

RESEARCH ON THE SMALL PEASANT INDIVIDUAL HOUSEHOLDS IN ROMANIA WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

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Abstract

This paper represents a study on the evolution of agricultural holdings in small individual peasant households in Romania and their importance in sustainable agriculture. Agriculture is one of the basic branches of the national economy. Sustainable agriculture involves obtaining healthy and quality foods, conserving natural resources and preserving biodiversity. Small peasant households generally meet these requirements of sustainable agriculture, given that they generally have small areas of agricultural land near the house used mainly as family gardens that are worked more with hand tools or small machining which do not destroy soil structure by compaction, and chemicals for fighting diseases, pests and weeds are used little or no use. Also, natural fertilizers are usually used and the supplementation with macro and chemical microelements is done in balanced doses. Based on data from the Institute of Statistics, between 2002 - 2016 there is an increase of agricultural holdings in small peasant farms between 2002-2010 (in 2002 and 2010 the two General Agricultural Census took place) and a decrease between the years 2010-2016.

Key words: small peasant individual households, General Agricultural Census, family of farmers, Romania

INTRODUCTION

The development of agriculture, in the current context, cannot be judged only by the prism of agriculture as a basic branch of the national economy, but also by the social component, particularly important, represented by the traditional peasant households that ensure the subsistence of the rural population [2], as well as the involvement in the use of over 55% of the agricultural area of the country [7], [10].

Starting with the industrial revolution, we tried to restructure agriculture on industrial principles, excluding the fact that the two fields of activity are governed by different laws [1]. Treating the environment as a food-producing factory does not seem to be a sustainable and consequences-free solution. In the last decades, agricultural production has tripled [5], but the costs have decreased and the natural value of food has decreased.

The small peasant individual household had for centuries as main investment work, based on honest economic principles and based on a responsible morality in relation to the

environment and society [15]. These qualities have ensured the survival of this form of peasant household, regardless of the external conditions and it is necessary to recognize the status of basic structure in the society [1]. The small peasant individual household constitutes the economic cell of the production, distribution and consumption of the goods in relation to the demands of the family, of one or more persons gathered for the same purpose [9]. This is characterized by the fact that he owns the land around the house or at a certain distance from the house [3].

Small peasant individual households have been known since the Dacia times, developing and modernizing in each historical stage [15]. An important element of small peasant households is the garden or land near the house where vegetables, flowers, herbs, vines, etc. are grown [5]. The basic feature of small peasant individual households is that, unlike large farms, they do not produce for the market in general, but for their own consumption [15]. Theoretically, a small peasant household can work wherever there is

a small area of land and has the following characteristics [2], [15]:

-Its members do not retire and work as long as life allows them to get the food they need for the family

-It is a simple form of circular economy.

The small peasant individual household is based on the work of a group that seeks to satisfy its consumption needs [1]. Regarding the optimal extent of the farm, the households establish it at the level of the most advantageous use of their own work [12]. The intensity of labor exploitation is established in order to obtain the maximum income per unit

of work, without a lower limit, but with a relative upper limit established in the sense of satisfying the consumption needs of the family [2]. Thus, the peasant household in the Romanian village does not produce for the purpose of earning, but for the consumption of the family, being not a capitalist type enterprise [17]. In small peasant households, the social criterion is the main criterion according to which the efficiency of production is evaluated [6]. As such, there are triple interdependencies at the household level [15].

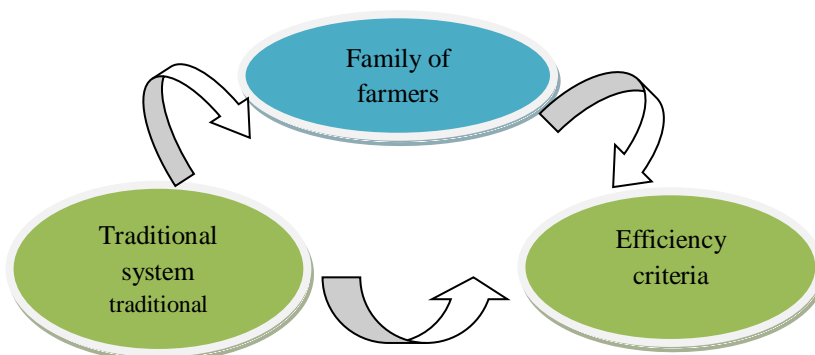


Fig.1. Ties of interdependence at the household level
 Source: own processing from open source [15].

