Family farm inheritance in Slavonia region, Croatia

Dědění rodinných farem v oblasti Slavonie v Chorvatsku

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Abstract: The aim of the study was to determine the chances of the Slavonian family farms for social reproduction in the next generation and to determine attitudes of farmers towards some aspects of family farm inheritance and the possible ways of preventing the division of land. The research was carried out on a sample of 202 family farms. The analysis showed that the chances to remain as integral production units in the next generation are realistic for only 48% of family farms. The traditional pattern of behavior is obvious with regard to inheritance and to postponing the transfer of management and control of the farm resources. The majority of the Slavonian farmers find that it would be proper if the state were to introduce special measures to regulate the integrity of the land and to offer subsidies and easements for the "entry" of the young into the agriculture.

Key words: family farm, inheritance, successor, Slavonia, Croatia

Abstrakt: Cílem předkládané studie bylo vymezit možnosti rodinných farem ve Slavonii vzhledem k sociální reprodukci v dalších generacích a vymezit postoje farmářů ve vztahu k některým aspektům dědění rodinných farem a možných cest, jak přitom zabránit drobení půdy. Výzkum zahrnoval vzorek 202 rodinných farem. Analýza ukazuje, že pouze 48 % rodinných farem má reálnou šanci zůstat integrálními produkčními jednotkami v další generaci. Ve vztahu k dědění je zde zřejmé přetrvávání tradičního vzorce a odkládání převodu řízení a kontroly farmy a jejích zdrojů. Převážná část rodinných farmářů ve Slavonii by považovala za vhodné, aby stát zavedl zvláštní opatření k regulaci integrity půdy a nabízel dotace a další formy podpory usnadňující vstup mladé generace do zemědělství.

Klíčová slova: rodinná firma, dědický proces, dědictví, následník, Slavonie, Chorvatsko

In the mixed economic model of the rural Croatian regions development (dispersed concept of ruris), an important position belongs to the production potential of agricultural sector because of different climate conditions, relief and soil, which enable growing of numerous cultures[1]. The production structure of Croatian agriculture is dominated by family farms, highly heterogeneous regarding their size and production: from natural to mixed and highly specialized production. The Agriculture Act, Article 2 (Official Gazette 86/2002) defines the family farm as "an independent economic and social unit based on ownership and/or exploitation of production resources and family management in carrying out farming activities". Thus, a family farm (sometimes also referred to as peasant farm) differs from companies, trades and cooperatives registered for agricultural business.

In 2009, the Farm Register had 190 672 entries, of which 96% were family farms and 4% agricultural companies and cooperatives (Ministry of Agriculture,

[1]The Croatian territory is divided into three natural and geographical regions: Pannonian and Peripannonian region, mountainous region and Adriatic region.

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Fisheries and Rural Development, 2009)[2]. Of the total number, 63.1% farms have up to 3 hectares of land, one third (33.4%) from 3 to 20 hectares, and only 3.6% are farms with 20 hectares and more of land. According to the above data, a full-time farm has 5.3 ha of land in average. Half of all farms are commercial farms, while the other half are farmers with a considerably smaller production volume which produce to cover their needs and sell part of their production in the market. Although, compared to Europe, Croatia is rather rich in agricultural land per capita (0.6 hectare per capita) an average land area used per 1 farm is only 2.9 hectares[3]. The age structure of farmers is another disadvantage for the Croatian agriculture. Almost 35% of family farm owners are older than 60 years, and they cultivate 2.8 ha of land in average. A more vital part of family agriculture comprises only 13.4% of family farms owned by farmers younger than 40 years who cultivate less than one forth (21.5%) of the total agricultural land in use, which makes 7.4 ha per farm in average. Such unfavourable structure has a serious impact on the process of adjustment of the Croatian agriculture to the requirements of the European integration and enhancement of its competitive capacities on the national and international level (Radinović and Žutinić 2007).

