

# UNDERDEVELOPMENT IN RURAL ROMANIA: LAND OWNERSHIP AND AGRICULTURE FROM 1918 TO 2018

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*L*and ownership has been one of the most important elements of wealth in the entire evolution of humankind. In Romania, during the last one and a half century, land ownership has had an important evolution, given at least four major agricultural laws, each of them attempting to solve for good what has come to be known as “the agrarian issue”. The article is a comparative analysis of the main provisions thereof, and of their impact on Romanian society. The reached conclusion is that agricultural holdings in Romania used to, and continue to, be fragmented, mostly dwarf in size, economically inefficient, lacking a modern set of agricultural tools and machinery put in place, with low quantitative and qualitative productions as a result. The causes of these state of facts are most diverse and differ in time: the overpopulation of the rural area, the absence of an industrial and tertiary sector developed enough to absorb the population excess in agriculture, the low level of education of the rural population, economic inefficiency, the lack of a coherent political vision, etc. All this has caused the Romanian rural population to live on the brink of poverty and the agricultural sector to continue to be underdeveloped.

**Keywords:** economic inefficiency; land fragmentation; land reforms; poverty; underdevelopment.

## INTRODUCTION

The social reality of 2018, including the current social structure, is obviously influenced by what happened after 1990 (politically, and, in particular, economically and socially), and by some of the legacies of previous historical periods. In what concerns the Romanian rural areas and the agricultural field in its integrity, we can identify a perpetuation of much older state of fact, rooted in Romanian history (going back to when the modern state was formed), leading to rural population undergoing radical transformations in the past century, including fractures and continuity alike.

One of the stratification principles in all societies is wealth, which, historically speaking, has been closely related to ownership of the land, the main resource in agriculture, which is also valid nowadays. The situation is not different in Romania. Successive reforms for the redistribution of agricultural land to the peasants have

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been the priority of political elite in the last 150 years. Throughout this time, land ownership has been a decisive factor influencing employment and income levels, education and health of the rural population, their lifestyle, etc.

The article makes a comparative analysis of the main provisions thereof, and of their impact on Romanian society, using statistical data available on different, and very dispersed sources (statistical yearbooks, fiscal census, general and agricultural census, various social-economic surveys and analyses, etc.). The data presented in the article is based on the information available following the agricultural censuses of 1930, 1948, 2002, 2010 and the agriculture structural survey of 2016. Although insufficient, the existing data are indicative of the evolutions which took place in the surveyed period, particularly since they illustrate the situation following the big agrarian reforms or structural changes (1921, 1945, 1949–1962, 1991, and 2000), and we can thus draw conclusions albeit partial concerning the consequences of such reforms.

For an accurate analysis of the current situation, an overview of the Romanian rural environment is required, starting with the first agrarian reform (1864) until present, with particular emphasis on what happened during the one hundred years since the birth of the Greater Romania. Going back in time allows us to identify those causes which led to the current state of affairs, as it is the analysis of the past that can provide us with the key to solving our current problems.

#### **AGRARIAN REFORMS: FROM LEGAL INTENTIONS TO PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES**

Rural reforms tried to solve what has come to be known as the “agrarian issue” (Dobrogeanu-Gherea, 1910; Ionescu-Șișești, 1920; Zeletin, 1925; Madgearu, 1936, etc.), i.e. the assignment of land ownership to the peasants so as to mitigate the wealth gaps between them and an extremely small number of great *boyars*.

The assignment of land ownership to peasants, seen as the silver bullet at the beginning of the process of creation of the Romanian State, did not always have the outcomes envisaged by reformers, as negative consequences also arose<sup>1</sup>, impacting both new land owners, and the agricultural sector in its integrity.

#### **The beginnings: social versus economic**

The first agrarian law (1864) is the result of the compromise between the social classes of the time (the *boyars* and the peasants), which, however, had unequal persuasive strength in the political world. The launch of the debate regarding the future of agriculture in the Principalities was made due to the

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<sup>1</sup> Some negative consequences that can be mentioned refer to excessive fragmentation of agricultural lands, low crop outputs, at least in some products, the accentuated extensive characteristic, the acute underutilisation of the rural labour force, perpetuation of extreme poverty, the almost exclusive reliance on the growing of grains, etc.

external pressure exercised by the big European powers<sup>2</sup> (England, France and Russia, each of them having competing political and economic interest in this part of Europe), but changes in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were not consistent. As shown by historians (Murgescu, 2010: 115–117), the beginnings of the grain trade on the European market was timid, and its boom took place as late as 1860 and continued throughout the entire second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The 1864 reform divided the set of landlord property into two categories (Axenciuc, 1996: 77–78): on the one hand, the land was owned by landlords and peasants; on the other hand, the working means and the labour stock and force were exclusively held by the peasants. Landlords procured the required labour force for their land by taking advantage of the peasants' need for grass lands and pastures for the cattle, their need to rent additional pieces of land or need of money.

Although different historians operate with slightly different numbers, given that the data at the time were not quite accurate (Dobrogeanu-Gherea, 1910/1977: 49; Bărbulescu and others, 1998: 381, 528; Axenciuc, 1996: 88), after the reform, the almost two million hectares, representing one quarter of Romania's farming land at the time, was distributed to the following categories of peasants<sup>3</sup>: 413,202 hectares were given in the ownership of 71,912 head peasants (20% of the surface area under the scope of the assignment of land ownership); 882,737 hectares were distributed to 202,075 middle peasants (44.3%), and 381,708 hectares were allocated to 134,132 poor peasants (19.2%); almost 60,000 families who owned no traction animals were only allocated the piece of land afferent to the house and garden. In a subsequent stage, 48,342 newlyweds were allocated an additional piece of land – 228,329 hectares (11.5%) The distribution was unequal, as the head peasants were allocated an average of 5,7 hectares, the middle peasants 4,4 hectares, and the poor peasants only 2,8 hectares, with a general average of 3,9 hectares per family.

At the time of the agrarian reform, besides the former corvée labourers, there were an additional 240,000 families of free peasants (freeholders and yeomen), owners of 1,5 million hectares, which means that of the whole rural population, emancipation and the assignment of land ownership only aimed at 63% (Axenciuc, 1996: 85).

