



Grassroots involvement in Rural Development policy in Romania

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About Eco Ruralis

- Established in 2009 by **small peasant farmers** from several regions of Romania;
- Uniting more than **5000 members**;
- Member of the international movement “**La Via Campesina**”, uniting 200 millions small farmers all over the world.

VISION : A society that is **environmentally sustainable, economically fair and socially just** where peasants are the central part of our food system.

MISSION : To **support agroecology and promote small-scale family farming** as the dominant, preferable method of agriculture in Romania. We actively support a **movement of young farmers that will preserve traditional farming practices and assert their control over food production and land rights.**

About rural Romania

- the rural landscape covers **87% of the country** comprising almost half of the population.
- With a utilized agricultural area of 13 million hectares, **more than half of the country**, Romania is one of the significant agricultural states in the European Union.
- Between 2010 – 2013 the number of small farms using less than 1 hectare of farmland per farm decreased with about 76 000 farms, respectively by 3.8%. **In this period, every hour 3 small farms disappeared.**
- **Duality of the farming landscape:** 55.7 % - under 2 ha, 44.3 % - above 200 ha (millions of farms under 1 ha but also megafarms of 50 thousand ha or larger).
- **About one third** (31,5%) of the total EU agricultural holdings are registered in Romania.



The problems undermining rural development in Romania

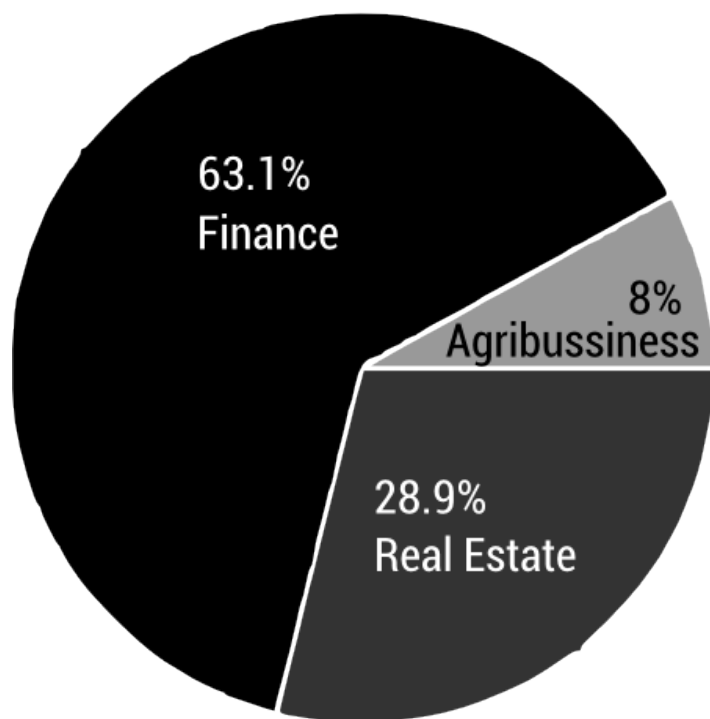
- **Farmers are getting old:** 60.4% of the Romanian farmers are over 55 years old, and only 7.3% under 35 -> farm succession is an important issue to address in rural development ;
- Problem of **land grabbing and speculative land investments;**
- **Rural exodus, economic migration;**
- **Commodified land markets** as well as the **liberalization of the agro-food industries;**
- Lack of transparency regarding land deals : civil society estimates that already **1-4 million ha of agricultural land is grabbed** and under control of speculative hedge-funds and multinational agribusiness corporations.

What is land grabbing ?

