



Rural development in Hungary

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Abstract

The economy and society of the rural settlements was transformed by the transformation after the political changes on a more dramatic way than in other parts of the country. The compensation, the privatization, the co-operative's transformation, the market losses, the decreasing profitability of the production and the decrease in agricultural employment caused a difficult situation by itself, but other sectors have shown a worsened performance, too.

The lag of the rural areas from the urban zones is increasing continuously.

The national rural development conception was elaborated with the aim that it has to make a balance about the rural space transformation in the nineties and to elaborate the theory, methodology and techniques of the rural development. The conception is aiming those regions, in the settlement structure of which the villages are dominants and whose economy is typically connecting to the agriculture and natural environment.

The widespread moonlighting, the multichannel income in most part of the households, the widespread industrial jobs in the villages, the radical decline of the agricultural employment, the land property of the city dwellers make the tasks of the rural development conception extremely complex, it goes in its consequences and effect far beyond the social groups of the village residents. On the base of the rural development conception a rural development program was elaborated. (Dorgai et al., 1997).

The rural area

- In Hungary in the everyday use the rural space (the countryside) is meant as „not a city”.

- In the Regional Development Act (Act XXI. of 1996) is not defined the idea of the rural area but from the containt one can understand: the rural area is outside of the capital. (Fehér-Dorgai, 1998)

The national regional development conception (draft) does not define (although uses) the idea of the rural area (countryside) but states on the other hand that 83 % of Hungary's territory is rural area (here is living 30 % of the population) for which the principles and methods of the rural development in Europe have to be applied. There is no possibility to support the whole rural area that is why those microregions can be count as rural development areas, where:

- the ratio of the agricultural employment is high;
- the population density is low;
- the soil quality and the ability of keeping are low and;
- the migration is long lasting. On the base of this 50 microregions*, where approximately 1,6 million people are living are belonging in this type.

* Number of the statistical microregions: 138

Taking into account the international recommendations and the Hungarian situation:

- that settlement is characterized as a rural settlement which does not have a town status (from administrative point of view) or it has a town status but its population is less than 10 thousand;
- those areas (microregions) are regarded as rural areas where the ratio of the population living in the rural settlements is more than 15 %;
- rural development is meant an activity the final aim of which is that the rural areas – firstly of social interest – be able to fulfil their functions in the society permanently. (Fehér-Dorgai, 1998).

Rural development

The rural development is the co-ordination of activities, which are built on each other and are outside of the industrial zones and bigger towns. This means vital functions for the whole society and are in close connection with the agriculture and forestry. The rural development is wider than the agricultural development but at the same time it influences according to the regional characteristics the direction of this latter.

The role of the agricultural economy in the rural development

The agriculture and forestry are nowadays and on medium term an important sector and area use method on greater part of the rural areas in Hungary, too.

Long term priorities of the agricultural economy:

- support of the training, research and consulting in connection with the structural change and rural development;
- preserving of the employment role of the agriculture;
- development of the agriculture according to the requirements of the sustainable development;
- change of structure (land use and production structure according the conditions, area specific products, afforestation, non-food use of the land area);
- protection of the alive environment;
- village renewing, village development;

- agrotourism and other alternative employment possibilities (Dorgai et al., 1997).

Principles of the Hungarian rural development policy

Generally the rural development policy is an integrated system of the different economy and social policy segments concerning the rural areas. The links of the regional development policy is shown in Figure 1.

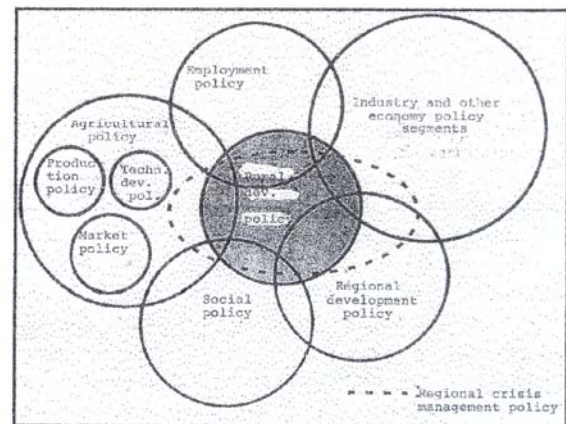


Figure 1. Links of the rural development policy.

