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## Paradigms of Bulgarian Agriculture and the Development of Mountain Regions

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### ABSTRACT

The first agricultural paradigm was preproductivistic. Mountainous areas developed dairy farming, wool, meat, and skins production. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries transition started from preproductivistic /before-productivistic/ to productivistic paradigm. Mountain farming began to lag behind. After World War I, Bulgarian agriculture created three types of farming: low land/intensive, market-oriented /hilly/ mixture of traditional technologies and products, and new products oriented market/and mountain agriculture. Socialism did not change the agrarian paradigm. Agriculture remained a major source of income for urbanization and industrialization. Bulgaria was the most southern part of the socialist camp and Bulgarian agriculture had great geographical advantages. Regional policy was oriented to central locations in lowlands. The mountains represented the demographic and economic periphery. After the communist period, agriculture remained under productivism. Traditional agricultural exports declined and imports increased. With EU accession, Bulgarian agriculture had a shock. Contemporary agriculture in developed EC-countries was in transition from productivism to postproductivism and multifunctional agriculture. Bulgarian agriculture was a step backwards. It can not overcome the productivistic stage now. Agricultural subsidies are insufficient, especially for mountainous areas. The Program for rural areas remains the agricultural program. Crafts, rural and agrarian tourism are at the beginning. Rural mountainous areas need a real cohesion policy.

In Bulgaria and in the EU there is no clear definition of the mountainous region. In our opinion, the reason is the different conditions for the development of society: cultural, economic, religious, folk, and of course - natural. The main problem is the altitude as the lower limit of mountain regions. There are 500 posts in 700, even 800 meters altitude. A significant problem is that the mountains in Bulgaria are many, but only the Rhodopes have conditions for development of mountain territorial units with opportunities for self-development and self-government.

Mountain areas traditionally are subordinate to local, regional and national centres that are located in plains and lowlands. Major cities in Bulgaria are located in areas from 0 to 250 meters altitude. The only exception is the capital Sofia with its altitude of 550

metres. It is located in a valley with an area of 1,000 square kilometres and is surrounded by mountains. The difference in altitude between the bottom of the valley and the ridges of the surrounding mountains is 900-1,800 metres. Natural vertical areas in the Bulgarian mountains are important for the development of agriculture and settlements. In the mountainous areas agricultural resources dominated and individual settlements rely on mining. Settlements that depend on tourism are still very small. In Bulgaria there are over 800 mineral springs. The majority of them are located in mountainous areas, but they are not used enough.

As agriculture is the main economic sector in the mountain regions, we will examine the development of mountain regions through the paradigms of agricultural development.

*I. The period of the preproductivist paradigm (the Ottoman period until the liberation of 1878).* During the Ottoman period in the Bulgarian lands agriculture was backward, primitive, with technology from the Middle Ages and from Antiquity. Manufacturers consumed most of their production. A small part of production was for export. During this period, the geography of agriculture was related to the geography of population. The Bulgarian ethnic group dominated at the south of the Danube, at the west was Kosovo and the Blue or the Adriatic Sea, at the south was the White or the Aegean Sea, and at the east was the Black Sea coast. In the middle of the Bulgarian lands were the Balkan Mountains, called the Balkans, and in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century they gave the name of the whole peninsula. Bulgarians lived in hilly and in mountainous areas. The mountain foothills were the centres of the Bulgarian Revival. The first industrial companies developed.

*II. The period of the appearance and development of the productivist paradigm in agriculture.* This period was very long and heterogeneous. Bulgarian agriculture was still within the productivist paradigm.

*Iia. Transition from the preproductivist to the productivist paradigm (1878-1918).* The development of Bulgarian capitalism was based on agriculture. By the end of World War I, Bulgarian agriculture inherited the geography from the Ottoman period. The goal was obtaining a maximum amount of agricultural production. Manufacturers consumed about 80% of production. Export was second. Its share was becoming more and more important. They developed export industries: rose oil, hides, grain, cheese, meat, and meat products. The transformation of handicrafts in modern industry began.

Many of the Muslims: Turks, Tatars, Circassians, part of the Bulgarian Muslims, emigrated. In the low lands remained vacant territories: the Dobrudja, the Danube Plain, and the Thrace. Much of the Bulgarian population descended from the mountains and occupied villages and lands. Modern infrastructure gave priority to the capital Sofia and to the main towns on the Danube and at the Black Sea. Administrative centres appeared in the lower parts of the country. There were built railway lines and industrial enterprises.

