FARMING SYSTEM IN ALBANIA

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ABSTRACT

During the economic transition the agricultural sector of Albania has changed significantly. This process continues parallel with global trends of periods of relative consolidation. The diversity of farm types is increasing in terms of both their production structure and production organization. Even though the farms are still small in terms of the average size, there is an increasing tendency of fallow land, due to emigration and migration of the rural population. This is mainly due to traditions, because households composed of several families use greater parts of farm land for subsistence. Farm size and fragmentation - Albania has a very large number of farms per unit surface area compared to other countries in the EU. The size variation differs according to regions: higher in Western and South-Eastern Albania - in Fier 1.64 ha/farm; in Korçë 1.48 and smaller in Northern and North-Eastern regions - in Kukes 0.62 ha/farm. According to official statistical data the size of farm plots increased from 0.20 ha plots in 2000 to 0.26 ha in 2011; which is equal to nearly 30% in a decade. But the total average size of field plots, in general is still too small to justify the intensification of production by replacing hands with machines. The aim of this study is to give a screenshot of the actual situation of farming system in Albania. To fulfil this objective, we have taken into consideration some of the major areas of Albania, Fieri, Lushnja, Berati, Korce and Kukes. A descriptive analysis has been carried out to analyse these areas.

Keywords: Albania, farming system, transition, agriculture sector.

INTRODUCTION

During the transition period, production structures as well as other indicators that characterize the agricultural sector of a country have changed significantly in Albania. Among the factors that have influenced the orientation and decision making of farmers can be mentioned:

- Meeting the needs (it is clear that completion of consumption needs, under the conditions of subsistence farms is one of the main motives in their decision making)
- Availability of resources (farmers were engaged in production systems where needs for human resources are mainly provided by family farmers, and in crops whose products resists for a long time and have relatively low demands for purchased inputs)
- Incomes intensity (culture cultivation with high income per unit of surface as well as higher market opportunities).
- Experience and tradition (the farmers were oriented towards activities well-known by them)

The impact of these factors combined with the mentality, level of information and geographic location led to a total new orientation of Albanian farm production structures. In the first decade after the 90's it is noticed the adoption of complex and multi-cultural production systems, characterized by a large number of agricultural crops and animals.

A part of the development barriers identified above continue to be major obstacles to farm development. Surface of agricultural land has relatively little decreased (according to the

latest official statistics). It results to be 696,000 ha, because of changing its destination into non-agricultural (mainly for urban use), but an important issue remains the fallow land mainly because of emigration and urban migration. Thus, the number of farms, which have left partially or completely fallow land are estimated at 91,251 farms (Statistical Yearbook 2018, MAFCP (Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Protection)

During the last two decades of market economy, due to the major demographic movements and displacement of population to urban areas, the number of farms with productive activity has fallen significantly. Today, the number of farms in operation is estimated to be nearly 350,654 (Statistical Yearbook 2018, MAFCP). The average household size in Albania is high. This is mainly due to the living traditions where the household is composed by several families. This indicator is on national average of 4.7 household/ farm, and can be considered as a development barrier. Likewise, number of farm families has remained almost unchanged in the last 10 years with an average of 1.1 families/farm.

The farm size and fragmentation

Albania has a very high number of farms regarding total surface. The average land surface per capita is estimated to be 2-5 times lower than that of countries in the region and European Union countries (Ministry of Agriculture). The average agricultural area per inhabitants is 2200 m². However, only about 450,000 ha of land are actually available to be cultivated. This surface is the same as was the cultivated area during the last decade. One of the indicators that we actually consider as one of the main barriers to development and commercialization of agricultural farms is the highest number of plots and the small size of farms.

There is also a noticeable difference as to size of farms in various regions of the country. It is higher in Western and South-Eastern regions of the country respectively in Fier and Korçë with a farm size of 1.64 and 1.48 ha/farm, and smaller in Northern and North-Eastern regions of the country where the land availability is also lower (e.g. in Kukes region the average farm surface is 0.62 ha/farm or twice less than in Fier and Korçë region). (Statistical Yearbook 2018, MoAFCP).

Based on official figures the plot size has been very little improved from 0.20 ha plots in 2015 to 0.26 ha in 2018. However, this increase in the size of plots has not given the expected effect in farm opportunities to use agricultural machinery and/ or intensify the production. It is also noted a little increase in the average size of farm. Referring to the same sources it is estimated that it is from 1.04 ha/farm in 2015 to 1.21 ha/farm at the end of 2018. (MAFCP, 2019).

Production systems

Crop pattern is undoubtedly one of the indicators that significantly affect the efficiency of the farm. Plant systems mainly include plants such as wheat, corn, hay, vegetables, beans, potatoes, and orchard. It has been noticed a significant change in the production structure of nut plants. Actually, there is almost no cultivation of cotton, sugar beets, tobacco, rice, rape, etc. in Albania. Among the main factors that have produced the crop pattern change in Albania, can be mentioned:

- Market orientation and transfer of decision making from the government to the farmer and the market
- Destruction of the processing industries during the transition period, such as the tobacco industry, cotton, rice, oil refinery, sugar) and the absence of significant investments in some fields of agro food processing branch.

