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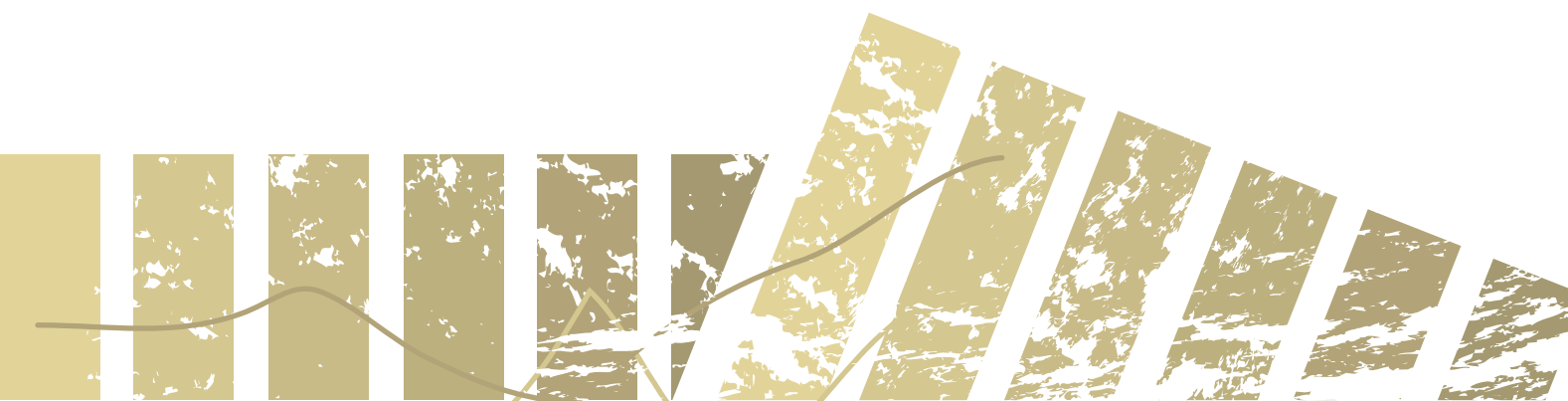
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THE AGRICULTURE CHANGES, BUT ITALY AND SLOVAKIA HAVE STILL SOMETHING IN COMMON

POL'NOHOSPODÁRSTVO SA MENÍ, ALE TALIANSKO A SLOVENSKO MAJÚ STÁLE NIEČO SPOLOČNÉ

1. INTRODUCTION

This article provides information on the evolution of the agricultural system in Italy and in Slovakia. Starting from the analysis of the last agricultural survey data, held in Slovakia and Italy, attempting to highlight the changes between 2010 and 2013, especially in the farm structure, observing the recent evolution of the agricultural situation in the two countries and the similarities observed. Nevertheless agriculture is currently again a subject of cultural debates in which it plays a major role of an agricultural model different from the past, more focused on quality, alternative productions and on finding new sources of income for young people.

2. INTERPRETING THE LAST SURVEY RESULTS

The results of the Farm Structure Survey 2013 highlight that current agriculture has many different faces, each with a very specific task and functions to be recognized and valued: the agro-industrial component, the multifunctional agriculture, the organic production, the small units by self-consumption, the multiple employment. It's a rich and complex world that performs a vital function of productive, environmental and social type.

If we take into account the phenomenon of diversification of activities within the farm, which interested both the Slovaks and the Italians, we see that energy production for sale from renewable resources and work in forestry have been greatly accelerated.

Furthermore, the contract work for non-agricultural businesses and agro-tourism increased as well. The agro-tourism, in particular, grows in importance in recent years almost everywhere. It is a form of rural tourism thanks to which tourists are housed at a farm; it is facing a period of strong expansion. The agro-touristic activity may be exclusively exercised by operators of agriculture individual or group in connection and complementarity with the main activity. The agro-touristic activity is not in conflict with the farming as it is built in large part through the use of products and original means of the farm itself; this includes hospitality in houses and camps, organization of recreational and cultural activities, provides meals and drinks made by the company. The rooms used for agro-tourism activities must match the home of the farmer and the buildings in the background.

The agro-touristic farm was defined in the early eighties as an important tool for the protection and enhancement of the environment. The European Union with the new Common Agricultural Policy has given prominence to agricultural activities integrated with other activities not eminently productive. In fact, after the intensive

agriculture (widespread in Europe) had achieved significant limits in excess production and a significant environmental impact for the massive use of fertilizers and pesticides, it is desired to favor and reward an activity carried out with respect for the environment and also protection of traditions and agricultural uses.

Even the more recent indications of the European Union reaffirm the will to maintain and develop agricultural activities in marginal rural areas where the persistence of multiple jobs integrating the farm incomes would be desirable: the production of traditional products, the wise use of environmental resources, the exploitation of tourism in many areas, should hinder the depopulation of rural areas. The agro-touristic activity must therefore complement the other strictly agricultural activities, such as the cultivation of the soil and the breeding.

