

SURVEY ON IDENTIFYING A SUITABLE FINANCING PRODUCT FOR FARMERS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Abstract

In the context of the development of the agricultural sector in the Republic of Moldova, access to financial resources represents a key factor in supporting and expanding farmers' activities. The need for financing products tailored to the specific characteristics of agriculture is becoming increasingly evident, given that this sector is highly influenced by seasonal risks, climatic conditions, and market fluctuations. The purpose of this chapter is to analyse farmers' financial behaviour and to identify the main challenges they face when accessing agricultural loans. Through a survey conducted among farmers and potential farmers, the study investigates their actual financing needs, the purposes for which loans are used, and their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of available financing solutions.

Keywords: agricultural finance, access to finance, agricultural sector, farmers, modernization, sustainable development, agricultural investment, Republic of Moldova

1. Introduction

Agriculture is one of the oldest and most fundamental economic sectors worldwide, playing a crucial role in ensuring food security and supporting the economic and social development of countries. In the Republic of Moldova, agriculture has economic and social importance due to the country's favourable geographical and climatic conditions, fertile soils, and temperate continental climate, which allow for the cultivation of a wide range of agricultural crops. The sector represents an important source of income and employment, particularly in rural areas, where a significant share of the population depends directly or indirectly on agricultural activities. Despite its importance, the development of the agricultural sector in the Republic of Moldova is constrained by several structural and financial challenges. Agricultural producers, particularly small and medium-sized farms, frequently face difficulties in accessing adequate financial resources needed for investment, modernization,

technological development, and the expansion of their production capacity. The specific characteristics of agricultural activity, including seasonality, dependence on climatic conditions, long production cycles, and relatively high levels of risk, make access to conventional financing more difficult and increase the importance of financial products specifically adapted to the needs of farmers. Access to appropriate financing is therefore essential for improving the productivity and competitiveness of agricultural holdings and for supporting the sustainable development of the sector. However, although the importance of agricultural finance has been widely recognized in the literature, there is still limited research focusing specifically on the financing needs, preferences, and decision-making factors of agricultural producers in the Republic of Moldova. Insufficient attention has been given to identifying the characteristics of financial products that farmers consider most appropriate for the specific requirements and risks associated with agricultural activity. Addressing this gap is relevant for both financial institutions seeking to develop suitable agricultural lending products and policymakers concerned with improving access to finance in the agricultural sector. In this context, the present study aims to identify the main financing needs and preferences of agricultural producers in the Republic of Moldova and to determine the factors influencing their decision to access agricultural credit. To achieve this objective, a survey was developed and addressed to farmers, focusing on their experience with access to financial resources, the main difficulties encountered in obtaining financing, their preferences regarding credit products, and the factors considered when deciding whether to contract a loan.

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What are the main financing needs and difficulties faced by agricultural producers in the Republic of Moldova?
- What characteristics do farmers consider important when choosing an agricultural credit product?
- What factors influence farmers' decisions to contract agricultural loans?

Based on the findings, the study aims to identify the characteristics of a financing product that would respond more effectively to the specific nature of agricultural activity and the requirements of farmers, thereby contributing to the development and modernization of agricultural holdings. The manuscript is structured as follows. The first section presents the theoretical and contextual framework concerning agricultural financing and the development of the agricultural sector in the Republic of Moldova. The second section describes the research methodology, including the survey design, sample, and methods used for data collection and analysis. The third section presents and discusses the empirical findings regarding farmers' financing needs, preferences, and credit decisions. Finally, the study formulates conclusions and recommendations concerning the development of financial products better adapted to the needs of agricultural producers in the Republic of Moldova.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The financing of agriculture has been extensively examined in both international and national literature, particularly from the perspectives of access to credit, financial inclusion, risk management, and rural development. International research generally emphasizes that access to appropriate financial resources is a critical determinant of agricultural productivity, investment capacity, and the long-term sustainability of farming enterprises. From a financial management perspective, access to external financing enables agricultural producers to overcome liquidity constraints, invest in machinery and

technology, purchase inputs, expand production, and manage seasonal fluctuations in cash flows. However, the literature also demonstrates that the relationship between access to finance and agricultural development is not straightforward, as the effectiveness of financing depends on the cost, maturity, collateral requirements, risk-sharing mechanisms, and suitability of financial products to the specific characteristics of agricultural activity.

A significant body of international literature focuses on the constraints faced by farmers in accessing formal financial services. These constraints are commonly associated with information asymmetries, insufficient collateral, high transaction costs, irregular agricultural income, exposure to production and market risks, and the seasonal nature of agricultural cash flows. From this perspective, traditional lending models may be poorly suited to agricultural producers because they are often based on stable income patterns and conventional collateral requirements that do not fully reflect the economic realities of farming. Consequently, researchers increasingly emphasize the need for financial instruments specifically adapted to agriculture, including flexible repayment schedules, longer maturities, seasonal credit arrangements, and mechanisms that reduce the risks borne by both lenders and borrowers.

The literature also suggests that access to finance should not be interpreted exclusively as the physical availability of credit. A broader financial inclusion perspective considers farmers' ability and willingness to use financial services, their financial literacy, perceptions of risk, trust in financial institutions, and previous experiences with borrowing. These behavioural and institutional dimensions are particularly important because farmers may have access to financial products but choose not to use them when the perceived costs and risks exceed the expected benefits. Factors such as self-reliance, risk aversion, limited knowledge of available financial instruments, and distrust of financial institutions can therefore act as additional barriers to formal agricultural financing. This perspective extends the conventional credit-access approach by recognizing that financing decisions are influenced by both objective economic constraints and subjective perceptions.

Within the Republic of Moldova, the issue of agricultural financing is particularly relevant given the structural importance of agriculture and the sector's exposure to climatic, market, and production risks. National studies and institutional reports indicate that agricultural producers continue to encounter difficulties in obtaining external financing, especially small and medium-sized farms. Limited collateral, fluctuating agricultural revenues, relatively complex lending procedures, and insufficient financial literacy can reduce farmers' ability to meet the requirements imposed by financial institutions. At the same time, the availability of financial institutions and specialized financial services remains particularly important for rural communities, where access to financial infrastructure may be more limited. These conditions suggest that the financing constraints identified in the international literature are also relevant in the Moldovan context, but their intensity and specific manifestations may differ according to the structural characteristics of the national agricultural sector.

A critical comparison of the international and Moldovan literature reveals an important limitation. International research provides extensive theoretical explanations of credit constraints, financial inclusion, and farmers' borrowing behaviour, while studies concerning the Republic of Moldova tend to focus more strongly on the general availability of financial resources, institutional support, and the broader economic conditions of agricultural development. Consequently, there is comparatively less empirical evidence regarding the **specific characteristics of financing products that farmers themselves**

consider appropriate, including their preferred loan amounts, repayment periods, interest-rate expectations, collateral requirements, and other product characteristics. Moreover, previous research frequently examines either farmers' access to financial services or their willingness to use them, without sufficiently integrating these two dimensions with the practical requirements of agricultural production and the decision-making process preceding the use of credit.

This unresolved issue provides the conceptual basis for the present research. The study adopts an integrated perspective in which farmers' financing decisions are understood as the result of the interaction between **economic constraints, financial characteristics, institutional factors, and behavioural considerations**. Within this framework, access to agricultural finance is viewed not simply as the availability of credit, but as the extent to which available financial products correspond to farmers' productive cycles, financial capacity, risk exposure, and preferences. Such an approach makes it possible to move beyond the question of whether farmers can access financing and examine whether the financing available to them is suitable for their needs.

To address this research gap, the present study uses primary data collected through a survey of farmers and potential farmers in the Republic of Moldova. The questionnaire examines financing needs, previous borrowing behaviour, perceived barriers to obtaining credit, preferences regarding financial product characteristics, and the factors influencing the decision to use agricultural financing. The empirical approach therefore complements the existing literature by incorporating farmers' own perceptions and preferences into the analysis of agricultural finance.

