

DEVASTATION OF SMALL FARMERS: CASE STUDY SERBIA

ДЕВАСТАЦИЈА СИТНИХ ФАРМЕРА: CASE STUDY SRBIJA

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Abstract: In this paper are presented, based on comparison of family farms Census in Serbia (1960-2002), changes in socio-economic structure of households that posses farms. Special underline is given to reproduction perspective of family farms from aspect of existence of active farmer in these households in 2007.

Анстракт: У раду су, на основу компарације резултата пописа индивидуалних пољопривредних газдинстава у Србији (1960 – 2002), приказане промене у социо-економској структури домаћинстава која поседују индивидуално пољопривредно газдинство (ИПГ). Посебно је, за 2007. годину, процењена перспектива репродукције домаћинстава која поседују ИПГ са аспекта постојања активних пољопривредника у тим домаћинствима.

Key words: household that posses farms, farmer, ownership, socio-economic structure.

Кључне речи: домаћинство које поседује индивидуално пољопривредно газдинство (ИПГ), пољопривредник, социо-економска структура.

INTRODUCTION

Family farms represent the most significant production-economic group of subjects in Serbian agriculture, despite the trend of reducing their number (from 989,721 in 1960 on 778,891 in 2002 or for 210,830 production units or for 21.3%). According to research of ŠEVARLIĆ M. and NIKOLIĆ MARIJA (2007), significance, position and role of family farms are confirmed with indicators of their dominant representation in production capacities (83.0% arable fields, 95.6% orchards, 91.4% vineyards, 91.0% meadows, or 85.0% cultivable and 79.8% of agricultural land; 93.8% cattle, 81.5% pigs, 97.9% sheep, 98.1% horses and 91.1% poultry; 99.9% motocultivators, 97.4% tractors and 88.2% combines) and level of agricultural production (73.6% wheat, 88.8% maize and 63.6% barley; 86.9% apple and 92.1% grape; 90.8% cow milk and 97.2% wool), as well as their significant participation in production of industrial crops (45.7% sugar beet, 60.5% sunflower and 44.3% soya).

However, family farms have relatively lower participation in total production than in disposable capacities for agricultural production. This is usually explained with two factors: first, fragmentation of estates that disable large market and profitable production, and second, dynamic trend of farm transfer to non-agricultural families, to whom agriculture is just an extra (and not main) source of income.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Data source is agricultural statistics and documentation of Census 1960 and 2002 on family farms. In this paper are used standard statistical methods of calculating structure indicators (socio-economic and age) and dynamic (indexes) of analyzed trends. Generalization of some premises and final discussion was based on method of contents analyses of referent literature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1.1. Changes in number and socio-economic structure of households that possess farms (1960 - 2002)

In the period between two censuses (1960–2002) evident changes occurred, significant from aspect of number and socio-economic structure of households that possess farms in Serbia (*Table 1*), and most important are following statements:

- total number of family farms in Serbia was reduced for 21.3%, emphasizing that dynamic of their reduce is more impressive in Vojvodina (for 34.6%) than in Central Serbia (for 25.9%), which indicates that processes of concentration and centralization are going faster in agriculture of Vojvodina;
- reducing number of agricultural (for 78.1%) and heterogeneous households (for 54.8%) that possess farms, as well as their cumulative reduction from dominant 92.5% on only 34.2% indicate that agriculture as unique source of income is becoming un-perspective for our relatively small and non-specialized farms;

Table 1

Number and structure of households that possess farms in Serbia, by socio-economic categories of households, 1960 and 2002

	Total	Agricultural	Non-agricultural	Heterogeneous	Without income
1960 - number	989,721	632,468	46,821	283,342	27,090
- %	100	63.9	4.7	28.6	2.7
2002 - number	778,891	138,738	484,961	127,990	27,202
- %	100	17.8	62.3	16.4	3.5
Difference = 2002-1960	- 210,830	- 493,730	438,140	- 155,352	112
Index = 2002/1960	78.7	21.9	1035.8	45.2	100.4

Source: Authors' calculation based on data given in Census 1960 and 2002

- increase (for even 10.4 times) of number of non-agricultural households that possess farms indicate that ownership of so called family farms have been transferred to dominant possession of non-farmers (62.3%), but it also display that in this stage of transition, households where all active members have constant resource of income outside farms still preserve their holds (whether they are inherited or bought) like element of certain social security or they keep it from other reasons (family tradition, image, maintaining in contact with nature, etc); and
- number of households without active members (old households) or households without income that possess farms in Serbia is practically minor (increased from 2.7% on 3.5%), "although trends of their number by macro-regions are mutually opposite – in Central Serbia their number was increased for 54.5%, and in Vojvodina was decreased for 55.8%."

1.2. Changes in number and age structure of farmers in households that possess farm (2002-2007)

Number and age structure analyses of active farmers¹ in agricultural and heterogeneous households that possess farms indicate that agriculture is non-perspective professional occupation on small family farms.

Table 3

Households that possess farms according to size of farm and presence of active farmers (2002-2007)

Size of farm	Number of farms (2002)			Farms with AF* (2007)	
	total	without AF	with AF ▶ 60 age	number	%
◀ 1 ha	214,388	192,811	5,099	16,478	7.7
1 - 3	254,832	186,254	20,882	47,696	18.7
3 - 5	135,161	74,495	18,574	42,092	31.1
5 - 8	96,843	42,249	15,295	39,299	40.6
8 - 10	34,595	12,565	5,634	16,396	47.4
▶ 10 ha	43,072	13,729	6,718	22,625	52.5
Total	778,891	522,103	72,202	184,586	23.7

*AF – active farmer

Source: Authors' calculation based on data given in Census 2002.

Considering that 5 years have passed since Census 2002, it is possible to “eliminate” highest age category (60 and more years) of active farmers from census data on number of farms according to age structure. These farmers are now, after 5 years, at least 65 years old, and according to Methodological explanation, are transferred into category of non-active persons. They can be treated as non-active persons although farmers work on family farms practically to the end of life or “until their power betrays them”.

Decreasing trend of number of households that possess farms and have no active farmer (younger than 65 years) is continuing. Having in mind that farmers that in time of *Census 2002* were older than 60 years, in 2007 can be represented as *non-active persons*, it can be concluded that today there are only 184,586 households that possess farm with at least one active farmer still younger than 65 years – which is only 23.7% of total 778,891 households that possess farms in Serbia.

CONCLUSION

Family farms have extreme dominant participation in all disposable capacities for production, and their representation in achieved extent of agricultural production is either dominant or significant.

Trend in number and socio-economic structure of households that possess farms in Serbia (1960-2002) indicate following statement:

- total number of household that possess farms are decreasing, and only number of smaller farms is increasing (up to 1 ha and 1-3 ha);
- depression of agricultural and heterogeneous households that possess farms (where one or more active members are occupied with agriculture as only profession) is devastating; at the same time number of non-agricultural and households that possess farms are increasing – and they have no active farmer;
- instead of dominant participation of agricultural households that was noted in 1960 (63.9%), non-agricultural households were dominant owners of family farms in 2002 (62.3%);
- cumulative participation of households where all (agricultural) or some of economically active members (heterogeneous) gain income only from working on family farms, was reduced from mainly dominant (approximately 90% in 1960) on relatively lower significant group of farm owners (about 35%) in 2002.

It is substantial that only 184,586 households with active farmer or 23.7% of total 778,891 farms by *Census 2002* exist in 2007. In other words, there are only 22,625 households with active farmer and more than 10 ha of totally used land area – and this can be considered for potential nucleus of farm way organization in Serbian agriculture.

LITERATURE

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