



Land consolidation in Slovenia

1. General overview

Small size of agricultural parcels beside great dispersion, inappropriate shape and size, represent some of the main structural problems of Slovenian countryside. The structure of Slovenian agricultural holdings is being improved very slowly. Average agricultural holding cultivates 6,3 ha of agricultural land, which is three times smaller than an average of EU member States.

Despite the fact that a slight progress in increasing the size of farms can be noticed, the condition comparing to other European countries remains poor.

One of the greatest difficulties of Slovenian agricultural developmental problems is great parcel dispersion. This is very significant for family farming, that cultivate altogether more than 600.000 pieces of agricultural land or in average 7,2 pieces per agricultural holding. The average size of one piece of land represents around 1.4 ha.

Nowadays in Slovenia there are 950.000 ha of agricultural land in use and within these approximately 59.000 ha have been consolidated, which corresponds to 273 land consolidation areas. 174 these consolidated areas (approximately 33.000 ha) have been finally concluded and registered to land cadastre.

The most intensive time of land consolidations belongs to the 80-is of the previous century.

In the year 1990 the moratorium on amelioration implementation, and indirectly on land consolidation implementation, was introduced. Consequently, approximately 127 land consolidation areas from this period remained unfinished.

Ministry of agriculture, forestry and food in 1995 prepared Program for sanitation of unfinished land consolidations that have been performed through Administration Units. After 10 years of performing this program, approximately 50 land consolidation areas need yet to be finished, while the majority of works on these areas have already been done. Generally, all these land consolidations are currently on the appeal at the appellate body.

Between 1990 and 1995 no new land consolidations in Slovenia have been performed. In 1995 new Agricultural Land Act, which also covers agricultural land consolidations, has been accepted and is still in use. Comparing to previous law, the new one essentially raised the percent of necessary concordance for introduction of land consolidation proceeding from 50 % to 80 %.

After the year 1995 the Ministry of agriculture, forestry and food reestablished financing land consolidations of agricultural parcels.

Until including the year 2003 eight public tenders have been performed, which financed 27 new land consolidation areas in common area of 3.795 ha and in common value of 2.358.372 EUR.

According to the fact that the proceedings on these new land consolidation areas are being performed according to the new Agricultural Land Act and that initiative for introduction of land consolidation derives above all from the owners of parcels (threshold for land consolidation introduction according to the new law requires concordance of 80% of all the owners), the implementation of proceedings is essentially easier and faster.

Among 27 introduced land consolidations, 14 areas have already been finished and registered into land cadastre, 6 areas are currently on appeal at Administration Units and on the Ministry, on 7 areas the proceedings are running and Decisions of new dispersion of parcels from land consolidation fund have not yet been issued.

Practically all land consolidations of agricultural parcels have been financed almost entirely from public sources.

2. Momentary activities of land consolidations in Slovenia

The interest of local population on land consolidations of agricultural parcels is in some parts of Slovenia in the last few years surprisingly increased. This interest is distinctively expressed in Prekmurje and in Štajerska (NE Slovenia), Dolenjska and in surrounding of Ljubljana (SE and central Slovenia). According to the collected data 14.030 ha or 70 areas to be consolidated are foreseen, and according to the rough estimation that the costs of consolidation per hectare are approximately 1.041 EUR, the common estimated financial value of works on these areas is 14.614.583 EUR.

Reasons for introduction of land consolidation:

- Great dispersion of parcels, the size of agricultural parcels is too small
- Consequences of denationalization proceedings (Refer mostly to the lands of complexes of ex-public agricultural companies, where condition in nature greatly varies from the condition in land cadastre plans. Despite the fact that the parcels were returned to the owners in nature, they cannot use these parcels, cause the borders of these parcels in nature are not present, as well as in general in nature there are no more land cadastre roads.)
- Consequences of building of highways that cause additional dispersion of the parcels.
- Non-functionality of existing land structures (bad condition of poorly equipped infrastructure...)

Even though that Agricultural Land Act foresees several various ways of financing of land consolidation proceedings, the Communes as well as the owners expect that land consolidations will be financed by the State. Planned land consolidations can be found in less developed Communes that have at their disposal only limited budgetary resources, while farming remains their primary activity. Knowing that the farmers in these areas wish to continue with farming, clearly tells us that financing land consolidations by the State is by all means reasonable.

At the present moment 10 new land consolidation areas in common surface of 2.566 ha and estimated value of approximately 2.972.916 EUR are being prepared for implementation.

In the year 2005 new public tender for applications for allocation of non-refundable resources for land consolidations of approximately 1.250.000 EUR is foreseen. It is evident that demand for financing land consolidation from public sources greatly exceeds resources available.

Due to the accelerated construction of highway network, consolidation of agricultural parcels on the highway line is foreseen as well. If construction of highway caused land dispersion of agricultural parcels, investors are on the base of legislation obliged to assure resources for land consolidation implementation.

A nice illustration of this practice is a new railway line Murska Sobota-Hodoš (connection to Budapest), where investor (Slovenske železnice d.d.) financed implementation of land consolidation.

3. A case of land consolidation Prigorica - Dolenja vas

Land consolidation area Prigorica – Dolenja vas extends over 400 ha of agricultural land. Preparative works started in year 2000 and necessary concordance for land consolidation introduction from owners has been obtained. In 2001 Decision for land consolidation area introduction has been issued and in 2002 public resources of 400.000 EUR for land consolidation implementation have been assured.