The actual application of the law triggered a series of negative aspects impacting the viability of peasants' agricultural holdings (Pătrășcanu, 1925/1978: 27–28): land distributed to peasants was insufficient and, in very many cases, low quality, as they were very far from the places where they lived<sup>4</sup>; the agrarian

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<sup>2</sup> A special annex of the Adrianopol Treaty (1829), *The Additional Act for the Moldavian and Wallachian Principalities (Actul osăbit pentru prințipurile Moldova și Țara Românească)*, included provisions establishing the freedom of trade of the two Principalities, as well as decreased economic and political influence of Ottoman Empire in favour of Russia.

<sup>3</sup> Based on the number of traction animals, they were divided into three categories: with 4 oxen, with 2 oxen, and poor peasants.

<sup>4</sup> Many peasants were allocated several pieces of land which were disparate, which made travelling from one piece of land to another time-consuming, thus causing the inefficient operation.

reform did not lead to the creation of communal grazing grounds, and the grass lands and pastures were still owned by the big landlords, which allowed the latter to use them as leverage against peasants owning the big majority of livestock in the rural area; forests became the private property of big landlords, which made it impossible for peasants to procure firewood free of charge, as their right to collect such wood from the forests was suspended.

Moreover, the law provided that some compensation was to be paid in exchange for statute labour and other feudal tasks, payable for 15 years, based on which category they were included in, and on the region. To these, reparations to the owners were added which were paid through a compensation unit, plus an annual 10% interest (Axenciuc, 1996: 95). The huge duty to pay was depleting the peasants' family budgets, as their tax duties increased several times compared to what they had been in the past. The provisions of the law were approaching the two social classes envisaged by the reform unevenly, by providing former owners big sums of money, whose payment was the exclusive task of new owners, which, in the long-term, led to the indebtedting of a big number of the new owners and the loss of their land.

Economically and socially speaking, the role of the reform was to revolutionise the property relations and the social relations in the rural area: feudal duties were entirely dissolved, and peasants were, for the first time, appointed owners of the pieces of land. According to Zeletin (1927/1992: 31–33), the law of 1864 allowed for the establishment of a capitalistic ownership regime, which turned peasants into owners and lands into merchandise. This forced the Romanian peasants to change their attitude to work given that the capitalistic private estate implies ongoing, efficient work allowing for the accumulation of surplus for the market, generating profit, i.e. additional income sources for the peasants' families. The reform aimed at the assignment of more land to the peasant families who also had the possibility to cultivate it (depending on the number of traction animals each family had), thus ensuring the economic viability of peasants' holdings.

The greatest advantage of the agricultural law of 1864 (Zeletin, 1925/2006: 60–61) was that it allowed a capitalistic class to be formed in Romanian agriculture. This class was composed of land owners having the so-called trade spirit, the "trade-oriented boyars" or the "small boyars" who were interested in increasing the efficiency of their own agricultural activities and in the production for the market and for profit.

Other researchers (Garoflid, 1926: 38–47) believed there was no difference between the big and small Romanian boyars, both having the same economic interests; they both understood their potential of gaining from agriculture, they both wanted to operate agricultural lands and trade agricultural products. According to the mentioned author, the differences between the two categories were political, not economic, because the small boyars had no access to political power, despite their wish to. This struggle inside the boyars' class was not new and had nothing to

do with capitalism: Garoflid resumes Filitti's theme (Filitti, 1924a; Filitti, 1924b), according to which the Romanian Principalities were run by an elite consisting of approximately 20–30 big boyar families who had taken control of political power in the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The small boyars were fighting against the former in an attempt to gain access to political power, to secure themselves a seat in the group of privileged boyars, rather than make a difference for them economically.

To all this, we add the fiscal policy of the Romanian State, which procured the money necessary to build the capitalistic infrastructure (roads, railways, industrial investments, etc.) from the duties charged to the peasants. From this standpoint, data prove the low level of taxation of owned estate of big land owners compared to the small ones: for instance, in the year 1905, for estates exceeding 500 ha, the income tax was lei 26.16 /ha, large estates (100–500 ha) lei 30.41, and small estates (under 10 ha) lei 37.35 (Pătrășcanu, 1925/1978: 28–30). According to the calculations of G.D. Creangă (Popescu, 1998), drawn up based on the Ministry of Finance lists of property tax (1905), the annual income of small owners of land estates below 10 ha (98% of all country estate owners at the time) was lei 120 per family, whereas the annual income of big owners – with over 100 ha, was lei 24,700 per. Even so, the difference between the annual incomes of the two categories meant that the rich had over 200 times higher incomes, while property duties paid were much smaller than in the case of owners of small estates, who were much poorer.

The perpetuation of poverty in the rural areas determined desperate peasants to revolt several times (best known upheaval being that of 1907). For these reasons the “agrarian issue” was ranked again first in the list of issues required tackling at the end of World War I.

### **The big agrarian reform of 1921: the victory of the social factor over the economic one**

Despite some positive results of the reform of 1864, in the eve of World War I a big part of the rural population continued to live in poverty or on the brink of it, having precarious living standards. Also, a process of differentiation in the rural areas appeared. For instance (Axenciuc, 1999: 119–121), a peasant house had 1.4 rooms in 1860 and 2.2 rooms in 1912; the quality of materials used for buildings increased (almost all houses started to have glass at the windows, 28% of the roofs were covered with steel sheets, etc.), but there were still 42.000 huts, and the number that lived in a house was around 8 persons. One of the biggest social problems was represented by child mortality, the highest in Europe: in 1914, one of three children under 1 year died in rural areas and one of four in the urban.

The announcement of the future changes in the situation of land property in Romania was made by King Ferdinand in 1917, in order to motivate the peasant-soldiers that fought against German and Austrian-Hungarian armies in Moldavia. First legislative step was made by Brătianu government, in the same year, by changing

the article 19 of the Romanian Constitution and allowing future expropriations with financial compensations.

The law of 1921 opted for solving the social issue, given the fact that 78% of the Romanian population lived in the rural area and relied exclusively on agriculture (Axenciuc, 1996: 21). It implied the diminishing of big land estates exceeding 100 hectares, which led to an interwar agriculture in which peasant property prevailed. This strategic decision, however, had numerous consequences on the agricultural system in its entirety, with a negative impact on the economic viability of agricultural holdings in Romania during the interwar period.

The debates of specialists involved in the agricultural reform of 1921 were particularly consistent in both the theoretical and the legal aspects of the reform, but particularly in the practical aspects thereof, pertaining to the reality of the interwar rural space.

