



The Jaglea **family farm**

Carpatians, Romania

Caroline Le Crouhennec,

June 2011

Case Study from a Series on Access to
Land for Community Connected Farming

Case Study Series on Access to Land for Community Connected Farming

In 2010-11, an informal group of civic organisations from across Europe conducted a project on Access to Land for Community Connected Agriculture. A key part of the project lies in a series of seven case studies, documenting experiences from various European countries and different levels of activity (local, regional, national). These case studies seek to explore both the functioning and the benefits of community

connected farming. From this they seek to identify the constraints that limit access to land of sufficient quality and size, and the potential solutions that have been found to reduce the impacts of these constraints. The case studies are illustrative of a variety of issues and situations and, taken together, present some interesting and innovative approaches to the development of local, civic agriculture.

• Viva sol, Lithuania:

A National Association of cheese eaters and producers established to support the development of solidarity between urban and rural people, and to encourage the settlement of small farmers and artisans in rural Lithuania. Viva sol has started a farmers' market in Vilnius, a box scheme, environmental training and activities to support small-scale breeders. Faced with the issue of several farmers being unable to find affordable land, it is currently envisaging creating a Land Fund to raise investments or donations in order to buy agricultural land.

• Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch Community Farms, UK:

Two Biodynamic Community Farms located in East Sussex, UK, wholly owned by a cooperative (an Industrial and Provident Society) with approximately 600 shareholders, most of them local to the farms. The farms occupy approximately 300 hectares of land, the majority of which is owned by St Anthony's Trust, a local land trust. The farmers employ about 20 staff, process and sell their products directly and have established strong community connections.

• Hamburg City Estates, Germany:

For decades, Hamburg municipality has purchased agricultural land to be able to influence city development. In 1989/1994, the city opted for the conversion of three large estates in its ownership to organic farming. These farms all play a major role in providing local organic food, and two of them have developed direct marketing and a large array of social and cultural activities involving the community.

• Terre de liens, France:

A civic organisation established to assist organic and peasant farmers in gaining access to land. The organisation also promotes new ways to own and manage land as a common good. Terre de liens has created financial tools (a solidarity investment company and an endowment trust) to collect investment funds and donations, and educational tools to inform the public and raise awareness about land access and agriculture. It now has a network of 2000 members and 8000 shareholders, and owns 2400 hectares of farmland, supporting about 200 farmers.

• Jaglea Farm, Romania:

An organic farm located near Sibiu, in the Carpatians, which illustrates a new kind of farm in Romania, where tradition and innovation meet to form an emerging "new peasantry". The Jaglea family practice a low-input, largely manual agriculture, which is certified organic and which seeks new ways to be economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. They process and market all their products directly, and took part in the creation of the first organic producers' cooperative shop in Romania. One obstacle that they face in seeking to expand their activity is gaining access to more land in the vicinity of the farm.

• Cooperativa Agricoltura nuova, Italy:

A cooperative farm on the periphery of Rome, formed in 1977 following occupation of the land by a group of young people opposing urban development. It is now a 250 ha mixed organic farm, geared towards on-farm processing and direct marketing and hosting a range of environmental and social activities (an information centre on renewable energies, community gardens, social integration of vulnerable adults, etc.). In 1996 it obtained a tenancy contract from the municipality of Rome, which has established a regional park in the area surrounding the farm.

• Regionalwert AG, Germany (RWAG):

A citizen shareholder corporation, located in the area of Freiburg em Brisgau, that supports the development of organic agriculture and local food production, marketing and distribution. It has collected €1.7 million from about 500 mostly local shareholders. The capital is invested in 6 farms and associated land, processing businesses (caterer, processor), and marketing businesses (retail and wholesale shops, box delivery). As part of its operation, RWAG has developed a detailed methodology to report on the social, economic and environmental impact of its investments in the region.

These case studies have been brought together and edited by Véronique Rioufol (Terre de liens) and Neil Ravenscroft (University of Brighton and Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch Community Farms).

The Jaglea family farm, at the crossroad of tradition and innovation

by Caroline Le Crouhennec, June 2011 ¹

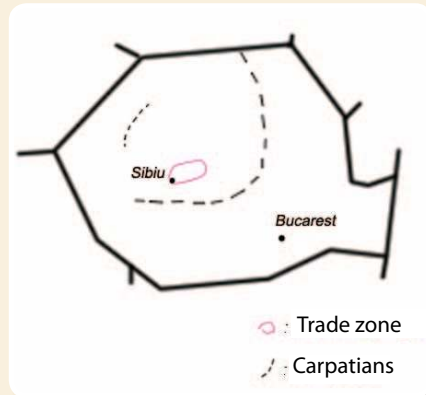
English translation: Sally Sorel, December 2011

Overview

The Jaglea family lives in Rosia (population 5500) near the town of Sibiu (population 15 500), in the Carpatians.

Ioan and Ramona apply the principles of traditional, organic² farming to mixed cropping and dairy farming:

- The farm satisfies the family's food needs and is profitable. The farm's products are sold directly to local consumers.
- Their approach to farming is systemic, with the farm being managed as a living organism of interrelated parts.
- The family constitutes the basis for the farm: its values, needs and work frame the management, practices and outputs of the farm.
- The farm applies the principles of agro-ecology.



¹ - Caroline Le Crouhennec works free-lance to facilitate cross-cultural cooperation c.lecrouhennec@gmail.com.