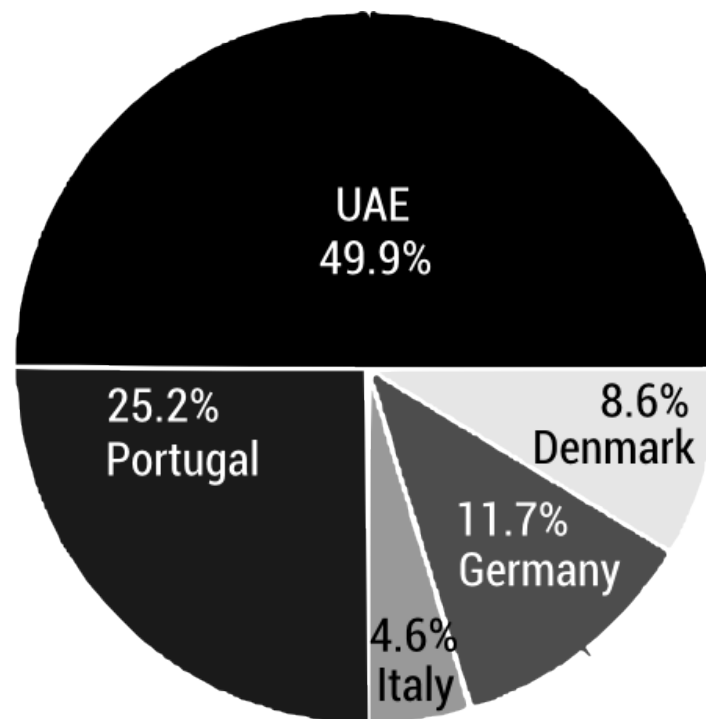
*“Land grabbing is the **control** – whether through ownership, lease, concession, contracts, quotas, or general power – of **larger than locally-typical amounts of land** by any **persons or entities** – public or private, foreign or domestic – via any means – ‘**legal**’ or ‘**illegal**’ – for purposes of **speculation, extraction, resource control or commodification at the expense of peasant farmers, agroecology, land stewardship, food sovereignty and human rights.**”*

