



Is Romanian subsistence farming a survival strategy?

Seven years on from joining the EU Romanian agriculture is still dominated by small-scale farming. Is this bad for efficiency or good for personal survival?

What are the research findings?

- EU accession in 2007 involved a difficult transition to a market economy, particularly for the Romanian agricultural industry.
- There has been some consolidation of 10-20 ha farms but farms of less than 2 ha are increasing in number.
- Romania has the largest number of semi-subsistence farms in the EU; in 2009 about three-quarters of the total 3.9m farms had less than 2 ha, with the average farm size just over 3 ha.
- Subsistence farming is still an important means of survival, and rural well as urban households rely increasingly on food produced by themselves or relatives.
- Much of the produce not consumed by the family sells through informal markets, at farm gate or roadside or through “local wholesaling”.
- There is a public perception of home-produced food as being “real” and “organic” and generally of better quality than the imported food available from supermarkets.

What are the implications for policy?

- CAP direct payments may have slowed structural change and encouraged fragmentation, although the smallest farms (under one ha) are not eligible and the application process probably discouraged many.
- Food produced by immediate or more distant family provides a vital safety net in Romania where food is heavily taxed and where both pensioners and public employees have seen incomes fall drastically during the recession.
- Although small farm production is regarded as inefficient their social, economic, cultural and ecological role should not be underestimated.
- Small farms are associated with High Nature Value landscapes and provide a wide range of ecosystem services. The Small Farmers Scheme of the CAP 2014 offers potential to support and enhance the role of these farms.
- The role of small farms in the wider economy is still not fully understood and requires further research.

Further information:

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