Constantin Garoflid, “the most authorized spokesman of the large agricultural holdings interests” (Șandru, 2000: 17), one of the most appreciated specialists in the interwar period, who was Minister of Agriculture and was involved in the agrarian reform of 1921, deemed that a peasant and his family could cultivate 13 hectares, according to the conditions of extensive agriculture of the time. Therefore, the areas of land attributed to peasants’ families during the previous agrarian reforms had an anti-economic effect given that not enough land was offered to increase the rate of return of the labour of peasant families (Garoflid, 1926: 36–37).

Another agriculture specialist involved in the development of an agriculture reform law at the end of World War I (Ionescu-Șișești, 1920: 738), believed that the new agrarian reform was supposed to prevent the risk of making the mistake of assigning peasants with as much land as they wanted because their lack of agricultural stock which meant an inability to cultivate large surfaces of land. Second of all, large-scale agriculture had proven its return-yielding ability considering that some owners made significant investments to equip and modernize agricultural machinery on their agricultural holdings.

The final draft of the law envisaged the diminishing of big land estates (exceeding 100 hectares) and the distribution of pieces of land to peasants owning little or no land at all. Thus, according to the existing data (Romanian Encyclopaedia, 1943; Axenciuc, 1996: 99–100), 22,523 estates were expropriated, amounting to over 6,000,000 hectares (that represented almost one third of Romanian agricultural surface at that time). According to the mentioned data, on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1933, approximately 1,500,000 (64%) of the 2,300,000 registered peasants owning no land or insufficient land, were awarded over 3,400,000 hectares. On the other hand, a great number of families had still been left without land.

A positive aspect concerning the reform was the creation of communal grazing grounds amounting to a total of over 1,100,000 hectares, which were necessary for the peasants who had the animals required for agricultural labour. The absence of such communal grounds was the cause of the peasants’ dependency on big land owners or leaseholders and of the emergence of a new form of serfdom.

Data collected by the sociological researches made in 1938 proved that agricultural machinery held by the peasants covered the necessity for cultivating land; thus, the data we refer to (Golopenția and Georgescu, 1941/1999: 126–127) showed that, in the surveyed villages, the average was 1 plough per 2.1 households (which meant a surface area of approximately 7.2 ha each, therefore, an underutilisation of their labour capacity); 2.7 households had one harrow (one harrow corresponded to 8.9 ha); one seeder corresponded to 75.2 households, with an afferent surface area of 252.1 ha (an all to small number given the actual needs, according to the authors); one reaping machine corresponded to 48.4 households for an afferent surface area of 136.2 ha, and one thresher was allocated to 117.2 households with a surface area of 329.9 ha. Ploughs were one per household only in the case of agricultural activities with a surface area of land between 10 and 25 ha, which, redundantly enough, proves the profitability of middle rural households.

Besides the theoretical debates around the size of lands required for the benefit of rural households, the agrarian reforms meant radical transformations in what concerns the distribution of land by size. Comparing data with those of other countries provides the possibility to understand these transformations in terms of agricultural holdings in interwar Romania, as well as the negative aspects which persisted, beyond the social characteristic of assigning larger land ownership to peasants:

Table no. 1

Agricultural holdings by size, percentage of total number and of surface area, in Romania and other countries, between the years 1929–1935

Size group	Romania (1930)		Bulgaria (1934)		France (1929)		Germany (1932)		Hungary (1935)	
	% of holdings	% of total surface	% of holdings	% of total surface	% of holdings	% of total surface	% of holdings	% of total surface	% of holdings	% of total surface
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Up to 1 ha	18.6	1.6	13.52	1.34	25.58	1.58	68.00	1.96	40.56	1.81
Between 1 and 2 ha	56.5	26.4	13.54	4.00	28.90	8.18	5.70	1.62	33.49	9.36
2–5 ha			35.35	24.69			9.43	6.20	11.37	9.30
5–10 ha	16.9	20.0	26.44	36.76	18.09	12.47	7.36	10.39	8.46	13.53
10–20 ha	5.5	12.0	9.18	24.35	14.96	20.48	5.33	14.92	4.48	14.99
20–50 ha	1.7	7.8	1.37	7.20	9.59	28.10	3.16	18.88	0.86	6.65
50–100 ha	0.4	4.5	0.6	1.66	2.06	13.26	0.64	8.61	0.34	5.36
100–500 ha	0.3	10.6			0.78	12.70	0.31	13.25	0.35	17.06
Over 500 ha	0.1	17.1			0.04	3.23	0.07	24.17	0.09	21.94

Source: Axenciuc, 1996: 242–243.

Analysing the data in the table, we note that the situation of property in our country differs from that in the developed states of Europe (such as France and Germany), as well as that of Bulgaria; for instance, in Romania, the surface area of estates between 10 and 100 hectares signified approximately 25% of the total surface area of land, whereas in Bulgaria, this was 32% of the total surface area, in Germany over 40%, in France over 60%, whereas in Hungary's case, they were similar to that in our country. The analysis of the category of middle estates in Czechoslovakia by Ionescu-Șișești (Ionescu-Șișești, 1921: 26) indicates that estates between 10 and 100 hectares in this country represented about 40% of the total surface area, with slight differences between the different regions of the Czechoslovakia.

The above data also show that, in our country's case, estates under 10 hectares were prevailing, despite having been strengthened during the almost one hundred years from the first agrarian reform of 1864. While high in the beginning, during the referred time, the number of big estates was permanently reduced, both in terms of average surface area of operated land, and in terms of the average of such land in the total surface area, leading to their disappearance at the end of the 40s'.

The table data also indicate that almost 90% of agricultural holdings in Romania were below 10 hectares, 70% of which were below 5 hectares in size, i.e. half the agricultural land, which none of the states included in the comparison encountered. This structure of the estate with a high rate of dwarf agricultural holdings caused the peasantry to be unable to overcome the state of poverty, even after the reform of 1921.

Thus, a new debate regarding small versus big agricultural holdings was raised during the late thirties (Șandru, 2000: 15–19), especially after the publication of the data of Agricultural Census of 1930. This debate involved a wide range of theorists, specialists or politicians, like Mihalache, Garoflid, Ionescu-Șișești and others. Arguments like the economic and social consequences of a new agrarian law, or what kind of and what size is suitable for an agricultural holding in order to generate property or profit for the owners, were brought forth and debated, but the Second World War postponed a decision at that time.