² - In Romania, certified organic agriculture is called "ecological agriculture". This text will use the more common expression "organic agriculture."

- The good health of the farm is assured by the careful observation of plants and animal behaviour.
- The size of the farm is in accordance with the family's needs and ethics.

This represents a new kind of farm in Romania, one where tradition and innovation meet to form an emerging "new peasantry". The farm's evolution has taken place in a broader context of economic recession and rising unemployment since 2008. While historically, semi-subsistence farming has been a source of food security and income for deprived Romanians, the challenge for the Jagleas is to develop an economically viable business, while remaining true to their roots and values.

This study will first describe the farm, its background and seasonal work cycles, before analyzing its successful blend of tradition and innovation. Lastly, the study will consider the farm's goal of sustainable development on a human scale.

1. The farm today

1.1 History

Ioan and Ramona Jaglea are both from Rosia. After their marriage, they moved into the family house and became owners in 2006. Farming was a natural choice, as they were given their first cow as a wedding gift and had use of 3 hectares of family land. The herd, the land, and the family expanded over the years. Between 2006 and 2007, the farm geared up, with the purchase of 4 additional cows. This was a time of both full growth and great confusion due to European Union regulations, with many farmers giving up cattle breeding during this period. A cow cost 100€ at that time, compared to 1000€ today. In 2007, their milk quota was 7000 litres per year, based on the 3 cows declared in 2005. In 2011, the quota was reassessed at 28 000 litres for 12 cows that were declared in 2009.

FARM: KEY DATA

Farmers and farm workers:

- Ioan and Ramona JAGLEA/ 35 and 32 year old
- Adrian, Ioan's brother and Toma, Ramona's father
- 2 seasonal workers from Rosia

Type of agriculture:

- traditional-type mixed farming, based on cow breeding
- agro-ecology, certified as "organic agriculture" (European label)

Production:

- average milk production of 2,800 l per year, per cow (summer > 120l per day). Quota: 28,000l per year
- 50% of the milk is processed into cream, butter, yoghurt, traditional cheese
- fodder (corn, cereals, hay, alfalfa, clover, marrow)
- vegetables

Land:

- 17 ha of land, including 10 ha in the vicinity of the farm
 - > 3,4 ha directly owned, with another 3 ha belonging to the family
 - > 10,5 ha rented
- buildings:
 - > the house, barn and cowshed are owned by the farmers
 - > 2 barns and one granary have been lent by family members

Legal status:

Farm-holder status (Ioan), exempt from taxes, allowing for the sale of live animals, on-farm processing and direct sales

Sales: 75% of the output is sold

Direct sales: home delivery, sales through the producers' cooperative in Sibiu (Biocoop)

Until recently, Ioan and Ramona Jaglea considered farming as their second job. Ioan worked in the Credicoop Bank in Rosia, then as an accountant in the local school, before being laid off in 2010. At the same time, he undertook training in agro-ecology in the early 21st century. In 2003, he worked for 3 months on an organic farm in Germany. Ramona worked for a company in Sibiu that exported decorative items to Austria, and she also worked a few months in Germany. From 2004-2009, she took a parental leave to raise the couple's 3 children. Since that time she has been officially unemployed, with no recognized status for her work on the farm. In 2010, the couple decided to make agriculture their main job, and to expand the farm (by renting additional pastures and arable land from retired farmers whose children have left the village, or from Saxons who have gone to live in Germany³) so that its income would provide for the whole family. Ramona recently took a 3-month course in animal husbandry at the Chamber of Agriculture. She would like to officially join the business as a farmer.

1.2 Organisation of work and tasks

The farm follows the model of a traditional family farm, with the bulk of the work done by the couple, with the help of other family members. The days are long, as many of the tasks are done manually. This is due to financial constraints but also choice, since the couple feel that it guarantees high quality products and controls the farm's development.

Division of labour

Ioan is in charge of the herds and crops. He handles the finances, land transactions and deliveries. Every day, he and his brother hand-milk the cows. He insists on feeding the hens, pigs and newborn calves himself, to assure their health and quality.

³ - Almost the entire Saxon community fled Romania in the 90s.



Ramona is responsible for processing and packaging the milk, for gardening, and for canning fruits and vegetables. On a day-to-day basis, she also looks after the house and the children.

