

New approaches for land consolidation in Bulgaria

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1. Conception document for Land Consolidation

A working group with broad membership, led by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), invented and publicized a land consolidation conception document on the site of the MAF:

- Main tasks – Land Consolidation definitions and Land Bank alternatives.
- Description – Framework document.
- Aims – to lay the foundation of the future land consolidation activities.

2. Land Consolidation Strategy and Programme for Bulgaria (LCSP Bulgaria)

- Partners: DLG (The Netherlands), MAF (Bulgaria).
- Organization: a Core Team taking care for the organization of the project for the whole period from the beginning of 2006- 2007 was established.
- Start – The projects started with a proposal in the beginning of the 2005. The preparation period took about 10 months.

a) Definitions within the project:

Land Consolidation: Project wise (voluntary and/or legal) land exchange in a part of the rural area (several hundreds of ha), in order to solve the land fragmentation, accompanied by some technical improvement measures, for rural roads, rural water management, rural development and/or ecological measures.

Land Fund/Land Bank (LF/LB): A government-steered, market-steered, non-profit, revolving fund institution which owns and manages larger areas of rural lands, and actively purchases, exchanges, swaps, concentrates lands to larger units, to sell out or rent out to more viable farms.

b) The Land Consolidation Strategy and Programme document:

The Land Consolidation Strategy (LCS) will consist of a document that analyses the present situation and lessons learned up to now. Based on this knowledge, global scenarios, organisational structures, finance etc, will be developed, offering decision-makers the basis on which to make essential choices. This will entail also the potential development of a Land Fund and/or Land Bank (LF/LB) that will be entirely dependent on the LCS and the essential choices made by policy makers.

After agreement of the LCS by the decision-makers a Land Consolidation programme (LCP) will be developed, detailing the LCS on such a level that it will become a multi-annual operational LC programme.

c) *Content of the Strategy*

The following activities should be irreversible part of the Strategy as it has already been found out in the most important strategies and programmes implemented ever in Bulgaria.

Desk study

This study will focus on:

- Geographical characteristics and main differences between the various regions.
- Analysis of water management and irrigation strategies, and a future prognosis viewing the possibilities to adapt them by means of LC.
- Ecological evaluation and inventory of current legislation, environmental policy and protected areas in order to match with LC strategy.
- Regional attitudes towards LC.
- Analysis of land use and land property.
- Getting an overview of progress of land-restitution and registration.
- Analyse farm structures and farm sizes.
- Analyse physical conditions and (environmental) circumstance.
- Land market.
- Analysis of recent developments on the land market in new EU member states.
- SWOT analyses.

Policies overview and rendering

- Relevant EU regulations are to be analyzed, especially regarding the possibilities for implementing EU funding to the rural development plan and programme. Advise how part of this programme (esp. articles 23 and 30 of the EU regulation on rural development) can be used to co-finance LC projects and programming. Policy overview of other ministries within Bulgaria.
- Learning from other pilots.
- Learning from experiences in other (pre-accession) EU countries.

Problems and objectives

- Problems are analysed and to be defined on basis of the “problem tree process” (Afterwards analysing actions are finished and results are available).
- As a result of this process the LCSP team will be able to distillate the main objectives and outline them, together with the MAF employees involved, and discuss them within a workshop setting, prior to the first national seminar.

Scenario building for Land Consolidation and Land Fund/Land Bank instruments (Tool box)

Scenarios for the size and the level of complexity of LC projects

Land consolidation instruments can be categorized in several different forms:

- Small, basic, easy, short termed and limited goals projects.
- Extended, broad outlined, complex, interactive, long-term, integral and multi-purpose projects.

Scenarios for initiative/lead with Land Consolidation and/or Rural Development:

- Land Consolidation as leading vehicle to improve and stimulate rural development: voluntarily based or (in case of more complex and integrated projects) on legal force basis.