Right after acquirement of financial resources necessary works continued. Operative land consolidation implementation was finished in 2004; Decision of new land dispersion of parcels from land consolidation fund has been issued in August 2004.

The land consolidation process is currently on appeal at the appellate body, which has received approximately 30 complaints.

It is evident that approximately 5 years have passed from the issue of Decision of new parcel dispersion till land consolidation. For land consolidation to be final, lawful and registered into land cadastre two more years are needed. The whole consolidation proceeding therefore takes 7 years.

Comparative sheet of characteristic data before and after land consolidation:

	Before land consolidation	After land consolidation
Number of owners	660	628
Average size of parcels (m ²)	867	3.444
Average number of parcels per ha	11,5	2,9
Average number of parcels per owner	7	1,9
Area of roads and pathways (ha)	1 23 50	6 21 16

As it is evident from the given sheet land consolidation area Prigorica – Dolenja vas extends over the area of very unfavorable land structure. Even though that after land consolidation average number of parcels per owner decreased four times, dispersion of parcels is still big. Looking in long term it would in any case be reasonable on this area (period of 20 years) to implement new land consolidation which would establish somewhat normal conditions.

4. Future of agricultural land consolidations

4.1. Need of act's changes of agricultural land consolidations

In the present time valid Agriculture Land Act, which regulates also land consolidation matters, has been accepted in 1996. Regarding the chapter that refers to land consolidation, articles are in general very similar to those articles from Agricultural Land Act from 1979. It is clear that new act did not bring essential changes, while it has raised a degree of democracy of land consolidation proceedings, which is evident in required concordance of the owners that posses 80 % of land embraced in land consolidation area.

Changed social circumstances and membership in EU require changes also in the land consolidations. The proceedings of land consolidations need to be systematically arranged, considering EU directions and objectives. Contemporary land consolidation accessions not only define consolidation of dispersed parcels, but also represent an instrument for reorganization and sustainable development of broad countryside.

In Slovenia it is necessary first of all to think of:

- Land consolidations which represent not only an action for parcel enlargement for more economical agriculture production, but also land consolidations that enable integral rural development;

Aim of land consolidation is stimulation of cultivated countryside considering ecological aspects as well as aspects of care and maintenance of landscape (land consolidation as an action for conservation and creation of new systems of natural biotopes that are of a great importance for countryside). Spatially planned and deliberated project of new land dispersion must include also reasonable and functional arrangements of traffic and water infrastructure as well as barriers against noise and wind. Land consolidations could also help solving needs upon renovation and development of countryside settlements (acquirement of necessary surfaces for agriculture land and settlements, migration of spatially problematic farms...). It is also necessary to enable harmonized cooperation with other land operations and other steps of agricultural policy.

- To simplify proprietorial legal relations on parcels included in land consolidation fund;

In land consolidation proceeding owners of the parcels would like to sell their land, give it to their descendants, disunite joint property and alike. Act should enable that these proceedings would be performed in more simple way. Much of dissatisfaction among owners causes a fact, that the procedure with the

parcels must be done in such a way as if land consolidation has not been implemented – hang out the offer, notary's contract, verification... Hanging out the offer in the case of land consolidation is unreasonable, because the purpose of the procedure is that precedence for purchase is given to the owners of neighbor parcels. In a proceeding of land consolidation all the owners are also neighbors to each other.

- More harmonized activity of all participants involved in land consolidation proceeding;

According to organizational system of land consolidation implementation, the flow of data within involved organs should be arranged. In present time the existed condition is very problematic because Administrative Units do not possess appropriate program solutions, that would enable them taking over digital data from surveyor performers, and after finalization of Decision sending them to Surveyor Administration and to land cadastre. This way delays and unnecessary waste of time occur.

- Greater involvement of local population in land consolidation proceeding;

Land consolidation proceedings that have been implemented in the past, have been in a way considered as compulsory consolidations, which aim was directed mostly in increasing ex-public agricultural complexes, and not in increasing of individual family farms. This way local people have lost their trust and some time was needed, that they again realized the benefits of land consolidation. Land consolidation committees can represent one of key subject that can assist and support successful and qualitative land consolidation implementation. This is why in the future it is necessary to put greater emphasize to their connection with narrower local community.

4.2. Establishment of conditions for profiting of resources from EU funds in the following financial period of 2007-2013

In financial period from 2004 to 2006 Slovenia on agrarian operations does not benefit resources from EU structural funds. In the following financial perspective from 2007 to 2013 Slovenia is very interested to acquire resources from EU agricultural fund for financing land consolidations on the base of Council Regulation on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) for the period from 2007 to 2013.

5. Conclusion

To land consolidations as a measure, which can essentially contribute to agricultural development as well as to Slovenian countryside, in last few years little attention has been paid. Reasons can also be found in a fact that land consolidations in 80-is and 90-is of previous century have been implemented in a large extent. These land consolidations have in some case not been professionally implemented or have not been finalized in expected planned term and appropriate time.

According to the relatively successful and fast finalization of land consolidation proceedings that have been introduced after the year 1996 (new Agricultural Lands Act), and according to actual inappropriate parcel structure of Slovenian farms, the

interest of farmers upon these proceedings is being increased in last years. Farmers are becoming aware that existed parcel structure represents big organizational and also financial problems to cultivation of agricultural land.

Difference between past compulsory land consolidations and land consolidations today is that initiative for land consolidation introduction comes directly from the farmers and this is also one of essential reasons, why it is reasonable in the future to continue with these actions and for these purposes assure sufficient financial resources.

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