One of the explanations for this particular situation is related to the excess population in the rural areas, that caused the households to be overpopulated, which, in the case of small estates, translated into their poverty. Excess population in the rural area generated most of the problems occurring in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: like the low labour productivity (economic inefficiency), the low quality of grains and of other agricultural products as well, and the extremely enhanced fragmentation of peasants' estates (Madgearu, 1940).

Madgearu, (1940: 32) pointed out that approximately 14 million out of a total of 18 million inhabitants (79%) lived in villages; therefore, 17.5 million hectares of cultivated land was allocated to 13.5 million inhabitants, with an average of 1.34 hectares of cultivated land per capita. The number of peasant estates under 1 ha



(i.e. 18.6% of the total of rural holdings and 2.1% of the cultivated area) is due to a rural economy based on dwarf property, a much serious situation than that of other agrarian states such as Bulgaria or Hungary. According to the General Population Census of 1930, the average number of people in a household was 4.4 members per family. Therefore, a family included an average of 2.6 active people and 1.8 provided for, generating a social problem that continued to remain unsolved.

### **1945 agrarian reform: destruction of the large agricultural holdings**

The post-war period meant an unprecedented economic boom internationally, particularly in the case of developed states, which meant a deepening of the already existing economic and social gaps in the European continent (Murgescu, 2010: 315–319): between 1950 and 1998, the gross world product was multiplied six times, with an annual growth rate of 3.9% compared to the only 0.3% annual growth during 1500–1820, and the annual 1.6% between 1820 and 1950, respectively. Such an important growth was triggered by most economic sectors, as well as by the new industrial and service sectors (such as tourism, for instance). According to the mentioned author, agriculture also experienced a significant growth, with production reaching record levels, and the labour force employed in agriculture dropping significantly, whose excess migrated towards the industrial and service sectors. The population employed in agriculture dropped significantly, in the case of Greece and Portugal, from almost 50% in the '50s to about 30% of the active population in 1980.

Coming back to the evolution of rural property in the 20th century, we can see that, at the end of World War II, a series of new agrarian reforms took place. They were strongly influenced by political evolutions in the region, particularly by the active presence of the Soviet Union, who had a strong influence on the political decisions of the Central and Eastern European states.

The first amendment took place in 1945, with the explicit purpose of supporting the establishment of “solid, healthy and productive households” (article 1 of the Law 187/1945). Moreover, as shown in the provisions of article 2, the purpose of the agrarian reform was: to increase the arable areas of rural households including less than 5 ha of land; to create new individual rural households for the agricultural labourers who had no land; to create herb gardens in the vicinity of towns and cities in order to supply the workers, clerks and manual workers; and to reserve some pieces of land for the benefit of experimental farms and agricultural schools.

The agrarian reform of 1945 represented the lowest level of assignment of land ownership. Over 143 thousand people were dispossessed – i.e. a surface area of 1,444,000 hectares (approximately 10% of the agricultural surface of Romania at that time), and almost 800,000 peasants were assigned with land ownership, i.e. a total surface area of 1,058 thousand hectares (Axenciuc, 1996: 102). According

to data, another 940 thousand ha were added that were seized by the state in 1949, which leads to a surface area of 2,360,00 ha which was dispossessed from the middle landowners.

The destructive characteristic of the law for the middle landowners who had just started to grow during the interwar period is illustrated by the provisions of article 3, which sets out the expropriation of German and Romanian German-origin citizens who collaborated with Hitler's Germany, without any compensation paid to the owners, as well as of lands and other estates of war criminal and other culprits for the disaster of the country, the agricultural estates of the volunteers who fought against the United Nations, people who had not cultivated their lands for the past seven consecutive years, except for parcels up to 10 ha.

In addition to lands, the state also immediately and without any compensation, seized all machinery found on the agricultural estates, as shown in article 3 provisions, in order to be included in the county centres for the rental of agricultural machinery available to agriculture labourers, as well as the tools and traction animals. Basically, the law signified the seizure of privately-owned agricultural estates, which resulted in the de-structuring of modern agricultural holdings with high mechanisation level which had achieved economic efficiency.

The distribution of land to rural households with less than 5 ha (meaning most of peasant households in Romania at that time) was determined by Groza government's decision to win a strong political support.

The agricultural assets and the people who were going to be assigned land ownership were drawn up by a local commission convened by the mayor, consisting of 7 to 15 members, ploughmen of the respective commune, without land, or who had up to 5 ha, i.e. the beneficiaries of the law, without any involvement on the part of the people who were going to be expropriated.

According to article 15 of the law, the price of land for the assignment of land ownership was set against an average annual crop of 1,000 kg of wheat and 1,200 kg of maize, respectively, with 10% of the price to be paid in advance and the rest of the amount in instalments for 10 years in the case of land owners and in 20 years, in the case of people without any pieces of land, considering that expropriation had been made without any compensation.

### **Collectivisation: destruction of private property**

After the full takeover of power by the communists in 1947, the new political leaders developed a coherent project for the amendment of the ownership structure and, obviously, of the social structure of Romanian society which, in the rural area, meant the bridging of inequalities in terms of the distribution of land, by dissolving middle property (over 50 hectares, representing a surface area of 1.4 million hectares). Machines and Tractors Station Units were established in 1948 by seizure of the agricultural stock by the Romanian State; subsequently, it was decided to

start the collectivisation process in agriculture, and the forming of so-called Collective Agricultural Holdings (GAC), which will later become Agricultural Production Cooperatives (CAP). Starting with the year 1945, these measures led to a change in the nature and structure of agricultural property, with the “cooperative” property now prevailing.

The forced collectivisation process aimed at the liquidation of the “kulaks”, i.e. the rural *bourgeoise* class which had started to form in the interwar period. One of the systems utilised to de-structure the affluent peasants was the mandatory quotas system, after the Soviet Union model, in place between 1948 and 1956, which regulated the obligation to supply agricultural products to the state, on the due dates and at the prices set by the latter. The system required disproportionately high quotas from the affluent peasant households, which resulted in their impoverishment (Larionescu and others, 2006: 97). All these were part of a strategy to dispossess prosperous peasants of their lands and for the Romanian State to seize such lands; the duties and obligations imposed to the middle peasants were so burdening that there were numerous cases where they gave up their lands to the state of their own volition (Şandru, 2000: 308).

Physical elimination, one of the most radical and longest campaigns of the Communist Bloc, was added to these economic measures: a first step was made by way of decree 83 of 2 March 1949 facilitating the expropriation of pieces of land over 50 ha, which had been under the scope of the agrarian law of 1945, which, however, did not actually become completely extinct.