The contribution of the study is twofold. From **a research perspective**, it provides empirical evidence on the relationship between farmers' financing needs, perceptions, and borrowing decisions in the Moldovan context, thereby extending the existing literature on agricultural financial inclusion. From **a practical perspective**, the findings can support financial institutions in designing credit products that are better aligned with the seasonality, risks, and cash-flow patterns of agricultural activity. They may also provide policymakers with evidence for developing measures aimed at reducing financing barriers, improving financial inclusion, and strengthening the competitiveness and sustainability of the agricultural sector in the Republic of Moldova. In this way, the study seeks to bridge the gap between the theoretical discussion of agricultural finance and the practical design of financial solutions adapted to the realities of Moldovan farmers.

3. Materials and Methods

This study adopts a cross-sectional, exploratory research design to examine access to and use of financial products among agricultural producers and potential farmers in the Republic of Moldova.

3.1. Study design and context

The research was conducted in the context of the Moldovan agricultural and rural sector, which plays a significant role in the national economy but remains exposed to structural, financial, climatic, and market-related constraints. The selection of the Republic of Moldova as the study context is motivated by the importance of agriculture to rural livelihoods and by the persistent challenges faced by agricultural producers in accessing formal financial services. Primary data were collected through an online survey administered via the Survio.ro platform. The questionnaire was designed specifically for this study and focused on respondents' access to financing, previous experience with credit products,

awareness and use of financial services, financing preferences, and perceived barriers to obtaining financial support. The survey also incorporated questions intended to capture individual and contextual factors that may influence financing decisions, including financial literacy, trust in financial institutions, previous borrowing experience, and reliance on informal sources of financial support.

The study is exploratory in nature and seeks to provide empirical evidence on the financing behaviour and needs of agricultural and rural respondents in the Moldovan context. Rather than focusing exclusively on the availability of credit, the research considers both the willingness to use financial services and the perceived capacity to access them, thereby allowing a broader assessment of financial inclusion in the agricultural sector.

3.2. Data, variables, and sampling

The empirical analysis is based on primary data collected from a sample of 327 respondents connected to the agricultural and rural sectors of the Republic of Moldova. Respondents were selected using a non-probability sampling approach, with the aim of obtaining variation in terms of agricultural experience, farm characteristics, and previous access to financial services. The sample included individuals involved in agricultural activities as well as potential agricultural producers whose responses could provide information on financing intentions and perceived barriers.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The questionnaire covered several groups of variables and indicators related to agricultural financing. The main variables examined in the study included:

- Access to financial products – respondents' reported access to formal financial services and agricultural credit;
- Use of financial products – previous or current use of loans and other financial services;
- Financing needs – respondents stated need for external financial resources for agricultural activities;
- Borrowing experience – previous experience with obtaining and repaying loans;
- Financial literacy and awareness – respondents' self-reported knowledge and understanding of available financial products and financing conditions;
- Perceived barriers to financing – difficulties related to collateral requirements, lending procedures, income instability, interest rates, limited information, and access to financial institutions;
- Trust in financial institutions – respondents' perceptions regarding the reliability and accessibility of formal financial institutions;
- Informal financial support – the use or consideration of family, friends, or other informal sources as alternatives to formal financing;
- Financing preferences – respondents' preferences concerning the characteristics of potential agricultural credit products.

The survey data were organized according to the responses provided by the participants. Open-ended responses were retained as qualitative information and subsequently coded according to recurring themes. The use of both closed and open-ended questions allowed the study to combine measurable

response patterns with respondents' own perceptions and explanations regarding agricultural financing.

3.3. Analytical methods

The collected data were analysed using a combination of descriptive and thematic analysis. Descriptive analysis was used to identify general patterns in respondents' financing behaviour, awareness, previous credit experience, and perceived barriers to accessing financial services. For closed-ended questions, responses were organized into categories and summarized using frequencies and percentages, allowing the main characteristics of the sample and the distribution of responses to be identified. Open-ended responses were analysed using a thematic coding procedure. The analysis involved an initial review of the responses, identification of recurring concepts, coding of relevant statements, and subsequent categorization into broader analytical themes. Two principal themes were established: (1) access to and use of financial products and (2) barriers to accessing finance. Within these themes, several sub-themes were identified, including financial literacy, trust in financial institutions, informal support networks, previous borrowing experiences, lending conditions, and perceived financial risks.

The analytical framework was designed to examine the relationship between respondents' individual characteristics and their perceptions of agricultural financing, while also considering broader economic, institutional, and social factors. Attention was given to the distinction between the availability of financial services, the willingness to use them, and the perceived ability to obtain financing under existing conditions. No causal inference is intended, given the cross-sectional design and non-probability sampling procedure. The results are therefore interpreted primarily in terms of observed patterns, respondent perceptions, and associations within the surveyed group rather than as statistically representative estimates for the entire population of agricultural producers in the Republic of Moldova. This limitation is important when assessing the generalizability of the findings. The analysis was conducted based on the responses collected through the Survio.ro platform. The study does not apply a predefined statistical significance threshold because its primary purpose is exploratory and descriptive rather than hypothesis testing. The methodological approach is intended to provide sufficient transparency regarding data collection, variable construction, coding, and interpretation to facilitate the replication of the survey and analytical procedure in future research.

4. Results

The results are presented in accordance with the main objectives of the study, focusing on farmers' access to financial products, their previous borrowing experience, perceived barriers to agricultural financing, and the characteristics of financial products considered most appropriate for their needs. Given the exploratory nature of the research and the non-probability sampling procedure, the results are interpreted primarily through descriptive statistics and thematic patterns identified in respondents' answers.

4.1. Profile and structural characteristics of respondents

The survey included **327 respondents** from the agricultural and rural sectors of the Republic of Moldova. The characteristics of the respondents provide an important context for interpreting their financing behaviour and perceptions. Variables such as agricultural experience, farm characteristics,

and previous interaction with financial institutions were considered to identify differences in financing needs and access to financial services.

This study analyses questionnaire results aimed at identifying the financing needs of farmers in the Republic of Moldova and defining the characteristics of an appropriate agricultural financial product. It also examines access to finance, barriers in cooperation with financial institutions, and farmers' preferences regarding credit conditions.

The research involved farmers from various regions and agricultural sectors, mainly small and medium-sized enterprises with different levels of experience. A structured survey was conducted among 100 farmers to gather data on financial needs and obstacles in accessing funding.

Overall, the results provide a clear basis for understanding farmers' financial requirements and for developing financial products better adapted to the realities of the agricultural sector.

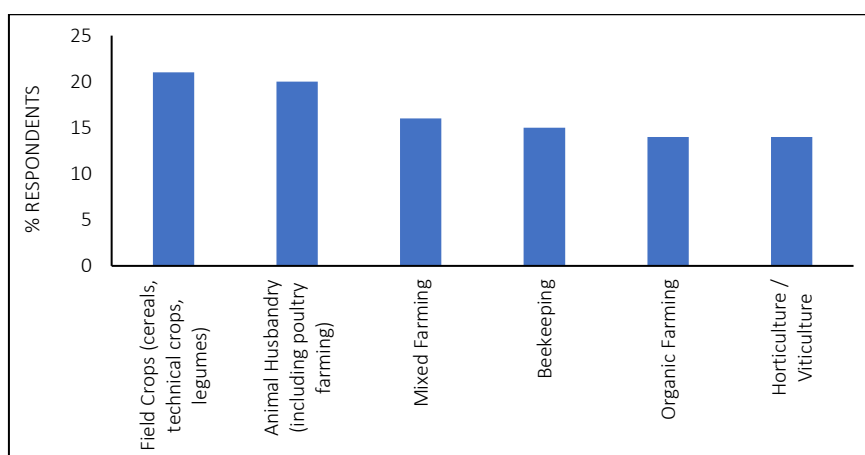


Figure 1. Main type of agricultural activity reported by respondents

Source: Authors' survey (2026)

The survey results from 2026 show that the agricultural sector in the Republic of Moldova is dominated by traditional activities, particularly crop production (21%) and livestock farming (20%), which confirms the persistence of a conventional agricultural model. At the same time, the presence of mixed farming, beekeeping, organic agriculture, and fruit growing/viticulture indicates a moderate diversification process and a gradual shift toward more sustainable and specialized practices.

Overall, Moldovan agriculture is characterized by stability, but also by a slow transition toward modern forms of development, highlighting the need for policies and financial products adapted to the specific nature of different agricultural activities (*Programul Națiunilor Unite Pentru Dezvoltare va Susține Agenda de Modernizare a Republicii Moldova* | GVERNUL REPUBLICII MOLDOVA, n.d.).

