic context. These concerns have shaped the Common Agricultural Policy for the next budgetary period 2023-2027 and are fully reflected in the financing of measures from the

¹³ <https://acad.ro/institutia/acte/Program%20Strategic%20Academice.pdf>

National Strategic Plans for agriculture. These concerns are also reflected in the research themes funded at EU and national level.

As regards the Institute's main activity, namely research in agricultural economics and rural development, the IEA management aims to adapt the research themes to the European and national priorities, as well as to the current strategic scientific programs of the Romanian Academy.

The IEA's strategic research program, updated for the period 2025-2029, comprises the following five sub-programs:

SP-IEA 1. Transition to green economy and sustainable food systems;

SP-IEA 2. Agricultural policies and support to sustainable development of rural areas;

SP-IEA 3. Agricultural system resilience factors in a regional context;

SP-IEA 4. Interaction of farmers with value chain operators in the context of gross value added creation;

SP-IEA 5. Implications of different agricultural systems on food security in Romania.

The five research sub-programs for the period 2025-2029 are aligned with the existing human resources in the Institute and the national and European priorities. Of these, the first three sub-programs are part of the INCE *Strategic Research Program for the period 2023-2027*, which covers *Program 92 of the Romanian Academy: Increasing research performance in the field of economic, legal and sociological sciences*. Within the INCE program, the themes proposed by the IEA are multi-annual, some of these starting in 2024.

The IEA themes for the year 2025 from the INCE program are subsumed under the Specific Strategic Program *SSP 1. Reassessments of sectoral priorities and related policies (capitalizing on the natural resource heritage, energy and food security, competitiveness, RDI, circular economy, biodiversity)*.

Thus, the themes under subprogram ***SP-IEA1. Transition to green economy and sustainable food systems*** are the following:

- *Economic and societal implications of implementing the European Green Deal: food security scenarios;*
- *Development opportunities of agri-food chains in the context of the European Green Deal;*
- *Factors influencing the competitiveness of agri-food trade in the context of the transition*

to sustainable food systems.

The theme under the sub-program ***SP-IEA2. Agricultural policies and support to sustainable development of rural areas*** is:

- *Institutional and socio-economic premises for the sustainable development of rural areas.*

The theme under the sub-program ***SP-IEA3. Agricultural system resilience factors in a regional context*** is:

- *Resilient agricultural systems – challenges and alternative development models.*

The thematics of the last strategic sub-programs, namely *SP-IEA 4. Interaction of farmers with value chain operators* and *SP-IEA 5. Implications of different agricultural systems on food security in Romania* will be addressed in the next years, namely 2026-2029.

These research themes, with multi-annual implementation, are circumscribed by the current concerns in the field of agricultural economics, food security, environmental challenges and rural area.

At the same time, the IEA's research directions were formulated after consulting the research priorities in the field at national (PNCDI IV, ADER IV) and European level, respectively Horizon Europe, Work Program 2025-2027, for cluster 6. Additionally, the research priorities at EU level were consulted, as they are presented in the DG-Agri documents and in the research programs of some important profile institutes from Europe, such as INRAE (Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique – France), IAMO (Leibnitz Institute of Agricultural Development in Transition Economies - Germany), Wageningen Social & Economic Research, as well as of the institutes from Central and Eastern Europe with which the IEA has collaboration agreements (from Budapest, Warsaw, Sofia).