Expropriation was now made overnight, and refusal to obey seizure or the non-disclosure of assets were punished by 5 to 15 years in prison. Furthermore, the law concerned the displacement of the landlord families and the indefinite forced domicile in various locations around the country.

Repression was strong, according to the data of the Presidential Commission report for the study of the communist dictatorship in Romania (CPADCR, 2006: 438): thousands of peasants were convicted or imprisoned; their assets were seized, including houses, the remaining family members were forced to pay rent, etc. Thousands of families were displaced (80,000 according to Şandru, 2000). Although de-structuring reached high quotas compared to other communist states, the fact is that, in 1984, the parcels used by the cooperative peasants and the non-cooperative lands represented only 15% of the agricultural area of the country, and they amounted to 49% of the cattle, 49% of the sheep stock and 57% of the egg-laying birds. (CPADCR, 2006: 440).

The agricultural system during the communist period consisted of the Collective Agricultural Holdings (GAC), which included the biggest aggregation of land, the State Agricultural Holdings (GAS), individual peasants, from mountain and hill areas where cooperatives were not established, and peasants with no or little estates who supplied the highest rate of labour force in agriculture.

Agricultural sector continued to meet two essential functions: on the one hand, it provided the product for the increasing population living in urban areas, as well as for export, and, on the other hand, supplied jobs for the rural population that continued to represent almost half of the country inhabitants.

The agricultural sector was economically efficient, but the rate of investments was kept low, in order to transfer money for industrialisation. All these determined that Romanian agricultural sector remained underdeveloped, with low profitability, partially modernized and still overpopulated.

### **Restitutio in integrum: the perpetuation of inefficiency**

From the onset, the decision-makers after 1989 were facing a dilemma: they did not know whether they should reform cooperatives, reorganise them based on the independent cooperation system, or dissolve them and return to individual private property. They chose the latter option, and the choice was not economic-based, but social, as a result of the pressures of the peasantry to regain possession of the land they were forced to give up.

The successive agrarian reforms after 1990<sup>5</sup> firstly reconstructed the rights of private ownership of estates, both to cooperative members and to their legitimate heirs, by using land from state or local authorities' property.

The reconstructed property rights within the limitation of 0.5 ha per entitled individual and no more than 10 ha per family, in equivalent arable land (a family means spouses and unmarried offspring). The entitled individuals could request the difference between this surface area and the one with which they contributed to the agricultural production cooperative, but no more than the level of surface areas set out in *Law no. 187/1945 for the performance of the agrarian reform*, i.e. no more than 50 ha.

Thus, the process for the reconstruction of private property of the peasantry was carried out after 1989, but this reconstruction was based on the agrarian law of 1945, which, as we have seen, envisaged the dissolution of middle-class property (the kulaks) and the distribution of land to small landowners and the people without land. Utilisation of such land as a benchmark signifies that such property reconstruction laws aimed at allowing small landowners to emerge, and in no way at establishing middle and big property with higher economic production and efficiency. Moreover, the law of 1991 confined the reclaimed land to 10 hectares per family, which was completely insufficient for the economic activity on such estates to be lucrative, as the surface area of such land was much lower than the ones laid down by the 1945 law.

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<sup>5</sup> Law no. 18/1991 on the Agricultural Real Estate, Law no. 1/200 on the reconstruction of property rights and issuance of property titles on agricultural land forestry land and Law no. 169/1997.

An important remark is now required in relation to the process of reconstruction of agricultural property in Romania: not all pieces of land became the property of the peasants; according to the traditional meaning of the word, peasants and the members of their families live in the rural area and are involved in agriculture exclusively. In the case of the agrarian reform after 1990, part of the pieces of land becomes the property of individuals residing in the urban area (heirs of their parents or grandparents who held land that they were obliged to enter communist GAC), where most of them were employed (as manual workers, clerks, intellectuals, pensioners, etc.), who only cultivated the land on an occasional basis or only for their personal benefit.

Reconstruction of property within the limitation of the aforementioned 10 ha did nothing but fragment Romania's agricultural areas, thus bringing forth all issues generated by small property, as seen already as part of the debate of specialists in the interwar period. Although the law of 1991 made it mandatory for the respective land to be cultivated, the breach of which could lead to the owners being fined with high amounts (between lei 50,000 and 100,000 per hectare), this was only valid on paper. The consequences were negative, as many owners were unable to cultivate the respective pieces of land for various reasons (the economic inefficiency of estates, their age, the lack of a coherent policy for takeover and storage of agricultural products, their quality, etc.), which impacted the agricultural field as a whole, as well as the income of the population in the rural area, who continued to be penniless.

The shortcomings of the 1991 agrarian reform became evident and caused the governments that followed the change of political power in 1996 to reconsider the surface areas which needed to be transferred to owners, with Law no. 1/2000 setting out the reconstruction of property rights within the limit of 100 ha per dispossessed owner, both in the case of agricultural and forestry lands. The law also laid down the possibility of land-consolidation arrangements, where possible, to cover the gap caused by the differences in the pieces of land between 50 and 100 ha. The new law thus allowed the concentration of pieces of land and the creation of middle-level holdings which should have been the engine of the development of Romanian agriculture.

The analysis of the effects of the land reform made after 1991, including the evolutions in the structure of the agricultural holdings will let us to draw some conclusions on the current situation, but also on the future developments of the agricultural sector.

### **100 YEARS OF AGRARIAN REFORM: FRAGMENTATION, ECONOMIC INEFFICIENCY AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT**

A review of the economic reality in the Romanian rural area must begin from the tracking of the evolution of the size of agricultural holdings, their distribution

by groups of sizes, since they represent an efficiency indicator of agricultural activities.

A first methodological distinction is the difference between agricultural property and agricultural holdings: economic and social researchers (Axenciuc, 1996: 107) showed that statistical data may be reconstructed by utilising the most diverse sources like fiscal census, agricultural census, various social-economic surveys, etc. Unfortunately, the existence of data concerning solely agricultural property or concerning agricultural holdings makes it impossible to compare the agricultural realities of various historical times. There is an essential difference between agricultural property and agricultural holdings, having major economic and social implications: agricultural holdings imply the monetised, market-oriented agricultural property.