In the structure of agricultural production the first place belonged to crop production: corn and sunflower. An intensive production of vegetables and fruits began. Mountain areas remained in administrative and transport exclusion. They were the periphery of regional development. The base of their economy was traditional pasture farming. Mountain villages and areas became poorer.

*Iib. The period between the two World Wars.* The new political borders in the Balkans hindered

traditional farming. They stopped the migrations of herds. During winter animals were in the Danube Delta and in the valley near the White and the Blue Sea. In the spring they went high in the mountains and stayed there until the end of September. Then they came back. Since 1918 mountain pastures had only local significance. Mountain economy did not change, agriculture remained the main sector, but with limited resources and production. Migration to the cities in the low lands continued. The only positive news was the production of tobacco. It developed very quickly and markets were in Western Europe. In 30 years Bulgaria already started to outpace its neighbours (Greece and Turkey) in tobacco production. Areas of tobacco were at the basis of the mountains and the mountains of southern Bulgaria (especially the Rhodopes). Tobacco industry and the entire food industry developed rapidly and in 1939 already provided 51% of the GDP of the Bulgarian industry. It generated about 30% of the GDP. The industry developed in the low lands. Network rail lines and roads facilitated progress in the low lands and at ports. Export areas of tobacco, vegetables, and fruit appeared. Livestock decreased. Low industrialization of agriculture made livestock for mechanical work important by the middle of last century.

Here and there depopulation began. In the worst situation were the mountainous areas along the southern border with Turkey and with Greece. Neighbours of Bulgaria led a policy of commercial isolation and our country oriented towards Germany and Italy. Around 1940 Germany held up to 80% of the Bulgarian exports. The industrialization of agriculture was developed. The government established a National Plan for Agricultural Development (1942-1946). It said that machinery had to displace the working cattle. The return of Southern Dobrudja, of the lands in Macedonia and of the lowlands near the White or Aegean Sea solved the problem of grain and tobacco. Negative processes were significant in high lands. Peri-urban agriculture was a chance for mountains near Sofia, which in 1944 had a population of 400,000 inhabitants.

*Iic. Productivist agriculture during socialism (1944-1989).* Bulgarian agriculture remained within the productivist paradigm. Although industrialization took place, agriculture remained the main source of currency and capital for the regional economy and development.

Between 1944 – 1959, the state pulled farming. It was a central regulator. The purpose of regional development and agriculture was “equitable economic development”, but the results were just the opposite. After 1970, they created agro-industrial complexes. These concentrations of agricultural resources had reached their maximum. In the Southern Dobrudja, complexes with 1-200,000 hectares appeared. The principle was administrative: a municipality-1 complex. The food industry remained outside complexes and so did trade. Agricultural estates worked at a loss, food

industry and especially trade always won. Socialist agriculture gradually entered a crisis in the '80s. Goals went back to the period before World War II: the idea was obtaining maximum production of grain, meat, and milk. Industrialization fall behind. Manual labour prevailed.

*III. EU membership and the changing of the agricultural paradigm.* The shift from socialism was very difficult. In agriculture, socialist forms were destroyed, but without clear alternative for the future. For example, first they gave back animals to people, but they did not secure land for forage production. The centre of the change was land reform. It regenerated smallest farming in Europe. Now, in Bulgaria there are millions of pieces of land, averaging 3-4-5 acres. There is no special law for consolidation. Bulgarian agriculture is in crisis. From time to time traditional exports are smaller than imports.

The country passed a period of rationing. The peak of the crisis was in 1996. Bulgaria imported grain. Then the political forces established a consensus for membership in the EU. Bulgaria lagged behind other former socialist countries. The country stood last according to GDP/per capita and in 2007 became an EU member.

In recent years there were regional development projects for small Strandja and the Sakar Mountains in south-eastern Bulgaria, on the border with Turkey. For 7-8 years projects consumed about 6 billion dollars, but the actual result was only a mountain road between the regional centre of Burgas and Malko Tarnovo local centre.

