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## Romania

**Post:** Bucharest

### **New Minister of Agriculture appointed in Romania**

**Report Categories:**

Agricultural Situation

**Approved By:**

Hoa Huynh

**Prepared By:**

Monica Dobrescu

**Report Highlights:**

In the beginning of February 2012, Stelian Fuia, the President of the Committee for Agriculture in the Chamber of Deputies, was appointed as Agriculture Minister. Increasing the EU funds absorption rate, maintaining the financial support for livestock and crop producers and timely disbursement of direct payments to farmers are among the priorities of the newly appointed minister.

## **General Information:**

The resignation of the Romanian Prime Minister on February 6, 2012 led to a Government reshuffle. Stelian Fuia, President of Committee on Agriculture in Chamber of Deputies, was appointed as Minister of Agriculture. Valeriu Tabara, the former Agricultural Minister, held this position for 15 months.

## **Agriculture Minister's Biography**

Born in 1968, Stelian Fuia graduated as agronomist in 1993 from the University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine in Bucharest and six years later he was awarded the PhD in Agronomy. Stelian Fuia attended short-term courses on strategic management and negotiation strategies in several Universities in the United States.

Stelian Fuia's political activity began in 2004 as Vice President of the county branch of Democratic Party and three years later, he was elected as the First-Vice President of the same organization in Calarasi county. In 2007, Stelian Fuia became member of the Romanian Parliament and three years later he was elected as president of the Committee for Agriculture, Chamber of Deputies.

Prior to joining the Romanian Parliament, Stelian Fuia worked for agri-business companies producing seeds and pesticides. Much of his professional experience (1995-2002) was within Monsanto company, occupying different management positions in Romania and abroad. In 2007, as a manager of a biofuel company, Stelian Fuia participated in the United States the Cochran Program administered by USDA, focused on Biofuels production.

Stelian Fuia has a great wealth of experience in agriculture field and has a deep understanding of the issues facing agricultural companies. Farmers expect from the new Minister a good management, consistency in the requirements for EU funding accession, and openness for dialog with farmers associations.

Having worked for Monsanto company in the past, Stelian Fuia is perceived as an agricultural biotechnology supporter. His appointment attracted critics from the biotech opponents who asked the Prime Minister to revoke this nomination "considering his long career within Monsanto company". The appointment of the former AgMinister, Valeriu Tabara, generated the same reaction in the fall of 2010.

## **Priorities for agriculture and rural development portfolio**

Accelerating the absorption of EU funds remains the top priority. The National Plan for Rural Development has an overall budget of 10 billion euro, of which 8 billion is funded by the European Union through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, the balance being covered from the national budget. The total payments made so far reached 3.4 billion Euro, meaning a rate of absorption of 33% during the 2007-2013 period. A target of 43 percent has been set to be reached before October 2012.

Continuing the support for livestock and crop producers and timely disbursement of direct payments to farmers remain among the priorities of the newly appointed minister. Romania has a deficit in terms of irrigation, thus revamping the irrigation systems is on the agenda as well. He also promises an intense participation in the CAP reform debate.

The new Minister is planning to work for reducing the fiscal evasion in agriculture, expanding the cultivated land as well as imposing some penalties for land owners who refuse to cultivate their land.