Winter period

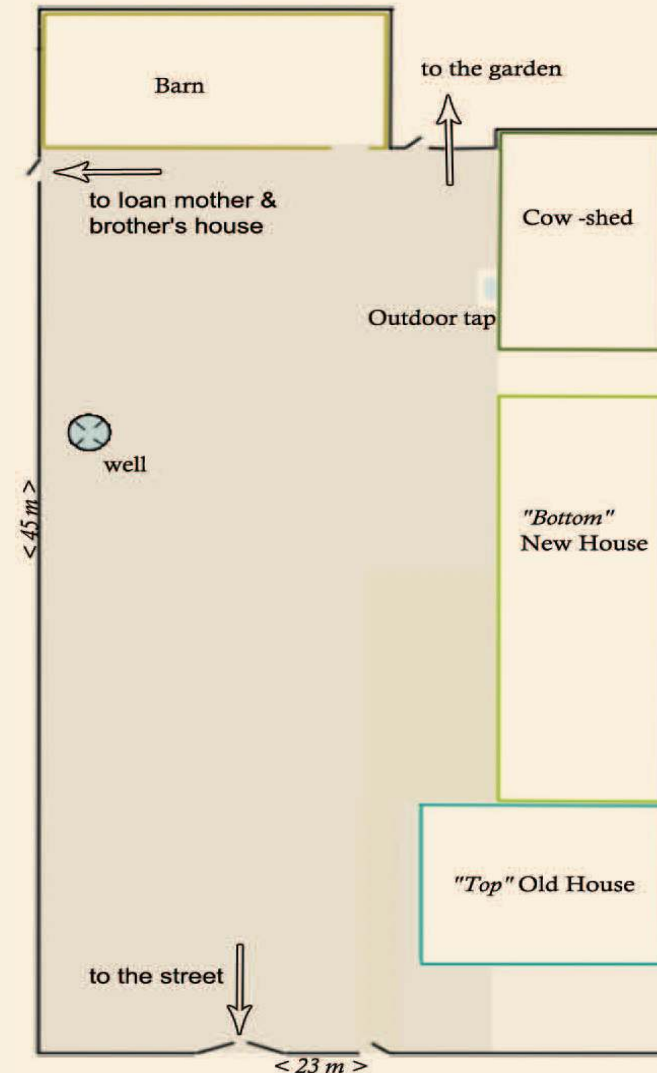
The work day is regulated by milking and caring for the animals: 5:30am-8am and 4pm-6:30pm.

Ioan's father-in-law cleans the barns and takes the manure to the compost heap in a neighbouring field. After caring for the pigs, calves and hens, the cows are let out for a drink and a run. Ioan spends his spare moments on handiwork and repairs, as well as farm-related appointments and errands.

Ramona's days revolve around the children's schooling and the milking. In between milkings, Sundays are devoted to the family and to the Greek Orthodox Church. Ioan is a soloist in the church choir.

Summer period

Come spring, work begins in the vegetable garden. The pace speeds up in early summer with the hay making. A neighbour cuts 10 hectares with his tractor and almost 4 hectares are



Map of the farm (buildings)

done by scythe. Windrowing and gathering are done entirely by hand. Taking into account the second cut, hay making takes up the better part of the summer. When milk production is at its peak (usually from May to December), the cows are kept in a common herd called the “ciurda”. Those with small herds can access the town-owned pastures and together, they pay the cowhand. Milking time for the collective herd is moved up to 5am and the cows are seldom brought in before 10pm. Ioan and Ramona process and package the milk the same evening, as they have no refrigerated tank for storage. After the harvest is in and preserves put up for winter, the pace slows down in autumn.



2. A project combining tradition and innovation

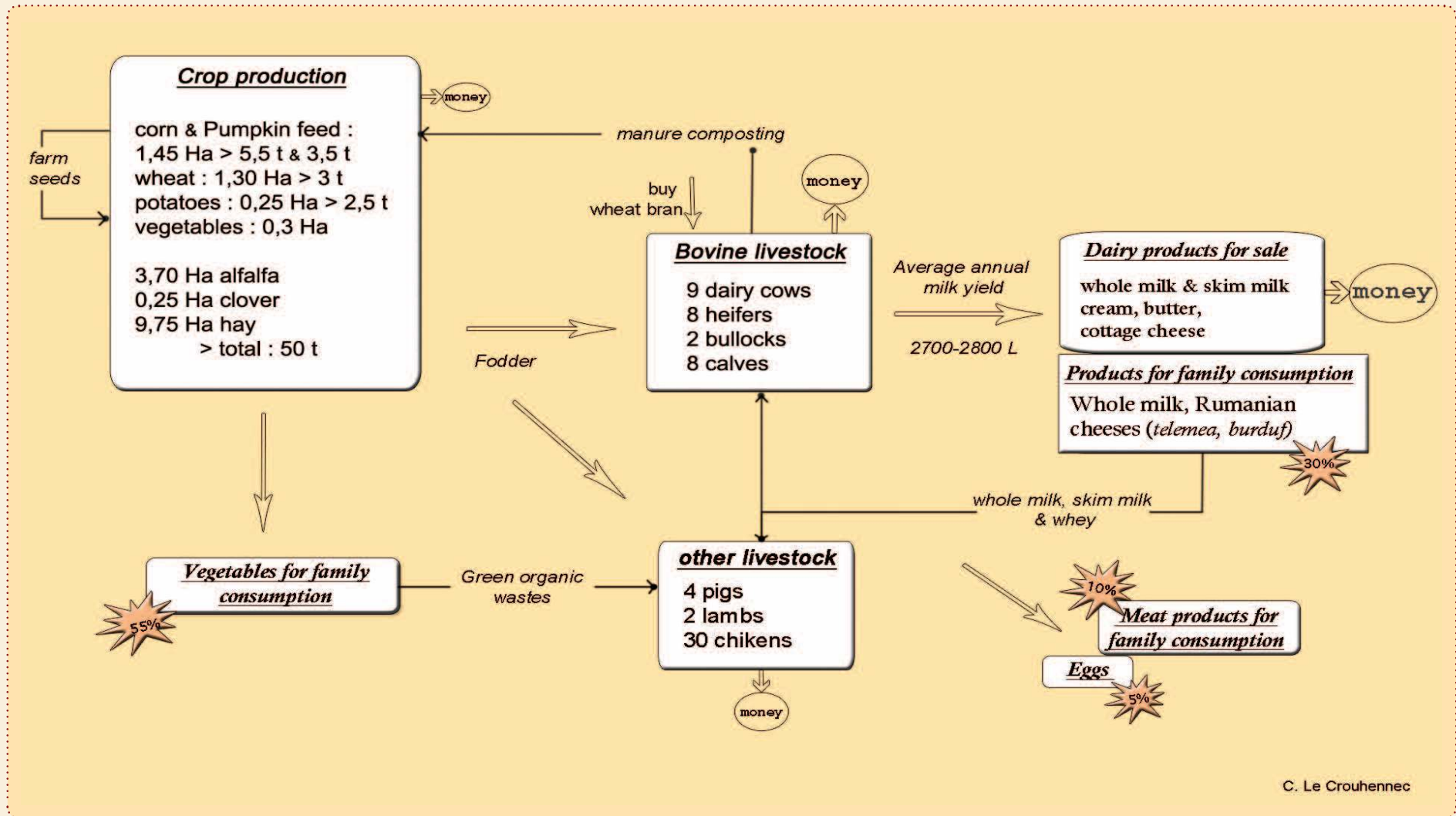
Romanian farms have long offered 2 models: the small traditional farm; and the large commercial farm. For those who wish to make a living by farming on a human scale, the first is a source of inspiration, the second an example of what not to do. In this context, organic agriculture is an escape route for Romanian farmers anxious to give up semi-subsistence farming without resorting to intensive agriculture. Coming from a long tradition of small farmers, the Jaglea family immediately saw it could respect its roots while enabling them to move away from semi-subsistence farming and develop new environmentally-friendly and community-oriented practice.

