

## Land consolidation in Lithuania

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### 1. Land use and the present land reform

The **total land area** of Lithuania is 6,53 million hectares; land designated for forestry purposes covers 30,0 percent of the total land area, whereas land designated for agricultural purposes takes 60,7 percent (3,96 million hectares) of the total land area; water bodies, roads, built-up territories and land of other purposes cover the rest of it. Land used for agricultural activity takes 53,3 percent or 3,48 million hectares, arable land accounts for 2,93 million hectares of it; meadows and natural pastures take 0,55 million hectares of it.

Present land reform in Lithuania started in 1991 with the main aim to **restore land ownership rights** to the previous one from the Lithuanian independence in 1918-1940. The main purpose of this land reform was to completely rearrange the land management system so that the newly built land management system would facilitate social and economic development of the country. Ownership rights were supposed to be restored to land, forests, water bodies, residential houses and economic-commercial buildings. Land ownership rights were restored to the former owners in three ways - in kind, in equivalent and compensation.

Restitution of land ownership rights is at its final stage though the most difficult cases for settling the applications have remained. As of 1 April 2006, land ownership rights have been restored to 94 percent of land area indicated in the applications.

According to the data of the State Land Cadastre, the **average area of the land parcel used for agricultural activities** is **3,3 ha** and the **average area of agricultural land belonging to one owner** is **6,3 ha**. The average area of the private household plot is even smaller - 0,8 ha. Such small land parcels often divide former large fields (used for farming activities during the soviet period) into several land holdings and cause fragmentation in land use. Also according to the *Agricultural Census* data from the year 2003, small farms are dominating in Lithuania - **average size of the farm is 9,1 ha**. Recently the Statistic review defined that the average size of the farm has **increased** up to **11,1 ha**.

### 2. Beginning of land consolidation

Dominance of small and fragmented land plots in agricultural sector, as well as undeveloped infrastructure in rural area leads to the need in defining the new policy for land management based on **land consolidation**. Since the year 2000 two **pilot projects on land consolidation** have been carried out in Lithuania in order to prepare for this action on a large scale. Also the general **legal basis** for land consolidation has been enforced with the **Law on Land** where the **land consolidation** is **defined** as *a complex readjustment of land parcels when their boundaries and location are changed according to a land consolidation plan prepared for a certain territory, with an aim to enlarge land parcels, to form rational land holdings of farms and to improve their structure, to establish necessary infrastructure and to implement other goals and tasks of the agricultural and rural development as well as environment protection policy.*

Detail provisions on the development of land consolidation plans are approved by the **Governmental Resolution No 697 of the 27<sup>th</sup> of June, 2005 on Approval of the Rules on Development and Implementation of Land Consolidation Plans.**

**3. Main principles of land consolidation:**

- **County Governor** is responsible for the development of a land consolidation plan;
- Landowners shall file the applications to develop the land consolidation plan to the County Governor. Having established that **at least 5 landowners** wish to develop a plan in the same location and the area that is envisaged for land consolidation plan is **no less than 100 hectares**, the County Governor shall organise a meeting of owners of the land in this location;
- The meeting provides grounds on the need to develop a land consolidation plan and specifies a preliminary area for a land consolidation plan;
- Land owners within a period of **1 month** after the meeting shall conclude a **preliminary contract** of land consolidation where according to it they are committed within 3 months after the approval of the plan to conclude a main contract of land consolidation;
- Owners of the land parcels included in the area of land consolidation plan not later than **within 3 months** after the approval of the plan shall conclude **a contract of land consolidation**;
- The **executor of the land consolidation plan** is being selected by the County Governor through the public tender procedure;
- County Governor selects **free state owned land parcels** that will be included into the land consolidation planning procedure.

Financing of the development of land consolidation plans is available under the **Lithuanian single Programming Document (SPD)** of 2004-2006, IV priority “Rural development and fishery”, Measure 4 “Promoting the adaptation of rural areas”, Sub-measure “Land re-parcelling” (100 percent).

The deadline for submitting applications expired after 28 April, 2006 and there were submitted 14 relevant applications - that means first 14 land consolidation projects have started in Lithuania. They are spread in 4 counties (Telsiai, Taurage, Panevezys, Marijampole) where the restitution of land ownership rights is almost completed. Here are some statistical data on the first land consolidation projects:

	District	Cadastral area	Total area (ha)	Number of landowners	State owned land	
					Trustee of the state owned land	Area (ha)
<b><i>I. Telsiai county</i></b>						
1.	Telsiai	Degaiciai	670	43	1	5
2.		Luke	338	19	2	14
3.	Mazeikiai	Zidikai	655	54	1	17
4.		Seda, Serksnenai	362	28	1	50
5.	Plunge	Sateikiai	145	14	1	30
<b><i>II. Marijampole county</i></b>						
6.	Sakiai	Griskabudis	485	89	1	3
7.	Vilkaviskis	Gizai, Keturvalakiai	528	21	1	4
8.		Gizai	174	6	-	-
9.	Marijampole	Patasine	172	21	-	-
<b><i>III. Taurage county</i></b>						
10.	Jurbarkas	Jurbarkai	208	13	1	-
11.	Taurage	Zigaiciai	133	11	1	1
<b><i>IV. Panevezys county</i></b>						
12.	Kupiskis	Juodpenai	397	19	1	13
13.		Adomyne	270	17	1	52
14.	Pasvalys	Ustukai	192	22	1	4

In order to carry on land consolidation on large scale, there are still several issues to be addressed:

- National land consolidation strategy should be developed, identifying links between the territorial planning and rural development measures;
- Public awareness campaign should be organized;
- Administrative and institutional settings for land consolidation activities should be established;
- Training and education for land consolidation planners, administrations and students of high schools should be carried out;
- Manuals for planners and administrations employers should be developed.

Big support for the above-mentioned issues is provided to Lithuania through various international projects. The National Land Service, together with the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania, presently is involved in the following projects:

- **FARLAND: “Future Approaches to Land Development”** (June 2005 – December 2007) – **EU INTERREG IIIC PROJECT**;
- **Short term (6 month) project “Methodological guidance to impact assessment in land consolidation process”** (with DLG, Netherlands) (15 November 2005 – 15 May 2006);
- **FAO TCP project “Support to the preparation of an operational land consolidation system in Lithuania”** (April 2006 – June 2007).