2. Scientific and financial SWOT analysis

For a better understanding of the IEA's situation, the SWOT analysis is structured by the scientific and institutional objectives of the Institute of Agricultural Economics for the next five years, also taking into consideration the financial aspects. These objectives are the following:

Objective 1. Increasing the performance of research activity in the field of agricultural economics and adapting to the current economic and societal context;

Objective 2. Engaging the IEA in scientific collaboration with interested public institutions and private entities by providing consultancy and technical assistance;

Objective 3. *Increasing the internal and external visibility of the Institute of Agricultural Economics;*

Objective 4. *Diversifying the qualification of human resources and improving their quality;*

Objective 5. *Improving the tools for increasing the quality of research activity management and adaptation to the new challenges and crises.*

SWOT analysis

Strengths and weaknesses

Objective 1. <i>Increasing the performance of research activity in the field of agricultural economics and adapting to the current economic and societal context</i>	
Strengths	Weaknesses
Professional training and scientific experience of researchers who have addressed specific themes in research projects (grants and studies at the request of public beneficiaries, European and national projects) relevant at national and international level	Reduction in the number of experienced researchers in the Institute due to numerous retirements in the last four years.
Experience in developing project proposals and accessing research and innovation funds from European sources	
Good professional relations with research institutions from European Union countries (Poland, Hungary, France, Netherlands, Germany, Bulgaria).	Lack of key specializations in the Institute, such as environmental economics, animal husbandry and nutrition, agricultural technologies and land improvements, due to retirements and blocking of the organization of contests for jobs.
Objective 2. <i>Engaging the IEA in scientific collaboration with interested public institutions and private entities by providing consultancy and technical assistance</i>	
Strengths	Weaknesses
The experience acquired in the consulting projects and studies developed by IEA researchers in relation to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the World Bank, the European Institute of Romania and other entities at European level.	Limitations on the possibility of future involvement in participating in competitions to win new projects due to the shortage of human resources and key specializations.
The experience gained from the involvement of the Institute of Agricultural Economics in the preparation of the CAP National Strategic Plan, through participation in the debates within the working groups for its elaboration, organized by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, has contributed to bringing the IEA closer to farmers' concerns and real problems.	

Existence of growing opportunities to access new research projects funded from national and European funds.	
Objective 3. Increasing the internal and external visibility of the Institute of Agricultural Economics	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>The European projects that have been carried out in the last 5 years in IEA, financed from European funds (Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe) or the consultancy studies financed from national funds (MADR, World Bank, European Institute of Romania) have contributed to increasing national and international visibility.</p> <p>IEA had several collaborations in EU projects in the period 2020-2024 (LIFT, SUREFARM, BIOEASTsUP, MIXED, Tools4CAP). It also implemented 1 project financed by the World Bank and 2 projects with national funding.</p>	Administrative problems related to securing co-financing from own sources (when resources exist) for participation in project proposals that require own financial resources.
<p>In the same period, IEA had 9 international cooperation agreements with universities and institutes in our geographical area, namely Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Serbia.</p> <p>It also had 3 bilateral projects, with institutes from Hungary, Poland.</p> <p>IEA also concluded a scientific collaboration protocol with the Bucharest University of Economic Studies (ASE) in 2024.</p>	
<p>The Institute of Agricultural Economics annually publishes, in Romanian, a thematic volume edited at the Romanian Academy Publishing House, based on papers presented at the international scientific session it regularly organizes, with the 15th volume in this series being published in 2025.</p>	
<p>Constant participation of IEA researchers in international and national scientific events with relevant papers that present the results obtained in the RDI activities of the institute research team.</p>	Limited internal resources for financing participation in national and international conferences.
<p>Each year, two issues of the institute's journal in English, "Agricultural Economics and Rural Development", are published.</p>	IEA journal's rating, which should be upgraded.
<p>Increased concerns of researchers for publishing their research results in national and international ISI indexed journals.</p>	Internal budget limitation to support the financing of the publication of articles in ISI