The small farm system within the small peasant individual household will last as long as the demand for food comes with priority from family members [2].

The small individual peasant households represented and still represent the backbone of the Romanian people, which meant continuity in traditions specific to the rural environment, generating environment for healthy agricultural-food products [15], [18]. It can be said that a small peasant household is a rural

household, which has agricultural resources and has as a basic, complementary and additional concern, agricultural activity to produce basic agricultural products for family members and for those close to them [1], [2].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Within European agriculture Romania ranks 6th in the EU in terms of agricultural area used [8],[10],[14].

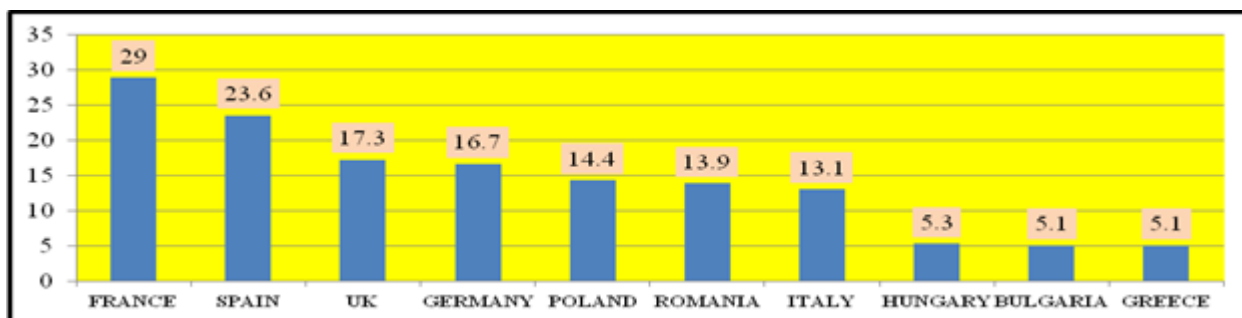


Fig.2. The first ten EU countries in terms of agricultural area used (million ha, 2013)

Source: processed data after Eurostat [7], [8], [9], [10], [17].

The agricultural areas of the small individual peasant households (family gardens) have a small percentage of the total agricultural area

of Romania, according to the data from the National Institute of Statistics [3], [5], [13].

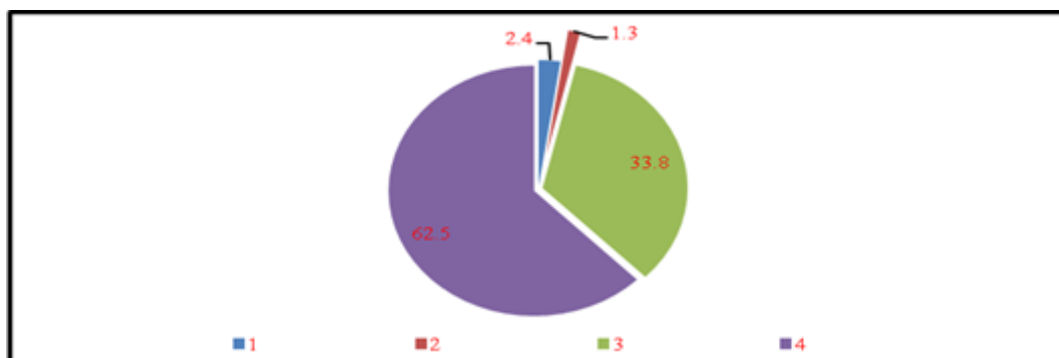


Fig.3. Distribution of the used agricultural area of Romania.