- The loss of traditional export markets as a result of system change
- The need to meet the requirements for farm family consumption
- Insufficiency of financial resources

In the last ten years it has been a decrease of the surface of field crops, but nevertheless, it remains still relatively high. In circumstances where field crops give generally low yields, and when our country does not have comparative advantages in field crop production (Agraja, 2006), it significantly affects the level of farm income. The increase of fodder share is justified by the increasing number of livestock herds.

No	Ha	Crops& Livestock	Crops without Livestock	Field crops	Orchards	Fallow land	Total farms
1	0.1-0.5	60317	9878	67852	12677	4988	**70195**
2	0.6-1.0	76646	13015	86710	41324	18011	**89661**
3	1.1-2.0	122565	19519	141368	76932	44415	**142084**
4	≥ 2.1	42422	6554	47044	28846	15827	**48976**
Total		**301950**	**48966**	**342974**	**159779**	**83241**	**350916**

Agricultural & Food production

After 1990, the major transformations taking place in the economy also contributed to changing the structure of GDP in favor of agriculture. During the transition from a centralised to a market based economy, the Albanian economy has experienced a general production fall in many economic sectors especially in industry, transport, services etc. As a result, it is agriculture which contributes much more to national GDP. The specific weight of agriculture in GDP falls from 54.6 percent in 1995 to 30.8 percent in 1996 and continues steadily to fall with 28.1 percent in 2000 and 18.26 in 2012 (INSTAT - statistical yearbooks 1992-2013). Agricultural production real growth rate over the last ten years is estimated to be about 3.6% per year (in average?) (INSTAT, annual statistics 2015-2018). On the other hand, rural households continue to dominate the economy. Nearly 48.7% of the population in 2014 lived in rural areas and agriculture was the main economic alternative of people living in these areas. According to experts, the main contributors are livestock, corn and orchard production. This is mainly because of the significant impact of the direct support schemes, in the last five years. The performance of this structure is presented in the table below.

Table 2: Dynamics of agricultural products in percentage (MBZHR, 2019)

No.	Share in%	2005	2008	2010	2014	2016	2018
1	Livestock	57	59	52	55	52	52
2	Filed crops	34	30	29	30	31	30
3	Fruit trees	10	11	15	15	17	18

Field crop production

During the last ten years the cultivated surface of field crops has changed. What we notice is the changing in the cultivation structure. There has been a decrease in the cultivated area with field crops particularly with wheat, while the cultivation of fruit trees was increased. In terms of production efficiency, it is constantly increasing in almost all cultures. This interesting fact is clearly proved by the significant increased yield in the culture of wheat, despite the decrease of the cultivation surface, and in those of vegetables and potatoes.

The fact is that for a relatively long period of time (almost ten years)) vegetable production has little or not at all changed, a phenomenon primarily associated with the uncertainty of potential vegetable producers to introduce to the structures of production those vegetable plants for which they have little knowledge. Planted area and production in the course of the years are displayed in the table 3.

Table 3 Structure and field crop production (in 1000 ha and 000 tons, MBZHR, 2005- 2018)

No.	Description	2005		2010		2015		2018	
		ha	tons	ha	tons	ha	tons	ha	tons
1	Cereals	178.2	565.8	147.7	511.2	149	608	146.7	697.3
2	Vegetable	32.8	620	32.5	685	29.6	715.4	29.8	869.0
3	Potatoes	11.4	161	10.1	169.3	9.8	190.0	10.0	218.0
4	White beans	22.5	25.2	16.1	23.6	14.3	21.8	13.5	28.3
5	Tobacco	5.7	6.2	1.5	1.9	1.1	1.3	1.5	2.0
6	Sunflower	1.9	2.9	1.1	2.0	1.4	2.2	1.3	2.9
7	Soybean	0.4	0.6	0.4	0.7	0.3	0.6	0.3	0.6
8	Forage	165	4730	191	5197	194	5333	205	5439

What can easily be noticed is the fact that nearly half of the cultivated crop areas consist of fodder crops which are used primarily as feed, a fact that indicates the growth of interest in livestock manure management in the country. Even the productivity has grown compared to 2018; the value of agricultural corn production has increased by only 26% compared to 2005.

CONCLUSIONS

The Albanian policy instruments for supporting the farm community are effective, but need to be further improved, especially as to further increase of the agri-food sector competitiveness and preparation for the EU integration. Government policies must be focused on the improvement of market and rural infrastructures, information and services to farmers, improvement and/or completion of respective legal framework.

Policies aiming the increase of agricultural production must be accompanied with continuous efforts for providing information to the farmers in terms of efficient management practices, new cultivation practices and efficient husbandry practices. Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Water Administration, together with other institutions dealing with agriculture and rural development must continue to cooperate with farmer's community, enhancing farmer’s associations.

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