From the figure one can see that:

- the political segments are actually situated in space, their relation to each other is changing in time and space, too;
- there are elements of each policies who can be seen more or less independent from the regionally and rural development (for example production policy, market policy and technical development policy inside of the agricultural policy);
- the regional crisis management is a specific element of the Hungarian regional development policy;
- nowadays the regional development policy does not belong to one Ministry or institution. (Fehér, 1998).

Basic principles of the Hungarian rural development policy:

The rural development policy has to:

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- create such conditions which enable that the rural areas can fulfill and keep their economic, ecological and social, cultural functions permanently;
- handle as top priority the tensions between the rural areas and improvement of the living conditions;
- develop reasonable decision mechanisms;
- take into account the characteristics of the rural areas and adapt to them that means create frame conditions for the improvement of the adaptation ability of people living in rural areas;
- build on the regional co-operation;
- take into account the specific rural development role of the Hungarian agriculture, the shaping of the agriculture that means the regional characteristics in according to this (Fehér-Dorgai, 1998).

Long term priorities of the rural development

- fortifying of the economic base of the rural areas, diversification of the economic activity;
- improvement of the rural employment and earning conditions;
- improvement of the rural living conditions;
- preservation and protection of the rural social communities, professional and civil organizations and cultural values;
- improvement of the social, economic conditions of agricultural areas with unfavorable conditions with stressed support;
- renewing of villages and farmsteads;
- fortifying of the rural teasing of young people and entrepreneurs;
- the development of infrastructure;
- increase of the spiritual level of rural areas;
- protection of the alive and built environment (Fehér et al., 1997).

Tasks of the rural development is short term (till 2000-ig)

- increase of the agricultural production, cease of the crisis phenomena (lack of capital, low profitability, taxation);
- regulation of the rural development on legal basis;

- national rural development program after that technical aid in preparation of rural development programs on regional level;
- separation of financial resources of the rural development, elaboration of the using methodology of the resources;
- further decentralization in the agricultural subsidies, differentiation according to the different conditions of certain areas;
- stimulation of the rural investments;
- preparation for the EU regional and rural development support system;
- creation of the operational conditions of the rural development working committees;
- information and monitoring system.

Program tasks concerning the agriculture and forestry

- a) representing the regional crisis management and regionally in the agricultural policy (in the financement policy, income policy and holding);
- b) agricultural and forestry tasks which serve the stabilization of the keeping ability of rural areas;
- c) agriculture and forestry assuring the sustainable, reasonable land use;
- d) promotion of the agrarian structural change;
- e) helping the rural teasing of agricultural entrepreneurs and young people;
- f) the rural development is a task of agriculture, forestry, teaching, research and consulting;
- g) co-ordination of the national rural development program, the regional agrarian strategies, the development conceptions of areas with agrarian character (Fehér, 1998).

Nor the rural development program, nor its tasks cannot be identified with the agricultural development. The rural development is basically the program and tasks of the rural population. This program can be realized with state support and co-ordination.

Practical realization of the rural development

The rural development needs because of its complexity co-operation from the participating organizations, institutions. The rural development has to be in accordance with the regional development.

Until now the regional development was co-ordinate by the Ministry for Environmental Protection and Regional Development. For the preparation of the

national rural development program is the Ministry of Agriculture responsible.

The co-ordination is needed on government level but beyond this co-ordination its needed in the regions on county, microregion, local municipal government level and among civil organizations, too.

The organizational frames of the regional development are functioning. There is no need to create parallel organizations for the rural development but institutional elements have be operated dealing with the rural development.

References

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