



Aspects of Rural Development in the Apuseni Mountains - Romania

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Introduction

The author presents the main ways through which you can achieve the development of the mountain farms: the growth of the dimension, the training and the education of the farmers, the trade of the products, many-sided activity, financial support and scientific research.

The diversity of the natural, social and economical conditions and that of supplying human resources, in which mountain household function, creates rarely the situation when two of them have identical possibilities for the development of agricultural production. That is why we assert that their global evolution doesn't have to follow a preconceived script, in which the role of each household has been predicted. The important thing is that of creating a general favourable environment for the agricultural activities in mountain areas and that of creating the possibility of joining it to other activities in a mixture that would insure the rational use of the corresponding resources and in the meantime to insure family's an income for a decent life. Each householder depending on the entire context of his own existence will choose the way that should be followed.

The identification of the levers through which a favourable climate for the development of the mountain households can be created is a process that should start from the existent link between available resources and the necessary consume and then their development, as well as from the means that society can use in order to support the mountain population in establishing a balance between needs and resources. We consider that the following things are essential in all the projects that aim to develop any mountain agriculture: the growth of the dimension of mountain households, the technical equipment of the households, the farmers' training and education, the trade of the agricultural products, the many-sided activity, the financial support and the scientific research.

The Growth of the Dimension of Mountain Households

Mainly a rational dimension of the agricultural household is that which can provide the family a decent living standard, that allows an efficient use of the family labour force and that whose exploiting "scale" is enough to allow the introduction of modern agricultural technologies.

From this point of view it can't be established a certain level of resources that can present the appropriate dimension of a household's activity, usually available for a mountain area. The minimum dimensions differ a lot even in case of the same commune or village because of the differences in quality between various land areas, because of the nature of production, depending on the existence of trade markets, because of the technical equipment, the structure of auxiliary services they can take advantage of, as well as depending on the available labour force and on the possibility of mixing the agricultural work with other types of activities in order to completely use the available work time of the family.

In certain given conditions the incomes that can be obtained by an agricultural household are closely related to its dimension and, as far as the available labour force isn't

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involved in other activities that bring incomes, the viability of the agricultural households depends on its dimension.

In this context, as it results from the specific research (2) the mountain households usually have too small dimensions for providing enough incomes for the mountain families dealing with agriculture. In many cases the dimensions are so reduced that they can't ensure the agricultural products needed for their own consume. In these conditions, for the greatest part of the households it is necessary the farmers' encouragement in order to enlarge their activity mainly by growing of the used areas and then by the number of the raised animals.

Obviously a general solution regarding the dimension can't be given, however it is necessary an agricultural politics concerning the encouragement of the growth of the dimension. The concrete dimension depends on an entire complex of conditions that can be established for each household only by the farmer on his own.

The Technical Equipment of the Mountain Households

In the natural conditions specific to the mountain regions, the difficulty of processing the wood and that of preparing fodder for winter times is great. The actual degree of the technical equipment is insufficient for any dimension and especially for a larger one. The lack of appropriate technical equipment makes the work extremely difficult, fact that makes it less attractive and that is why only seldom enjoyed by youth. In the meantime, without proper technical equipment only a small area can be cultivated and only a reduced number of animals can be raised. On the other hand, the reduced level of technical equipment prevents the application of an appropriate technology, the latter being one of the causes that lead to the reduced output of the resources' capitalisation.

All these are arguments for the fact that the agricultural production in the mountain area needs the insurance of proper technical equipment and this is necessary especially because of growth of dimension of the exploitations. The achievement of the objective supposes specific a financial effort besides some researches in identification, too. It must be done starting with simple elements (appropriate hand-tools) and finishing with complex equipment. The mechanising solutions must have as objective what can be mechanised. The conceiving of some appropriate equipment to the given situations having acceptable price and high resistance, the production and insurance of delivery and that of their services can be considered through themselves an important activity for the population of that area and an essential way of improving the work conditions, the growth of the productivity of work, that of the quality of the products and that of the outputs of capitalisation of the available resources with all the provided consequences.