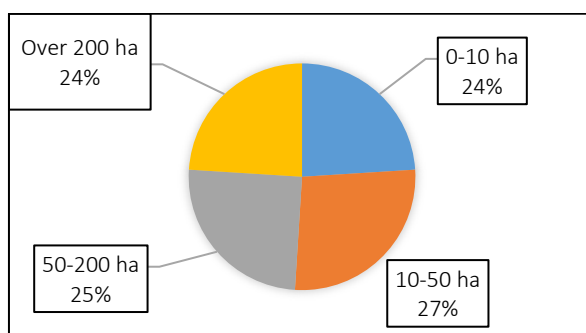


Figure 2. What is the total area of the land you cultivate?
Source: Authors' survey (2026)

The distribution of cultivated areas in 2026 according to Figure 2 highlights a relatively balanced structure among farm size categories. The largest share is held by farms of 10–50 ha (27%), closely followed by those of 50–200 ha (25%). Large farms of over 200 ha account for 24%, as do small farms of 0–10 ha (24%). These results indicate a moderate fragmentation of agricultural land, with no clear dominance of a single size category. At the same time, there is a significant presence of both small and large farms, suggesting the coexistence of multiple types of farm structures within the analysed agricultural sector.

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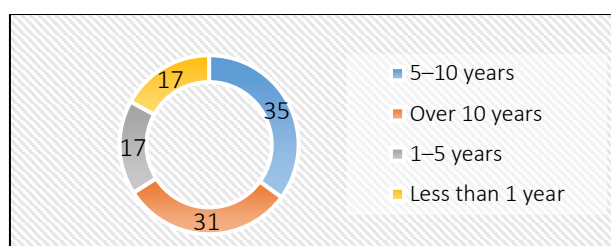


Figure 3. How long have you been active in the agricultural sector?
Source: Authors' survey (2026)

The data in Figure 3 regarding the length of activity in the agricultural sector show that the largest share is represented by farmers with 5–10 years of experience (35%), followed by those with more than 10 years of activity (31%). This indicates the predominance of individuals with medium and high levels of experience in the agricultural sector.

4.2. Perceptions of the agricultural financing environment

In contrast, beginner farmers account for smaller shares, namely 17% for those with 1–5 years of experience and 17% for those with less than one year. Overall, the results suggest a stable agricultural sector, where activity is mainly sustained by experienced farmers, while the entry of new practitioners is more limited. The results of the 2026 survey, according to Figure 4, indicate a predominantly negative perception of the economic environment in the field of agricultural lending in the Republic of Moldova. Most respondents (43%) consider this environment to be an obstacle to business development, suggesting the existence of significant structural barriers, such as limited access to financing, high credit costs, or restrictive lending conditions.

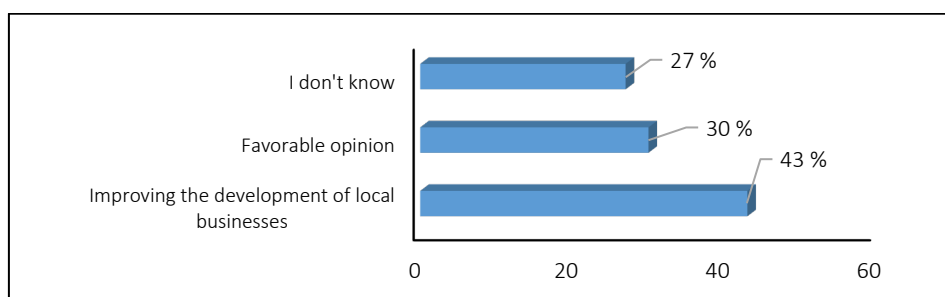


Figure 4. How do you assess the overall situation of the economic environment in the field of agricultural lending in the Republic of Moldova?

Source: Authors' survey (2026)

At the same time, only 30% of respondents perceive the environment as favourable for starting new businesses, reflecting a moderate level of confidence in existing financial support mechanisms. Additionally, the relatively high share of those who are not aware of the situation (27%) highlights a lack of information and transparency in this sector. Overall, the data reveal the need for strategic interventions aimed at improving access to credit, simplifying procedures, and increasing farmers' level of information to stimulate the sustainable development of the agricultural sector.

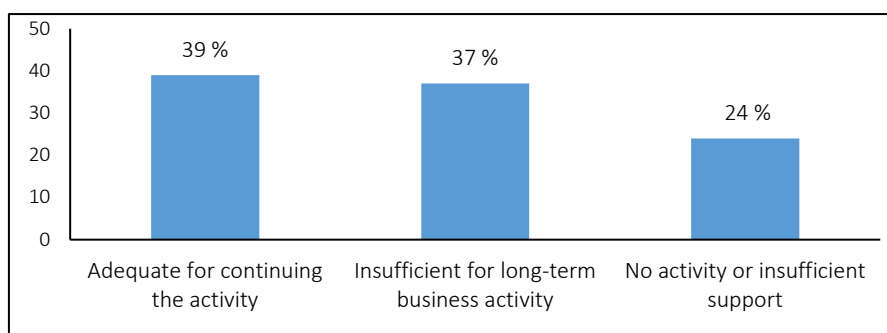


Figure 5. How do you assess the level of subsidies needed for carrying out agricultural activities?

Source: Authors' survey (2026).

The survey results in Figure 5 highlight a mixed perception of the level of subsidies in agriculture in the Republic of Moldova, although with a clear tendency toward insufficiency. While 39% of respondents consider subsidies to be adequate for continuing farm activities, an almost similar share (37%) believe that they are insufficient to sustain long-term agricultural activity.

In addition, 24% of respondents perceive subsidies as being sufficient only to ensure a subsistence level, which suggests a limited impact on the development and modernization of the agricultural sector.

Overall, the results indicate that, although subsidies contribute to maintaining current activities, they are not perceived as a sufficiently strong instrument to foster sustainable development and competitiveness in agriculture. In this context, there is a need to revise support policies by increasing subsidy levels and directing them toward long-term strategic investments.

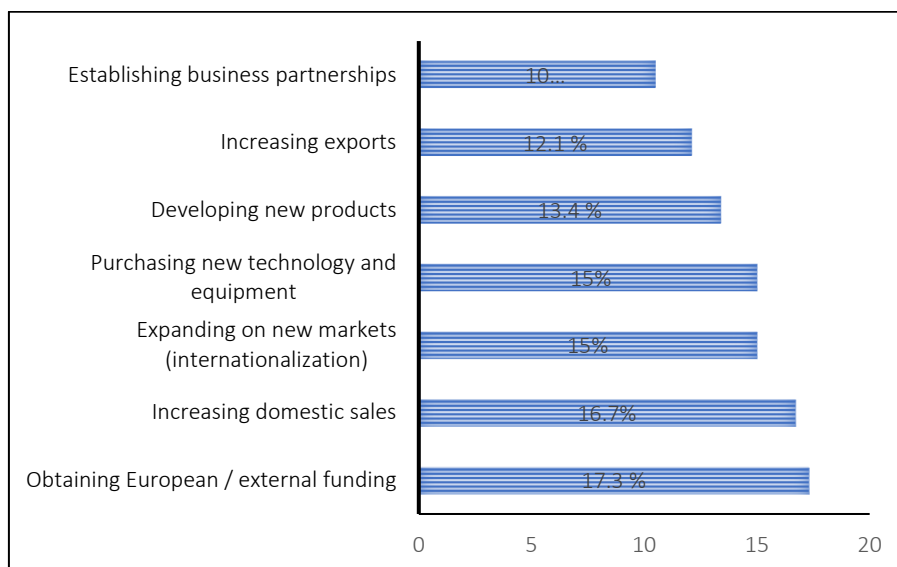


Figure 6. What are the three most important business objectives for 2026?

Source: Authors' survey (2026).

The results in Figure 6 show that in 2026 agricultural entrepreneurs in the Republic of Moldova primarily prioritize accessing external or European funding (17.3%), reflecting a strong dependence on external financial resources for investment and development. Other key priorities include increasing domestic sales (16.7%), entering new markets (15%), and acquiring modern technologies (15%), indicating a dual focus on market consolidation and modernization.