The data included in the following tables use information available following the agricultural censuses of 1930, 1948, 2002, 2010 and the agriculture structural survey of 2016, and they illustrate the situation following the big agrarian reforms (of 1921, 1945, 1991, and 2000). Thus, we can draw some conclusions concerning the consequences of such reforms:

Table no. 2

Agricultural holdings by classes of size (number of holdings)

Categories of holdings (ha)	1930 <sup>1</sup>		1948 <sup>2</sup>		2002 <sup>3</sup>		2010 <sup>4</sup>		2016 <sup>5</sup>	
	Number (thousands)	%	Number (thousands)	%	Number (thousands)	%	Number (thousands)	%	Number (thousands)	%
0–1	610	18.6	529	17.1	2,222	49.6	2,000	52	1,852	54.1
1–3 (1–2 in 2002)	1,100	33.5	1,107	35.7	898	20.0	726	18.9	630	18.4
3–5 (2–5 in 2002)	750	22.8	707	22.8	1,028	22.9	799	20.8	660	19.2
5–10	560	17.1	551	17.8	263	5.9	223	5.8	194	5.7
10–20	180	5.5	154	5.0	49	1.1	55	1.5	50	1.4
20–50	55	1.7	34	1.1	11	0.2	20	0.5	19	0.6
50–100	13	0.4	14	0.5	4	0.1	8	0.2	6	0.2
100+	12	0.4			10	0.2	14	0.3	12	0.4
TOTAL	3,280	100.0	3,096	100.0	4,485	100.0	3,845	100.0	3,423	100.0

Sources: <sup>1</sup> The 1930 Census, according to Madgearu, 1940: 30; <sup>2</sup> The Agricultural Census of 1948 according to Golopenția, Onică, 1948: 483–484; <sup>3</sup> The Agricultural Census of 2002 (<http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/GAC/index.htm>); <sup>4</sup> The Agricultural Census of 2010 (<http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/RGA2010/Rezultate%20definitive%20RGA%202010/Volumul%20I/Tab4-suprafete.pdf>); <sup>5</sup> The Structural Survey in Agriculture (SSA), 2016: 20–21.

One conclusion which is immediately obvious following the analysis of the *Table no. 2* data is related to the constant number of agricultural holdings in the last century, except for the period following 1990, which proves the negative effects of the agrarian reform – particularly in the category of owners of small pieces of land (in the category of up to 5 hectares, which should be providing for a 4-individual household). The boom in the category of the dwarf agricultural holdings, obviously economically non-viable, may be explained through the desire of the Romanian peasants who underwent collectivisation and forced dispossession of land during the communist time (many of them quite old in the '90s) to regain possession of the pieces of land they used to hold and to work them individually, completed by a rapid fragmentation process through inheritance.

However, on the other hand, this evolution entirely annuls the efforts made in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, through the consecutive agrarian reforms, to distribute as much land to peasants holding small pieces of lands as possible, for the purpose of ensuring sufficient income for such holdings. According to data, the holdings with surface areas below 10 hectares represented 92% of the total holdings in our country in 1930, 93.4% in 1948, 98.4% in 2002, 97.5% in 2010, and 97.4% in 2016, which means that almost all agricultural holdings are small-scale. Almost 92% of current ones, as shown by the 2016 data, are below 5 ha, compared to approximately 75% in the first half of last century.

Data also show that this phenomenon took place in parallel with that of diminishment of the holdings in the 10–100 hectares category, where such agricultural holdings should have been the core of economically viable agricultural ones. Unfortunately, in the nineties there was an instinctive reluctance toward any form of association for the purpose of forming agricultural holdings of big pieces of land, with the change of the mindset only taking place as late as after Romania's accession to the European Union.

One possible explanation of the sudden increase in number of agricultural holdings after 1990, apparent in the agricultural census of 2000, was related to the 1948 situation: the data of the census made that year show that over one third of a population of 15.872.624 inhabitants, i.e. 5.5 million people were land owners, with the numbers reaching 48.7% if we refer to the population over 14 years of age (Golopenția and Golopenția, 1999: 477), which means a significant overlapping of the number of agricultural holdings in 2002, compared to that of land owners in the '50s.

However, the number of holdings only provides a partial image, whereas a thorough analysis requires a follow-up on what happened to the pieces of land owned by the respective agricultural holdings; existing data are presented in the following table:

Table no. 3

**The structure of agricultural holdings by classes of size  
(total surface area of agricultural holdings)**

Categories of holdings (ha)	1930 <sup>1</sup>		1948 <sup>2</sup>		2002 <sup>3</sup>		2012 <sup>4</sup>		2016 <sup>5</sup>	
	Surface area (thousands ha)	%	Surface area (thousands ha)	%	Surface area (thousands ha)	%	Surface area (thousands ha)	%	Surface area (thousands ha)	%
0–1	320	1.6	305	2.1	771	4.9	734	4.7	801	5.8
1–3 (1–2 after 2002)	2,200	11.1	2,548	17.5	1,274	8.1	1,037	6.6	988	7.1
3–5 (2–5 after 2002)	3,015	15.3	3,170	21.7	3,168	20.2	2,474	15.8	2,188	15.8
5–10	3,955	20.0	4,324	29.7	1,740	11.1	1,487	9.5	1,376	9.9
10–20	2,360	12.0	2,230	15.3	616	3.9	727	4.6	709	5.1
20–50	1,535	7.8	1,060	7.3	315	2.0	612	3.9	613	4.4
50–100	895	4.5	940	6.4	264	1.7	541	3.4	602	4.3
100+	5,470	27.7			7,560	48.1	8,083	51.5	6,601	47.6
TOTAL:	19,750	100.0	14,577	100.0	15,708	100.0	15,695	100.0	13,878	100.0

Sources: <sup>1</sup> The census of 1930 according to Madgearu, 1940: 30; <sup>2</sup> Surface areas of individual agricultural households according to Axenciuc, 1996: 214 and the Agricultural Census of 1948 according to Golopenția, Onică, 1948: 483–484; <sup>3</sup> The Agricultural Census of 2002 (<http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/GAC/index.htm>); <sup>4</sup> The Agricultural Census of 2010 (<http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/RGA2010/Rezultate%20definitive%20RGA%202010/Volumul%20I/Tab4-suprafete.pdf>); <sup>5</sup> The Structural Survey in Agriculture (SSA), 2016: 20–21.

