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Session 6:
Why is farm land abandoned in some places but not others? Presentation of case study of South-East Serbia

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Outline

- What do we mean by abandoned land?
- Why is it such a problem in Europe?
- What drives the abandonment of farmland?
- How is it different at the local level; which are the factors that are most important in explaining different rates of abandonment?
- So what? What are the implications for policy and planning?



Definitional difficulties

- How long before land should be considered abandoned?
- How do you distinguish between land that is resting (fallow) and land that is abandoned?
- Does it have to lead to specific harms? If so, who can insist on remedial action, including compensation for non-performance?
- Should you differentiate between permanent crops, pasture and arable land?
- What is the minimal level of activities that would justify saying that the land is in use?

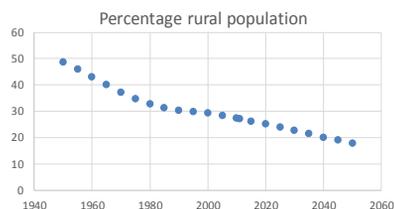


Some definitions

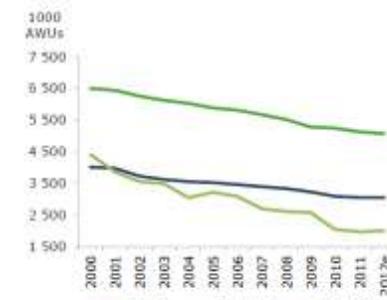
- 'Farmland abandonment is a **cessation of management** which leads to **undesirable changes** in biodiversity and ecosystem services,' Terres and Nisini 2013
- Agricultural land which is **no longer farmed, for economic, social or other reasons**, and which is not used in the crop rotation system which means that no agricultural use is intended. Pointereau et al 2008:20
- A plot of land that is **not cultivated or subject to any farm work whatsoever or used as grazing land** and where there is **no upkeep of a vegetal cover** either that is adequate from an environmental point of view and where **shrub and the remains of the same cover at least seventy five per cent of its area** with an average size exceeding fifty centimetres as well as those planted stands in areas of agricultural interest when the vegetal cover of the undergrowth consisting in grass or shrub is of such nature that it **poses a serious risk in the event of a forest fire**. Section 30(1) Act 7/2007 Law on Land Banking in Galicia

Why is it a problem and who is most affected?

- Aging and shrinking farm population
- Aging and shrinking rural population

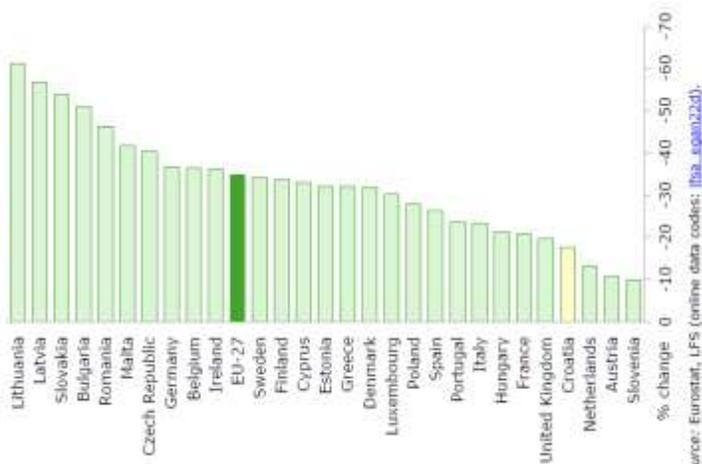


Graph 2 Evolution of agricultural labour input in the EU by groups of Member States – Data from the EAA



Source: Eurostat, EAA (online data code: [aact_a101](#))

Graph 3 Evolution of persons employed in agriculture in the EU-27 and Croatia (2000-2012, % change) – Data from the LFS



Source: Eurostat, LFS (online data codes: [lfsa_spa022d](#))