Another aspect worth highlighting that also shows similarities between Slovakia and Italy is the choice of the biological. More and more farms in Slovakia and in Italy prefer biological agriculture or organic breeding.

3. THE ORGANIC AGRICULTURE IN ITALY AND SLOVAKIA

According to the results of Farm Structure Survey 2013 the incidence of the organic area on the total of utilized agricultural area (UAA) rose from 6,1% to 7,7% in Italy and from 6 % to 7,27% in Slovakia.

The term “organic” refers to a method of cultivation and breeding that only allows the use of natural substances, present in nature, excluding the use of synthetic chemical substance (fertilizers, herbicides, insecticides). Organic farming means developing production models that avoid excessive exploitation of natural resources, particularly soil, water and air, conversely using these resources in a long-term farming. To preserve the natural fertility of a soil, organic farmers use organic materials and appropriate agricultural techniques in order to prevent its intensive exploitation.

Regarding housing systems, utmost importance is placed on the welfare of grass-fed and organic-fed animals and on reducing the use of antibiotics, hormones or substances artificially stimulating growth and milk production in animals. Moreover, in agricultural holdings so that the animals can move around and graze freely.

Organic farming does not use chemicals. Crop protection is provided primarily as a preventive selecting species resistant to diseases and intervening with appropriate cultivation techniques, as for example: the crop rotation that means not growing on the same land consecutively the same plant. So on the one hand, it hinders acclimate pest, on the other the nutrients of the soil are exploited in a more rational and less intensive way; the planting of hedges and trees, as well as it recreates the landscape, gives hospitality to natural predators of pests and acts as a physical barrier to possible external pollution; the intercropping, i.e. cultivating plants in parallel unwelcome to pests of others.

In organic farming only natural fertilizers such as manure and other composted organic matters are used. In case of necessity for the protection of crops natural plant, animal or mineral substances: extracts of plants, beneficial insects that prey on pests, rock meal or natural minerals to correct the structure and chemical properties

of soils are used. Even organic breeding follows regulatory criteria defined by the European Union. Animals must be fed according to their needs with plant products from organic production method, preferably grown on the same farm or in the district where the farm is located.

Organic animal breeding is closely tied to its land base. The number of animals to rear is closely related to the available area. The adopted breeding systems must meet the ethological and physiological needs of animals. Transplantation of embryos and the use of hormones to control ovulation are prohibited except where veterinary treatment of individual animals is necessary. The use of breeds obtained through genetic manipulation is forbidden.

The development of bio-agriculture in the Slovak Republic began in 1991, following the experience and development trends in western European countries. The basic regulatory framework for the organic system at that time were the Rules of organic agriculture valid for the territory of the Slovak Republic. The Rules were based on the principles and requirements of organic agriculture as defined by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements.

A basic and significant change to the legislative framework for organic agriculture took place in 1998, when the Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 224/1998 Coll. on Ecological Agriculture and the Production of Organic Foodstuffs was adopted.

Since the EU accession in 2004, organic agriculture is being carried out in compliance with the Council Regulation No.2092/91, and area based payments are granted under the EU's Rural Development Programmes.

On 1 January 2009, the Regulation (EC) No. 834/2007 replaced Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91 as amended. The Regulation (EC) No. 889/2008 defines the terms of application. In 2010, more than 140000 hectares of agricultural land were under organic management. About one third of these were arable land, two thirds permanent grasslands and the rest were orchards and vineyards.

According to the results of the FSS 2013, the share of organic farming on the total utilized agricultural area in Slovakia is by 7,27% and increased by more than 1 point from 6% in the FSC 2010. The highest number of units practicing organic farming is located in the centre and in the east of the country. Almost three quarters of these are located in the regions of Banská Bystrica (56 farms), Košice (58 farms) and Prešov (51 farms). The rest is located in other regions: Bratislava (10 farms), Nitra (24 farms), Žilina (32 farms) and Trnava (3 farms).

As for breeding, we are sharing a similar situation, in the central and the eastern part of Slovakia there is the highest number of organic farms: Prešov with 88 units, Banská Bystrica with 76 units and Košice with 58 units. The only exception is represented by the Žilina region with 50 units only. In other regions only few units can be found: Bratislava with 12 farms, Nitra 23 farms and Trnava 5 farms.

In Italy, the number of farms engaged in biological agriculture or organic breeding shows an increase by 4,7 % compared to the Census 2010. The south continues to

hold the largest share of units practicing organic farming in the national total (42,2%), followed by the islands (22,9%), the centre (16,1%), the northeast (12,9%) and the northwest (5,8%). The greatest percentage of total companies is found in the islands with 4,1% compared with a national share it is higher by 3,1%.

