



# Valea Farm, Mesentea Village, Alba County. Case Study

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Valea farm, from Mesentea village, represents a model of zonal survivor for almost a century. Along with the pure agricultural activities, a main role for the life of the farm can be given to the mill of cereals, lately modernized, and in connection to this the bakery that started to be built starting in 1999.

The attempt to develop activities with a pure agricultural character has failed (see the cows for milk, the calves, and the swine) because of the competition on the market. Without the existence of the non-agricultural activities as milling and bakery, the farm couldn't have resisted from an economical point of view.



Figure 1. Position of the farm (national level).

The location of the farm is in the Mesentea village, Galda de Jos commune, Alba County, in the Valley of Galda, being in a favorable position from the local geographical point of view (plain surface, relative isolation when compared to the main road, abundance of water). It is 18 kilometers far from Alba-Iulia city and 5 kilometers from the European Road E 60.

In 1916, Valea Simion from Cetea village emigrated in USA, for earning money and in order not to be

incorporated in the war. He returned in 1922 and, with the money he has earned, buys from baron Kemeny Arpad the land where today enterprise is.

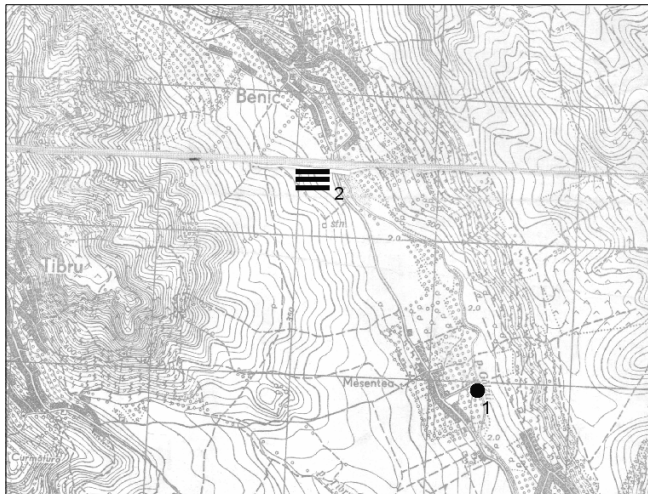


Figure 2. Position of the farm ( local level):  
1. House, mill and bakery; 2. Stables.

In the same year (1922), he rebuilds the water miller which remained from the ex-owner. Beside the mill, he builds a small wooden house which serves as a temporary home.

In 1924, the place of the house is taken by another one which was destroyed in 1960. This house is also taken down and the house which we can see today is built.

In 1933, a brick stable is built. While the milling activity develops, the family owns 8 ha of agricultural land. Beside the mill, a plum brandy (“țuică”) machine named “alembic” was working.

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By 1965, a construction on the stream of water which leads to the mill which produces hydraulic energy in an autonomous system is to be found in their courtyard. The mill produces flour and corn mush or maize for all the villages around. The transportation of the wheat and the flour is made by the miller or by the clients with their own cart.

Around 1962, when the process of collectivization starts, the mill still functions although the taxes were high.

Between the following years, 1952-1960, the head of the family was commuted to Cugir. After the collectivization (1962), till 1990, he was a qualified worker at the Brick Enterprise from Sântimbru (15 km away).

It is of a big importance that all the 4 adult members of this family were commuters to Alba-Iulia. There is another thing that should not be omitted: that the farm and the household was functioning and taken care of by 2 families. That is important because of the financial support that this farm needed.

In 1990, the head of the family gives up commuting and dedicates his time to his farm, to growing animals and to milling. In 1998, his wife gives up the commuting, too. She stands by her family in developing a profitable economical activity.