2.1 The two building blocks of the farm: self-sufficiency and organic farming

Ioan and Ramona’s lives revolved around traditional Romanian agriculture, and it is on this basis that their farm has developed. Their approach to farming revolves around two basic principles: that the farming is mixed and meets the basic food needs of the family (vegetables, dairy produce, meat and grains); and that most of the animal feed is farm-produced (complemented with the purchase of wheat bran.)

To date, the farm has no machinery, with all work done by hand. Ioan sees mechanisation as a way to meet real needs by facilitating the work. For example, he hires neighbours to do certain field work requiring a tractor. For Ioan, manual work fosters a closeness to the animals such that the smallest problem can be quickly spotted and addressed. Mastitis is usually identified at an early stage and is treated with a traditional massage using homemade soap. Antibiotics are used only as a last resort, just once in the last 10 years. Summer or winter, the Jagleas can rarely leave the farm for even a few days, as they have no one who can fully replace them to tend to the farm.

SYSTEMIC VIEW OF JAGLEA FARM 2010



The symbiotic relationship between semi-subsistence farming and organic farming is a recent phenomenon in Romania. Under Ceausescu's Communist dictatorship, the majority of the population was only able to survive thanks to family farms. In spite of all the efforts to industrialize, Romania remains a predominantly rural country, rooted in traditional agriculture. Romanians look at traditional peasant agriculture with fond nostalgia, and are deeply attached to "good natural products." At the same time, traditional farming is considered archaic and inefficient, and the ruling political leaders aim for a single model, based on productivist agriculture. However, over the last decade a new farming model has emerged, as a result of the synergy between traditional Romanian farming and new Western European organic farming practices. The association Eco Ruralis⁴ has spearheaded the movement, by bringing together peasant farmers and activists and by lobbying for the recognition of traditional and organic agriculture.

At the turn of the century, Ioan attended training seminars in agro-ecology, which introduced him to composting and crop rotation, both of which had been abandoned by many Romanian farmers. This allowed him to move forward from a traditional model of agriculture to one that is both healthy and profitable. Organic farming certification enabled Ioan to stand out from the crowd and to be recognized. At the time, organic products were not "in", and organic farmers had to start from

scratch. The choice of outlet soon turned naturally to direct selling. In 2004, Ioan joined a small group of organic farmers in his region. Together, they founded Biocoop, an organic store in Sibiu selling directly to the public.

For Ioan and Ramona, organic farming has opened the door to a whole new world of solidarity. In summer 2010, they welcomed foreign volunteer workers. But before joining the WWOOF⁵ network, they took time to think things out: how could they reconcile the presence of volunteers while respect for the intimacy of family life? How could they balance the positive contribution provided by these volunteers with the investment in time and food involved in welcoming wwoofers? Last year, for the first time, a family from Sibiu who buy the Jaglea's products biked over to have a look at the farm. This led Ioan and Ramona to consider inviting city dwellers to share farm chores in exchange for accommodation.

Ioan and Ramona also enjoy the contact with other organic farmers through training initiatives. For example, the Biocoop organized a trip to Austria to visit farms and meet members of ÖBV (Via Campesina Austria). This enabled Ioan to study different setups and compare farm efficiency. The couple

5 - World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms, an international network of volunteers who work on organic farms. In Romania, the organization is run by Eco Ruralis.



realized that income from the direct sale of farm products, complemented by subsidies, is an economically viable choice for a family farm.



From the building blocks of peasant farming, with its principles of self-sufficiency, semi-subsistence farming and family solidarity, organic farming is a natural choice, reconciling tradition and innovation.

2.2 Production based on the family's food needs and direct sales

The farm's first priority was to feed the family. It then expanded to bring in extra income, and to provide financial security.