Historically, three circumstances have caused the present agricultural structure in Croatia. The first were the political and economic barriers imposed on family farms in the former socialist system, such as the enforced collectivization, the limited private ownership, the maximum land holding 10 hectares introduced in 1953, insisting on the so-called "socially-owned" agricultural sector and, generally, the treatment of family farm as a historical remnant. This prevented family farms from adopting a business model based on the Western European tradition in management of family farms. Without an economic basis and political support, small fragmented farms could not offer an adequate social security to the farmers who were determined to educate their children for other professions. Such educated young persons were often leaving the farms and the villages (Žutinić 1999). This resulted in the revitalization of rural population, "shutting down" of a number of farms as production and economic units and the increase in farms with a negligible production volume. Thus, from 1969 to 1991, the number of family farms decreased from 615 (1969) to 534 thousand (1991). Additionally, the average size of farm decreased from 2.8 hectares to 2.7 hectares.

The second circumstance was socio-cultural in nature, related to the family farm inheritance. Before the World War II, a patrilineal system of inheritance or primogeniture, namely the custom that (most commonly) the oldest son takes over the estate was a deeply rooted tradition on the territory of the today Croatia. A family farm functioned on a traditional structure of family relations (paternalistic authority) as a comparatively self-sufficient and independent unit within a greater social community where the positions, functions and roles of the family members were strictly defined. The interwoven family and farm interests were the guarantee of the farm stability and continuity. This traditional pattern remained "a concept of life" of rural families and farms until the 1960s. Structural changes caused by the industrial development, improvement in communications, education, etc. that affected the Croatian rural areas disrupted the traditional structure and changed the rural model of social promotion, and consequently the attitude of the young towards agriculture as their profession (Dilić 1989: 13). Individualism in attitudes and behaviour of the descendants strengthens and they, having the status of the family "help", demand to be paid and to participate in the farm management, which resulted in inter-generational tensions (First 1981)[4]. Leaving the estate and village was one of the forms of resolving the inter-generational conflicts, so most farms remained without their young generations. Actually, it was not only the youngest, but the complete offspring was leaving. According to the than inheritance law, after the death of the parents, the estates were equally divided among the heirs (most of whom had already moved to the cities), which contributed to the systematic fragmentation of estates and land ownership absenteeism.

[2]According to the 2003 Agricultural Census, Croatia had 448 532 farm households with 1.9 hectares of agricultural land on average. Most of these households produce to cover their own demand, and they are not entered into the Farm Register. The Farm Register was generated in 2003, and registration is mandatory for all the farmers who sell their products it the market and apply for subsidies or other agricultural supports.

[3]Total surface area of agricultural land in Croatia is almost 2.7 million hectares, of which 67% (1.8 million hectares) is privately and 33% (about 890 000 hectares) state owned. The farms entered into the Directory use about 1.3 million hectares.

[4]In addition to maximum land holding introduced in the former state, high taxes were used to limit trade in private agricultural land. Further, farmers were given an opportunity to enter into the disabled and pension schemes only in 1980.

The third circumstance emerged at the beginning of the period of transition. Regardless of the fact that the Croatian independence gained in 1990 resulted in bringing down of the family farm development barriers, such as the maximum land holding, in the processes of transformation and privatization of the state-owned farms (former combines and co-operatives)[5], the farmers were deprived of the right to participate in the distribution and the privileged purchase of land or shares, although they contributed to their growth and development through the so- called socialist cooperation. Thus, a chance was lost for land consolidation and a faster development of a productive model of family farm[6].

Considering the Croatian agricultural structure of today, the agriculture is facing a new challenge – choosing a method of family agriculture restructuring, namely the increase of the number of farms with production sufficient to make them viable in the market and thus prevent a further fragmentation of estates. This revives an issue of the family farm inheritance and the legislation that would encourage the attempts to avoid the division of agricultural land owned by them.

Family farm inheritance has long been studied as a socio-economic phenomenon in numerous sociological, economic and related studies (Fennell 1981; Huston 1987; Symes 1990; Gasson and Errington 1993; Gamble et al. 1995; Potter and Lobley 1996; Kaine et al. 1997; Baker et al. 2001; Barclay et al. 2007; etc.). It is a very complex process affected by numerous factors differing considerably by their nature – from the objective socio-economic conditions in the society, the local community or farm to the socio-cultural and psychological characteristics of the family (Dunemann and Barrett 2004; Pardo-del-val 2009).