1 - permanent crops; 2- small peasant individual households (family gardens);

3 - pastures and meadows; 4 - arable land

Source: processed data after NIS [11], [12], [13]

The structure of the used agricultural area of Romania is similar to the one in the EU, where the arable land holds about 60%, the pastures and meadows 34%, the permanent crops 6,1%, and the family gardens 0,2% [9], [10], [16].

The structural analysis of the Romanian agriculture is very important to determine at what stage is this important branch of the Romanian economy [14].

The study is based on the statistical data provided by the General Agricultural Census of Romania from 2002 and 2010 [11], [12], [5]. The study used the method of comparative analysis of the data provided by the two sources, based on absolute and relative deviations from the reference year 2002, the results obtained having the role of expressing

the trends regarding the future of small peasant households in Romania in the medium and long term [4], [5].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study based on the results of the structural survey in agriculture conducted by the National Institute of Statistics presents the evolution in time by comparing the statistical data from 2016 with those of 2013, 2010 and 2002.

The comparative situation of the agricultural area used, respectively of the agricultural area owned by the individual small peasant households in Romania in the years 2002, 2010 and 2016 is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparative situation of the agricultural area used in the years 2002, 2010, 2013 and 2016

Indicators	U.M	Total agricultural holdings			
		2002	2010	2013	2016
Number of agricultural holdings	thousands	4,485	3,859	3,630	3,422
The agricultural area used	thousands ha	13,931	13,306	13,056	12,503
Small peasant individual households (family gardens)	thousands ha	169	182	158	142

Source: Data processing from basis of data from Farm Structure Survey and Agricultural Census data base 2002-2016, NIS [3], [5], [11], [12], [13].

Analyzing the graphical representations it can be noticed a tendency of increase of the agricultural surfaces of the individual small peasant farms during the period 2002-2010,

even in the conditions of the decrease of the number of agricultural holdings, but followed of a rapid decrease in the years 2010-2016 caused in particular by the migration from the

rural environment in the urban environment or even outside the country and also because of the aging phenomenon of the population in the rural area (Fig. 4, 5 and 6).

