

Strategy for Land Consolidation and Improved Land Management in Georgia

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Summery

Land consolidation has to be seen as an instrument in a long-term planning perspective for Georgia. With respect to the current situation a strategy to introduce land consolidation needs to be careful, well timed and flexible. Although the need of land consolidation is stated at present one should not try to establish a fixed land consolidation procedure for the whole country. This is neither feasible nor appropriate at the present time. A top-down approach, e.g. compulsory consolidation schemes, will not be an option since the population mistrusts government driven activities. Thus a careful step-by-step approach should be considered, with special emphasis on community and citizens' participation. The first step should address some key issues that are important preconditions for the establishment of a land consolidation strategy.

There are a number of bottlenecks that may hamper the introduction of land consolidation in Georgia. Among the many constraints the most striking are:

1. A very weak land market, developing only slowly in rural areas.
2. A policy framework that is still in a transitional stage.
3. The absence of spatial planning in rural development.

But there are also some elements that favour the introduction of land consolidation in particular:

1. The need to improve the situation in rural areas given the level of fragmentation of agricultural land and the poor state of the rural infrastructure.
2. The recent successful efforts towards improved land management within the State Department of Land Management in Georgia including the establishment of a cadastre and registration system.

When weighing up the above pros and cons for land consolidation in Georgia one can state that land consolidation would contribute to the improvement of the situation in rural areas because it would offer an intersectoral framework for tackling the multiple problems with which rural communities are faced. Poverty and the basic needs of citizens in rural areas with a livelihood on the subsistence level provide a huge field of activity for land consolidation, limited only by finite resources like finance or manpower. Given the overall economic conditions and considering that political transition is an ongoing process in Georgia, only a highly flexible approach will be successful. A number of preconditions must be met before land consolidation can be introduced on a nation-wide scale.

These preconditions are:

1. A strategy for the reintroduction of spatial planning must be elaborated and reflected in land consolidation procedures. This must also be reflected by the institutional set-up and the sharing of responsibilities between the various ministries.
2. Public awareness about the advantages of land consolidation both on the level of public decision makers and local actors must be improved.
3. The legislative framework, regulations and guidelines for land consolidation must be drafted.
4. Key players from the public administration and the private sectors must be trained.
5. Pilot projects are needed to gain experience to be fed back in the overall policy.