Survival of many family farms depends on the success of the inter-generational transfer (Weiss 1999; Mishra et al. 2004), and the entry of the 'next generation' into agriculture determines the structure of the country's economy and the total number of farmers and farm families (Gale 1994). Williams and Farrington underline that "the successional process has become increasingly complex as the patterns of succession and inheritance continue to adapt to the changing economic and social conditions" (Williams and Farrington 2006: 4).

The inter-generational transfer of family farm is a multilayered process that includes succession, inheritance, and retirement, the decisions relating to which are inseparable (Gasson and Errington 1993). Unlike an act of inheritance which follows after the retirement or death of the farm owner, the succession and namely the transfer of management functions and the control of the use of farm resources is a longer process carried out in several phases, which starts when the potential heirs are still rather young. The planned succession and presence of an heir at the farm effects the development curve or advancement of a family farm, which is not the case at the farms where it happens "spontaneously" or where it does not happen at all (Fenell 1981).

The study conducted by Kimhi and Lopez (1997) among Israeli farmers shows that the retirement plans are related with the demographic characteristics of the farmer and specific characteristics of the farm. Older, better educated and richer farmers plan to retire later. The study of the importance of the succession considerations for retirement plans of farmers leads the authors to the conclusion that that retirement and succession considerations in family farms are not separable (Kimhi and Lopez 1997). On the basis of a survey of 1650 Upper Austrian farm households, Glauben et al. (2004) analyzed three aspects of succession: (a) the probability of family succession; (b) the likelihood of having a successor designated; and (c) the timing of succession. They determined that the succession and having the successor designated is more probable in large and highly specialized farms, that the number of family members living in the farm has a considerable influence on the succession plans, and that the time of succession is postponed with an increase in farmer's age. There is a significant correlation between different aspects of succession, and the authors conclude that the decisions on family succession, the designation of a successor, as well as the timing of succession are not separable. According to Kaine et al. (1997), there are critical events in the life of a farm family that affect the succession plan or cause its change. Such critical events could be the birth of a child, the end of education of a child which starts working in agriculture, the assumption of a large debt, unfavourable conditions for agricultural production, the illness or death of a family member.

The process of planning succession and retirement of farmers often does not include the potential successors, although this matter affects their future. The

[5]Before privatization (until 1990), about 400 agricultural and industrial combinates had about 1.2 million hectares of cultivated land (Šundalić 2002: 211).

[6]It should be stressed that change in political and economic system happened under the war circumstances, which made the transition process considerably more difficult and slowed it down. It affected agricultural development and the consequences are still present – about 19 600 hectares of agricultural land is still contaminated with landmines.

study conducted among the Australian farmers in 2002 and 2003 shows that almost one third of older farmers had still not shared their plans with the successors, while almost all young persons expressed a desire to get involved into or at least informed about the succession decisions (Gamble and Blunden 2004).

The patterns of inheritance and succession determine whether a farm will be transferred to a single or shared among several successors. An equal treatment of all children could cause the division of a family farm. These, and the rights of the potential successors, are regulated differently by the law in different countries, in order to prevent the fragmentation of family farms in the future. Generally, European countries prefer three types of farm transfer. The first type, when the farm is transferred as a complete unit to a single successor who has to compensate other heirs (e.g. in France), or such compensation is given by the parents (e.g. in Denmark). The second type also prefers the transfer of the estate to a single successor, while others do not receive any or receive minimum compensation in money (e.g. The Netherlands, Germany, Great Britain). The third type is practiced in the countries of Southern Europe (e.g. in Spain) where the inheritance is divided into equal or almost equal shares, which results into the fragmentation of the estate (van der Veen et al. 2002).

Unlike the past, when the social reproduction of family farms in Croatia was a topic studied by numerous researchers (Puljiz 1980; Brkić et al. 1983; Brkić and Žutinić 1993), only one empirical study performed on a sample of 111 family farms in Istria region (Ilak Peršurić 2003) was published during the last fifteen years. The author determined in their study that over one forth of farms has no heir or the heir is a non-farmer who does not intend to get involved in agriculture, which could result in "shutting down" of such farms as production and economic units in the future.