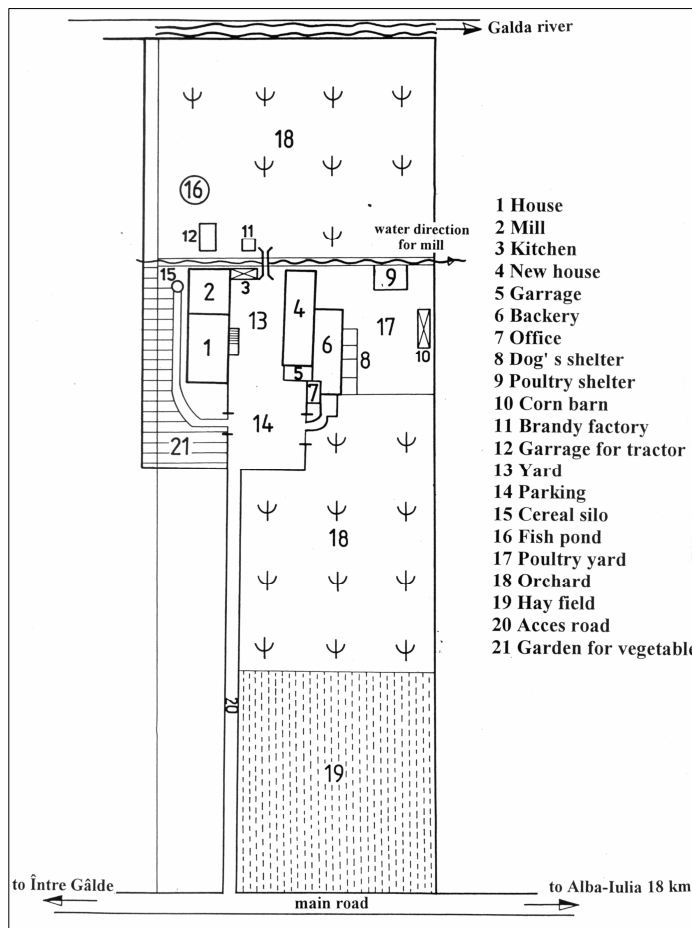


Figure 3. Valea farm. Sketch.

By 1994, taking a loan from the bank they start the modernization of their activity and the growth of the mill's production capacity. They buy a new electrical mill, produced in the country, and by 1999, they build a bakery which uses methane gas in order to function.

The bakery functions with 9 workers and produces around 1.000 breads each 24 hours. The delivery of the bread in the neighborhood is made with three lorries which belong to the family.

The land around the household and the farm is about 2 ha, being used as an orchard and as a backyard. About 500 sqm are used as vegetable garden.

In 1998, they buy three stables from CAP (former colectiv farm) with an adjacent surface of 2 ha. They grow calves in order to deliver them when mature to private persons for the necessity of meat (they deliver about 30 calves each year). In 2000, they give up calves growing because they do not have

any delivery market at all. They modernize the place and than start to growing Pik swine. The action of modernization is sustained by the youngest son of the family who is a student at Agronomical Sciences. Annually, they deliver 200 swines which weight about 50 to 200 kg each. The repopulation is assured by 30 sows. The farmer and his son, the student, followed the model of some real farms from Germany and Czech Republic. The mechanical support is made by a 65 power tractor and two trailers, three lorries, one truck and 5 cars which belong to the family. The elder son of the family keeps the machines in function, as he is a student in Mechanics. He is helped by his grandfather a mechanic, too.

The head of the family is 50 years old, and together with his wife, they have a very high managerial capacity. He has as hobby hunting, raising 7 dogs for this aim. Moreover, the farm has other 5 dogs which defend it.

In 2002, in the place of the old stable, they begin the construction of a newer house. They stop growing big swine and start growing chickens, about 200 pieces, for the farm's needs. The farm has 6,5 ha of arable land, in all parts of the commune. They raise wheat, soy and barley. During the years when the crops have the natural conditions to be raised, the land ensures  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the wheat needed for the bakery. The other  $\frac{1}{4}$  is bought from the market. The soy and the barley are used for the swine's feeding. The delivery of swine remains a difficult task because of the competition on the exterior market. Without the financial compensation made by the milling activity and by the bakery, the swine's raising would not be a profitable activity.

During its existence the farm follows three stages:

- the stage of the autharchic development 1922 – 1962;
- the stage of supplementary development 1962 – 1990;
- the stage of competition development 1991 – present.

The first stage (1922-1962) makes it possible the providing of flour for all rural community and the growing of horned cattle, cultivating grapes, cereals and fodder plants.

The second stage supposes the development of the farm in difficult conditions provided by the collectivization when all people are supposed to work for these farms even if it implies commuting. He produces milk for consumers, vine, plum brandy, vegetables and he mills the cereals for the local people, the inhabitants of his village.

The last stage is divided in two smaller stages:

1. Production for the market 1990-1998. This is when he buys 10 breed cows of a very high productivity from Switzerland. The farm buys technical products in order to mechanize the process of milking and all the other processes made in this farm. The animals are raised in the stable from the farm which has been suffered changes by modernization. Because of the low prices of the milk during this period, they gave up rising of cows for milk.
2. The diversification of the economy starts in 1994 when there is a growing possibility in production. They buy some calves. Annually they deliver between 30 – 40 calves which weight between 150 – 400 kg. In 2000, because of the expenses and of the difficulties in delivering the meat, they gave up this activity, too.

Preparations for growing swine for meat are started. This activity is sustained by the milling activity and the producing of bread. As a result of the process of diversification of the farm's activity there are two advantages:

- a) Assurance of the continuous activity of milling, bakery and fattening the swine;
- b) Avoiding the strong shocks connected to the prices' fluctuation on the market because of the super offers made by foreign countries in order to sell their meat.

Two cows for milk and about 200 chickens are raised for the family's needs; they do also gardening and grow vegetables for personal needs.

They abandoned the cultivation of grapes (from about 1km distance) and the production of plum brandy even if there is enough quantity of fruits all year long in order to assure the necessary for the family.

The pure agricultural side of the farm stays unexploited, two of the stables being unused. The large expenses for functioning and maintenance - electricity, methane gas, and milling – do not let the family to make economies, at least not during this stage. Given this impossibility the modernization of the farm must stop. This case, of this farm, stays as a representative model for the rural economy.

## Bibliography

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