

Jurgita Mačiulytė

An Experience of Decollectivisation in Search of its European Itinerary: The Case of Lithuania^{*}

Abstract: After the fall of the Iron Curtain, the post-communist European countries embarked on a process of decollectivisation, which, due to the historical legacy, the political environment, and the methods of privatisation chosen in each country, had its specific features and which has created a mosaic of agrarian structures in the old continent. Lithuania, having experienced Soviet collectivism, has returned to the model of family farms that was created during the interwar period. However, family farms which vary in size and production objectives coexist with agricultural enterprises with different legal statuses. This paper aims to analyse the mutation and territorial spread of agrarian structures in the face of radically changing political and economic contexts. Taking into consideration the lasting nature of territorial structures, it is necessary to assess the role of the historical factor in the transformation of rural areas and to determine how inherited territorial structures influence the adaptation of the new agrarian structures in the area. The transformation of agrarian structures is analysed at national and municipal territorial levels.

Keywords: Lithuania, decollectivisation, social forms of production, family farm, agricultural enterprise.

Jurgita Mačiulytė, Professor, Institute of Geosciences, Faculty of Chemistry and Geosciences, University of Vilnius, 300 kab., M.K. Čiurlionio str. 21, Vilnius, Lithuania, e-mail: jurgita.maciulyte@chgf.vu.lt, ORCID: 0009-0001-8748-3273.

^{*} Publication funded under the Programme “University Excellence Initiatives” of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania (Measure No. 12-001-01-01-01 “Improving the Research and Study Environment”).



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1. Introduction

After the proclamation of independence on 11 March 1990, Lithuania demonstrated its desire to break away from agrarian collectivism and return to the model of family farming successfully developed in the interwar period. The reference to the period of the first independence inspired this political turning point, supported by the strength of the memorial bond of a society firmly attached to the national land. The project of rebuilding what the Soviet power had sought to destroy by deporting and dispossessing hundreds of thousands of peasant families highlights the uniqueness of Lithuania's post-collectivist path-dependant trajectory.

Lithuania has distinguished itself among the European countries that have emerged from communism and initiated decollectivisation of agriculture, by designing and implementing an agrarian reform that has given a special place to family farms. The transformation of agricultural structures in the context of the transition to a market economy was accompanied by public policies that favoured the revival of family farming. As a result, Lithuanian structures appear to be comparable to EU averages in terms of the distribution of farm size, the role of family labour and the relative importance of family land ownership. Does this mean that Lithuanian agriculture corresponds to the so-called "European model of family farming"? Does this make it a kind of exception "east of the Elbe" (Swain 2013)? This point needs further analysis. The concept of "family farming" covers a wide variety of farms in relation to farm size, volume of capital invested, labour resources, degree of market integration, income and productivity levels, etc. At the risk of oversimplifying a polymorphic reality, it can be argued that family farming is a social form of production in which ownership and labour are closely linked (Lamarche 1991). These commonly accepted criteria for defining family farming emphasise the role of the family in participating in work, in managing assets (land and productive capital) and in the running of activities.¹ The renaissance of family farming as part of the system transition raises questions about the weight of history and leads us to formulate the hypothesis of a path-dependent agrarian trajectory, which applies not only to the exit from collectivism but also to the longer term. The transformation of agrarian structures must be seen in the socio-historical context specific to Lithuanian peasant agriculture, which benefited from a successful land reform on the eve of the 1920s before being destroyed by the collectivist campaigns of the 1940s. Restoring family-based agriculture must be seen in this

¹ Here we refer to the statistical definition given by the FAO "A family farm is an agricultural holding which is managed and operated by a household and where farm labour is largely supplied by that household." <https://www.fao.org/world-agriculture-watch/tools-and-methodologies/definitions-and-operational-perspectives/family-farms/ar/> (access: 5th April 2024).

national historical perspective. Considering the assertion that “history matters”, this paper would like “to discuss the weight of the determination of the past and how this past is supposed to count” (Maurel 2015).