The development of the agriculture in the mountain area depends on the volume, the structure and quality of the technical equipment, its price closely related to it the growth of the dimension of the household. Among the first steps in order to equip them there must be taken into consideration the insurance of the necessary infra-structure, of electric energy, of water for all the agricultural households and also it must be taken into consideration the most extended resource, the machines, the equipment involved in the harvest, preparing, transporting and storing the hay.

The Training and Education of the Farmers

In the meantime, to the reduced actual size of the mountain households and to the less favourable characteristics for the traits of the agricultural productivity is added a defective technology. It is less evaluated and the subsisting production is owed to the lack of the farmers' training and education.

Mostly the low level of the applied technology causes the reduced outputs achieved in the capitalisation of the resource of the mountain area resource's capitalisation. Obviously, the application of an appropriate technology is related, among others, to the proper training of those

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who are doing it. The overwhelming majority of farmers in the mountain area didn't attend any kind of organised school in order to become qualified in agricultural jobs. However, the practised activity relies on an important quantity of information, which is handed over from one generation to another. But this isn't sufficient any more. Relying on this information, the available resources can be capitalised only partially and so it happens that the living standards are low. From this point of view, the mountain farmers' education and training must be seen as a lever of improving their lives, a lever through a superior capitalisation of the available resources.

The contradiction between the men's needs and the volume of the resources given by nature compel to the growth of the efficient use of nature. The contradiction being permanent, the problem of increasing the rationality and the efficiency of the utilised resources is permanent, too.

Between the two types of resources (existent and used) interferes the technological process that is initiated, led and ended by man through his knowledge in that field. The needed knowledge for transforming in results the available resources, under the most efficient conditions, tends to be more or less rich, depending on the complexity of the process. Agriculture, as a consequence of the mutual influence between the living organisms and the natural environment, is appreciated as being the field with the most complicated processes of transformation of the resources. However, agriculture, in general, is the branch that less benefited of people's training and the mountain agriculture is the segment that from this point of view has been the most neglected.

The lack of training is like rust that eats the links of the resources of the transformation' mechanism; it disturbs and it reduces the capacity of the movements and activities that means a wasting of time and of economic value. Therefore, it isn't understandable how the most important source of agriculture has been neglected although there are proofs, which show that human beings' attention had been drawn to this problem a long time before (1).

The needed knowledge of today's farmer can't be transmitted only by a simple custom or tradition from one generation to another and cannot be learned using only his own experience. The implementation of an appropriate education and agricultural training should be imposed and it should contain:

- the introduction in the mountain rural primary schools of some agricultural subjects;
- apprentice schools and secondary schools being specialised for mountain agriculture;
- these should have a farm for practising as well;
- high schools with farms and rural tourism conditions;
- the introduction of some subjects on mountain and rural development in the curriculum of the university having this specialisation;
- projects of education and extra-curricular activities of agricultural population, projects that should aim the improvement of the living standard of the families dealing with mountain agriculture and the construction of a modern agriculture.

It is of the greatest importance that the people involved in agricultural education and extra curricular activities should possess an appropriate professional qualification. From an organisational point of view, it is of great importance to establish reports of trust between them and the members of the rural community.

The spreading of the agricultural knowledge can't be efficient unless those involved have the needed institutions for education, specially meeting places, means of transportation and educational devices.

It is obvious that the trust in government is unquestionable if it creates local authorities without providing training, technical assistance and financial support, which are indispensable for their efficiency. Obviously, the expenses of this kind of activity, in its proportion, are very great but it is estimated that the expenses for education and training in a field like the one of agricultural development represents one of the best investments that a country can do.

Farmers from families that farms in the mountain area must be helped to improve their professional knowledge and also to increase their managing capacity. It must be created that surplus of objectives on which the development of the household could rely on. The farmer, the manager of the household must want and must be able to appropriate the duties of the economic unit that owns. The surplus of the managing capacity makes them consider the agricultural process

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as a living one and helps them to get out of the helplessness and to begin to focus especially on the necessity of financing investments on the long run.

Along with the training the whole education system must have as objective a certain education that could contribute to the improvement of their life style.