The research the results of which are partly presented in this paper is an integral part of the scientific research project "Sociodemografska reprodukcija obiteljskih poljoprivrednih gospodarstva (Socio-demographic Reproduction of Family Farms, ID: 178-1782223-2360) funded by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia. Within the project, a field study was carried out of family farms in order to investigate into the forms and possibilities of their social reproduction in the next generation.

Our intention was to consider two issues: first, have the Croatian farmers maintained the traditional attitude towards inheritance of family farms (preference for one heir, a male offspring) and, second, what is their general standing with regard to the possible measures for the prevention of fragmentation of land owned by the family farms? The aim of the study was to determine the chances of family farms for social reproduction in the next generation, and to determine if there are any differences in the patterns of inheritance between the full-time and part-time farms.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out early in 2009, using the questionnaire on a sample of family farms from the Slavonia region which stretches over the central and Eastern part of Croatia. The Slavonia region is a typical agricultural region with dominant arable land and, considering the prevalent Croatian conditions, larger farms. The sample was not taken randomly, and the basic criteria for the selection of farms were: (a) farm owner aged 45 and over, and (b) agriculture as an important source of income and employment for the household members. The final sample encompassed 202 family farms, of which 128 or 63.4% were full-time and 74 or 36.6% part-time farms.

Socio-demographic data on household members and the main production characteristics of the farm were collected from the head of the farm. A separate part of the survey included questions on the plans regarding the transfer and inheritance of farms, and a set of questions consisting of 10 statements on the prospective of family farming in Croatia and the possible solutions regarding the methods of the division of land. The agreement of the respondents with these statements was measured using the Likert five-level scale (5 – strongly agree to 1 – strongly disagree).

The data were processed using the standard statistical techniques for the analysis of frequency distribution, percentages and means, and the significance of difference between the full-time and part-time farms was valuated using the χ^2 test and C coefficient at the level of significance $P < 0.05$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of the respondents, families and farms

Most respondents were male (90.6%), since in Croatia, they are traditionally farm operators and legal owners of the land and other physical resources at the farm. The women are farm operators in the households where the husbands have died (8 cases) or work off the farm (11 cases). A summary descrip-

Table 1. Basic family and farm characteristics

Characteristics	Full-time (n = 128)	Part-time (n = 74)	Total (n = 202)
Family characteristic			
Average age of farmer (respondent)	55.7	51.5	53.0
Education of farmer (respondent) (%)			
basic school	51.5	25.7	40.1
secondary school	45.4	62.2	53.5
high school or university	3.1	12.1	6.4
Farm owners:			
solo owner-man	62.5	54.1	59.4
solo owner-woman	6.2	–	4.0
owner in partnership with wife or husband	31.3	45.9	36.6
Average number of members per household	4.5	4.2	4.4
Average number of children per family	2.4	2.0	2.3
Number of sons per family	1.5	1.4	1.5
Number of daughters per family	1.6	1.4	1.5
Family type by child gender (%)			
only son/s	26.6	21.6	24.8
only daughter/s	14.8	24.3	18.3
son/s and daughter/s	50.0	51.3	50.5
without children	8.6	2.8	6.4
Farm characteristics			
Size of land owned by the family (%)			
up to 5 ha	27.3	56.8	38.1
5.1–10 ha	32.8	32.4	32.7
10.1–20 ha	22.7	6.8	16.8
20 ha and more	17.2	4.0	12.4
Average farm size* (ha)	44.9	13.6	33.4
Main activity on the farm (%)			
animal production	39.1	27.0	34.6
crop production	25.0	43.2	31.7
mixed crops and animal production	35.1	25.7	31.7
organic farming	0.8	4.1	2.0

*includes owned and leased agricultural land used

Source: Questionnaire Survey of Farm Inheritance – own research (2009)

tion of the basic socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, their families and farms is given in Table 1.