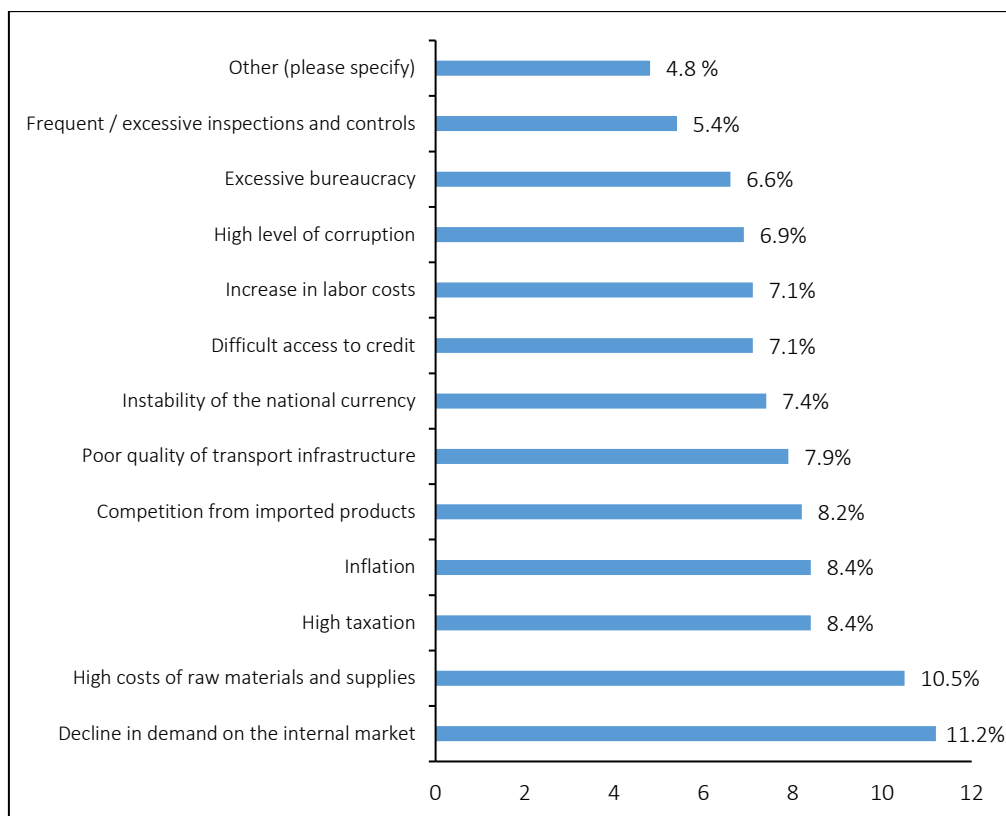


Figure 7. What are the main difficulties your business is facing?

Source: Authors' survey (2026).

Objectives such as product development (13.4%) and export growth (12.1%) are of moderate importance, suggesting that innovation and internationalization are present but not dominant priorities. Business partnerships (10.5%) are the least prioritized, reflecting limited strategic cooperation within the sector. Overall, the sector is mainly oriented toward financing, modernization, and market expansion, while still showing moderate levels of innovation and collaboration, and remaining dependent on external financial support. According to Figure 7, the 2026 survey results show that the main difficulties faced by businesses are primarily driven by economic and financial pressures. The most significant challenges identified are the decline in domestic market demand (11.2%) and high financing costs (10.5%), followed by taxation and inflation (8.4% each) and competition from imported products (8.2%).

At the same time, structural issues such as underdeveloped infrastructure, currency instability, limited access to credit, and rising labour costs continue to affect business activity, having a moderate but persistent impact. Compared to these factors, corruption, bureaucracy, and inspections are perceived as fewer pressing problems.

4.3. Access to and use of external financing

Overall, the data show that over 38% of the identified difficulties are concentrated in four main issues—low demand, financing costs, taxation, and inflation—confirming that the 2026 business environment is mainly dominated by direct economic pressures and financial instability. The survey results show that external financing is used by an overwhelming majority of companies (97%), while only 3% of respondents have not accessed such sources. This distribution highlights the almost universal nature of external capital usage among the analysed enterprises (figure 8).

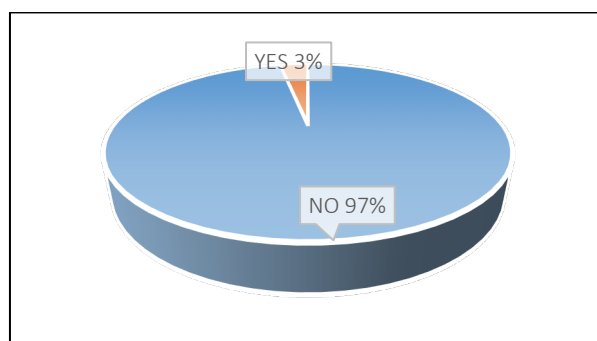


Figure 8. Have you previously accessed external financing (credit, leasing, grant)?

Source: Authors' survey (2026).

The data indicate that external financing instruments—such as credit, leasing, and grants—have become an essential component for the day-to-day functioning and development of businesses. The extremely high level of usage suggests that these sources are no longer an occasional option but a structural condition of economic activity. Overall, it can be concluded that the analysed business environment is highly dependent on external financing, reflecting both the need to support investments and the limited self-financing capacity of enterprises.

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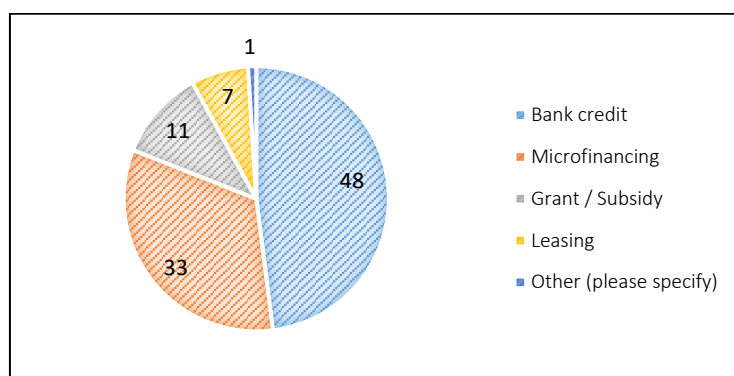


Figure 1.9. If yes, what type of financing have you used?
Source: Authors' survey (2026).

Total responses represent the sum of all responses selected by participants for a given question. The percentage for each option is calculated by dividing the number of responses for that option by the total number of responses. Based on the survey, the main type of financing used is bank credit (48%), followed by microfinance (33%) and grants/subsidies (11%), while leasing and other forms of financing account for a small share. These results show that companies primarily rely on traditional financing solutions, especially bank loans, indicating a high dependence on the banking system. At the same time, the significant share of microfinance suggests that many businesses, particularly small ones, seek more accessible alternatives.

Overall, almost half of the companies prefer bank credit (48%), and more than 80% of financing is concentrated in the first two options (credit and microfinance), confirming a clear orientation toward traditional sources of capital. Total responses represent the sum of all responses selected by participants for a given question. The percentage for each option is calculated by dividing the number of responses for that option by the total number of responses. The analysis of the data presented in Figure 10 shows that the main barriers to accessing financing are procedural and informational in nature rather than purely economic.

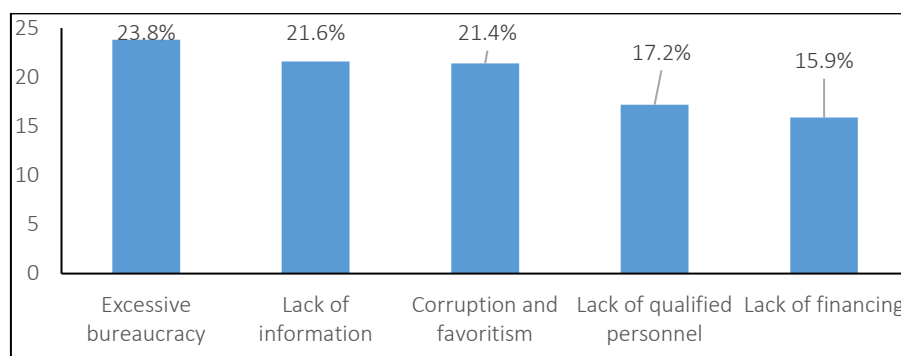


Figure 10. What are the main difficulties encountered in accessing financing?
Source: Authors' survey (2026)

The highest share is recorded for complicated procedures (23.8%), indicating a high level of perceived administrative complexity among respondents. This is followed by lack of information (21.4%) and insufficient collateral (21.4%), both of which reflect structural difficulties in the relationship between

applicants and financial institutions. Further on, long approval times (17.5%) and high interest rates (15.9%) represent important obstacles, although with relatively lower intensity compared to the first categories. These results suggest that, although the cost of financing remains relevant, accessibility and transparency of the lending process are the main issues faced by beneficiaries.

