

# Overview of the recent analysis about the root causes for land abandonment

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# Land abandonment – concept

How does land  
abandonment look like to  
you?























# Land abandonment – concept

EUROSTAT: Farmland abandonment can be defined as the cessation of agricultural activities on a given surface of land.

- How do you distinguish between fallow land (resting in a rotation) and land that is abandoned?
- How long does it take before land should be considered abandoned?
- Shades of grey – what is the minimal level of activities that would justify saying that the land is in use – where's the border?
- Should you differentiate between regions, types of crops,





Permanent biodiverse grassland





High Nature Value Farming



# Land abandonment – concept

A couple of definitions:

- ‘Farmland abandonment is a cessation of management which leads to undesirable changes in biodiversity and ecosystem services.’ *Terres et al 2013*
- ‘Agricultural land which is no longer farmed for economic, social or other reasons, and which is not used in the crop rotation system which means that no agricultural use is intended.’, *Pointereau et al*





# Land abandonment – concept

There is **no single definition** of the terms “land abandonment” or “abandoned land”, as each legal or scientific text uses its own.”, *Corbelle et Crecente, 2008*

“Land abandonment often is a **complex** and gradual **process**...” *Leal Filho et al, 2016*



# Land abandonment – impact

## Negative

- Loss of features and characteristics in traditional landscapes
- Loss of traditional practices / knowledge
- Loss of valuable structures (e.g. terraces, irrigation systems)
- Increase of undesirable animal populations (e.g. plagues)
- Waste of agricultural land (scarce resource)
- Soil erosion and soil loss
- Loss of semi-natural habitats and associated species of of of nature conservation importance





# Land abandonment – impact



## Positive

- ✓ Restoration of nonagricultural habitats (e.g. re-wilding)
- ✓ Re-vegetation (forest regrowth, more woody vegetation)
- ✓ Increased carbon sequestration
- ✓ Bigger potential for bio- and renewable energy
- ✓ Less pollution from agricultural chemicals
- ✓ Less soil erosion



# Land abandonment – impact

The consequences of land abandonment vary with the territory (climate, soil, topography, pre-existing / surrounding biodiversity and vegetation, etc.) and with the type of agricultural system previously existing (intensive, extensive).

# LANDNET and land abandonment





# LANDNET and land abandonment (LA)

**Regional Workshop on Land Tenure and Land Consolidation** Santiago de Compostela, Galicia–Spain, 09–11 February 2009

Organised by the Regional Ministry of Rural Affairs, Government of Galicia, Consellería do Medio Rural, Xunta de Galicia and FAO / LANDNET

Session on land development instruments:  
“The Land Bank of Galicia” – measures to regulate the rational use of the agricultural areas in order to preserve them and prevent their abandonment. Learning from 1 year experience with BanTeGal and a penalty regime for abandoned land



Regional Workshop on Land Tenure and Land Consolidation, Santiago de Compostela 2009



# LANDNET and land abandonment (LA)

## International Workshop “How To Revitalise Farming And Agricultural Land Use? European Options For The Future”

Oeiras, Portugal, 16–18 September 2009

Organised by the Portuguese Ministry of Agriculture – DGADR, FARLAND network and LANDNET

Objective: contribute to a comprehensive and systematic approach to revitalise farming and rural areas – What steps can countries / regions take to come up with a comprehensive and systematic approach to revitalise farming and rural areas?

Report (draft): [http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/reu/europe/documents/LANDNET/2011/DraftReport.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/reu/europe/documents/LANDNET/2011/DraftReport.pdf)

# International workshop in Oeiras (cont.)

## Some results & conclusions

LA takes different forms and requires different strategies in different territories



Elements to consider when defining a tailor-made territorial approach to address LA:

- i. Legal and institutional framework related to farms and farming
- ii. Land, land markets and the economy of scale
- iii. Diversification and the economy of scope



# International workshop in Oeiras (cont.)

## Some results & conclusions

When considering legal and institutional framework related to farms and farming:

- Clarify, integrate and make compatible main definitions (farm, farmer family, economic viability, etc.)
- Establish a farm typology
- Define labour and social protection regimes for members of farmers' family
- Promote studies and research on impacts on farms, farmers and farmers' family



# International workshop in Oeiras (cont.)

## Some results & conclusions



When considering land, land markets and the economy of scale:

- Solve co-ownership and unknown ownership situations
- Improve land tenure structure, adapt instruments to stakeholders needs and make it 'social'
- Improve integrated territorial planning by making it farmer-friendly
- Make land information records reflect reality



# International workshop in Oeiras (cont.)

## Some results & conclusions



When considering diversification and the economy of scope:

- Develop a common conceptual framework for revitalization via diversification
- Develop a multi-level communication strategy on rural development and diversification, at national level
- Develop territorial integrated plans with room for innovations