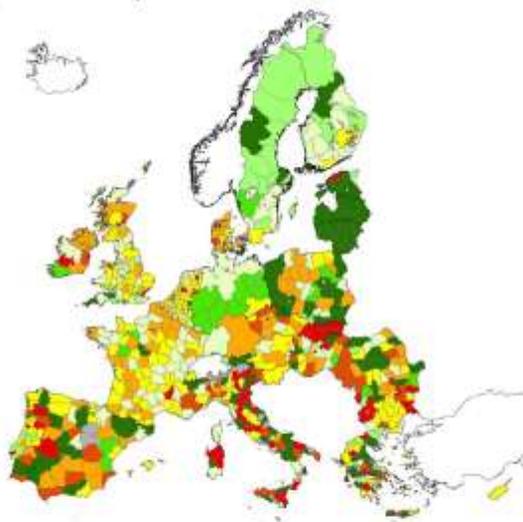


Drivers of Land Abandonment (The big picture)

- Geographic – land is unsuitable for cultivation without extensive support
- Economic – farm incomes unstable and farms not viable
- Demographic – out migration means that there is not enough labour to cultivate the land plus there is smaller local markets
- Land Market – not enough demand for land, circulation blocked by ownership questions or high transaction costs



Map 17: UAA evolution by NUTS 3 in EU-27 between 2003 and 2005

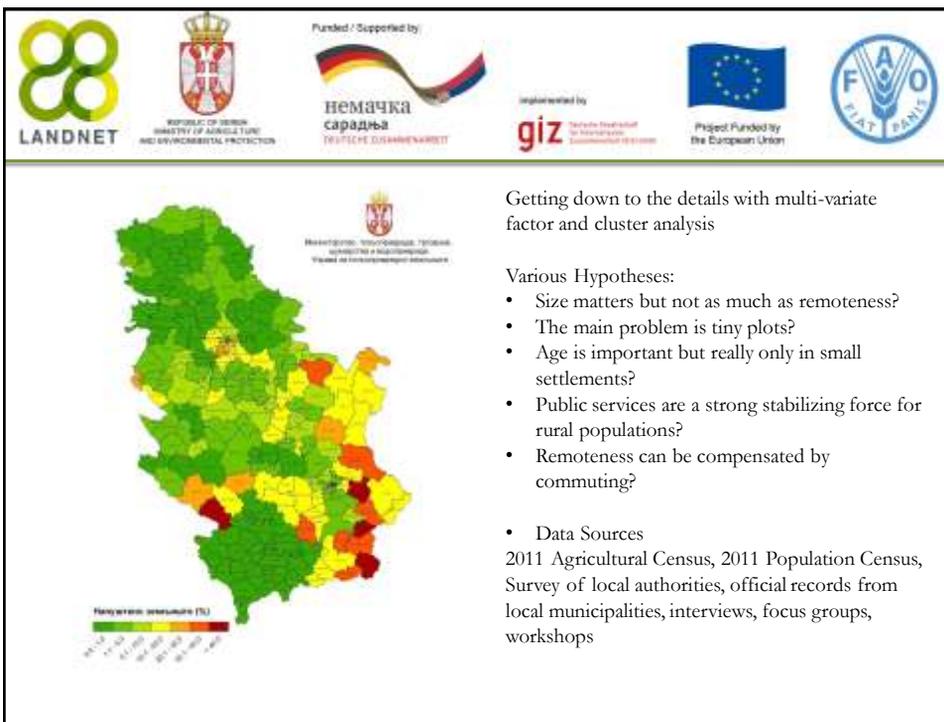
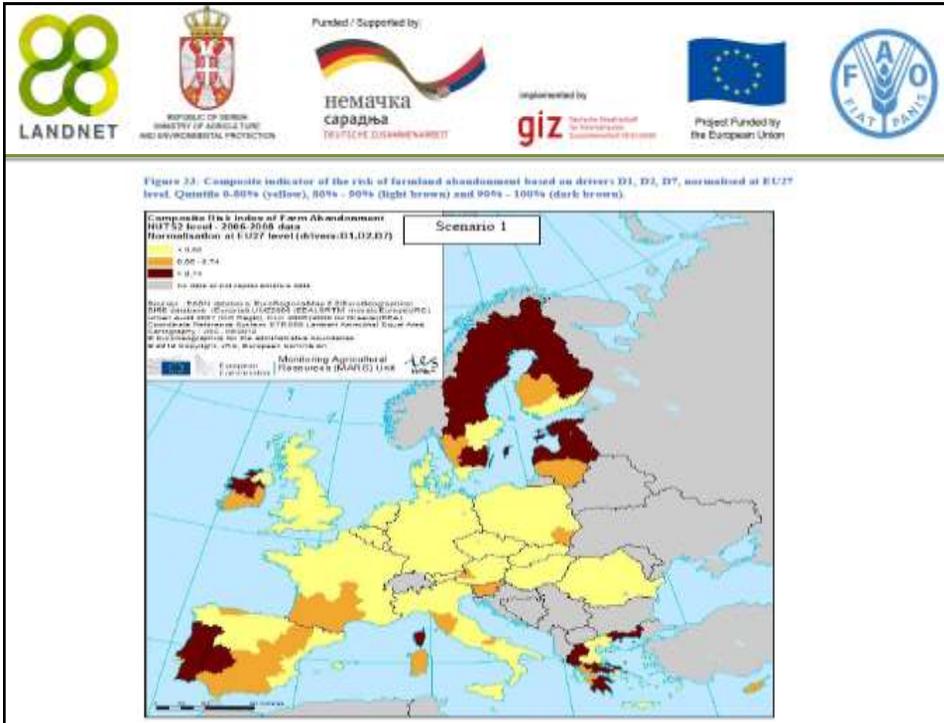