Generally, it is admitted the fact that education brings new characteristics to professional qualification and that it is indispensable a "fertile field" for any kind of specialisation. But as far as mountain farmers are concerned education is necessary from any other points of view.

Beyond the improvement of technology it is necessary: (1) a better organisation of the activity of the production; (2) a direction regarding the obtained production destination (trading) and a better orientation of capitalising it; (3) the realisation of some forms of association in the field of production or those of capitalisation; (4) new attitude concerning the comfort of their homes (water, bath, cleaning etc) and concerning the food diet etc.

The Trading of the Agricultural Products

Is a lever through which the farmer can obtain the needed incomes in order to buy the products and the consume goods needed.

The growth of the size of the mountain household's resources and their capitalisation at a superior level, under the condition of rising the level of technical equipment and that of qualifying of the labour force has as a primary result the growth of the quantity of the obtained products. The conditions of the production level's outrunning (that of subsistence) having been created and even for creating a surplus of agricultural products, in case of some households, it is necessary that their market should focus on towards the capitalisation of the obtained product.

Mostly, the obtained agricultural production in the mountain households, for the moment, is destined to their subsistence and only non-capitalised part by selling, that comes from a reduced number of products (milk, young bulls' fatten, potatoes) and all these in the most basic form of obtaining without any processing. In order to be able to talk about the development of the agricultural household it is necessary the stressing of the selling trend of the obtained agricultural products. The need of trading a part of the agricultural production obtained in the mountain households is determined by the dynamic force that can be recorded by the trading process of the development of agricultural production. An efficient commercial sector isn't satisfied with joining the consumers and with supervising the evolution of supply and demand. It has a dynamic role in limiting or stimulating the production and consumes - the polar of the economic development. On the one hand the trading stimulates the demand in improving and transforming the agricultural products and intensifies the attraction of new consumers, activates new needs. On the other hand, it turns the farmers' attention towards new productions and encourages the attempts for innovation, depending on the demand and the prices. It offers the opportunity for investments in successful activities, through the obtained funds as a result of trading. The dynamic role of trade is of a basic importance in promoting the economic activity. It can be defined as the main multiplication factor of the economic development, or directly said trade is the constitutive part of the agricultural development. In a certain percentage, the advantage brought to farmers by the income obtained by trading some products can determine them to wish the multiplication of the quantity and the quality of the assets for selling, while this behaviour determines them to improve the economic efficiency. The mountain farmer's behaviour towards the selling of their products is characterised today by what Gheorghe Ionescu Sisești said many years ago referring to peasants in general: "what really misses to our peasants is this business spirit, this trading mentality that should always be disturbed by the plan of an enterprise and the possibility of a gain". (Agricultural Policy with special Regard to Romania, Libraria Leon Alcaly, Bucharest, 1937, p. 183.) The trading can be row or processed stage of the products. From a more general perspective it is appreciated that this activity is more profitable as the selling of the products in an advanced stage of capitalisation.

Some of the needed preparing for selling of the products can be done in the farmers' own households, with modest investments. But, greater chances have those who engage in common

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activities like co-operatives or association forms, strategy that can introduce them more actively and efficiently in the system of trade and that can offer to their members the possibility of obtaining better prices for their products. Also, there are products like milk and meat that need both technical equipment and organised, rapid and hygienic distribution. A real improvement in this field generally goes beyond the possibilities of the familial households of the mountain farmer. The co-operative society, for instance, can make easier to solve the problems of collection of the products. With a good organisation, the co-operatives can improve the storing and processing conditions. This form of organisation can also be a great method for creating an agricultural project of credit and the method of a system of supplying the factors of production. In order to make this mutual helping viable, the mountain farmers must be helped to understand that by themselves can't face the requests of the progress and to understand that here, too, like in other aspects that they met along the existence of the households, sometimes, the association represents the power.

Thus, the individualistic characteristics, the basis on the durability and perpetuating of the farmer as a producer must be used constructively and, as possibly, focused towards attitudes of co-operation in production, selling, supplying, credits, etc.

The economic mechanism of some united operations on large scale can provide a series of advantages for associations.