The surveyed farms have more members than an average Croatian rural household (3.3 members). This could be attributed to the fact that the farm families generally have more children and the descendants commonly live together with the parents (cohabitation), which is true even for the young married couples. Several generations quite often live together in the same household[7].

The surveyed farms use agricultural land areas which are in average larger than it is common in Croatia, so they are more relevant for the study. A large share of farms (74.8%) takes the land under lease, and uses more than 20 hectares of land (47.0%). The land area used by the farms ranges from 3 to 570 hectares.

The contingency analysis (χ^2 test) shows that most socio-economic characteristics indicate no significant differences between the full-time and part-time farms. Statistically significant differences were noticed in the level of education of the farm operators (χ^2 = 13.66, Cc = 0.26, P = 0.00), the size of agricultural land used (χ^2 = 48.31, Cc = 0.43, P = 0.00) and the prevalent agricultural production (χ^2 = 10.75, Cc = 0.32, P = 0.01). In other words, the part-time farm operators have a higher level of education than the full-time farm operators, the full-time farms cultivate, in average, considerably larger agricultural land areas, and they are more oriented towards animal production

[7]Due to the economic conditions, the young, even the young married couples in Croatia frequently live with their parents. A recent study on a representative sample of the young in Croatia shows that 76.6 % of the young aged 15–29 live with their parents (Ilišin and Radin 2002).

Table 2. Patterns of the family farm inheritance (%)

Basic inheritance types	Full-time (n = 128)	Part-time (n = 74)	Total (n = 202)
Type 1: Solo heir	49.2	44.6	47.5
Type 2: Several heirs	22.7	18.9	21.3
Type 3: No identified heir	28.1	36.5	31.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Questionnaire Survey of Farm Inheritance – own research (2009)

unlike the part-time farms, which are more focused on plant production.

Patterns of inheritance

Most respondents consider their involvement in farming to be a continuation of the family tradition, 63.4% took the farm over from their parents, 28.2% by marrying into a farm family, and 8.4% bought land and established their own farm.

A large majority of families surveyed has one or more children (93.6%), which might but need not be a guarantee that the farm will survive in the future. Earlier studies carried out in Croatia have shown that there is frequently a gap between the subjective desires and expectations of farmers and the motivation of their heirs to take over the farm and get involved in agriculture (Brkić and Žutinić 1993). Answers to two questions ("Which relative will inherit the farm?" and "Has a potential heir assumed an obligation to take over the farm?") enabled us to establish the forms/types of farm inheritance (Table 2). From these data, it is concluded that 50% of full-time farms and 45% of part-time farms will remain integral production units in the near future. In one fifth of the surveyed farms, the land and other property will be divided among several heirs, which might result in marginalization of a farm as the production unit. Almost one third of farms have an uncertain situation regarding the succession (at least for the time being), since the owners have not decided who will take over the estate or there is no successor. Considering the basic types of inheritance, it was determined that there are no statistically significant differences between the full-time and part-time farms ($P > 0.05$).

A more detailed description of the inheritance types and the identified heirs is given in Table 3. The table clearly shows that in the situation when only one heir is designated (Type 1); the heads of the farm prefer it to be a male heir. Traditionally, these are generally sons or, to a smaller degree, other male relatives in families without children or with female descendants only. Generally, farm inheritance by females is rare in Croatia, and in our case, a daughter or daughters as the only heirs were found only in households without a male descendant. We have even recorded the cases at the farms with children of different sex where the heads of the farms preferred the division of a farm among the sons only. This confirms that the traditional attitude towards inheritance has been maintained as a life philosophy of many farmers.

We have also determined that the preference of one heir is more frequent at the farms with larger land

Table 3. Family farm heirs (%)

Inheritance types	Identified heir(s)	Full-time (n = 128)	Part-time (n = 74)	Total (n = 202)
Type 1	son	41.4	33.8	38.6
	daughter	4.7	8.1	5.9
	another relative (nephew, son-in-law)	3.1	2.7	3.0
Type 2	sons in same shares	6.3	5.4	5.9
	daughters in same shares	1.6	1.4	1.5
	sons and daughters in same shares	14.8	12.1	13.9
Type 3	owner who has children but has not decided who will inherit the farm	21.1	35.1	26.2
	owner has no successor	7.0	1.4	5.0
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Questionnaire Survey of Farm Inheritance – own research (2009)

area, which complies with the findings of earlier studies. Equal distribution of estate among the children, regardless of their sex, is more frequent at the farms operated by younger heads of the farms (45–55 years of age). Also, most farmers that still have not chosen their successor although they have adult descendants belong to this age group.

