

RESILIENT FUNCTIONS AND ROLES OF SMALL-SCALE AGRICULTURE IN RURAL ROMANIA

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A brief overview of rural Romanian phenomena and processes in modern history reveals that rural areas and small rural households were highly stable systems, providing social and economic security. In all history, except during the communist period (1945-1989), small-scale agriculture was and continues to be the main component in the rural labour market in the quasi-absence of other non-agricultural employment opportunities. In all times, food self-consumption, supported by small farms, has had a leverage effect against poverty. More than that, the statistical information shows that small farms achieve higher levels of economic performance compared to large farms by diversifying their production structure and, through that, they make an important contribution to national food security. In the post-communist period (i.e. after 1989), in Romania, these functions and roles of the small farms have been restored and are widely recognised. If the meaning of ‘socio-economic resilience’ is the ability of an individual, of a household, community, region or country to resist, to adapt, and to fast recover after a crisis, shock or change, the economic and social functions and roles assumed in the transition period by small Romanian rural farms gives them the attributes of a resilient answer of the entire Romania to the post-communist changes and shocks.

Methodological approach is a descriptive one describing major socio-demographic trends that impacted Romanian rural society (rural-urban migration), economic dynamics (occupational structure, income structures and poverty) and farm system transformations (farm structure of farms by size, economic output, contribution to the agricultural production) in order to capture the ability of small-scale agriculture to preserve their role and function during the last 30 years. New data revealed that small-scale agriculture still preserving its ability to absorb shocks and changes, but the dimension of this safety net is diminishing over time.

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