The surface areas of land of small-scale holdings (under 5 ha) were quite constant in the historic period reviewed: from 28% of the total lands in 1930 to 28.7%, which proves, once more, that the growth in the number of agricultural holdings may be explained by an increased number of people or inheritors who regained possession of former estates. Moreover, the use of less than one quarter of the total surface areas utilised in small agricultural holdings shows the negative social aspects of the Romanian rural area which persist even today: poverty, low health and education levels, inadequate housing, low living standards, etc. This also explains the domestic and abroad migration of the past 10 years, in particular of the young population from the rural area, and the negative aspects of depopulation, but also the ageing of the rural population, with long-term negative effects.

Again, the dramatic dropping of surface areas is taking place in the context of categories of holdings which should have been the most important categories of agricultural holdings, which could have provided more than the survival of the rural households: the pieces of land of those who used to own between 5–10 ha dropped from almost 30% in 1948 to 10% of the total surface area of land in 2016; the ones included in the 10–20 ha category dropped from 15% to 5% for the same years of reference; the ones between 20–50 ha were cut in half, from 7.3% to 4.4%. All this means that middle size agriculture holdings, the heart of modern exploitation,



dropped dramatically, despite of the continuous effort to develop them through several land reforms.

The data in the table indicate the same positive aspect concerning agricultural holdings in our country, i.e. the doubling of the surface area owned by big holdings (over 100 ha) compared to 1930 (agricultural holdings over 100 ha had disappeared entirely in 1948). This is positive given that big agricultural holdings allow mechanisation, fertilisation, etc., which leads to bigger crops and, therefore, to increased economic efficiency. The development of the large holdings proves that both Mihalache and Garoflid were right in their theoretical dispute carried out in the thirties: Mihalache was aware and concerned by the resilience of the large holdings and Garoflid considered that these are the only viable forms of economically viable agricultural activity.

A complete perspective on what happened with agricultural holdings is given by their average surface area, whose data are included in the table below.

Table no. 4

Average surface area of agricultural holdings, by classes of size

Categories of holdings (ha)	1930	1948	2002	2012	2016
0-1	0.5	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.4
1-3 (1-2 after 2002)	2	2.3	1.4	1.4	1.5
3-5 (2-5 after 2002)	4.0	4.4	3.0	3.0	3.3
5-10	7.0	7.8	6.6	6.6	7.0
10-20	13.1	14.4	12.5	13.2	14.1
20-50	27.9	31.1	28.6	30.6	32.2
50-100	68.8	67.1	66	67.6	100.3
100+	455.8		756	577.3	550
The average:	6	4.7	3.5	4	4

Source: Average surface areas are calculated by dividing the number of holdings to the surface area of land owned by the same, depending on the categories of holdings, by using the data in Tables no. 2 and no. 3.

The presented data unequivocally highlights the persisting issue of the fragmentation of land ownership, an issue which was not solved in the reviewed century, despite the four mentioned agrarian reforms, all of which attempted to identify a solution to this very issue. In present-day Romania there are 2.4 million dwarf agricultural holdings of below 2 ha (i.e. 72.5% of total number of holdings), i.e. approximately 13% of the total of the agricultural surface. What is worse, 54% of agricultural holdings mean less than 1 ha of land, with an average surface area of 0.4 ha, which means that it does not even provide for the minimum necessities of the family.

The biggest part of estates, i.e. over 3.3 million of them, are in the below 10 ha category, and are, therefore, incapable of becoming economically-viable systems (97.5% of the total of agricultural holdings, meaning 30% of the whole of surface areas of agricultural holdings). This structure triggers a whole series of negative phenomena (the fragmentation of property, high level of land subdivision, etc.).

However, ironically and unexpectedly, during the transition period, agriculture provided the survival resource to a large mass of peasants who could no longer find any paid jobs, which Vladimir Pasti (Pasti, 1997: 47–48) called the building of a "society of survival", the outcome of largely unintentional and unforeseen processes, consequences of transition measures and policies. One of these processes was represented by the privatisation of agriculture, particularly, the way in which this was done, which caused the reoccurrence of the survival rural households, which maintained, and, in some cases, even deepened the underdevelopment of the Romanian rural area. The Romanian rural area became a world in itself, surviving by way of development of its own social structures, values, behaviours, mechanisms, etc., all these having the characteristics of pre-industrial society.

Moreover, after 1990, the law on the reassignment of land property to peasants did nothing but reactivate the interwar-specific flaws of rural households: thus, the dissolution of agricultural production cooperatives meant the loss of access to their technology and infrastructure, the financing sources required for the agricultural activity, the agricultural product markets and, last but not least, the support of qualified specialists (Pasti, 1997: 50–58).

Table no. 5

**The rate of the population working in agriculture**

Years	Total population			
	Total (thousands)	Rural %	Urban %	Employed agriculture population (thousands)
1920	15,541	77.8	22.2	7,102
1938	19,750	81.7	18.3	9,026
1950	16,311	76.6	23.4	6,209
1989	23,159	46.8	53.2	3,012
2000	22,435	45.4	54.6	3,523
2015	19,819	46.2	53.8	2,184

Sources: Statistical Yearbook of Romania, 2016: 116; Axenciuc, 2012: 96.

The above data show that the rate of the rural population was very high throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as the rural population represented almost half of the population of the country, even in 2015. Moreover, although the population employed in agriculture dropped dramatically compared to the interwar period, its number is still disproportionately high. According to official data (Statistical Yearbook of Romania 2016: 116), the employed population in 2015 was distributed as follows: 46% were employed, 0.7% were employers, 33.4% were freelancers or members of an agricultural company or a cooperative dedicated solely to the rural population (18.3% nationally) and 19.9% were unpaid family workers (9.6% rurally and urbanely).

Taking into account the still very high number of "unpaid family workers", it is almost impossible for the rural household to have any profit, except in the case of villages located next to the cities, where the agricultural activity is combined with paid work in the neighbouring city. The phenomenon is a matter of permanence

in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with their number being much higher in the interwar period (Larionescu and others, 2006: 210).

The existence of an excess of the labour force in the rural area, including involved in agricultural activities, was the main cause of the lack of efficiency and of the large-scale utilisation of manual labour, highlighted by numerous studies from the very beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: upon considering the required work in the rural households in the respective period, study (Georgescu, 1938) indicates that only among the rural population who, in 1930 lived from the cultivation of land, were there any labour availabilities amounting to 750,000,000 working days, which means that the population employed in agricultural activities was only using 52% of their working capacity. The Structural Survey of Agriculture data of 2016 indicate that the number of worked days in agricultural holdings was approximately 335 million even in 2016, which proves the continued utilisation of physical work to the detriment of mechanisation.