Planning of retirement, and the division of responsibility (partnership) between the father (and farm owner) and his heir is very rare among the Croatian farmers as was also confirmed by some international studies (Baker et al. 2001; Mishra et. al. 2003; Gamble and Blunden 2004; Barclay et al. 2007). According to the responses, 87.1% of respondents (i.e. 88.2% of full-time and 85.1% of part-time farmers) have neither a retirement plan nor a plan to transfer the farm management function as long as they find themselves physically and psychically fit to carry on. This is also unfavourable for the selected heirs because they lack the independence in the farm management. Consequently, the "successor effect" would be missing which, if the succession is planned in advance, usually results in a new capital investment and development of the farm (Fenell 1981). In a group of farms from our study which identified a single successor (n = 96), all successors are of 18 years of age and more, even to 50 years of age, and only 11.3% participate in the decision-making process on the farm business and investment on an equal standing.

Attitudes towards inheritance and family farming prospective

On the level of macro analysis, the inheritance of farms is related to the global socio-economic situation, including the level of development of labour market, the capital, the tax policy, the land and agricultural policy, etc. Due to the prevailing circumstances, family farming in Croatia has long been pushed to the margins of the society, which caused structural disturbances in agriculture, abandoning of arable land, fragmentation of land, etc., which affected the development of the Croatian villages and agriculture in general. Agricultural economists consider small and fragmented family farm land to be one of the main reasons that the Croatian agriculture lacks competitive capacities.

We used the below set of questions/statements to determine the attitudes of the Slavonian farmers towards some aspects of the family farm inheritance and the possible ways of preventing the division of land, and their general standing on the prospective of family farming in Croatia. The level of agreement with a statement and the mean values by the observed groups of farms are given in Table 4.

The full-time and part-time farmers expressed the highest level of agreement with the statements v3. (*State should regulate the integrity of family farm land by special measures*) and v5. (*State should encourage the young to "enter" the agriculture by the allocation of state-owned land and favourable loans*). This is not strange since, at least for the time being, Croatia has a gap in legislation that would specifically regulate the integrity of agricultural land. Also, the measure referred to as the "support to entry of the young into the agriculture" has been declaratively determined by the Agriculture Act as an instrument for the development of family farming. Regretfully, there are no concrete activities and programs focusing on the young farmers and the young who want to work in agriculture in general, with rare exceptions.

A comparatively large share of the respondents (77.3% full-time and 81.1% part-time farmers) agrees or agrees in most part with the statement v1. (*Agricultural land belonging to a family farm should not be divided among the heirs, and the farm should be taken over by a single successor*), which somewhat disagrees with their expressed intention to keep the successor on the farm (see Table 2). The same was observed for the statement v6. (*Farmers should plan to retire at an earlier age*), particularly on the full-time farmer sample. Almost two thirds of the full-time farmers (61.4%) expressed their agreement with this statement, which does not correspond with their actual behaviour since most of them have not developed their retirement plan although their average age is 56 years.

The distribution of level of agreement percentages for the statement v2. (*It is better for a farm if the successor were a male child*) points to a persistent traditional preference of a male heir among our respondents, particularly when these are the heads of the full-time farms. Still, half of the full-time farmers consider that the heirs should compensate their brothers and sisters (statement v.4), unlike the part-time farm operators who agree with such statement in a smaller percentage (45.6%). A possible reason for such response might be the fact that the part-time farms have smaller land areas (according to the available data 56.8% of such farms have up to 5 hectares of land).