The first part of the article sets out the main milestones in the history of Lithuanian agriculture during the last century. The second part is about the design and implementation of the transformation of the collective farming model. The third part attempts to characterise the structural profiles of the main social forms of production (agricultural enterprises, family farms and individual farms) and their respective evolution after Lithuania’s accession to the European Union. The last part analyses the impact of the European support mechanisms on the structure of agricultural holdings at the regional level. The historical approach to agrarian structures is based on a wide range of historical sources and survey material collected by the author in three different areas of observation during the process of decollectivisation (Mačiulytė 2001).² The tables and maps are based on statistical data from general agricultural censuses and survey data published by the Lithuanian Department of Statistical Studies.³

2. Agrarian Structures Over the Long Term

The 20th century saw three major social and economic shifts in the Lithuanian countryside: the agrarian reform during the interwar period, the collectivisation campaign at the end of the Second World War, and the decollectivisation process that took place after the restoration of Lithuania’s independence in 1991. Agrarian reforms and independence are closely interlinked in the mind of the Lithuanian population: the creation of an independent state is linked with agrarian reform in favour of the peasantry; it was followed by the Soviet occupation and the imposition of the collective farming model by force, and by the restoration of the independence associated with decollectivisation (Mačiulytė, Maurel 1998).

After the declaration of independence in 1918, the issue of land reform became prominent. The future economic and social progression of the nation was contingent upon the policy approach taken. The emerging Lithuanian intelligentsia, originating from peasant families and exposed to Western thought, promoted the establishment

² In 1997 and 2002, surveys among farmers were carried out in three places which differ in the historical development of agriculture. These are the Skaistgirys village, covering the territory of the former “Pergalė” collective farm in the municipality of Joniškis district, the Suginėčiai and Čivyliai localities in the municipality of Molėtai district, as well as the municipalities of Plungė district, where the new family farms are organised in agricultural machinery and milk cooperatives of a western style.

³ The research uses data from the general agricultural censuses carried out in 2003 and 2010, and surveys of agricultural structure conducted in 2005, 2007, 2013 and 2016.

of an independent peasantry. The governments of the interwar period opted for the “Danish agricultural model” as the most suitable approach for developing the nation’s agriculture, given its alignment with the political, economic, and social interests of the young state.⁴ In Lithuania, the “Danish model” of agriculture was developed through the implementation of a land reform, the main objective of which was to provide land for landless and small farmers, to abolish the large landholding of manors, and to modernise farming through the introduction of an advanced system of farmer education and developing agricultural sciences, and through the establishment of a cooperative network for the purchase and processing of agricultural products. The brief period of independence between the two world wars created an opportunity for the formation of the nation’s self-consciousness and left deep imprints in its memory. Was it not thanks to the legacy of what we call the “Danish model” that Lithuania was able to rebuild its agriculture of a family type after fifty years of Soviet domination?

Soviet rule put an end to the period of Lithuania’s independence and, at the same time, the formation of a free and democratic rural society. The family agricultural model that had been in place for three decades was brutally replaced by an antagonistic collectivist agricultural model, based on the nationalisation of land and means of production, and on the collective organisation of work. In the Baltic countries, collectivisation took place very quickly through repressive measures, i.e. deportations of the peasant elite to Siberia. The extent of the destruction of family farming, which varied from region to region, influenced the conditions under which land was restituted after independence.