Legend

Grey	No data
Red	Increase over 10% and over 8 000 ha
Orange	Increase between 5% and 10%, and over 8 000 ha
Yellow	Increase under 5% and over 8 000 ha
Light Green	Increase under 5% and under 8 000 ha
Green	Increase over 2% and under 8 000 ha
Dark Green	Increase under 2% and over 8 000 ha
Black	Increase over 2% and over 8 000 ha

Source: Eurostat and calculation by SOIAGRO.





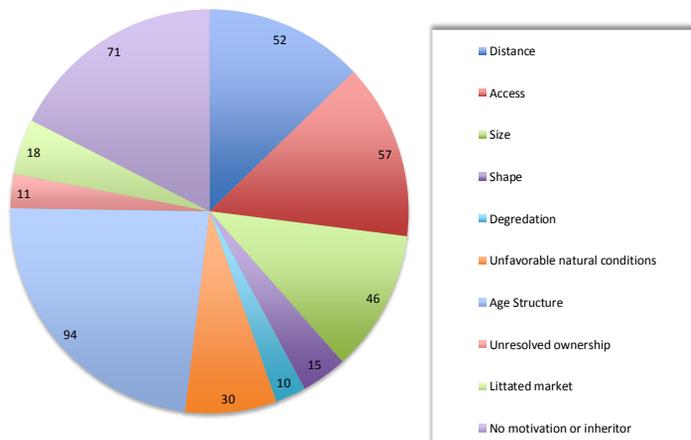


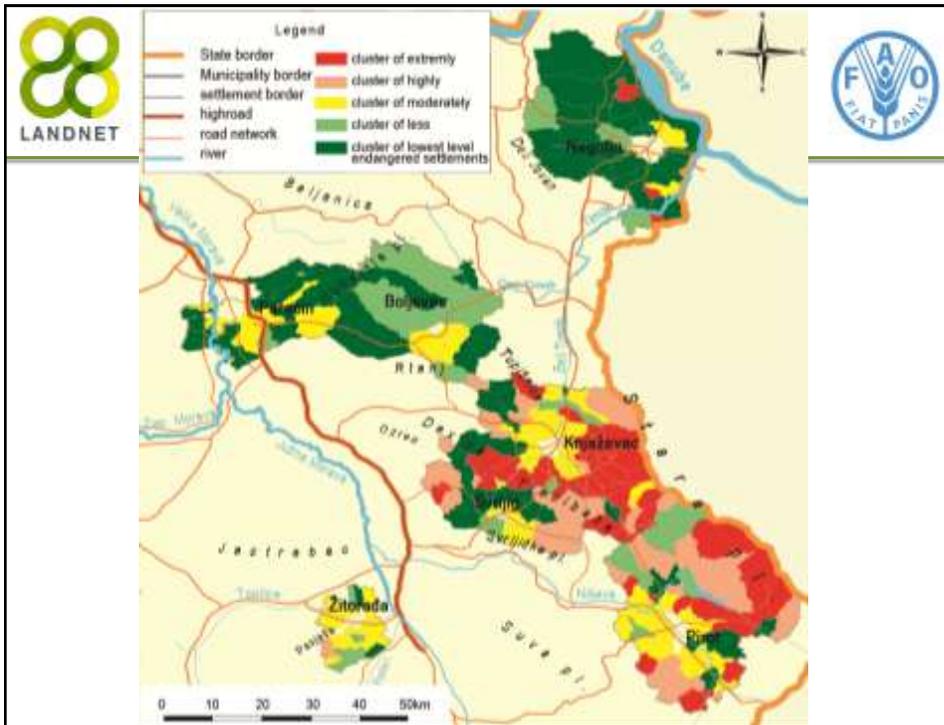
Information that might explain rates of abandoned land