4.4. Financing needs and preferred credit characteristics

Overall, the distribution of responses indicates that improving procedures, increasing access to information, and simplifying collateral requirements could significantly facilitate access to financing. Thus, the identified barriers are mainly institutional and operational, highlighting the need for reforms aimed at increasing transparency and efficiency in the crediting process. The analysis of the data in Figure 11 regarding the purpose of financing shows that the main reason farmers request financial resources is to secure working capital (29.8%), indicating a high need to cover the current expenses of agricultural activities. This is followed by investments in modernization and technological upgrades (28.3%), reflecting a strong interest in improving efficiency and the competitiveness of farms.

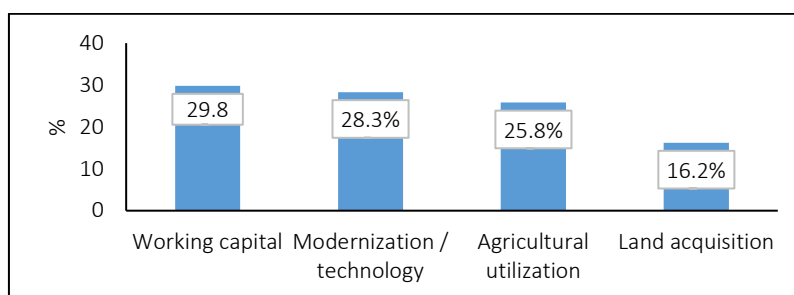


Figure 11. What is the purpose for which you need financing?

Source: Authors' survey (2026)

A significant share is also allocated to the purchase of agricultural machinery (25.8%), confirming farmers' orientation toward mechanization and the improvement of production capacities. Land acquisition (16.2%) has a lower share, suggesting that farm expansion is a secondary priority compared to immediate operational and investment needs. The complete absence of other declared purposes (0%) indicates a clear concentration of financing demand in a limited number of essential areas.

Overall, the results show that financing is primarily requested to support current operations and modernization investments, highlighting an agricultural sector oriented both toward operational stability and gradual technological development.

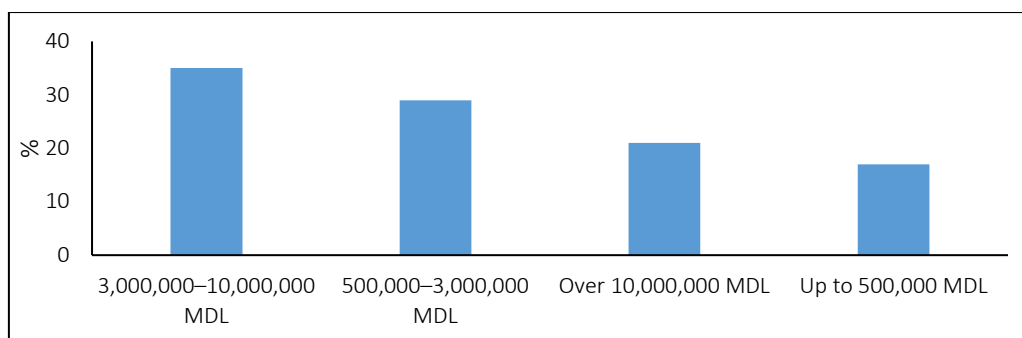


Figure 12. What is the approximate required amount?

Source: Authors' survey (2026)

The analysis of the distribution of requested amounts shows that the largest share of farmers requires financing in the range of 3,000,000–10,000,000 MDL (33%), reflecting medium to high-scale investment needs, mainly associated with the development and modernization of agricultural enterprises.

A significant level of demand is also recorded in the 500,000–3,000,000 MDL range (29%), suggesting the predominance of medium-sized projects likely aimed at both investment activities and working capital needs. At the same time, 21% of respondents require amounts above 10,000,000 MDL, indicating the presence of a segment of large-scale farms with complex investment projects and higher development capacity (figure 13).

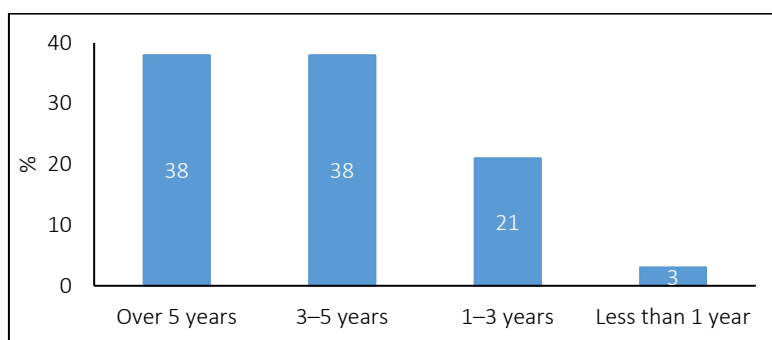


Figure 13. What is the optimal repayment period?

Source: Authors' survey (2026)

Demand for amounts below 500,000 MDL (17%) is lower, confirming that small-scale financing needs have a limited share within the overall structure of the sector. Overall, the results highlight a concentration of financing demand in medium and large amounts, reflecting an agricultural sector primarily oriented toward development and modernization investments rather than small-scale financing. The analysis of the results in Figure 13 regarding the optimal repayment period shows a clear preference among respondents for medium- and long-term financial commitments. Thus, 38% of participants consider a repayment period of over 5 years to be optimal, while an identical share (38%) opts for the 3–5-year interval. In contrast, only 21% prefer a 1–3-year period, and 3% indicate that repayment within less than one year is optimal. These results suggest a predominant orientation toward financing solutions that provide stability and budgetary flexibility by spreading financial obligations over a longer period. The low preference for short repayment periods may reflect both liquidity constraints and repayment capacity, as well as respondents' desire to reduce pressure from monthly instalments on current income. From an economic and behavioural perspective, the data indicate that respondents prioritise long-term financial sustainability and predictability over accelerated debt repayment. Therefore, financial institutions and policymakers should focus on developing credit products adapted to preferences for extended maturities, while maintaining a balance between affordability of instalments and the overall cost of financing.

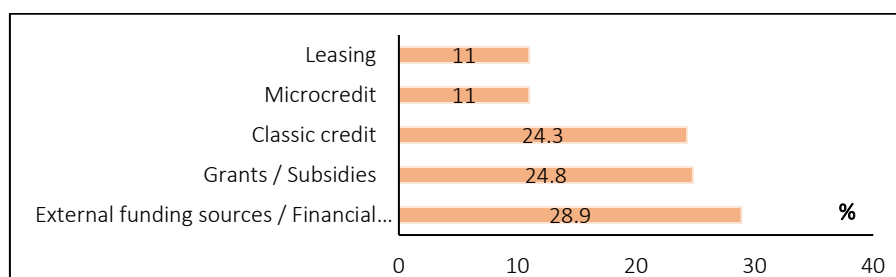


Figure 14. What type of financing do you prefer?

Source: Authors' survey (2026)

According to Figure 14, respondents show a predominant preference for external financing sources and funding programmes, selected by 28.9% of participants. This is followed by grants/subsidies (24.8%) and traditional bank credit (24.3%), highlighting a strong interest in financing forms that provide easier access to financial resources and favourable repayment conditions. In contrast, microcredit and leasing are less preferred options, each chosen by only 11% of respondents. The results suggest that respondents prioritise financial solutions that reduce investment cost pressures and provide a higher level of financial security. The preference for grants and funding programmes reflects a tendency toward sources of capital with lower financial risk or a non-repayable support component. At the same time, the significant share of traditional credit confirms the important role of banking institutions in meeting financing needs. Therefore, the data highlight the need to develop and promote diversified and accessible financial instruments, adapted to the financial capacity and requirements of beneficiaries, to support investment and stimulate economic development.

