INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, 90% of blueberry consumption in Europe is secured by Argentina/Uruguay and another 10% from Chile and South Africa (Rico, 2012; Lambert and Criner, 2014). Therefore, the blueberry supply in European countries will constantly increase in the next couple of years and have to satisfy the higher and higher demand (Braiston, 2014). According to USDA data (GAIN Report, 2013), the first three countries in terms of blueberry production are United States of America, followed by Canada and Poland. FAOSTAT include Romania in the first ten countries with a recorded blueberry production of 2612 tonnes in 2013. An additional argument is the special interest of Romanian research and breeders who have managed to create a large number of blueberry cultivars with superior organoleptic qualities and enhanced adaptability to environmental factors (Mălădeanu et al., 2012). We proposed to analyse the blueberry sector evolution in Romania including different factors that influenced the hightbush spreading (e.g., limitation by technical, organisational and commercial barriers) and a foresee developing trend on medium term taking into consideration the national and international dynamic market.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The supporting data in the current analysis are provided by County Agricultural Departments, administrative organs subordinated to the Romanian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) which are responsible for land and forest, resources use management, promoting and facilitate regional agriculture development also implementation of the governmental policy at county level, including statistical data services. Part of the cultivated areas are represented by commercial blueberry orchards realised with the EU funds through approved projects in the frame of some measures included in the National Plan for Rural Development (NPRD) implemented between 2007-2013 and in the brand new Fruit Growing Sub-programme of the NPRD 2014-2020 (ver. 2.1, February 2016).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In 1986 when the first highbush blueberry was established in Romania, the V corymbosum L. fruits were quite unknown by the Romanians. As a result of the first researches carried out on blueberry assortment (Bădescu and Rudi, 1975), agrotechnics (Bădescu, 2003) and propagation obtained at that time in the Muscel region at Bâcăstî (840 m altitude), the interest of the researchers and experts highly increase for this culture (Sumańa et al., 2014). Nevertheless, the highbush blueberries plantations in Romania totalized less than 50 hectares in 1980, most of the orchards belonging to fruit growing research units. After 1980, as a result of the National Plan for Promoting Berries in Romania (NPBRP) which foresaw extending to 1000 ha only for blueberry production, it have been planted 250 hectares till 1989. The political regime changed by the Revolution in December 1989 interrupted the further blueberry planting plan, mostly because of the fiscars reasons, a lot of lands moving in the private sector. This transfer of land property and the poor farms infrastructure and knowledge had conduct to a degradation of existing blueberry plantations and sometimes to deforestation. In this way, at the end of 90’s the blueberries plantations summarized less than 30 ha.

After 2000, the interest of consumers for this fruits increased, the surfaces occupied by blueberry has grown only with 3 ha, from 24 ha in 2000 to 27 ha in 2005. The supporting European Programmes in our country after EU adhesion have encouraged growers to intensify the rhythm of hightbush blueberry planting. Thus, in the period 2005-2008, the blueberries surfaces has been doubled (from 27 ha to 58 ha). Next years, the situation becomes even better, in 2009 and 2010 has been established another 63 ha and between 2011-2012 other 234 ha have been planted with blueberry. In this way, at the end of 2012, Romania riched the 355 ha planted with blueberry in different cultivation systems (Fig. 1).

CONCLUSIONS

The first highbush blueberry plantation in Romania has been settled in 1968 at Băcăstî in a submountain region at 840 m altitude. Results obtained by the researchers confirms the high favorability of the culture in that area and later in many other regions. The extending rhythm of surfaces occupied by blueberries in Romania oscillated from 1 ha in 1958 to over 250 ha in 1989 and less than 30 ha in 2000. After 2008, the number of plantations and the total hectage in Romania intensely increased, reaching 650 ha in 2015. The spreading of the hightrue blueberry culture was made mainly in three geographical regions of Romania: Transylvania, Muntania and Maramures. These counts more than 80% of the total area occupied by blueberry. Although some of the blueberry Romanian growers encounter some difficulties in the valorization chain, the blueberry culture will continue to expand, in the next years expecting to reach 1000 ha.

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