- EU funds, like LEADER or LIFE, as the main leading instrument, and Land Consolidation as sub instrument.
- Regulation on Rural Development as leading programme, in the framework of which Land Consolidation can be utilized.

Scenarios for separated or integrated application of a Land Fund / land bank instrument:
Instrumentation for Land Fund (institutional, process, financial instruments, legislation) and/or Land Banking.

By choosing the best options within these scenarios, a tool-box of various instruments can be obtained. Next it will be possible to choose per area, per project the optimal, tailor made instrument(s).

Institutional organisation

- Who takes the lead in Land Consolidation in Bulgaria? (responsible for process, legislation, programme).
- Which other parties are involved, what are their roles, tasks, ambitions and responsibilities (partly also to be the outcome of the force field analysis).
- Preparing a first draft for a legal framework and for institutionalizing organizations in Bulgaria.
- Expertise and capacity building.
- Knowledge management: Developing, building, outlining and maintaining the needed expertise and knowledge for sustainable Land Consolidation policy and programme.

Land Bank and Land Fund

- Analyse and define political ideas in Bulgaria about Land banking and Land funding.
- Defining the main objectives and mission of a Land Fund and/or Land Bank; draw main conclusions for LCSP.
- Outlining and elaborate organisational aspects.
- Analyse the financial aspects and the possibilities of a Revolving Fund as future instrument for LC, and stating the minimal working budget needed in terms of budget and/or hectares.
- Municipal Land fund: analyse the present and future possibilities and make proposals to incorporate into a future Land Fund.
- Institutional aspects and capacity building.

Co financing

- Outlining the instrument of early retirement.
- Formulate alternative options for co-financing models: EU, national, regional, county, local options.

Communication and public relations

- Organize the first national seminar
- Organize the second national seminar

- Prepare and write press releases, articles, provide for leaflets, information and public relations etc.
- Prepare and organize national workshops.

d) *Process for preparation of the LC programme: concept content*

1. Introduction, context and status of the LC programme, and relation to LCS and the RDP of Bulgaria.
2. Summary of the main choices, decisions, priorities in the framework of the LCS; summarising all aspects of the LCS that have been confirmed and which aspects have to be adapted/elaborated in the LC Programme.
3. Elaboration of the chosen scenario(s) for instrumentation of LC and a Land Bank.
4. Description of roles, responsibilities, tasks, expertises of the organisation(s) that takes the lead of LC and a Land Bank, and of the other governmental and private players in the field of LC; capacity building; necessary trainings; knowledge- and expertise management; organ gram.
5. Procedures on LC project initiative, application, management, design, formulation, communication, participation, approval per LC plan, ascertaining a bottom up, farmers driven approach as well as a top-down approach in case of clear governmental objectives.
6. Procedures for the implementation phase of the LC projects, safeguarding the rights and properties of landowners and land users.
7. Transparent rules and criteria for LC project selection and/or involvement of a Land Bank; regional priority setting (if any) and choices of methodologies to be applied (e.g. land valuation).
8. Methodology/guidelines on (Environmental) Impact Assessment, including costs/benefits / impacts of LC; on national and on local/project level.
9. Financial resources; rules for EU-, national- and local co-financing; % subsidy; indication for budgets per year on short, middle and long term.
10. Formulation of a communication approach and/or national awareness campaign on LC and a Land Bank, the positive chances and possible negative sentiments.
11. Proposals for adaptations/elaborations of the draft LC Act presented as separate paper and as paragraph in the LCP.
12. Proposal for land banking in accordance with LCS and LCP, presented as paper and as paragraph in the LCP.
13. Further process to approve the LC Programme by MAF (and other Ministries and organisations).

3. Bulgarian pilots

North-Western part of Bulgaria – 4 villages, 4 projects.

- First type of methodology: conducted using the training materials of FAO, DLG- The Netherlands, The University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy of Bulgaria.
- Second type of methodology- simple market methods for transactions and negotiations.