

## **20 years of Land Consolidation in Portugal**

**- abstract -**

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Before 1980 the farming sector in Portugal was composed, especially in the North and far South, by small size and high fragmented householdings.

The main goal of these farms was the self-sustainability, trying to produce a big variety of products in order to avoid the acquisition of goods outside the householding.

With the opening economy the price of farm products dropped dramatically, being the farmers asked to produce more and better at lower prices.

The small size and high fragmentation of their farms didn't allow the decreasing of production costs, lowering more and more their income.

Large parts of population were forced to leave the rural areas, specially the young and better educated, searching for better remunerated jobs within the coast belt and abroad.

In order to stop this tendency, Portuguese Government initiated several actions in the field of Rural Development, being supported by GTZ in the legal and technical procedures, training of staff and starting pilot projects to prepare portuguese farmers for the request of the European Market.

After ten years of work, the good results of land consolidation projects in improving the economy of rural areas were realized.

However, the costs and time of execution were considered still too high.

In 1994 ( 2° Community Support Framework ) the Ministry of Agriculture allowed the farmer's associations as promoters of land consolidation projects, to go into these activities in order to have closer and more intensive relations and connections with the farmers.

As result, the time consumption in execution of prestudies and projects for execution decreased 20 % to 30 %, showing the private sector acting more efficiently in Land Consolidation projects.

Another advantage was the confidence of the farmers in the follow up of the projects, with the assistance of their associations.

It has to be remarked that Land Consolidation as a very complex procedure is not always understood in its remarkable results especially in the decision making levels, what will be one of the major problems to be solved in future.

This concerns also the extension of goals e.g. in using *land banking* for structure improvements or *village renovation* as even more direct support of families within the rural space.

**One example :**

Project: Lagoa – Macedo de Cavaleiros

Region : Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro

Promotor: FATA – Federação da Agricultura de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro

Number of beneficiaries : 295

Number of parcels before and after the project : 2.729 - 1.180 ;

Needed time for prestudy : 24 months ;

Needed time for LC project : 27 months ;

Specific targets besides reorganization of property:

- Improvement of infrastructures, specially the road network ;
- Building of facilities for sheep, used in cooperation;
- Olive oil mill – Olives are the main crop in the zone. FATA promoted the creation of a private enterprise with 30 farmers. Objective: transforming olives in olive oil, bottling and marketing ;
- Forest project of 300 ha, involving 130 farmers in cooperation, promoting collective planting and managing of the area;

**Conclusions :**

- *As results of the last 20 years of experiences, must be counted the following needs:*
  - Improvement in the procedures, in order to save still more time;
  - Land Banking, to improve property and land use structures and to cover public land requests;
  - Adaptation to special requests (e.g. village renovation, change of land use, intensification of production methods, development of cooperation especially in marketing )
  - Medium and long term working and financial plans within national budget and administration.
  
- *As positive aspects can be observed:*
  - Active support by farmers associations;
  - Good capacity and independence within the private sector;
  - Private sector operating faster and more efficient than public administration;
  - Closer contacts to farmers and rural population.