	indexed journals and the publication of the IEA annual conference volume of proceedings.
Increasing the number of international scientific sessions organized in collaboration with partners (institutes) from Central and Eastern European countries with which the Institute has collaboration agreements.	Limited internal resources to cover the organization costs of international or national conferences.
Objective 4. Diversifying the qualification of human resources and improving their quality	
Strengths	Weaknesses
The implementation of European projects within the institute has allowed the involvement of young researchers in activities specific to this type of projects, who have thus gained important scientific and administrative experience and skills for approaching this type of projects.	In recent years, four young researchers under 35 years old have been hired. However, their number is too small compared to the number of researchers who have retired. In the period 2020-2024, 10 researchers retired, of which 6 in 2023. In this context, IEA lost 5 vacant positions in 2023.
Objective 5. Improving the tools for increasing the quality of research activity management and adaptation to the new challenges and crises	
Strengths	Weaknesses
The portfolio of procedures for internal managerial control and the risk register has been completed. This activity is dynamic and will continue in the next period depending on requirements and needs.	There is a perception, partially justified, of an increase in internal bureaucracy, which sometimes becomes suffocating, also against the background of a consistent reduction in staff, of the number of researchers respectively.
Contests were organized for filling single administrative positions (e.g. for the chief accountant position), which were successfully completed.	Increasing the need for administrative staff to assist the IEA research team to meet ever-changing legal requirements.
In the year 2024, two contests were organized and completed to fill unique positions: CS2 senior researcher – specialization in organic agriculture/agroecology and CS3 senior researcher – specialization in marketing.	
A series of specialized committees have been updated, such as: the gender equality committee, the ethics committee, the monitoring committee, the risk management team, the list of risk officers by research sectors. This activity will also continue in the next period.	Increasing the necessary time dedicated to administrative activities at research staff level, with the development of new procedures at IEA level.
The steps for the adoption of the European Charter for Researchers 2023 were initiated.	

Opportunities and threats

<i>Objective 1. Increasing the performance of research activity in the field of agricultural economics and adapting to the current economic and societal context</i>	
<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
European funds dedicated to research managed through national (NRRP) and European (Horizon Europe) programs.	Uncertainties remain regarding human resources, which may become insufficient to tackle larger projects.
Possible collaborations with research institutes from the ASAS network or national institutes to win complex multidisciplinary projects.	Territorial fragmentation of the agricultural research network.
<i>Objective 2. Engaging the IEA in scientific collaboration with interested public institutions and private entities by providing consultancy and technical assistance</i>	
<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
The projects and consultancy studies developed by IEA researchers for the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the World Bank, the European Institute, various entities such as farmers' associations or consulting firms offer credible prospects for good future collaborations.	The short time required to prepare documentation for participation in project tenders, combined with the decrease in the number of researchers and specializations.
<i>Objective 3. Increasing the internal and external visibility of the Institute of Agricultural Economics</i>	
<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
Increased concerns of researchers for publishing research results in national and international ISI indexed journals.	High costs for publishing articles in ISI indexed journals (in some cases).
Continuing efforts to publish the proceedings of the IEA annual international conference in a volume edited at the Romanian Academy Publishing House.	The costs for publishing the volume are covered by IEA funds (projects).
Increasing the number of international and national scientific sessions organized in collaboration with partners (institutes) with which collaboration agreements exist.	
<i>Objective 4. Diversifying the qualification of human resources and improving their quality</i>	
<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
Organizing contests for hiring employees for the positions that became vacant in the period 2023-2024.	Deficient funding for the years 2025 – 2026.
<i>Objective 5. Improving the tools for increasing the quality of research activity management and adaptation to the new challenges and crises</i>	
<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
Continuing to improve the specific administrative framework for the proper conduct of scientific activity, in accordance with the legislation in force and the regulations of the Romanian Academy.	Unexpected situations, which may unduly amplify institutional stress within the organization.

3. Objectives and strategic development directions

Objective 1. Increasing the performance of research activity in the field of agricultural economics and adapting to the current economic and societal context, supported through the following strategic directions:

- Stronger orientation of the research themes of the Institute of Agricultural Economics towards studying and providing solutions for current problems of the agricultural sector and Romanian society, in the context of requirements related to ensuring food and nutritional security for the population;
- Orientation in the coming years towards strategic themes to support agricultural policies, targeting green transition, bioeconomy and support for the sustainable development of rural areas;
- Addressing research topics in line with future concerns in the field of agricultural economics and the environment, in the context of the progress of smart agriculture technologies and advances in artificial intelligence.