The changes compared to the 2010 Census are quite diversified across regions: positive in the northeast (+18,0%), south (+6,5%) and islands (+14,4%), negative in the northwest (-19,6%) and in the centre (- 8,7%). From the point of view of the surface, compared to the 2010 Census there was an increase of 23,1%, with an organic area of almost 1.317.177 hectares. Nationally, the incidence of the organic area on the total UAA rose from 6,1% in Census 2010 to 7,7% in 2013. The highest values are found in the islands (11,7%) and in the centre (11,1%), followed by the south (8,7%), the northeast (4,1%) and the northwest (2%).

The south and the islands have similar biological surfaces share in the national total, although there is a significant difference with reference to the proportion, in the total national, of farms with organic crops: 41,9% in the islands and only 23,2% in the south. To sum up, two opposing models seem to prevail: in the islands organic agriculture is practiced by farms with more extensive surface area, while in the south there are organic farms with minor surface. This would depend on the type of cultivation and/or by the presence of pastures.

According to the data of 2013, there are more than 50000 organic farms in Italy, including in this form both the exclusive manufacturer and those companies which perform production and preparation or only preparation. The operators of the sector are 52.383 of which 41.513 are involved only in production, 6.154 are involved only in preparatory activities (including companies that perform retail activities), 4.456 that perform both production and preparation activities and 260 operators carrying out importation activities.

The distribution of operators throughout the country is led by Sicily, similarly as in the previous years followed by Calabria where are regions with bigger number of biological farms; as for the number of processing companies engaged in the sector, the leadership belongs to Toscana, followed by Emilia Romagna and Puglia.

Table 1: Number of registered organic operators by type and region

	Producers only	Preparatory only	Producers/ preparatory	Importers	Operators in total up to 31. 12. 2013
Total	41.153	6.154	4.456	260	52.383
Sicily	8.954	564	358	12	9.888
Calabria	6.574	218	372	4	7.168
Apulia	5.289	513	444	8	6.254
Emilia Romagna	2.537	794	336	51	3.718
Tuscany	2.399	499	787	16	3.701
Latium	2.636	345	231	8	3.220
Sardinia	2.073	65	90	0	2.228
The Marches	1.734	204	220	4	2.162
Piedmont	1.324	383	255	36	1.998
Campania	1.433	325	159	6	1.923

Veneto	946	573	247	38	1.804
Lombardy	809	656	217	43	1.725
Trento and Bolzano	1.088	338	210	8	1.644
Abruzzo	1.096	205	145	2	1.448
Umbria	911	130	156	6	1.203
Basilicata	1.011	77	78	0	1.166
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	232	114	66	5	417
Liguria	214	103	56	12	385
Molise	178	39	20	1	238
Valle d' Aosta	75	9	9	0	93

Source: SINAB-National Information System on Organic Agriculture

Table 2: Number of farms with organic breeding by region

Region	2010	2013
Total	7.355	8.033
Sicily	2.036	2.407
Sardinia	1.357	1.588
Latium	697	805
Emilia Romagna	621	661
Tuscany	406	480
Piedmont	356	343
Calabria	139	307
Lombardy	193	226
The Marches	225	221
Basilicata	182	197
Veneto	181	153
Umbria	154	121
Trento and Bolzano	353	118
Apulia	112	114
Liguria	114	99
Campania	74	57
Valle d' Aosta	55	52
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	39	44
Abruzzo	59	40
Molise	2	1

Source: SINAB-National Information System on Organic Agriculture.

Table 3: Number of farms with organic aquaculture by region

Total	17
Veneto	6
Emilia Romagna	4
The Marches	2
Apulia	2
Friuli Venezia Giulia	1
Molise	1
Trentino Alto Adige	1

Source: SINAB-National Information System on Organic Agriculture.

Italy is a European country with one of the highest presence of organic farms rates: as shown in the Map on organic agriculture in Europe. According to the Italian Association for Organic Agriculture, one out of every three organic farm in Europe, is Italian.

4. CONCLUSION

Despite some differences between the two countries, the analysis of the Farm Structure Survey 2013 in the Slovak Republic and in Italy, shows some similarities concerning the utilized agricultural land, the development of diversification activities, such as the energy production for sale from renewable resources and the work in forestry, and in both countries an increasing number of farms engaged in biological agriculture.

This last aspect should be taken into serious consideration: the organic (or biological) agriculture is a system that, on the one hand, aims to offer to the consumers fresh, genuine and chemical free products; on the other hand seeks to minimize the environmental impact of farming, by making sure that every piece of land is used in accordance with its natural cycles and in an environmentally sustainable manner. In addition to the land, the biological agriculture reserves a great attention to the respect of animals, air and water. This, we consider to be very important for the future of life on the earth.

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