European Coordination La Via Campesina

Who are behind these landgrabs ?*



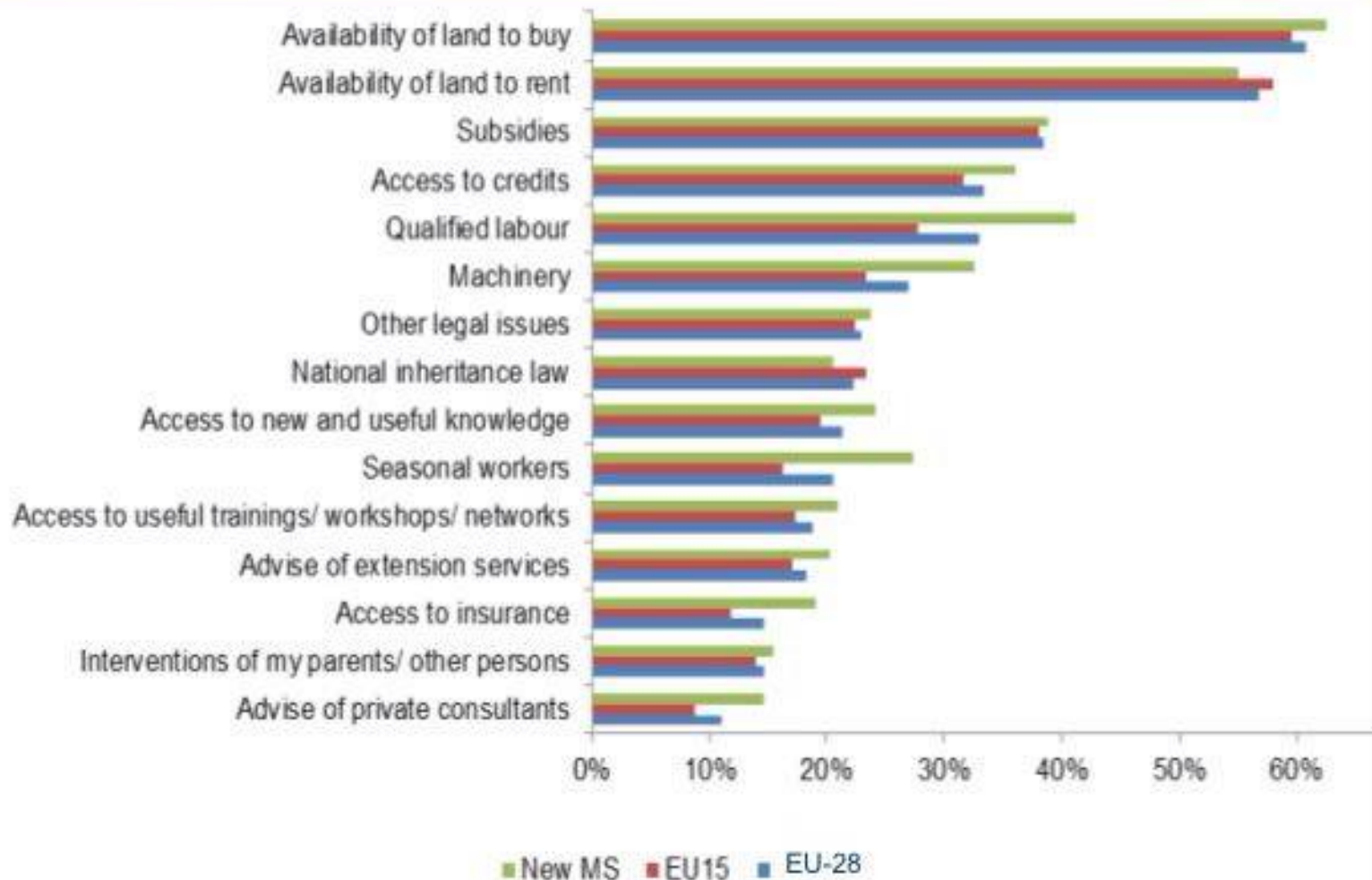
By sector



Country of origin

**based on the Eco Ruralis map of large land deals in Romania*

Needs of young farmers in EU-28



Other factors undermining rural development

- **Loss of biodiversity** due to industrial farming practices ;
- **Access to market and finance:** local markets are disappearing, most small farmers in Romania are not taken in consideration by the EU Common Agricultural Policy Pillar 1 subsidies, and hardly have any access to Pillar 2 Rural Development funds in lack of access to credit or match-funding.
- **Difficulty in building up grassroots cooperation** due to forced collectivization in the past.

How do we get involved ?

Getting organized:

- **Seed savers network:** growing and distributing seeds and propagating material to more than 6000 farmers – promoting agroecology ;
- Eco Ruralis **working groups on agrobiodiversity, land and rights of peasants;**
- Organizing **community volunteering** and exchange on agroecological farms through **WWOOF Romania;**
- Facilitating participation and access to local markets and fairs, and **building up alternative food networks:** “The peasant box”, promoting Community Supported Agriculture ;

How do we get involved ?

Networking:

- **In the country:** Romanian Food Sovereignty Cooperation platform, participation in the development of Local Action Groups.
- **Europe wide:** European Coordination Via Campesina, Hands on the Land, Access to Land.

Creating transparency:

- **Cooperation with international media** in investigating and creating informative documents on land grabbing and farm succession.
- **Disseminating information** among our members, allies, media and authorities.



Allies



How do we get involved ?

Advocating for peasants rights:

- **UN Level:** Civil Society Mechanism of the FAO Committee for Food Security, Human Rights Council Geneva – Declaration of the Rights of Peasants;
- **EU Level:** Debate on implementation and reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, EU land and tenure policy bringing the proposals of peasant and small agroecological food producers;
- **RO Level:** advocating for the implementation of the UN Tenure Guidelines and the Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources;

Lobby efforts at the RO and EU decision makers:

- Involving in the debate around Romanian land laws, proposing amendments to the Government from the grassroots.
- Involving in an EU Parliament own initiative report (INI) on access to land proposing grassroots solutions for a more fair and just access to land for farmers (especially young and small-scale) in the EU.

Conclusions and proposals for a sustainable rural development

- ***The peasant way - La Via Campesina:*** The voice of peasants and other people working in the rural area needs to be heard and respected.
- ***Land is not a simple commodity*** – *it is living territory, a resource for social development and well-being.* Thus, land grabbing and speculative land investments need to be stopped and reversed putting in place governmental programs that maintain and distribute fair and just access to land for diversified, small-scale sustainable farming.
- ***A biologically diverse rural landscape = resilient and multifunctional countryside.*** Enhance biodiversity in food production through agroecology.
- ***Keeping the farm-to-fork chain short.*** Enable access to market by supplying governmental support for the development farmers markets and alternative food networks rather than supermarkets mega-chains and dumping of cheap exports.
- **Lobbying and advocating** for fair farming and sustainable development on all levels.

Thank you !



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