Objective 2. Engaging the IEA in scientific collaboration with interested public institutions and private entities by providing consultancy and technical assistance, supported through the following strategic directions:

- Participation in working groups for the development of legislation in the field, at the request of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR), sectoral strategies and plans, other similar requests (for example, Romania's CAP Strategic Plan);
- Participation of researchers in technical consultancy and extension activities for farmers' associations within the National Strategic Plan for Agriculture 2023-2027.

Objective 3. Increasing the internal and external visibility of the Institute of Agricultural Economics, supported through the following strategic directions:

- Institutional collaboration with the national and international university and academic environment;
- Participation in projects in consortia with scientific institutes, partner universities and other entities active in the field of research and consultancy (for example, projects within the Horizon Europe program);
- Participation in the organization of national and international scientific events;
- Improving the rating of the institute's journal *Agricultural Economics and Rural*

Development and improving the website of the institute and journal.

Objective 4. Diversifying the qualification of human resources and improving their quality, supported through the following strategic directions:

- Improving the qualifications of researchers, especially young ones, according to operational criteria at European level;
- Creating teams specialized in writing project proposals;
- Diversifying the specialization of researchers by including technical disciplines, such as agro-environment, ecology, other disciplines associated with life sciences;
- Adopting the European Charter for Researchers 2023 in the next period.

Objective 5. Improving the tools for increasing the quality of research activity management and adaptation to the new challenges and crises, supported through the following strategic directions:

- Improving the internal managerial control and risk management;
- Improving the specific administrative framework for carrying out research activity in the best possible conditions, by continuously updating the operating regulations, internal rules of procedure and other regulations, in accordance with changes in the legislation.

Table 1. Scientific result indicators

	Period 2020-2024	Period 2025-2029
Number of articles published in a Web of Science indexed journal	40	60
Number of chapters of books published at an established by a well-known foreign publishing house	7	7
Number of books published as an author at the Romanian Academy Publishing House	2	4
Number of books published as coordinator at the Romanian Academy Publishing House	6	6

Among other key performance indicators, within the objectives listed for the period 2025-2029, the IEA also aims to increase:

- its presence in the editorial boards of prestigious journals/publishing houses;
- membership in national and international expert groups/scientific societies;
- representation in the scientific boards of prestigious international organizations;
- the capacity to coordinate/participate in studies and projects with national/local impact.

4. Human resources strategy

Taking over the concerns from the NRRP regarding the researcher career, which are also found in Law 183 of 2024 on the status of research, development and innovation personnel, the IEA is concerned with increasing the attractiveness of the national research/ development/ innovation system and the researcher career for a better integration into the European Research Area. Specifically, the assumption by young researchers of scientific and administrative responsibilities related to the collaboration in the Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe programs in which the IEA has been involved, is encouraged.

Human resources in research and the researcher career issue in Romania presents several difficulties, which are also partially presented in the NRRP (R3. Researcher career reform). The problems and difficulties presented in the aforementioned document, including insufficient financial compensation compared to that in other EU countries, and compared to other professional categories in Romania with a similar educational level, are real and have had an extremely negative effect on the attractiveness and prestige of the scientific researcher position.

The National Strategy for Research, Development and Innovation 2022-2027 also refers to the issue of increasing the attractiveness of the researcher career, through measures under program 5.2 Human Resources and program 5.8 European and International Cooperation, but its impact is limited, just like that of the previous strategy.

This is the main reason why research institutes have been gradually emptied of researchers, as qualified and educated people who could have made a career in research have moved to other sectors with higher financial incentives. At the same time, low funding and the lack of predictability regarding the promotion of researchers reduce the attractiveness for young graduates from higher education, who very rarely and only if they are very passionate start their professional careers in research.

The adoption of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers represents a useful tool in the process of reconsidering the researcher career and their position in Romanian society, to the extent that this approach can be financially supported.

