

Most regions have unequal situation relating to land holdings. Some regions in Poland, France (but not the Alpine regions) and Slovenia have more equal land holding conditions than the European average.

In 15 regions over 20% of the land is held by farms with 'farm managers' under 40 years of age. These regions are in Poland, France, Lithuania and Estonia. In the next section extra emphasis will be on remote regions in Poland (5.1.2.1), which have developed quite differently than regions in CEE in which land had been nationalised during communist rule and the region of Alentejo in Portugal (5.1.2.2), which is a region that traditionally had very large social and economic differences between a few wealthy landowners and a population of landless peasants.

5.1.2.1 Remote regions in Poland (PL219 Nowotarski; PL523 Nyski; PL618 Swiecki; PL637 Chojnicki; PL811 Bialski; PL821 Krosnienski)

In Poland there are wide regional variations in farmland ownership (Bański, 2011; Marks-Bielska, 2013). During communist time farmland stayed in ownership of family farmers. Generational transfer resulted often in a split of the farms. In most of Poland this has resulted in a fragmented ownership situation. A large exception to this was land in former German areas in the North and West. Here large state farms were founded. The state farms also grew in the border area at the Ukraine, by taken over land from Ukraine farmers moving over the border and in other areas by the exchange of land of older generations for a retirement scheme (Bański, 2011). In the areas that continued to be individual ownership, land is very fragmented.

'From the point of view of the average size of the parcels of land, Polish agriculture bears a resemblance to the fragmented farming going on in the post-communist Balkans. It is much less like the agriculture of such neighbouring countries as Slovakia and the Czech Republic.' (Bański, 2011, 98)

One important difference is that, because small farmers continued their ownership, there has been no restitution process of these farm lands to heirs of who owned the land in 1940s or so. During communist rule ownership rights have been 'maintained', that is, land has been transferred to new generations. There is no double fragmentation; although the land is fragmented, ownership is not: usually there is an owner of the land who has the power to act.

There are, however, regional differences in ownership structure within Poland that have been continued over time

'The transfer of land from the public sector to individual farmers had only a limited effect in resolving the problem of the farmland fragmentation. It was mainly the farms in the North and West that grew in size, and these had been relatively large even before the opportunity for a further expansion arose. No more major changes at all took place in the South of Poland, small or very small farms continuing to prevail there.' (Bański, 2011, 98)

In the North and West the state farms have been dissolved in the mid-nineties and ownership came in the hands of the Treasury Agricultural Property Agency (Bański, 2011).

Remarkably, is that the remote Polish regions in this group can be found in different areas of Poland. PL219 Nowotarski is in the South (at the Slovak border); Nyski is in Silesia (at the German side of the 1920 border and currently bordering the Czech Republic) Swiecki and Chojnicki are Central Northern located (at the Polish side of the 1920 border) PL811 Bialski is in the East (at the Belarus border); PL821 Krosnienski is in the South East (at the Slovak border)

So, the context of land markets differs substantially. However, two of these regions Nowotarski and Krosnienski, are in the Polish Carpathians, an area that faces farmland abandonment (Kolecka *et al.*, 2017). Farmland is being replaced by forests. This is a tendency that is happening in more European regions. The more mosaic type of landscape of the Polish Carpathians (and of many other more mountainous areas) make that this process may develop faster. It is less easy to consolidate agricultural land. There are more edges between agricultural and forest areas; which also result in the keeping the land in agricultural shape is more work, as:

‘...the proximity of forests promotes natural reforestation. In areas near trees and shrubs, seed dispersal significantly triggers the early stages of succession. In areas of less intensive use, saplings and young trees or shrubs are not constantly removed, and the vegetation density increases.’(Kolecka *et al.*, 2017, 69)

Remarkably is that this is not only an issue of remote regions, but also the rural areas close to the city may face abandonment: ‘Farmlands located closer to the current provincial capital cities were more likely to be abandoned.’ (Kolecka *et al.*, 2017, 69) This is explained by the fact that people that take job in the urban labour market have less time to farm, and part-time farming may become no farming especially if the relative income from farming is low; so it especially ‘affects less productive areas’ (Kolecka *et al.*, 2017, 69). Additionally the anticipation on urban sprawl may result in abandonment of agricultural land use (Kolecka *et al.*, 2017). The physical condition as a mountain area, seems so more important than the remoteness in the development towards farmland abandonment. Based on this it may be expected that infrastructure investments to counter remoteness, or the creation of jobs outside the agricultural sector will not stop farmland abandonment.

5.1.2.2 Alentejo

In Portugal, there are very few young farmers. In all Portuguese regions at least 50% of the farms and 30% of the land is held by farmers over 65 years of age. The old farming population is not a new phenomenon. Two decades ago Rodrigo and Moreira (2001) already analysed this issue and showed that attempt to rejuvenate the farming population by agricultural training courses did not result in many young people attending them. A ‘structuralist dualism and a bifurcated landownership pattern’ (Rodrigo and Moreira, 2001, 245) played a role in this. Rodrigo and Moreira (2001) especially referred to Alentejo remote regions, in which the ‘*latifundist* economic reality’ (Rodrigo and Moreira, 2001, 245) still existed. *Latifundia* refers to Roman large farms, but it is a concept that is also used in broader meaning large land holdings and the unequal social structure that comes with this (Szelenyi, 2011; De Almeida, 2013). Alentejo is a region ‘where land and property have historically been defining features of the socio-economic system’ (Edwards, 2011, 79). There has not been much change in the structure of a few very landholders and a large majority of landless farm workers between the 18th century and 1974 (De Almeida, 2013). Alentejo is the traditional bread basket of Portugal,