- **Demographic:** How many people lived in places, how old they were, whether they were resident full time or part time? How the population had changed over the last fifty years and how many babies were born in the past ten.
- **Employment:** What kinds of jobs they had, whether they commuted to work, whether they had finished school at 14, 16, 18 or more.
- **Settlement:** Local amenities, schools, clinics, pharmacies, shops, and garages, and just how far and how much it would cost to get a taxi into town.
- **Farms:** The size of farms, the numbers of people who worked on them, the number of separate plots and whether or not they leased any land. We asked if they employed seasonal labour, if they did anything else on their land that earned them income and whether or not they had taken out a mortgage on their property.



Most Important Factors Related to Land Abandonment (according to the heads of the Mesna Zajednica)





	Labour Force Potential	Socio-agrarian potential	Diverse rural economy	Unfavourable land structure	Uncultivated agrarian land (%)
Most	-0.908	-0.503	-0.155	1.263	48.35
Highly	-0.760	-0.597	-0.191	-0.887	24.60
Moderately	0.035	0.056	2.084	-0.385	20.24
Less	0.935	-0.368	-0.271	-0.003	19.22
Least	-0.120	1.277	-0.220	-0.109	19.05

	Extremely endangered	Highly endangered	Moderately endangered	Less endangered	Lowest endangered
Direct payments to agricultural producers	*	**	**	**	**
Young farmers		*	**	***	***
Modernization of farms		**	***	**	***
Processing and marketing		*	**	**	***
Diversification of rural economy	***	***		*	
Strengthening producer groups		**	**	*	**
Support for small farms	*	**	**	**	
Support for farming in areas with natural constraints	**	***	**	*	
Agri-environment measures	**	**	*	*	
Leader-type measures					

	Extremely endangered	Highly endangered	Moderately endangered	Less endangered	Lowest endangered
Land consolidation	***	***	*	**	***
Resolving ownership disputes	***	*	*	*	
Activating lease market	*	**	**	**	***
Reducing cadastral costs	***	**	*	*	*
Creating restoration funds	**	**	*	*	**
Land for pensions	***	***	*	**	*
Promote consolidation through subsidies	*	***	**	**	*



Conclusions

Farm land abandonment is complex process with many different causes and consequences.

Information gaps means that accurate and comprehensive pictures are often missing, but spatial analysis can support effective intervention by identifying different causal combinations and therefore suggest different combination of policy measures.

Abandoned land tends to be higher the smaller the farm and the smaller the settlement, but where populations are mobile, then size matters less even in the context of shrinking populations.

Higher birth rates and better public services means less abandoned land.

A diverse rural economy is the most effective counter to land abandonment, but in places that are most hit by abandoned land, the unfavorable land structure is the biggest obstacle.

It is the subsistence, unsubsidized farmers who are abandoning their land.

The question of inter generational transfer is critical to success in countering land abandonment



Thanks for your attention

References

- J.M. Terres, L. Nisini and E. Anguiano, *Assessing the risk of farmland abandonment in the EU*, Joint Research Centre, Report EUR 25783 EN, 2013
- *Act 7/2007, of 21 May on administrative and tax measures for the conservation of utilised agricultural areas and on the Land Bank of Galicia.*
- P. Pointereau, F. Coulon, P.Girard, M.Lambotte, T. Stuczynski, V.Sánchez Ortega, A. Del Rio, *Analysis of Farmland Abandonment and the Extent and Location of Agricultural Areas that are Actually Abandoned or are in Risk to be Abandoned*, Joint Research Center, European Commission and Institute for Environment and Sustainability, 2008