2.2.1. Family consumption

The 500m² of garden and orchard are devoted first and foremost to the family, who live off it all year round, thanks to freezing, lacto-fermentation and the storing of root vegetables. The animals raised for family consumption are slaughtered on the spot, in the traditional manner authorized by law. The meat is frozen or made into cooked pork meats. Part of the corn (maize) crop is ground into flour (malăi) to make a polenta-like dish called mamaliga, traditionally served with milk. With the exception of Lenten fasting before Easter, dairy products are a food staple. The only food items purchased are sugar, oil, rice, flour and sweets. While far from rich, Ioan and Ramona are well-known for their generosity, and are often called upon to help the community with its daily needs: young and old alike stop by for a litre of milk or some clothing.

Family Consumption as percentage of total farm production:

- > Milk: 30%
- > Vegetables: 55%
- > Meat: 10%
- > Eggs: 5%

Average: 25% of Jaglea farm production

2.2.2 A short supply-chain: straight from producer to buyer

Selling direct was a natural choice, a win-win situation for both consumers and producers. The former get quality products at affordable prices; the latter get a fair income from their labour, and the social networking enriches both parties. In this kind of setup, the quality of the milk and other products is paramount. For Ioan and Ramona, milk is both the showcase and the business itself, attracting new customers and maintaining their loyalty. The close contact with customers means careful attention must be paid to milking and packaging. For Ioan, the focus on quality sets him apart from farmers who sell their milk to commercial dairies that pasteurize the milk as soon as it is collected. Ioan and Ramona encourage their customers to buy unpasteurized milk, and give out leaflets explaining its benefits.

Home delivery and on-the-spot sales

Today, the farm has about 50 customers, three quarters of whom live in Sibiu and the rest in Rosia. Generally speaking, the customers are attracted to the genuineness, taste, and nutritional aspect. Half of the milk yield is home delivered on Monday and Thursday mornings, packaged in empty mineral water bottles that are replaced after each delivery. The volume of orders varies from 1 to 20 litres per week. The other half of the milk yield is made into cream, butter and cottage cheese, as well as a local cheese for family consumption. The cream

and butter are most often bought by Sibiu customers, with demand exceeding supply at the present time.

Animals are usually sold on the hoof. Most of the pigs are sold during the December holidays to friends who no longer have animals. Like all farmers who still raise animals, part of any meat is sold to friends, neighbours and some customers in Sibiu. At present, none is sold to order.



SELLING PRICE

> **Whole raw milk is sold 3 lei/ litre (0.70€)** to customers in Sibiu, except for retirees who pay 2.5 lei/ litre (0.60 €) because of their small pension. People from Rosia pay 2.5 lei/ litre. To compare, the price per litre of ordinary sterilized milk in supermarkets can reach 5 lei (1.20 €) whereas agri-businesses buy it for 0.50 lei.

> **Butter is sold direct for 28 lei/ kg (6.70 €);** at the Biocoop, it costs 36 lei/kg (8.60 €). In late 2010, the prices of certain products in large stores, notably butter, fell with the sharp fall in the population's purchasing power. Ioan and Ramona had to fall in line and cut the price of their butter from 32 lei/kg (7.62 €) to 28 lei/kg. Ideally, Ioan would like to sell the butter direct for 35 lei/kg (8.30 €).

> **Veal:** the whole carcass with bone (on average a quarter of the piece) is sold for 15 lei/kg (3.60 €) (in general, 100 kg of carcass during slaughtering).

> Occasionally, **chicken** is sold 20 at lei/kg (4.80 €).

The Biocoop

The Biocoop was set up in 2004 by Ioan and a small group of the region's organic farmers who had training in agro-ecology. At that time, supermarket distribution and the agro-food industry were growing in Romania, and eating habits were changing. The weekly market day no longer met people's needs. So, Biocoop decided to offer an alternative, relying on a core of committed customers. Initially, they swapped products, but then decided to go commercial and market the organic label. First set up as a non-profit association, the producers took turns keeping shop two days a week. In 2005, with business growing, they became a cooperative, a legal status that few farmers opted for at the time. Today, the Biocoop is open Monday to Friday and, since 2008, has had a paid manager.

For Ioan and Ramona, the Biocoop was a good starting point to build up a customer base in Sibiu. It remains a strategic point of sale, even if the sales volume there is low: in winter 2010-2011, they sold 14 litres of the 150 litres of milk sold each week. Thanks to the Biocoop, the Jaglea family has built up its own network of home-delivered customers, paving the way to a more lucrative channel of distribution.

THE SIBIU BIOCOOP

Selling price: Store prices are based on producer prices, plus 11%. Some Biocoop prices are lower than supermarket prices (milk, cheese, telemea) or those at the town market (honey).

Supply chain: The cooperative has a dozen regional producers, who supply honey and other apiculture products, bread and biscuits, milk and dairy products, apple juice, herbal teas, jams, syrups, tinned foods, fresh vegetables in season, and sometimes eggs.

Deliveries are twice weekly.

Today, the producers are not able to assure a steady supply of certain products like eggs and butter. This hurts turnover, as some customers seek a wide range of products under one roof, and prefer to shop elsewhere rather than do without.

Customers: The customer base is relatively well-off (university professors, town employees, entrepreneurs, retirees who lived abroad, etc.), but also pensioners in poor health seeking natural products. Since 2008, the economic slump has impacted the store's activity. Some customers have turned to the market in Sibiu, where prices tend to be lower. Others remain loyal to the Biocoop, trusting the origin and quality of the products, especially vegetables and eggs.