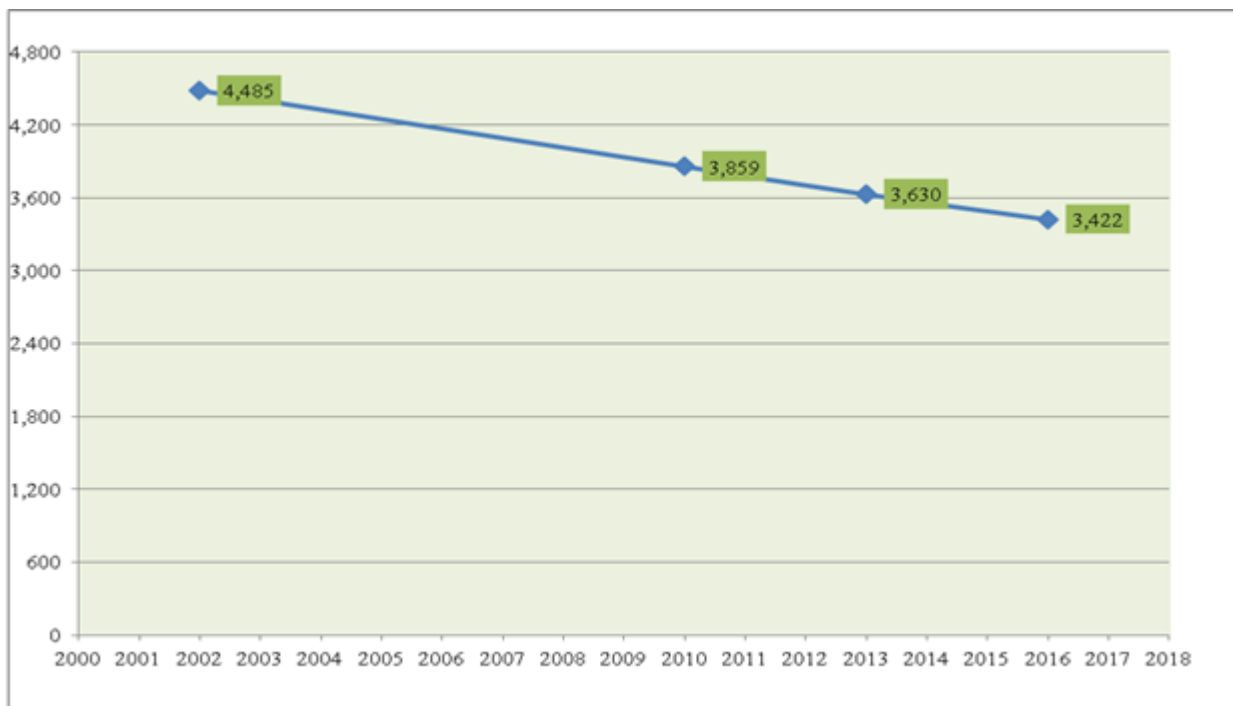


Fig.4. Evolution of the number of agricultural holdings (thousands)
Source: Own design based on the data from [3], [5], [11], [12], [13].

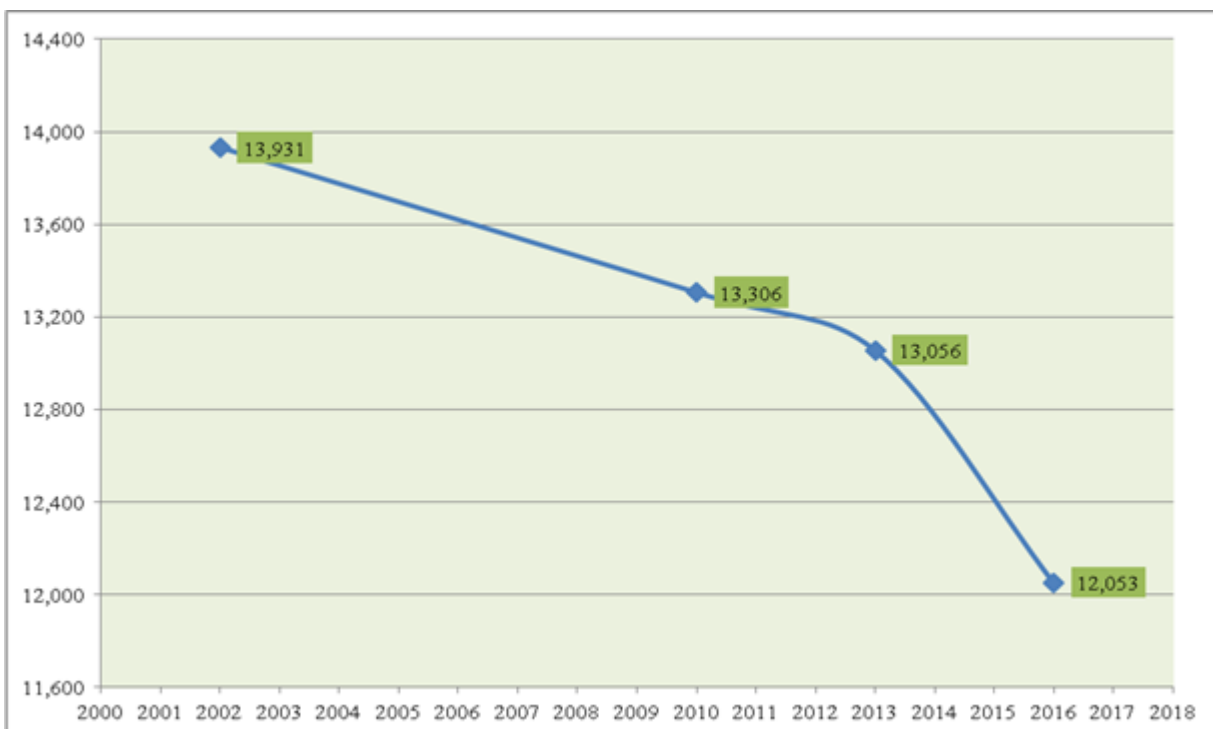


Fig.5. Evolution of the agricultural area used (thousands ha)
Source: Own design based on the data from [3], [5], [11], [12], [13].