International Workshop “How to Revitalise Farming and Agricultural Land Use? European Options for the Future”, Oeiras 2009



# LANDNET and land abandonment (LA)

Second international workshop on land consolidation  
and land banking

Budapest, Hungary, 06–09 June 2011

Technical Session on LA – results from questionnaire to  
LANDNET members, presentations and two working group  
sessions (on drivers of LA and on territorial approaches to  
fight LA)

<http://www.fao.org/europe/events/detail-events/en/c/275343/>

# Second international workshop, Budapest 2011

**Questionnaire sent by email to LANDNET members**  
replies from 12 countries

➤ Driving forces:


- Small holding size; fragmentation and dispersion of plots; no road access; irregular shape of plots; bad agricultural infrastructures; restitution of private property has resulted in excessive fragmentation; ownership held in undivided form
- Not profitable; low quality land
- Migration of population from rural to urban areas; elderly farmers
- Subsidies and insufficient state investment





# Second international workshop, Budapest 2011 (cont.)

“Assessing the risk of farmland abandonment in the EU”, JRC–EC

- Aim: to establish an indicator on farmland abandonment as part of a list of 28 agri–environmental indicators to help fulfilling the European Commission's information needs
  - Groups of drivers:
    - Poor environmental / biophysical suitability for agricultural activity
    - Low farm stability and viability
    - Negative drivers from regional context
- 

# Second international workshop, Budapest 2011 (cont.)

## LA drivers (study JRC–EC)

### Low farm stability and viability:

- Low farm income under regional average
- Low investment level in the farm
- Age of farm holder (>65 years)
- Low farmer qualification (education/training and use of advisory services)
- Remoteness / low population density
- Low farm size
- Farm enrolment in specific schemes

### Adverse regional context:

- Weak land market
- Previous trend of farmland abandonment



# Second international workshop, Budapest 2011 (cont.)

Country experiences on how to define, monitor and deal with land abandonment:

- Lithuania – definition, relevance, identification, State Land Fund and other measures
- Romania – structure and dynamics of farmland, definition, policy
- Cyprus – land consolidation (where abandoned agricultural land is included)
- Ukraine – land reform, state of play and considerations for the future
- Galicia, Spain – definition, significance, location, driving forces, impacts, policy and instruments

# LANDNET and land abandonment

## ‘Land Market Development and Land Consolidation in EU countries’

Skopje, North Macedonia, 21–24 April 2013

<http://www.fao.org/europe/events/detail-events/en/c/272760/>

Keynote “Land Abandonment and Shrinking Settlements” – definitions, drivers, connecting farmland abandonment with rural population decline (e.g. connecting Land Banking closer with territorial planning, foster greater connections between urban and rural territories via rural services planning)



# Workshop in Skopje, 2013 (c



## Country experiences:

- Lithuania – state of play, measures / instruments to fight land abandonment
- Albania – uncultivated / abandoned land drivers (private and state land), measures to reduce land abandonment
- Latvia – significance of uncultivated farmland, trends, policy measures to fight against land abandonment
- Republic of Moldova – policies to counter negative effects of shrinking rural population, land mobility instruments

# LANDNET and land abandonment

## LANDNET 2014 Conference

Belgrade, Serbia, 23–25 June 2014

<http://www.fao.org/europe/events/detail-events/en/c/271707/>

### Session 6 “Combating Abandonment of Land (AL) in Serbia”:

- Keynote on Combating Abandoned Land – We often focus on underlying causes of abandonment (...which is right) but complementary approaches may help
- Factors Causing Abandonment of Land in Serbia – Research Results
- Developing an interactive GIS and Remote Sensing based approach for monitoring abandoned land in Serbia



# LANDNET 2014 Conference (cont.)

## Factors Causing Abandonment of Land in Serbia:

- Abandonment of land tends to be higher the smaller the farm and the smaller the settlement, but where populations are mobile, then size matters less even in the context of shrinking populations
- Higher birth rates and better public services means less abandoned land
- A diverse rural economy is the most effective counter to land abandonment, but in places that are most hit by abandoned land, the unfavorable land structure is the biggest obstacle

# LANDNET and land abandonment

## LANDNET workshop 2017

Budapest, Hungary, 03–05 October

<http://www.fao.org/europe/events/detail-events/en/c/887096/>

### Session 7 – Country developments

- Dealing with Land Abandonment in Romania – reference to drivers and measures to mitigate  
Drivers: climate change, farm location (mountain areas), land fragmentation associated with weak land market, low farm income, low farmer qualification, production factors



# Thank you for your attention!

LANDNET and FAO workshops on LAND Tenure – since 2002

<http://www.fao.org/europe/resources/land-tenure-workshops/en/>

References:

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