*IV. European postproductivist and the "Bulgarian" productivist paradigm.* Mountain areas were the poorest of the poorest in the EU. During the preparation of membership for the EU, there were experiences for regional "mountain" policy in agriculture. In the Bulgarian Parliament, there was a committee on mountain farming. The government adopted a project for the development of agriculture in the Rhodopes Mountains. After the change of government projects stopped. Bulgaria's membership in the EU showed that Bulgarian agriculture was not ready for competition. It was weak. The size of a farm in Bulgarian agriculture was the smallest in the EU. One farm had 2-5 hectares and less than 10 animals. It used manual labour. Its productivity was several times lower than in the developed Western countries.

In Bulgaria entered the large food and retail chains. They imported agricultural products and restricted Bulgarian agriculture. Bulgarian subsidies (from the EU and from the national budget) were much smaller than those in Western Europe. The contact of Bulgarian agriculture to that of developed EU countries was a shock. Bulgarian agriculture is going out of its own crisis, it is in a typical period of productivism. Meanwhile, European agriculture is in a postproductivist

period. Its problem is surplus. In the recent years, there are even attempts to multifunctional agriculture.

The differences in paradigms between Bulgarian and European agriculture are the main issue of development. On the one hand it can not "jump" over the period of productivism and, on the other hand, the Common Agricultural Policy drives it towards unknown postproductivist, extensive, and very functional ecological agriculture.

What is the result of the development of mountain areas? A serious problem is the lack of clear rural policy. The Bulgarian Development Programme of rural areas is mainly associated with agriculture. By 2011, agricultural subsidies were mainly for cereal producers, many of which are "sofa farmers" (couch farmers). In 2012 subsidies are for producers of fruit, vegetables (increased subsidies for farmers). The greatest difficulty for farming in mountainous areas will be the implementation of the European decisions to stop subsidies for tobacco. In Bulgaria, tobacco production has economic but also political and electoral significance. Tobacco is produced mainly in the mountains of the Turkish ethnic group and of the Bulgarian Muslims. There is not economic alternative for tobacco yet and the government continues to be a sponsor.

Mountain regions are formed as a separate subject of agricultural and regional policy after the accession of Bulgaria to the EU in 2007. Mountain areas are part of areas with environmental constraints and difficulties. The European Parliament resolution of 23 September 2008g/R6-TA/2008/0438 is used for state and prospects of agriculture in mountain areas "and the European strategy for the economic and social development of mountain areas, islands and sparsely populated areas" was adopted by Resolution R7-TA/2010/0341.

A key indicator is GDP. Every country may use additional indicators (e.g. territory, population, unemployment, and level of education). The definition of mountain areas in Bulgaria was land of the settlements with an average altitude of at least 700 m, average slope of the terrain of at least 20% or an average altitude of 500 metres, and average inclination of 15%. There is a third option for settlements if their land accounts for at least 75% mountainous areas. In creating these definitions the following institutions got involved: the Soil Resources Agency, the Institute of Geography, and the Institute of Agricultural Economics.

Mountain areas cover 40% of the territory of Europe. 19% of population live there. The European Union already has positive experience with the development of some mountain regions: the 1991 Alpine Convention and the Carpathian Convention of 22 May 2003. Under the Lisbon Treaty, mountain areas have permanent unfavourable natural conditions and at the same time opportunities for "multi-environment".

In Bulgaria, there are associations for the development of mountain communities. These municipalities are 138 of the 264 in the country. 42% of settlements are situated in areas with more than 500 metres above sea level. 28% of the population live there. These areas have 39% of the arable land, 82% of the woods, and 78% of the road network. 240 villages lie above 1,000 metres altitude in the mountains.

There is a draft law on the development of mountain areas. It is particularly important to define the terms “mountain area”, “mountain areas”, and “mountain communities”. The key is creating special fiscal and financial relief for mountains areas. Now the additional subsidy for mountainous areas is 110 euros/ha for up to 50 ha and 50 euro/ha for 50 to 100 ha. It will begin subsidizing areas over 100 ha starting with the autumn of 2012. In 2011, the total subsidy for mountainous areas according to the program for development of rural areas was 17.5 million. One farm had to be at least 0.5 hectares to get a farm subsidy.

Policies for development of mountain areas are part of a program for development of rural areas and

agriculture. Mountain agriculture in Bulgaria is a small part of the agricultural production. It can more quickly adapt to the European Agriculture postproductivism paradigm and be multifunctional. Low intensity of production and implementation of “green policies” according to Nature 2000 gives good prospects.

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