Best selling products: Bread and milk are the main purchases. Vegetables and dairy products are often bought for children. Jams, tinned food, or syrups are bought occasionally.

2.2.3. Balance sheet: a low profit margin

2010 was a "mixed bag", with Ioan drawing 2 pay packets until September and Ramona being a home-maker. The transition was a positive one, as they managed to make a profit from the farm, albeit a small one. As farm-holders, they are not required to keep accounts where earnings, profits and expenses are clearly noted, and there is no tax on profits. Farming is mostly an underground economy. The amounts listed below are Ioan's estimates:

EXPENSES	Lei	Euros	INCOME	Lei	Euros
I - Agricultural production					
Land tax	500	119	Sale of milk + dairy products	30000	7143
Land rental	2000	476	Sale of calves and bullocks	6500	1548
Contract work: haying	3000	714	Sale of pigs	1000	238
Contract work: harvesting	3300	786	Sale of chickens	1500	357
Seeds	700	167	Sale of vegetables	1000	238
Seasonal workers	1500	357	Subsidy per hectare	5000	1190
Ioan's brother and Ramona's father	5000	1190	Cattle subsidy per head <i>Detail of subsidies: 80 € / ha CAP + 30€/ha State 200€ dairy cow</i>	5000	1190
Veterinary fees	300	71			
Purchase of animals	2200	524			
Purchase of feed (wheat bran etc)	2200	524			
Maintenance and repairs	5000	1190			
Upkeep of car + petrol	3000	714			
Total annual expenses	1300	310	Total yearly income	50000	11905
	30000	7143	Estimated yearly profit	20000	4762
			Estimated monthly profit	1667	397
II - Other budgeted items					
Loan payments	12600	3000	Ioan's pay thru Sept.	11600	2762
			Ioan's unemployment benefits	2200	524
			Family allowance	1200	286
Total yearly expenses	12600	3000	Total yearly income	15000	3571
			Monthly balance	200	48

Estimated Balance Sheet for 2010

By selling 75% of their production, choosing high quality products and eliminating wholesale, and by keeping production costs down, Ioan and Ramona made a profit of 4762 € in 2010, 40% of their annual income. While not enough to support the whole family, the transition towards full-time farming appears promising. Taken together, the family's income comes to about 880€/ month. To make a comparison, the minimum wage is around 150€/ month, whereas an adult with no children needs at least 350€/month to live decently in town. Subsidies account for 20% of farm income. Though they do not like the idea of subsidised agriculture, Ioan and Ramona are glad to have the extra income in these difficult times.

In 2007, in order to renovate the part of the house where the family now lives, the Jagleas took out a loan in Swiss francs, widely considered to be stable and advantageous at the time.

But since the financial crash in 2008 their monthly payments have doubled from 150€ to 300€.

Ioan hopes to negotiate with his bank for a change in currency. Though their budget is tight, the Jagleas look on the bright side, noting that unlike many Romanians, they have no mortgage payments.



Overall, the Jaglea farm combines traditional working methods and cultural habits with significant innovations in marketing, distribution, certification and social networking. The symbiosis between tradition and innovation has impacted all aspects of the farm, as shown in the chart below:

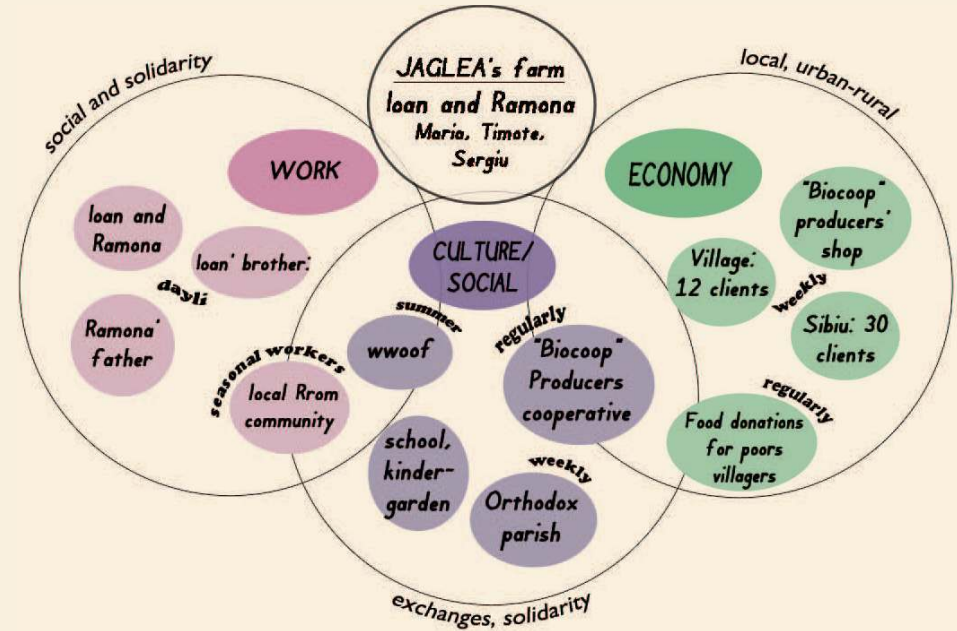


Diagram of social relations of JAGLEA's farm, spring 2011

C. Le Crouhennec, 2011

This new form of peasant agriculture, in the midst of ever-present traditional farms, is a landmark of post-Communist countries. It has enabled farmers such as the Jagleas to go beyond subsistence farming, by giving them greater incomes, providing locally grown high-quality products to consumers and strengthening economic and social ties throughout the community.