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, the post-communist European countries embarked on a process of decollectivisation which, due to the historical legacy, the political environment, and the methods of privatisation chosen in each country, had its own specific features and which has created a mosaic of agrarian structures in Central Europe (Rey 1996; Maurel 1994; Pouliquen 1993). The privatisation of land and the means of production has transformed the social relations of production and created new forms of farming, based on new links between land, capital and labour, i.e., the main factors of farming production. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), in place since 2004, aims to bring the agricultural structures of the new EU member states closer to those of Western Europe. However, the agricultural

⁴ The Danish model of agriculture had been developing in Western Europe since the 19th century; after World War I, it spread into some of the newly-emerged countries of Central and Eastern Europe. It was based on small and medium-sized family farms, progressive peasant education as well as on farm modernisation and cooperation. Where the development of agriculture follows the Danish model, the state plays an important role in the establishment of a system of farmer education, cooperation and credit (Sivignon 1992).

structures that have emerged after the dismantling of agrarian collectivism are characterised by a wide variety of social forms of production, both in terms of size and operational logic (Maurel 2018). Having experienced Soviet collectivism, Lithuania has returned to the model of family farms that had been in place during the interwar period. However, family farms which vary in size and production objectives coexist with agricultural enterprises of different legal status. The aim of this paper is to analyse the changes and the spatial distribution of these different types of farms in the face of a radically changing political and economic context. Given the enduring nature of spatial structures, it is appropriate to assess the role of the historical legacy in the transformation of rural areas and to determine how inherited spatial structures influence the reorganisation of agricultural structures in the region. Will this make it easier to adapt to the new European context after having joined the EU?

3. The Transformation of the Collective Farming Model

Since the restoration of its independence, Lithuania has embarked on an economic and social transformation towards a market economy. In the field of agriculture, these reforms take the form of the process of decollectivisation. The concept of the decollectivisation process is used to describe the agricultural reforms that have taken place in the Central and Eastern Europe; besides, it also expresses the willingness of post-communist countries to transform the collective farming model. “Decollectivisation” should be understood as a process affecting the three main factors of production – land, capital and labour – and taking place in a context of radical social and economic reforms. The legalisation of private property in agriculture is one of the key conditions for the transformation of the collective farming model. The privatisation of land and the means of production was a key factor in changing the relationship between the three main factors of production (land, capital and labour) and creating new forms of agriculture consistent with a market economy. Like many post-communist countries, Lithuania opted for the principle of “historical justice” in order to ensure the legalisation of land ownership, i.e. the restitution of land to its former owners or their descendants whose land had been nationalised by the Soviet government. In order to protect, at least partially, the rights of the users of the auxiliary farms, the government granted three ha of land to all rural families who were not entitled to the right of restitution of land or who did not wish to recover their land.⁵

⁵ During the Soviet period, in addition to collective farms, there were a number of family farms, for example, auxiliary farms with 0.6 ha of land. Although the development of such farms was hampered

In Lithuania, the process of land privatisation was separated from the privatisation of agricultural enterprises. The Law on Privatisation of Property of Agricultural Enterprises, adopted on 30 July 1991, defines the categories of persons entitled to participate in the privatisation of agricultural enterprises. The assets of agricultural enterprises were privatised by the persons who worked for the enterprises at the time of privatisation and by those who had worked for the respective enterprises before. The privatisation of assets was carried out with the help of privatisation vouchers, which were given to all citizens, and the so-called “green vouchers”, which were exceptionally given to farmers. Privatisation was achieved by issuing shares, i.e. each person eligible to participate in the privatisation received a share of the collective’s assets in the form of a member share. The share of assets acquired by a person depended on the number of years he or she had worked for the kolkhoz or the sovkhoz⁶. The idea of privatisation was to personalise the assets of enterprises, which in turn should ensure a better use of them, to give each member of the collective farm the freedom of choice and to create smaller companies better able to adapt to market conditions. The privatisation of the assets of collective farms was carried out by forming technological production units, i.e. production units that are able to work independently. In many cases, the kolkhozes and sovkhozes that existed during the Soviet era have been dismantled, their assets having been separated from each other without any coherent plan. Following the privatisation of kolkhozes and sovkhozes, new agricultural enterprises with a different legal status were created, the most numerous of which were agricultural companies (Table 1) (Mačiulytė 2001).