According to Figure 15, the most important aspect of a financing programme is a flexible repayment period (24.1%), followed closely by support and consultancy during the financing process (23.8%) and reduced or no collateral requirements (22%).

These results indicate that respondents place strong emphasis on flexibility and institutional support.

In comparison, fast access with simple procedures (15.4%) and low or zero interest rates (14.7%) are considered less important. This suggests that cost-related factors are not the main priority when selecting a financing programme. Overall, the findings show that respondents value practical accessibility, financial flexibility, and advisory support more than purely financial advantages such as low interest rates.

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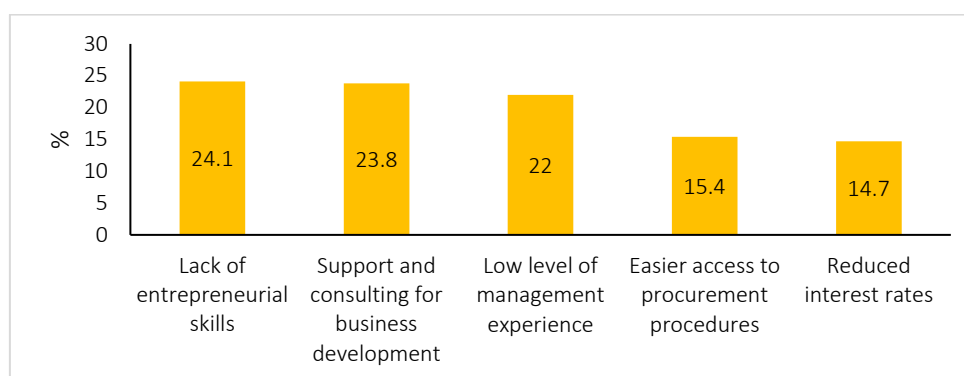


Figure 15. What is the most important aspect you would want in a financing program?

Source: Authors' survey (2026)

The analysis of responses regarding the importance of seasonal payment flexibility shows that most respondents consider this feature relevant in the decision-making process. Specifically, 32% rated seasonal payment flexibility as “very important,” while 31% considered it “important.” At the same time, 29% of respondents rated it as “slightly important,” and only a small share (around 8%) stated that it is “not important at all.” (figure 16).

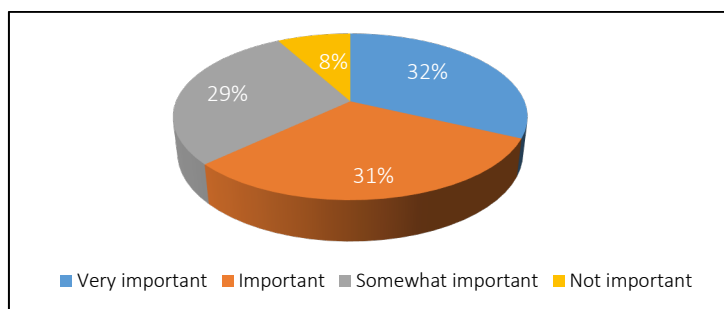


Figure 16. How important is the flexibility of seasonal payments?
Source: Authors' survey (2026)

The results suggest that flexible payment options represent a significant factor for a large proportion of users, reflecting the need to adapt financial services to income seasonality and the specific economic conditions of beneficiaries (Alexandru, n.d.). At the same time, the relatively high share of respondents who consider flexibility only “slightly important” indicates differences in financial preferences and behaviour among users. Overall, the data confirm the relevance of implementing flexible payment mechanisms as a tool to increase the accessibility and attractiveness of financial services. According to Figure 17, the level of satisfaction with existing financial products is moderate, with relatively diverse opinions among respondents. Specifically, 39% of participants reported being “satisfied,” representing the largest share of responses. Additionally, 16% stated that they are “very satisfied,” indicating a segment that highly appreciates the available financial products (figure 17).

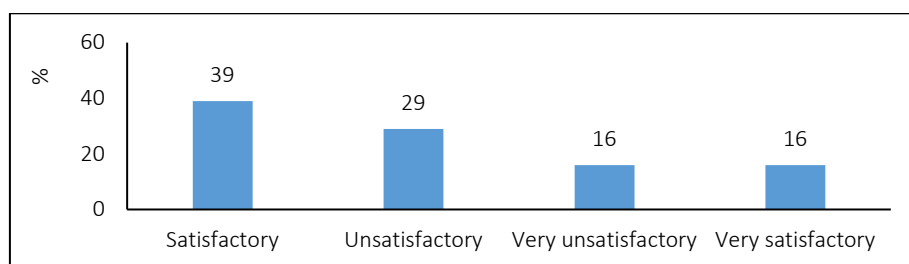


Figure 17. How satisfied are you with the existing financial products?
Source: Authors' survey (2026)

On the other hand, 29% of respondents reported being “unsatisfied,” while 16% were “very unsatisfied,” showing that a significant proportion of users perceive limitations or shortcomings in current financial products.

4.5. Financial information and access to European funding

Overall, the results suggest a generally moderate level of satisfaction while also highlight the need to improve financial products by better aligning them with the needs and expectations of beneficiaries (Republica Moldova: Probleme Alese, n.d.).

According to Figure 18, the level of respondents' awareness regarding financing programmes available for small farmers is predominantly moderate. Specifically, 36% of participants reported being "moderately informed," representing the largest share of responses. In addition, 27% stated that they are "slightly informed," while 26% reported being "not informed at all," highlighting significant gaps in access to information about available financing opportunities.

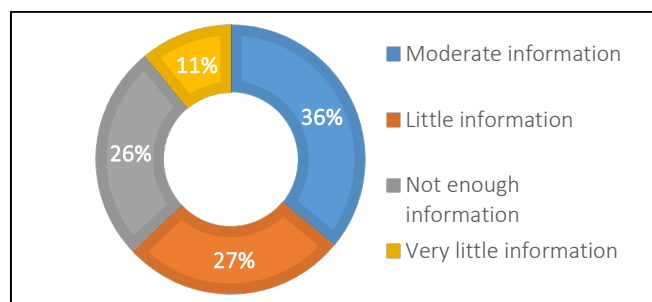


Figure 18. How well informed are you about the available financing programmes for small farmers?

Source: Authors' survey (2026)

At the same time, only 11% of respondents considered themselves "very well informed," indicating that a small proportion has in-depth knowledge of financial support programmes for small farmers. The results suggest the need to intensify information, promotion, and financial advisory activities in order to improve access to funding programmes and increase their utilisation (Olaru, 2014).

The data show that farmers and stakeholders in the agricultural sector primarily prefer digital and interactive channels for obtaining information about financing opportunities. Social media ranks first (14.1%), being perceived as the most accessible and fastest source of information, followed by seminars, training sessions, and agricultural events (13.4%), which provide direct interaction and clarification of information. Official websites of institutions and ministries (12.6%) also remain an important source, confirming the need for credible and up-to-date information (figure 19).

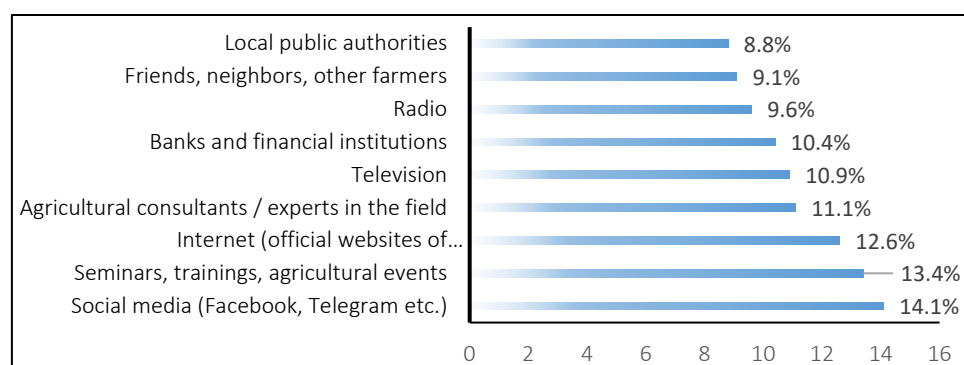


Figure 1.19. What information channels do you consider most useful for learning about financing opportunities?