3. Future development plans

To date, the farm has grown in a 'pioneer' way, with no set objectives or timetable. Now, without salaried jobs, Ioan and Ramona have elected to become full-time farmers and to make a decent living from it. To maintain balance, their philosophy has always been "Go slow, and keep investments down." Their one and only experience with bank loans has made them cautious. Ideally, Ioan and Ramona would like to deliver different products: milk, dairy products, veal, fresh and tinned vegetables, eggs and occasionally pork, chicken and bread. As the farm is managed in a systemic fashion, with the land, animals and farm production working interdependently, such a change would have important repercussions.

Their first goal is to build up the animal population to twenty dairy cows, 100 hens and at least 2 pigs. Once the dairy business is running smoothly, and the customer base optimized, they'll take up Ramona's passion: market gardening, by setting up a greenhouse in the garden behind the house. Ioan's mother has a wood-burning bread oven, and they are considering making and selling their own bread. They also dream of having bees, and of course will continue to supply most of the family's needs. Financially, their goal is to have an income of 4500 lei (1000 €) per month within 3 years, with overall yearly expenses of 90000 lei (21500 €).

3.1 Planned development

Targeting production

To become profitable as quickly as possible, they will focus on just a few items: milk, butter, cream and veal. Production figures for milk are calculated for the period of minimum output, so that deliveries can be assured and customers satisfied all winter long. This is cost-effective, as skimmed milk is added value when sold and when used to feed calves.



Customers

The Jagleas will offer a wider range of products to their present customers, and will need to expand their customer base. Flyers will be handed out to parents whose children attend the nursery schools and elementary schools in Sibiu. As for local sales, the Jagleas are already well-known in the village.

Land and buildings

The project will require additional land. They calculate that they require 20 hectares of pastureland and 25 hectares of cultivated land (for a cereal and grass rotation). They will also require 0.5 hectares for the vegetable garden adjacent to the farmhouse. For a herd of 40 cows, the barn will be converted into loose housing, mandatory for the organic agriculture certification as from 2013. They will also build a new dairy shed, with hot running water and wastewater drainage. Lastly, a new henhouse will be built in the farmyard, to accommodate approximately 100 hens. The work will be done by Ioan and a

villager to whom the Jagleas lent money. Materials will be paid for from future savings.

A legal status adapted to needs

Ioan will try to keep his status as “farm-holder” for as long as possible because regulations are less stringent, in terms of sanitary norms and animal well-being. He can thus expand the farm while keeping a traditional, informal framework. There is no tax on their products and they can expand at their own pace. The Jagleas hope to continue like this for another 2-3 years. When the time is ripe, they will set up a company. This will allow them to sell their products to different shops in Sibiu.

3.2 Financial choices

Investment needs are multiple and cannot all be met by savings: buying a second-hand tractor or car, fitting out a small cheese workshop, transforming the barn into loose housing, etc. As the couple wish to avoid debt, their choices are difficult ones and involve sacrifices.

A measure from the second CAP pillar could be the answer: Measure 121, designed to support young farmers. Ramona could qualify if she enrolls as a new “farm-holder.” This would bring in a subsidy of up to 2500 €, non refundable and with no co-financing. The Jagleas remain cautious and want to weigh all the pros and cons before making a decision. They are not interested in any subsidy requiring co-financing as they cannot afford their contribution.

3.3 Difficult access to land

In Romania, only 0.4% of farms are medium-sized (between 20 and 50 hectares). The number of such farms did not grow between 2005 and 2007⁶ as the socio-economic situation and on-going laws are a clear incentive to adopt the “European” farming model, with its triple reliance on mechanization, chemicals and subsidies. Ioan has the impression that farming

⁶ - Eurostat, *European Union statistics*.

is on the wane, whereas agricultural statistics in Rosia show an increase in the animal population since 2007. In fact, it is the way of working that has changed. Aging populations are giving up farming, keeping only small plots of land and rarely passing the farm on to their children⁷. On the other hand, many farmers are specializing in large-scale sheep husbandry, but keeping to tradition: Shepherds tend the ewes, which are kept outside all year and are grass-fed, with a hay supplement during winter if needed.

Pasture land

Ioan would like to rent 20 hectares of pasture land from the town hall, though access is usually restricted to herds of 40 head minimum. Ioan has pleaded his case with the mayor, arguing that he cannot expand without this grazing land, and that he will have 40 animals medium term. Pasture land is much sought after in this valley since it is classified as Natura 2000 land and attracts an agro-environmental subsidy of 200€ / hectare. Sheep farmers live off these subsidies and pay little attention to flock management. Pastoral transhumance to the Black Sea is a thing of the past; today, the flock stays in the valley all year round. This has dire consequences for farms like the Jaglea’s, as ewes break loose and devastate everything in their path. In Ioan’s opinion, the present criteria for allocating subsidies is unfair and penalizes high-quality, local agriculture. He notes how easy it is for large sheep farmers to turn the regulations to their advantage and to access extra land.