The requirements for human resources in research for the next period are specifically correlated with the need to diversify specializations in sectors related to agricultural economics

and agriculture, namely environmental economics, agronomy, animal husbandry, nutrition, informatics and smart agriculture.

Table 2. Research staff indicators

	Period 2020-2024	Period 2025-2029
Total research-development-innovation staff with higher education (full-time equivalent)	22	28
Number of researchers III, II and I grades (full-time equivalent)	18	22

5. Mechanisms to stimulate the emergence of new research topics and themes

Stimulating creativity and new approaches in the field of economic and social research is a concern and even a mission of research institutes. Research teams and individual researchers are constantly concerned with addressing new research themes, correlated with innovative methodologies, modeling techniques for complex phenomena, new indicators, which reflect the constantly changing reality of agricultural and food systems, of the economic and social areas in general.

The main mechanisms for reaching these goals are the following:

- organization of periodic meetings with academic partners, namely universities, research institutes, nationally and internationally recognized scientific personalities;
- ensuring access to scientific and research literature, through the Anelis Plus project (National electronic access to scientific and research literature) and other programs/databases;
- encouraging researchers' initiative to participate in scientific sessions organized nationally and/or internationally;
- encouraging researchers' participation in calls for projects organized by national or European bodies within large consortia of research institutions and private companies;
- participation in bilateral projects initiated with institutes of the same profile in countries with which partnerships exist;
- encouraging the provision of consultancy to public institutions, farmers' organizations, private companies.

6. Research infrastructure and investment plan

The research infrastructure is an essential component for the optimal conduct of the specific research activities of the IEA, the development of partnerships and collaborations with various institutions at international and national level (research, economic sector, governmental bodies, NGOs, etc.), as well as for increasing the visibility of the scientific results obtained through their periodic dissemination. It includes all IT equipment and devices/peripherals, such as desktop/laptop computers, printing/scanning equipment, video-projection equipment, mobile data storage devices, internal communication network, external internet connection, which constitutes the technical component that supports the online visibility of the Institute, ensured through its own web pages (Institute website, AERD journal, social media accounts) and platforms dedicated to online communication (such as Zoom).

In this context, the Institute of Agricultural Economics has developed *a multi-annual investment plan* for the period 2025-2029, with the following *general objectives*:

- ensuring good technical/software capacity of the research infrastructure – as essential support for research/dissemination/collaboration activities;
- developing the research infrastructure in correlation with new technologies, namely various online tools to ensure connectivity and increase online visibility.

The *specific objectives* set out in the multi-annual investment plan take into account the following aspects:

- periodic renewal of computing equipment (desktop/laptop computers) and peripherals (printers, scanners, etc.), as they reach/exceed the average operating life foreseen by the manufacturer (given the current situation of the infrastructure available in the IEA, from a technical point of view, a minimum annual renewal rate of approximately 10% of total computing equipment/peripheral devices is estimated);
- maintenance of the internal communication network, namely of server that ensures external access to the internet, including the expansion of internet access for mobile IT devices, by installing wireless access points;
- assessing the opportunity to improve the technical capabilities of existing IT equipment (increasing processing capacity, expanding memory and internal storage space), in order to extend operating life – based on a cost/benefit analysis and depending on the technical possibilities provided by the manufacturer;

- periodic updating of software associated with IT equipment (operating systems, Microsoft Office suite, other specific programs), as far as they exceed the scheduled duration for receiving periodic updates and no longer receive support from the manufacturer;
- periodic provision of consumables necessary for the operation of peripheral equipment (toner, image cylinder, etc.);
- ensuring the protection of IT equipment through special antivirus/firewall programs;
- periodic improvement/update of own web pages and social media accounts;
- continuing collaboration with the online platform Zoom for various online national/international scientific events organized by the IEA.

