Common grasslands in Romania

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SEE Round Table: Best practices for sustainable use of common grasslands in the Western Balkans and Europe
15 April 2013, Sofia, Bulgaria
Importance of common grazing in Romanian agriculture - extent

- Common pasture (and forest) owned by the state or community organisations: many different models
- Differs across the country, and areas of different ethnic minorities
- 2 mi ha publicly owned common land, 3.4 mi ha perm. pasture (60%)
- The majority of villages have some common pasture: in TM almost all permanent pasture is common/communal
Importance of common grazing in Romanian agriculture - **users**

- The major user of **common** pasture is semi-subsistence farmer with 1-3 cows
- This may be around half of all cow owners (official statistics only give numbers for owners of 3+ cows)
- 90 % of holdings are <5 ha
- But this user type is declining
- The major user of **communal** pasture is those with the greatest power
Legal frameworks for common pastures in Romania

Neither sale nor change of land use is allowed for state owned common pasture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commons type</th>
<th>Property rights</th>
<th>Use rights</th>
<th>Administration</th>
<th>Main distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>composesorat</em></td>
<td>Private property of the local community</td>
<td>Can be restricted to members (not always); usually inherited</td>
<td>Elected members</td>
<td>(HU speaking) Transylvania and N. Romania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>obște</em></td>
<td>Private property of the local community</td>
<td>Restricted to members; membership inherited/ through residence</td>
<td>Elected members</td>
<td>Regions of Wallachia and Moldavia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>izlaz</em></td>
<td>Public property of the local community</td>
<td>Any inhabitant of the municipality</td>
<td>Elected pastoral committee</td>
<td>Throughout Romania</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table based on Mantescu 2009: When Globalization meets Postsocialism. Community-based institutions for managing forest commons and the internationalization of timber market in Romania  
(http://www.econ.unavarra.es/seminarios/Seminarios%20antiguo/Papers0809/Mantescu.pdf)
• If the pasture is owned by the state, local inhabitants have the right to apply for grazing
• Since 2007, they may rent parcels (5 year contracts) or pay a tax to graze their animals
• Allocation and price of communal pasture decided by the mayor/vice mayor + pastoral committee in an annual spring meeting
• Those with contracts may apply for EU subsidies: uptake of Pillar I and Pillar II payments is high
Positive outcomes of renting/subsidies

Less abandonment, better maintenance
(strict controls from the payments agency)
Negative outcomes of renting/subsidies

- Opportunity to make cash from common pastures -> corruption in the system
- Town Halls were banned from receiving subsidies for common pastures in 2009
- Smallest farmers have the least benefit
- Overgrazing?
Farmer associations were encouraged by the government to form to receive subsidies for the common pastures, and reinvest them in the pasture.

- Local grazing association: rents 250 ha, receives ~€60,000/yr -> cleared pasture, built milking parlour, remade track to pasture...
- But many, many failed associations
Future trends

• In the near future, Town Halls will be required to hold auctions, whereby the highest eligible bidder will receive the parcel for a minimum period of 10 years.

• Educational initiatives for farmer associations: training to make the most out of HNV farmland
Eligibility criteria

Limited area eligible for Agri-Environment Schemes
Eligibility criteria

• A particularly valuable form of commons is wood pastures
• Solitary trees are (officially) protected by GAEC, but not e.g. promoted by agri-environment schemes
• As a result, the trees are ‘tidied away‘ (burnt, cut down, vandalized)