Arable land

A good deal of arable land remains available, though it is hard to buy or rent. Land title is not easy to determine for 2 reasons: first, former landowners who benefited from land restitution in the 90s have numerous heirs whose claim is not officially recognized as the land was never cadastered; and secondly, landowners do not report the land that they let, so as to benefit

⁷ - Less than 4.5% of farms under 5 ha between 2005-2007.

from CAP subsidies. Acquiring additional land is difficult, as plots are usually cut up and are less than 3 hectares, the minimum required by loan. In addition, the present economic slump has aggravated poverty and sparked a rise in thefts of building materials like copper, and of produce in isolated

fields. The fruit in Ramona's father's orchard is often stolen, so loan and Ramona try to work land as close to the farm as possible, for security reasons.



Conclusion

Ioan and Ramona want to work a medium-sized farm that respects natural resources, and that earns them a decent living. There are almost 3 million traditional peasant farmers in Romania⁸, but the Jaglea's farm is a new model, combining tradition and innovation in every aspect of the farm. That is their strength.

While Ioan and Ramona have no clearly drawn map to follow, they do have 4 strengths which should help them weather any difficult times:

- Family solidarity is an important regulator, as the work load can be juggled with less regard for market economics.
- Direct sales cushion the couple from dramatic market fluctuations (such as during the milk crisis). The Jagleas can also adapt quickly to market changes and to shifts in buying power.
- The informal nature of the set-up spurs flexibility and money savings, which allow an entrepreneur to expand without going into heavy debt.
- As Ioan and Ramona fine-tune the practice of mixed farming, they can keep the primary function of subsistence farming.

Life is not easy for the Jagleas, but their short lead time gives them an edge over the rigid, dominant model of industrial agriculture, which is weighed down with overheads, health and safety norms, bank loans and investments. For Ioan and Ramona, freedom of choice is the keystone of any decision they make, and they willingly accept the financial limitations that go with that freedom. The first few years will be difficult, and every euro invested must be accounted for.

⁸ - In 2007, 2.6 million peasants farmed less than 1 ha (Eurostat statistics).

Romanian political leaders do not back polymorphous, sustainable agriculture, but the latter could be spearheaded by the "Leader"⁹ program. When operational, this program will energize local development from the inside. For now, networks like EcoRuralis, Wwoof, ASAT¹⁰ or Biocoop are spreading the word and making themselves known. By organizing training seminars and talk groups, they are opening channels of dialogue that can pave the way to a real social and personal transformation.

⁹ - LEADER: a CAP development program designed to foster initiatives and jobs in devitalized rural areas. The Local Action Group in the Hartibac Valley was set up in 2007, but folded in 2011.

¹⁰ - Equivalent to Community-Supported Agriculture in the UK.

Access to land for Community Connected Agriculture in Europe Project 2010-1

This case study is part of a broader project on Access to land for Community Connected Agriculture in Europe run by a group of European civil society organisations.

Project Presentation

Our European project on Access to Land for Community Connected Agriculture focused on experiences of Community Connected Farming where there have been particular issues related to gaining and maintaining access to land.

We define Community Connected Agriculture as:

- sustainable, i.e. with no chemical inputs and minimal use of external and non-renewable resources, such as organic farming or extensive grazing;
- civic, i.e. concerned with the broader social, economic, environmental and cultural implications of caring for the land and producing food and/or engaging directly with their community;
- local, i.e. open onto their local environment and nurturing the local social and economic fabric through direct marketing, on-farm transformation, job creation, social activities, consumers' participation, etc.

The objectives of the project were:

- To document such experiences, through seven case studies and a mapping exercise of about 100 community-connected farms and related projects throughout northern, southern and central Europe;
- To disseminate information about and analyses of these experiences and the difficulties that they have faced, to feed into the broader public debate about the future of European agriculture and rural areas.

Local, civic agriculture is developing in Europe, and is gaining broader support from consumers, citizens, civic organisations and local authorities. Such farms often have many benefits: they provide local and quality food to consumers; they contribute to the protection of the environment and the reduction of farming's carbon footprint; they often create more jobs, per hectare, than more conventional farms; they contribute to the maintenance of green belts

around cities; and they are often multifunctional and pluriactive farms, which reinforces their economic sustainability and the vitality and viability of rural areas.

At the same time, one key obstacle to the preservation and development of local, civic agriculture is that many such farms are unable to compete successfully for access to sufficient land that is in good condition. Such civic farmers often struggle to find agricultural land that is available to them at affordable price and on secure terms. A question at the core of our project therefore was to explore these difficulties and, where possible, to identify innovative solutions.

Project Partners

The project was coordinated by Sjoerd Wartena and Véronique Rioufol - Terre de liens (France) and Titus Bahner - Forum Synergies (Europe). Neil Ravenscroft - University of Brighton and Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch Community Farms (UK), Jan Douwe van der Ploeg - Wageningen University (Netherlands), Audrius Jokubauskas - Viva sol (Lithuania), Peter Volz - Regionalwert AG/ Die Agronauten (Germany), and Marta Fraticelli - aGter (France/ international) were all active partners of the project.

Funders

This project benefited from the financial support and fruitful involvement of the Fondation de France and the Fondation Charles Léopold Mayer (FPH), as well as from that of European ethical banks: La Nef association and La Nef bank, Triodos bank, GLS bank and Merkur bank.

Contact:

We welcome information and contact regarding similar European initiatives and studies. The results of our work, and on-going activities, are available (from March 2012) on the website of:

Terre de liens:

<http://www.terredeliens.org>

Forum Synergies:

<http://www.forum-synergies.eu>

For further information:

v.rioufol@terredeliens.org