Source: Authors' survey (2026)

The results also highlight the importance of agricultural consultants and experts (11.1%), suggesting that beneficiaries value specialised support in accessing financing. Traditional channels such as television (10.9%) and radio (9.6%) remain relevant, although their impact is lower compared to digital media. At the same time, recommendations from acquaintances or other farmers (9.1%) and information provided by local public authorities (8.8%) complement the information ecosystem (Biroul Național de Statistică Al Republicii Moldova, n.d.). Overall, the findings indicate the need for an

integrated communication strategy that combines online media, specialised events, and professional consultancy to ensure effective and accessible information on financing opportunities. The analysis of the results in Figure 20 shows that the main obstacles to accessing European funds are economic, informational, and administrative in nature. The most significant barrier is represented by eligibility criteria focused on profitability (22.5%), which highlights the difficulty for small and medium-sized farms to meet the required conditions.

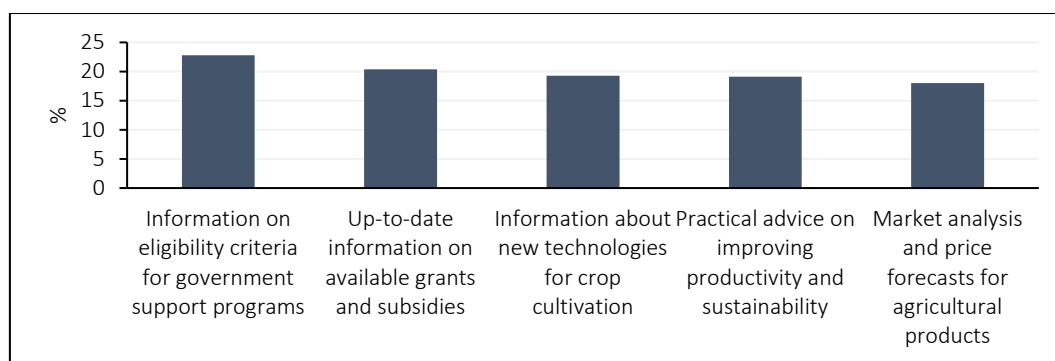


Figure 20. In your opinion, what are the three main obstacles to accessing European funds?
Source: Authors' survey (2026)

In addition, insufficient financial resources for co-financing (19.3%) and excessive bureaucracy combined with regulatory instability (19.3%) significantly limit interest and capacity to access European funding (Ministerul Agriculturii Şi Industriei Alimentare | Guvernul Republicii Moldova, n.d.).

4.6. Future financing priorities and regional agricultural challenges

At the same time, limited managerial capacity of firms (18.6%) indicates difficulties in project management and implementation (Cristea et al., 2020). Overall, the results emphasize the need to simplify administrative procedures, improve access to information, and support beneficiaries throughout the process of accessing and implementing European funds. According to the analysis of Figure 21, the main financing need for 2026 is directed toward research, development, and innovation (52%), reflecting companies' interest in modernization, increased competitiveness, and adaptation to new market requirements (Coban, n.d.).

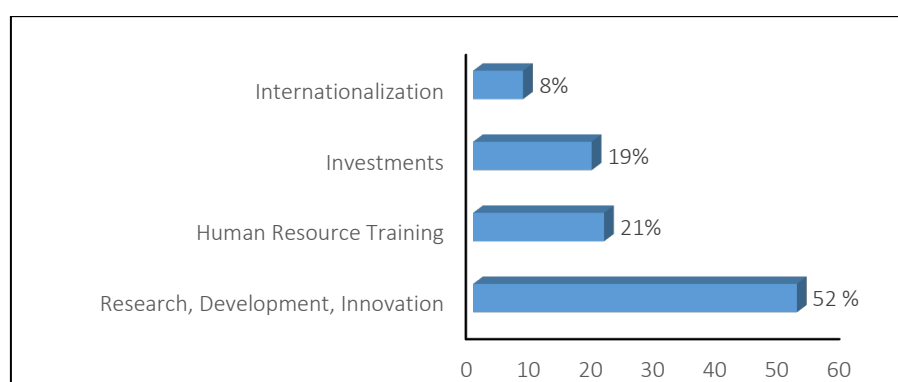


Figure 21. What are your company's financing needs for 2026?
Source: Authors' survey (2026)

This result suggests a strategic orientation toward technological advancement and the development of innovative solutions. Overall, the results highlight a clear priority for innovation and sustainable

development, considered essential elements for improving firms' competitiveness in the coming period.

Figure 22 highlights the main challenges encountered in agricultural activities in the region. The most significant difficulty reported by respondents is the shortage of labour (23.1%), indicating a substantial workforce deficit in the agricultural sector. The second most frequently mentioned challenge is difficulties in selling agricultural products (20.8%), suggesting problems related to market access and the commercialization of agricultural output. The next priorities are funding for human resource training (21%) and investments (19%), indicating companies' concern for developing employee skills and strengthening operational capacity. In contrast, internationalization (8%) records the lowest level of interest, suggesting that most companies are currently focused on developing and consolidating their internal activities.

In addition, insufficient technical equipment (18.8%) and unfavourable climatic conditions (15.2%) represent significant obstacles to the development of agricultural activities. High production costs (12.9%) and limited access to financing (9.2%) further contribute to the challenges identified by respondents.

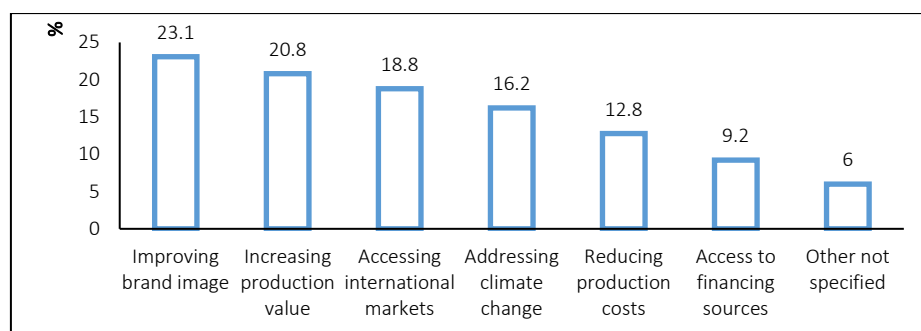


Figure 22. What are the main challenges encountered in agricultural activity in your region?

Source: Authors' survey (2026)

The "Other" category received no responses, indicating that the main difficulties are already well defined.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that access to appropriate financing remains a significant factor influencing the development and modernization of the agricultural sector in the Republic of Moldova. Although agriculture continues to rely substantially on traditional activities, particularly crop production and livestock farming, the results also indicate an increasing orientation toward diversification, technological modernization, and investment in productive capacity. The empirical research conducted among the surveyed respondents reveals a strong reliance on external sources of financing, with bank credit and microfinance representing the main financial instruments used. At the same time, the findings demonstrate that the widespread use of external financing does not imply easy or adequate access to financial resources. Farmers continue to face important barriers, particularly complicated administrative procedures, insufficient information, collateral requirements, lengthy approval processes, and the cost of borrowing. This indicates a persistent gap between farmers' financing needs and their effective capacity to access financial products that are appropriate to the specific

characteristics of agricultural activity. The results further show that financing is primarily required for working capital, modernization, technological upgrades, and the acquisition of agricultural machinery. Respondents demonstrate a clear preference for medium- and long-term financing and place particular importance on flexible repayment conditions, seasonal payment arrangements, advisory support, and reduced collateral requirements. These preferences suggest that conventional financial products do not always adequately reflect the seasonality of agricultural revenues, the production cycle, and the specific risks associated with farming.

Another important finding concerns the informational dimension of financial inclusion. Despite the strong interest in external and European funding, respondents report only moderate levels of awareness regarding available financing programmes. Limited access to reliable information, restrictive eligibility criteria, co-financing requirements, and bureaucratic procedures may therefore reduce the effective utilization of available financial support. Improving access to finance consequently requires not only increasing the availability of financial resources but also improving the mechanisms through which farmers receive information and assistance throughout the financing process.

The study also confirms that financial constraints are interconnected with broader structural challenges affecting agricultural development. Labour shortages, difficulties in marketing agricultural products, insufficient technical equipment, unfavourable climatic conditions, and limited access to European funding contribute to the vulnerability of agricultural enterprises and may restrict their capacity to invest and expand. These challenges indicate that agricultural financing should be addressed as part of an integrated rural and agricultural development framework rather than as an isolated financial issue.