Although it is a common practice in the countries with developed agriculture that the farmers get a professional aid for the succession planning, this is obviously not acceptable for most Slavonian farmers. Only 36.7% heads of the full-time and 33.8% of the part-time farms expressed their full or partial

Table 4. Intensity of acceptance of the attitudes on inheritance and the division of land

Statement	Full-time			Part-time			*P*
	level of agreement* (%)		mean	level of agreement* (%)		mean	
	1 + 2	4 + 5		1 + 2	4 + 5		
v1. Agricultural land belonging to a family farm should not be divided among the heirs, and the farm should be taken over by a single successor	14.1	77.3	4.17	9.5	81.1	4.43	0.75
v2. It is better for a farm if the successor were a male child	25.8	55.5	3.57	37.8	43.3	3.01	0.03
v3. State should regulate the integrity of family farm land by special measures	3.1	96.1	4.82	1.4	89.2	4.70	0.01
v4. Farm heir should compensate his brothers and sisters	28.9	51.6	3.41	19.1	46.5	3.45	0.03
v5. State should encourage the young to "enter" the agriculture by the allocation of state-owned land and favourable loans	2.3	95.3	4.77	1.4	91.7	4.68	0.34
v6. Farmers should plan to retire at earlier age	8.6	61.4	3.90	19.2	38.3	3.36	0.00
v7. It would be best for a farmer without a successor to give his estate/farm to the state in exchange for a lifelong support	46.1	37.5	2.89	32.5	41.9	3.18	0.16
v8. Farmers need a professional help in the succession planning	50.0	36.7	2.58	44.6	33.8	2.64	0.57
v9. The young in rural areas are not interested in agriculture because the farmers have a poor reputation in the society	50.0	23.8	2.61	46.6	26.0	2.75	0.88
v10. There is a promising future for family farming in Croatia	9.4	74.0	3.92	18.9	50.9	3.66	0.40

*1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree/do not know; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

agreement with the statement v8. (*Farmers need a professional help in succession planning*). They are also quite reserved about the possibility that the farmers without successors leave their farm to the state in exchange for a lifelong support (statement v7.).

The full-time farmers are more optimistic than the part-time farmers about the future of agriculture (statement v10.), but their disagreement with the statement v9 that *'the young in rural areas are not interested in agriculture because the farmers have a poor reputation in society'* is almost equal.

The average value of the level of agreement for all offered statements shows some differences between the full-time and part-time farmers, but statistically significant differences were determined only for the statements v.2, v3. v4 and v6 ($P > 0.05$).

CONCLUSION

A summary of the basic findings on possibilities of social reproduction of family farms in Slavonia region and attitudes of the farmers towards inheritance are as follows:

The farms surveyed differ considerably from the Croatian average by their average size and used agricultural land (33.4 ha) and the average number of household members.

Chances to remain as integral production units in the next generation (a single successor to the farm who assumed the obligation to take over the estate) are realistic for 50% of full-time and 45% of the part-time farms, i.e. only 48% of all farms. The land and other property of one fifth of the surveyed farms

(21.3%) will be divided among several heirs, which will probably cause marginalization of such farms with regard to the production. It should be expected that 5% of farms will "shut down" because they have no heir, and the succession for 26.2% of farms is uncertain since, although the heads of the farms are 53 years old in average, they have still not made a decision on the successor.

The traditional pattern of behaviour is obvious with regard to the inheritance, particularly among the heads of the full-time farms. They prefer male heirs, and their agreement with the statement that "it is better for a farm if the successor were a male child" is higher (55.5%). The traditional attitude is also common with regard to postponing the transfer of the management functions and the control of the farm resources, since 87.1% of farmers (88.2% of full-time and 85.1% of part-time farmers) have no retirement plans and they will be carrying on until their death.

The majority of the Slavonian farmers find that it would be proper if the state were to introduce special measures to regulate the integrity of the land and to offer subsidies and easements for the "entry" of the young into the agriculture. Therefore, we are convinced that the political discussions on the possible measures for a more successful transfer of family farms to the next generation and the integrity of land have to involve the farmers as well.

The development concept of the Croatian agriculture, which focuses on the family farm, asks for wisdom and a visionary knowledge, and the comprehensive empirical understanding of the possibilities of social reproduction since the future of family farming depends on that factor to a large degree.

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