The mountain farmers' association is necessary from the point of view of the operations of trade because at superior stage of commercial promotion, in competition, techniques of negotiation, publicity, special services must be used. The way in which the mountain farmer succeeds to produce beyond the necessary consume and the way in which succeeds in selling as good as possible the created assets is decisive for the improvement of his living standard.

The Many-Sided Activity

The amount of incomes the mountain man can obtain from the agricultural activity isn't enough, situation created by, on one hand, the low outputs obtained from mountain agriculture (even if the resources are better capitalised) and on the other hand by the impossibility of processing great areas in order to compensate the qualitative deficiency in comparison with the minimum qualitative level or resources outside the area. The insufficient incomes are related to the temporary character of some activities related to the agricultural production and to the incomplete use of the labour force. Because of the dependence of the agricultural production of the natural conditions the possibility of finding the solution of the complete and steady occupation of the labour force in households during a year in this activity is excluded. The complete occupation or at least in a greater percentage of the labour force in mountain villages as well as the opportunity of completing the insufficient incomes from agriculture depends on the implementation and the development of this places of some activities complementary to agriculture. The many-sided activity is a lever through which the mountain farmer can, in a certain percentage, replace the low amount of incomes obtained from agriculture as a result of the difficulties in processing the resources and as a result their limited possibilities. The developing of a complementary activity by the mountain farmers or at least by a part of them supposes an additional effort which, is added to an already considerable one, like that of capitalising some deficient resources without a reward of this work through the outputs obtained of the same level with the wages of the farmers from more favourable areas for the same work. Upon this economic disadvantage of the mountain farmer lay also social disadvantages (isolation, the lack of an appropriate infra-structure in the community).

The development of the non-agricultural activities in the mountain region can't be conceived otherwise than in a report complementary to agriculture and forestry, especially in the rural area, because their role isn't to substitute the two activities, but to create conditions for the population to last in the area, especially in the direction of capitalising the natural resources through agriculture and forestry. The problem is that trying to find agricultural process that fit exactly in their periods of inactivity is meant to fail. But of course the opposite way remains possible, meaning that finding some activities that can be done in the periods of agricultural inactivity. In this category a series of

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activities related to industry, tourism, forestry, trade, craftsmanship, processing of agricultural products etc. could be taken into consideration. Depending on the level of organisation of the complementary activity, it can be developed in households and in the villages as well. The closer it is to the farmer's household, the better.

The characteristics of the areas lead to the refreshment of some traditional industrial activities like: sewing, clothing, woodcraft, house building etc. The revival and extension of traditional industrial activities or the implementation of others from the small industry are necessarily sized according to the potential of the resources of raw material and with the available labour force in the conditions of complementary occupations.

The complementary relationship between agriculture, forestry and industry, tourism, services etc., must be carefully studied in case of each settlements and the accomplishment of best relations, depending on the available labour force, resources or services offered by the developed activities must be stimulated. The improvement of this relation may be the main lever for insuring the social-economical viability of some mountain area places.

The Financial Support

In order to maintain the viability of the mountain household it is necessary a financial support of those farmers in capitalising the marginal resources, through different ways, by the society that generally benefits, directly or indirectly, from the fact that these resources are not abandoned. The interfering methods of the society must be focused either directly towards the mountain agricultural household, or, indirectly, towards the area of creating a new general climate favourable to mountain men's activity and life.

The levels on which society interferes in supporting the mountain households can be established depending on their degree of the possible resources exploited by the households, on their size and, in the meantime, on the assets of the society at a certain moment. No matter how great this effort might seem to the society, at a certain moment, it must be paid because otherwise we will assist to a massive depopulation of our mountains.

The financial support of the mountain farmers is the main way through which the society could and it must compensate their effort of capitalising the marginal resources, which, in a pure competition, will be certainly abandoned.

The Scientific Research

Taking into consideration the reduced outputs on which the mountain area resources are being capitalised, generally lower than their potential and a insufficient extension of researching in the mountain agriculture field, we appreciate that this activity, by intensification, can be one of the most important levers of the development of the agricultural households existing in the mountains. The scientific research can find solutions of capitalising these resources with increased outputs, as well as ways of action or of combining all the other levers from above, levers meant to increase their efficiency.

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