Based on the empirical findings, several measures can be considered to improve the accessibility and effectiveness of agricultural financing in the Republic of Moldova. These include simplifying lending and application procedures, strengthening financial and digital literacy, expanding advisory and information services, developing state-backed guarantee mechanisms, adapting repayment schedules to agricultural production cycles, and reducing unnecessary collateral requirements. Greater support for technological modernization, farmer cooperation, and the preparation and implementation of European-funded projects could further strengthen the capacity of agricultural producers to access and effectively use external financial resources. The central practical implication of the research is the need for an integrated agricultural financing product adapted to the economic and operational characteristics of farming. Such a product could combine flexible medium- and long-term financing, seasonal repayment mechanisms, advisory and consultancy services, simplified digital application procedures, reduced collateral requirements, and transparent information regarding eligibility and available funding opportunities. Integrating these elements could address not only the financial needs of farmers but also the informational, administrative, and institutional barriers identified by the study.

Overall, the research contributes to a better understanding of the financing needs, preferences, and access barriers faced by agricultural producers in the Republic of Moldova. The findings suggest that improving access to finance is not solely a matter of increasing the supply of credit. It also requires the development of financial products and support mechanisms that are accessible, flexible, transparent, and aligned with the seasonal and risk-sensitive nature of agricultural activity. Such an approach could contribute to increased investment, technological modernization, improved competitiveness, and the long-term sustainable development of the agricultural sector in the Republic of Moldova.

6. Conclusions

This study examined the financing needs, access to financial products, and financing preferences of agricultural producers in the Republic of Moldova, with particular attention to the barriers that limit their effective access to financial resources. The findings indicate that external financing represents an important component of agricultural activity, with bank credit and microfinance among the main sources used by respondents. At the same time, access to financing remains constrained by complicated procedures, insufficient information, collateral requirements, lengthy approval processes, and financing costs. Results further demonstrate that farmers primarily require financing for working capital, modernization, technological development, and the acquisition of agricultural machinery. Respondents show a clear preference for medium- and long-term financing and place considerable importance on flexible repayment conditions, seasonal payment mechanisms, advisory support, and reduced collateral requirements. These findings indicate that the suitability of a financial product depends not only on its cost, but also on its ability to reflect the seasonal nature and specific financial requirements of agricultural activity.

An additional finding concerns the information gap surrounding available financing opportunities. Despite the strong interest in external and European funding, respondents report relatively limited awareness of available programmes. This suggests that improving access to agricultural finance requires not only the availability of financial resources, but also better information, clearer procedures, and appropriate advisory support. The main contribution of this study is the identification of the gap between farmers' financing needs and preferences and their effective capacity to access suitable financial products. By examining both dimensions, the research provides a more comprehensive perspective on agricultural financing in the Republic of Moldova and highlights the importance of considering economic, administrative, informational, and practical factors when designing financial solutions for agricultural producers. From a practical perspective, the findings support the development of agricultural financing products that combine financial resources with greater flexibility and accessibility. Financing solutions incorporating flexible repayment schedules, reduced collateral requirements, advisory assistance, simplified application procedures, and accessible information could respond more effectively to the needs identified by respondents. More broadly, improving the accessibility and suitability of agricultural finance can contribute to investment, modernization, and the development of more competitive agricultural holdings in the Republic of Moldova. The findings therefore underline the importance of aligning financial services with the specific characteristics of agricultural activity and of strengthening the connection between financing institutions and agricultural producers. Such an approach can support the long-term development and sustainability of the agricultural sector.

6.1. Practical and policy implications

The findings have several practical, managerial, and policy implications for stakeholders involved in agricultural financing in the Republic of Moldova. The results indicate that improving access to finance requires measures that address not only the availability of financial resources but also the administrative, informational, and structural barriers faced by agricultural producers. For financial institutions, the findings suggest the need to develop agricultural financing products that are better aligned with the specific characteristics of farming. Attention should be given to flexible repayment schedules, including seasonal payment mechanisms, appropriate loan maturities, and financing

conditions that reflect the timing of agricultural revenues. Reducing unnecessary collateral requirements and simplifying application and approval procedures could also improve accessibility, particularly for producers with limited financial and administrative capacity. Financial institutions could further strengthen their support by integrating advisory services into agricultural financing products, helping farmers better understand financing conditions and manage their financial obligations (SDG Progress Report 2023, n.d.).

For policymakers and public institutions, the findings highlight the importance of strengthening the institutional environment for agricultural finance. Policies could focus on improving access to reliable information about financing programmes, simplifying administrative and eligibility requirements, and strengthening mechanisms that support farmers who face difficulties meeting conventional collateral or co-financing requirements. State guarantee mechanisms and targeted support for small and medium-sized agricultural enterprises could contribute to reducing some of the barriers identified in the study.

For agricultural support institutions and advisory organizations, there is a clear need to improve farmers' access to financial and digital information. Information about available credit, subsidies, and European funding opportunities should be communicated through a combination of digital channels, agricultural events, official institutional platforms, and professional advisory services. Such support could help farmers better understand eligibility requirements, compare financing alternatives, and prepare the documentation required for funding applications.

For farmers and agricultural enterprises, the findings emphasize the importance of strengthening financial and digital competencies and improving the planning of financing needs. Greater awareness of available financial instruments and better preparation of investment and financing plans could increase the ability of agricultural producers to identify appropriate sources of finance and use them effectively (LAG Database | The European Network for Rural Development (ENRD), n.d.).

Overall, the findings support a coordinated approach involving financial institutions, public authorities, advisory organizations, and agricultural producers. Rather than treating access to finance as a purely credit-related issue, agricultural financing policies and products should address the interconnected financial, informational, administrative, and operational constraints identified by the study. This approach could improve the effectiveness of existing financing mechanisms and contribute to investment, modernization, and the competitiveness of the agricultural sector in the Republic of Moldova.

6.2. Limitations and future research

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the research is based on a non-probability sample, which limits the extent to which the results can be generalized to the entire population of agricultural producers in the Republic of Moldova. The findings should therefore be interpreted as indicative of the perceptions and experiences of the surveyed respondents rather than as statistically representative estimates for the national agricultural sector.

Second, the study relies primarily on self-reported questionnaire data. Respondents' assessments of their financial awareness, previous experiences, perceived barriers, and preferences may be influenced by individual perceptions and recall. Consequently, the results reflect respondents' reported

experiences and attitudes rather than independently verified financial records or institutional lending data (“Track. Prog. Food Agric. SDG Indic. 2023,” 2023).

Third, the research adopts a cross-sectional design, capturing respondents’ perceptions and financing conditions at a specific point in time. Agricultural financing needs and access conditions may change in response to variations in agricultural production, climatic conditions, market prices, interest rates, public support programmes, and broader economic developments. The study therefore cannot establish how financing behaviour changes over time or identify causal relationships between individual factors and access to finance.

Fourth, the analysis is primarily descriptive and exploratory. While this approach is appropriate for identifying major patterns in financing needs, preferences, and perceived barriers, it does not provide sufficient evidence to establish causal relationships or determine the statistical significance of differences between specific groups of respondents.

Future research could address these limitations by using larger and probabilistically selected samples covering different regions, farm sizes, and agricultural subsectors of the Republic of Moldova. Comparative research between small, medium-sized, and large agricultural holdings could provide further insight into how financing needs and barriers vary according to farm characteristics.

Longitudinal studies could also examine changes in farmers’ financing behaviour over several agricultural cycles and assess how changes in economic conditions, climatic risks, public support programmes, and financial market conditions affect access to credit. In addition, future research could combine survey responses with institutional and financial data, such as loan applications, approval rates, loan amounts, repayment performance, and financing costs, in order to complement farmers’ perceptions with objective indicators (LAG Database | The European Network for Rural Development (ENRD), n.d.) (Omer, 2008).

Further research could also test the feasibility and potential demand for the integrated agricultural financing product proposed by this study. Such research could examine different combinations of loan maturity, seasonal repayment schedules, collateral requirements, advisory services, and digital application procedures. This would provide a stronger empirical basis for assessing which characteristics of agricultural financial products are most effective in improving access to finance and supporting the sustainable development of agricultural enterprises in the Republic of Moldova.

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