These investments represent the minimum annual necessary for the modernization/maintenance of the IEA's research infrastructure, so that it can ensure normal conditions for carrying out specific scientific activities, given the accelerated technological progress in this field, which requires constant updating of both computing hardware and software.

7. Defining the scientific identity at national and international level

Institute of Agricultural Economics aims to place itself among the elite of scientific concerns in the field of agri-food economics in Romania and to contribute to increasing the scope of research in this field within the EU. IEA aims to build up a space of research, knowledge and innovation in agriculture and rural areas and to represent a support for advice and knowledge transfer to agriculture and rural areas through:

- implementing fundamental research programs of the Romanian Academy with impact on the development of knowledge, innovation and digitalization in the field of agricultural economy and rural development, resulting in increasing the competitiveness of the agri-food sector, ensuring food security and rural well-being;

- contribution of scientific studies carried out in IEA to the elaboration of agricultural and integrated territorial development policies;

- knowledge dissemination to education, farmers, industry, rural actors and public authorities.

IEA uses numerous methods to ensure an adequate framework for keeping researchers in permanent contact with the latest professional novelties in their activity field. An effective way to keep in touch with current problems and news is the periodic meetings that are organized in the

institute, for the debate of current topics, with an impact on farmers and society. Of course, another modality is the participation in national and international scientific events, where researchers can come into direct contact with important topics and themes and the concerns of Romanian and foreign researchers.

At the same time, however, the most important way to connect to relevant trends in the research field of the institute is through participation in consortia in international projects (Horizon Europe, for example). These participations bring additional knowledge not only in terms of the topics addressed, but also in the use of new methodologies and research techniques, including access to certain databases.

Another way to enhance the knowledge of IEA researchers is their participation in public policy consultations, launched by European (DG-Agri) and national (MADR) public institutions, on various topics, such as the future of the Common Agricultural Policy, the implications of the European Green Deal, climate policies or energy policies.

IEA is in permanent contact with representatives of research institutes and representatives of public institutions, due to the research projects in which it participates, the bilateral projects developed with partners from Central and Eastern European countries, including researchers who are members of the *European Association of Agricultural Economists* (EAAE), which is the most relevant professional organization in this field in the European area.

The Institute as a whole (and some individual researchers) is part of the *European Rural Development Network* (ERDN), an international network which was established in 2002, that brings together the most important research organizations and researchers concerned with rural development across Europe, and especially from the countries of central, eastern and south-eastern Europe. The main objectives of ERDN are convergent with the ideals of the European Community to build a European Research Area for agriculture and rural development. The network strives to jointly develop research themes in strategic areas for rural development and to attract new institutional partners.

The Institute maintains close contacts with various national associations involved in agriculture, including the Forum of Professional Farmers and Processors of Romania (FAPPR), National Branch Union of Cooperatives in the Vegetable Sector (UNCSV), Romanian Poultry Breeders Union (UCPR), the employers' associations RomConserv and Rompan, the working groups (in the crop production sector and in the processing sector) established at the level of the

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, which have access to research papers of the IEA and which in turn provide the institute with information for documenting certain issues specific to each association. Representatives of these associations are invited to participate in the round tables and sessions of the Institute of Agricultural Economics in order to disseminate the results of studies and projects carried out in the IEA.

Table 3. Visibility and impact indicators

	Period 2020-2024	Period 2025-2029
Number of citations in articles published in a Web of Science indexed journal	1017	1500
Share of budgets from projects in the total budget of the institute (percentage)	13.6	15
Number of international research projects (Horizon) carried out in the Institute	6	6
Number of national research projects carried out in the Institute	2	4
Number of reports of public interest produced in the Institute	46	50

8. Action plan and operational planning

The IEA's strategic institutional development plan for the period 2025–2029 points out the role of the Institute of Agrarian Economics in the scientific substantiation of agricultural and rural development policies in Romania, in a context marked by the green transition, climate change, pressures on food security and structural changes of rural areas.