This situation is illustrative of the inefficiency of the Romanian agricultural system: Vladimir Pasti (2006: 125–126) indicates that in 1930, 10.5 million peasants (more than half of them illiterate, lacking modern equipment, or an irrigation system or fertilisation), produced approximately 10.5 million tons of grains, which meant an average of 1,000 kg per peasant. In 1999, one peasant produced 4,300 kg, i.e. four times more, while a French farmer in France produced 53,000 kg (12 times more), and an American farmer produced 86,000 kg (meaning 20 times more).

Moreover, the author (Pasti, 2006: 433–434) believes that the current structure of agriculture tends to become polarized, which means the large-scale dispossession of small and medium holdings of agricultural areas, which will dismiss a large mass of the active population involved in agricultural work who will no longer be absorbed by the European Union developed states' labour market; modern agriculture would require half a million people, compared to the 2.1 involved currently.

## CONCLUSIONS

The excursion into one century of agrarian reforms and of modernisation of the Romanian rural area indicates that the passing from the traditional societies to modern ones is not a simple historical process. In the specific case of our country, we note an ongoing fluctuation between the modernisation attempts mimicking the West-European model and attempts at identifying a “Romanian” development pattern. Inequalities and poverty in the rural environment are consequences of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century events, i.e. the Phanariot period, the beginning of the severe exploitation of Romanian peasants to cover the ever-growing financial costs of the political leaders (including those related to the acquirement of the reign).

The consecutive agrarian reforms, attempts of repairing this state of facts, do nothing but consolidate small property. These reforms were supposed to ensure the survival of the rural families to the point of development of a strong national industry which might have taken over the excess population from the rural area. The outcome was, indeed, the survival of the rural population, however, on the

brink of poverty, even nowadays, when the urban environment and industry are, at least statistically, prevailing.

The decision to strengthen small agricultural holdings was mostly a political decision, even if debates involved very well prepared specialists in the agrarian field: political leaders of the last one hundred years have seen the distribution of land as a solution to the persisting social and economic problems of rural area (especially economic survival of a large percent of the population) till the economic development will be accomplished, but also a source for electoral support and gain of political power.

The rural area was the economic area which supported the economic development of the Romanian state, by two mechanisms depicted by Mihail Manoilescu: one was the “direct elevator” theory, according to which villages were forced to supply the food and agricultural products which the towns needed (at small prices). In addition to this mechanism, there was also the “indirect elevator” mechanism, by which agricultural products were exported by the Romanian state in order to cover the import of products needed almost exclusively by the towns, and for industrialization (Manoilescu, 2002: 100–102).

Currently, the agricultural holding sector is strongly polarized. On the one hand, we continue to have a high number of rural holdings, on the other hand, we identify the large holdings (trading companies, associations or individual holdings in excess of over 50 hectares) meaning almost half of the Romanian agricultural lands. Thus, the medium farm sector continues to be underdeveloped and lacks growth perspectives, at least for the near future. This takes in consideration the existence in the last years of a process of consolidation and development of big holdings (47% of the agricultural estate in the category of over 100 ha, in 2016).

The registration of property in Romania is deficient, particularly in the rural area: this was caused by the unequal application of the Agricultural Real Estate laws, the disagreement between the existing pieces of land and the ones assigned (such assignment was made based on the declarative records of agricultural registers), as well as the utilisation of outdated cadastre documents drawn up in the ‘70s and ‘80s. The absence of clear records and cadastre documents is an old issue; for instance, it was also invoked during the interwar period and in the agricultural census of 1948, when specialists which operated data collection complained that many managers of agricultural holdings estimated their size depending on the number of plough or reaper-use days (Golopenția and Golopenția, 1999: 474).

The issue with the lack of registration of property is that they cannot be subject to legal transactions, which is the modern equivalent of inalienability in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. All these represent an impediment to business opportunities, the taxation of the respective land, the development of sustainable development strategies or the possibility of attracting European funds. The lack of property titles and their actual overlapping created numerous legal problems, whose resolution will last many years to come.

The situation of property represents an alarm for the future developments of Romanian agriculture. Although we do not have solid data concerning the consolidation

of pieces of land and their purchase by people in European Union states, the press shows that such phenomena did take place after 2007. According to data from a European Parliament analysis (2015:19), up to 10% of agricultural land is now in the hands of investors from outside the EU, with a further 20–30% controlled by investors from the EU; for example, in the Western part of the country, in Timiș county, it is estimated that approximately 150,000 ha of agricultural land (almost a third of the agricultural area in the county) is cultivated by Italian-owned companies. The European Parliament analysis (2015: 19) also shows the number of land transactions, as well as the area sold has more than tripled in Romania between 2005 and 2009.

However, the consolidation and modernisation of Romanian agriculture, as well as the shift of production towards export for the European market will again generate problems concerning overpopulation and rise question about what will happen with the remaining population who, one way or another, is dependent on agriculture to survive.

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**P**roprietatea asupra terenurilor este una dintre componentele cele mai importante ale averii în întreaga evoluție istorică a omenirii. În România, în ultimul secol și jumătate, proprietatea asupra terenurilor a cunoscut o importantă evoluție, având cel puțin patru legi agrare importante pe parcursul acestei perioade, fiecare dintre ele încercând să rezolve definitiv ceea ce a ajuns cunoscut ca și „chesteiunea agrară”. Articolul analizează comparativ principalele prevederi ale acestora, precum și impactul lor la nivelul societății românești în ansamblu. Concluzia la care se ajunge este aceea că exploatațiile agricole din România au fost și continuă să fie fărâmițate, predominând proprietățile pitice, ineficiente economic, lipsite de inventar agricol modern, având ca rezultat producții cantitative și calitative reduse. Cauzele acestei stări de lucruri sunt dintre cele mai diverse și diferă în timp: suprapopulația din mediul rural, lipsa unui sector industrial și terțiar suficient de dezvoltat pentru a absorbi surplusul de populație din agricultură, nivelul scăzut de educație al populației, ineficiența economică, lipsa unei viziuni politice coerente, etc. Toate acestea au făcut ca populația rurală românească să trăiască la limita sărăciei, iar sectorul agricol să fie unul subdezvoltat.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** ineficiență economică; fragmentarea terenurilor; reforme agrare; sărăcie; subdezvoltare.

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