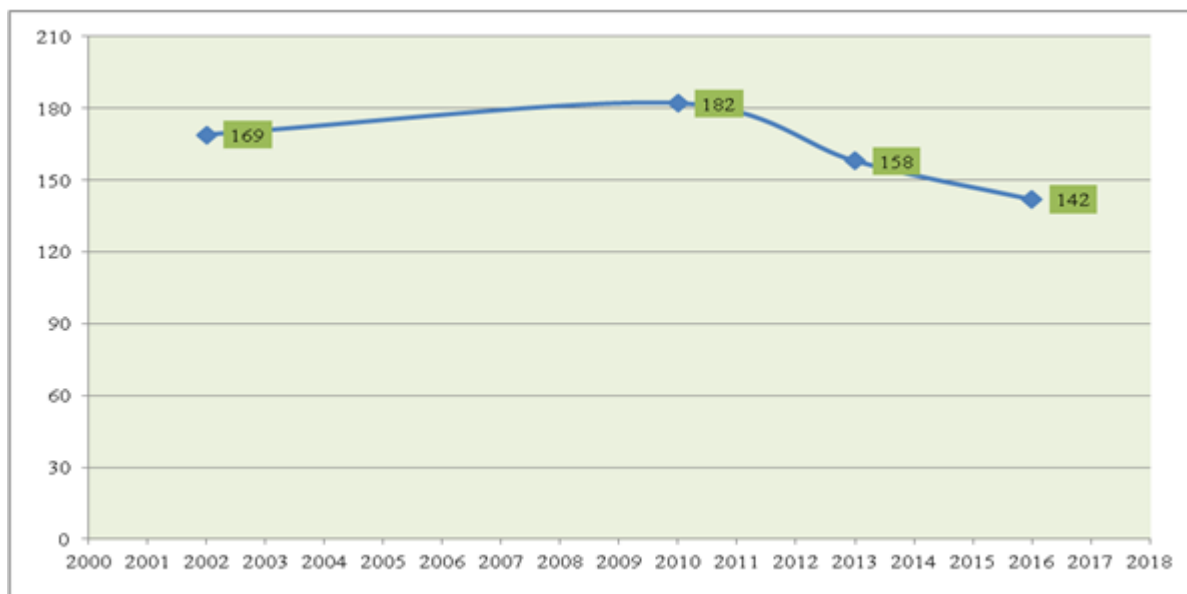


Fig.6. Evolution of small peasant individual households (thousands ha)
Source: Own design based on the data from [3], [5], [11], [12], [13].

CONCLUSIONS

For small peasant households, dependence on family work is a determining feature.

Small peasant individual households are involved in both the production and consumption processes. This dual character of small peasant households establishes the difference between the activity carried out in these households and other economic activities specific to the market economy.

The typology of small peasant individual households depends on their social, mono and multi-family or nonfamily structure, with one or more members, on the land resources, on the relief and agro meteorological conditions of the area, on the productive potential of the agricultural land and on the zoning and specialization of agricultural production.

Small peasant households ensure rural permanence by preserving traditions (economic, gastronomic, cultural, etc.) and rural heritage. The contribution of family farming to maintaining the specificity of the rural area is achieved through the use of sustainable, innovative agricultural practices and through the constant maintenance of biological diversity.

In view of the structure of property and households, but also other factors such as deindustrialization, migration of young people, against the background of population

aging, the peasant household is threatened as an existence, many villages being depopulated. That is why it is necessary to rebalance, including by designing and applying the appropriate normative framework, the value, cultural and economic conditions, which in turn will rebalance the human option for living small individual peasant households.

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