

Land policy for integrated development of mountainous areas in the sectors of agriculture, stockbreeding and forestry

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Abstract

The primary sector of production is fairly reported as an element of social and economic consistency that has a special contribution to the employment of the habitants of the mountainous areas of our country. The people, who are employed in the primary sector and live in mountainous and less favoured areas, represent 61.7% of the total population employed in this productive sector. Due to the high dependence of mountainous areas on agriculture, stockbreeding and forestry, all land policy measures that are taken have to do most with these sectors and related activities, both at European and national level.

It is well known that due to objective reasons (intense and intensively changing topographic relief, extreme fragmentation and dispersion of very small land ownership/use/exploitation units), landholding structure in Greece, especially in mountainous areas, seems to be problematic. The average landholding size in mountainous areas is even smaller than the extremely small average size for the country, agricultural land is gradually abandoned and the average age of landholding leaders is much higher compared to the other areas of Greece.

National land policy on the agricultural sector and mountainous areas (as is the case, more or less, in every aspect of national policy nowadays) is mainly an adoption of the respective European policy, as described in the Reformed Common Agricultural Policy and the European Spatial Development Perspective. Several measures are taken to cope with the phenomenon of the abandonment of mountainous areas and to promote their development. Compensatory allowances are given to farmers, so as to counterbalance their reduced income due to the natural disadvantages of the land they cultivate. Increased incentives are given to aid and facilitate the establishment of young farmers in mountainous areas. In addition, subsidies are given for the development of enterprises in mountainous and less favoured areas. Likewise, the expansion of agricultural activities into different sectors, such as small craft and industrial enterprises is promoted, with emphasis on the production of dairy products (a typical example of the contemporary policy directions and strategies that tend to connect the primary, secondary and tertiary productive sectors). Finally, the potential development of rural tourism is promoted in these policies as the panacea for the “development” of every mountainous area, without taking into account the specific physical and socioeconomic conditions that prevail in each case.

The aim of this paper is to review the “partial” and “combined” land policies of our country concerning the sectors of agriculture, forestry and stockbreeding. An analytical review of their “theory”, their practical implementation, the way they conceptualise the specific characteristics of the natural and socioeconomic reality of mountainous areas and their objective limitations and contradictions, is attempted here.

Following the theory of worth-living integrated development, the need for a holistic and interdisciplinary approach, as well as for exact and reliable recording, mapping, monitoring and analysis of the elements, characteristics and phenomena that constitute the physical and socioeconomic reality of the mountainous environment and define the multidimensional relationship, interdependence and interaction among agriculture, stockbreeding and forestry and the -specific in each case- features of nature and society, are documented.

In this direction, certain measures of Land Policy for the Integrated Development of mountainous areas, which aim to maximize the potential of these areas in the fields of agriculture, stockbreeding and forestry, are proposed. These can be achieved with the help of the proper technology, but in dialectical harmony with the sensitive and invaluable natural and cultural environment of our country.