The strategic directions of the institute are coherently aligned with both national and European priorities, in particular for the objectives set forth in the European Green Deal, but also in the Horizon Europe program. The integration of the thematics of bioeconomy, circular economy, resilience of agricultural systems and digitalization reflects a clear adaptation to the new sustainable development paradigms, emphasizing the development of transdisciplinary cooperation.

A central element of the Strategic Plan is strengthening the scientific performance, materialized by increasing the result indicators (publications, citations, projects carried out both at national and international level), expanding international collaborations and active involvement in research consortia. At the same time, the institute assumes an active role in consultancy and

knowledge transfer to decision-makers, farmers and professional organizations, contributing to the development and implementation of agricultural policies through its research works.

However, the SWOT analysis highlights significant vulnerabilities, especially in terms of human resources: the reduction in the number of researchers through retirements, difficulties in recruiting young specialists and budgetary limitations that may affect the ability to participate in complex projects. In this regard, the human resource strategy and the adoption of the principles of the European Charter for Researchers represent important steps to increase the attractiveness of the scientific career and to strengthen the human capital of the institute.

At the same time, the modernization of the research infrastructure and the digitalization of administrative processes are necessary conditions for maintaining competitiveness and increasing the international visibility of the institute. The proposed multi-annual investment plan responds to the minimum needs for efficient operation and adaptation to the accelerated technological progress that is currently taking place.

The action plan resulting from the SWOT analysis focuses on four main directions:

1. Human resources, targeting the following key aspects:
 - a. Retaining and developing the existing human resources;
 - b. Attracting, training and developing new human resources;
 - c. Closer and direct involvement in partnership actions with agricultural and economic universities and doctoral schools in particular.
2. Research infrastructure, with the following defining elements:
 - a. Renewal/updating the Institute's IT base;
 - b. Maintaining and modernizing the internal communication network;
 - c. Expanding researchers' access to scientific resources (databases, scientific publications, etc.).
3. Developing and streamlining research-development-innovation activities, with the following key elements:
 - a. Participation in writing project proposals within national and international calls;
 - b. Maintaining current partnerships and encouraging the development of new partnerships with scientific and/or business organizations.
4. Visibility, knowledge dissemination and transfer, targeting the following aspects:
 - a. Modernization of the IEA web interface;

- b. Participation in scientific events and publication of research results in volumes, journals with high scientific impact;
- c. Organization of scientific events.

Action plan for the period 2025-2029

<i>Strategic direction</i>	<i>Actions</i>	<i>Targets</i>
Human resources	Supporting the professional promotion of the Institute's staff	+2 CS III +1 CS II + 1 CS I
	IEA collaborations with agricultural and economic universities, especially doctoral schools, to facilitate the recruitment of young talents Support provided by IEA researchers to young doctoral students in the development of doctoral theses Participation of IEA researchers in doctoral student guidance committees	+ 2 young researchers
Research infrastructure	Maintenance of the Institute's IT base Purchase of new IT equipment and software appropriate to new research techniques and data processing technologies AI use in data documentation, processing and analysis processes, other advanced usage options	Renewal by 10% of IT equipment
	Maintaining and expanding access to databases and publications for IEA staff	Increase in the number of users with Anelis Plus access by 50%
Development of RDI activities	New partnerships for participation in the development of research consortia	3
	Participation in writing RDI projects at international competitions (HE and similar)	10
	Participation in writing RDI projects at national competitions	6
	Share of budgets from projects in total budget of the Institute	15%

Visibility, dissemination and knowledge transfer	Modernization of IEA's web interface	
	Participation in scientific events and publication of research results in volumes, journals with high scientific impact	50% increase of the number of citations
	Organization of scientific events	50

In conclusion, the IEA strategy for the period 2025–2029 outlines a coherent and realistic framework for institutional development, oriented towards scientific excellence, societal relevance and European integration. The success of its implementation will depend decisively on ensuring adequate funding, strengthening human resources and the Institute's capacity to capitalize on the opportunities offered by national and European research programs.