During the process of decollectivisation, property relations were transformed in favour of economic operators able to mobilise different forms of capital – social, economic and cultural capital. The most enterprising social actors were given the opportunity to benefit from access to land and means of production (Maurel 2018). The privatisation of collective and state farms (kolkhoz and sovkhoz)

by various constraints (limited land area, number of animals, size of buildings), they played an important role both in the production of agricultural products and in the lives of farmers. Auxiliary farms were closely integrated into collective farms, which provided them with agricultural services, seeds, fertilisers and centralised purchases of agricultural produce. These farms played an important role in preserving the mentality of a small private producer and the ability of farmers to work, i.e. the qualities that the Soviet agricultural system was trying to destroy.

⁶ In reality, there were no differences in the organisation of production and operation between the kolkhoz and the sovkhoz. Theoretically, the difference between the two collectivist farms consisted of the means of production’s ownership: the production capital, except the land, belonged to the kolkhoz members, whereas in the sovkhoz, it belonged to the state. Legally, the kolkhoz members had the right to elect the chairman and the farm managers. However, these were “unsurprising” elections and the leaders were appointed by higher institutions.

Table 1. The transformation of agricultural structures in Lithuania (1989–1992)**Tabela 1.** Transformacja struktur agrarnych na Litwie (1989–1992)

	1989		1992		
	Collective farms	Auxiliary farms	Agricultural enterprises	Family farms	Personal farms
Share of agricultural land (%)	90	10	65	3	32
Number	1,269	400,000	4,855	5,042	400,000
Average size (ha)	2,770	0.6	398	17	2.1

Source: own study based on data from The State Data Agency of Lithuania.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie danych Państwowej Agencji Danych Litwy.

and the restitution of land have given rise to a wide variety of forms of agricultural production which differ in their nature and their relationship to labour, land and capital. The new social forms of production could be divided into family farms, most of which were established on the basis of the land returned to the owners or on the land of auxiliary farms (three ha) provided by the state, and the neo-collectivist agricultural enterprises set up after the privatisation of collective and state farms. The relationships and territorial distribution of these structures evolved throughout the period of decollectivisation.

At the beginning of the decollectivisation process, neo-collectivist enterprises, the majority of which were agricultural companies, were the dominant form of production in terms of the area under cultivation, the number of workers employed and the volume of output produced. In Lithuania, some 4,279 agricultural companies and 576 limited liability or joint stock companies were founded on the basis of the former 1,269 collective and state farms (kolkhoz and sovkhoz). However, of the newly created enterprises, only 610 (including 285 agricultural joint stock companies) survived in 2003 (Mačiulytė 2009). The rapid decline in the number of agricultural enterprises cannot be explained solely by the government's unfavourable agricultural policy, the consequences of which have been felt throughout the production structure. Agricultural companies were a transitional form of production in the process of decollectivisation, characterised by strong internal conflicts between different social groups and a lack of interoperability between land, capital and labour. The separation of land and means of production led to conflicts between landowners and agricultural companies. Until 2003, agricultural enterprises (which are legal entities) could not own private land and were forced to lease it from the state or from the new landowners. The size of agricultural holdings also fell sharply as a result of the creation of new farms

and the allocation of land to personal farms. The privatisation of assets in the form of membership shares created social groups with different interests; these differed according to the share of assets they owned and their participation in production. Pensioners, the largest social group in terms of number and share of assets under their ownership, sought to receive dividends, free services on their personal farms, or the withdrawal of their share of assets from agricultural companies. The working members of the company, who were in a minority in terms of the share of assets held and in the number of votes in making key decisions, had an interest in preserving their jobs and the continued existence of the company. However, giving the workers a share in the property did not change their attitude to work: there were many cases of dereliction of duty and lack of motivation. Providing workers with a personal farm further reduced the quality of their work in the company, as many workers devoted most of their energy and time to their personal farms, while the company became a second-class workplace. The divergence of interests and asset management strategies among all these groups has been one of the factors hindering enterprises from adapting to the market (Mačiulytė 2003).

In 2003, there were 610 agricultural enterprises with a different legal status in Lithuania, including 285 agricultural companies. These surviving neo-collectivist agricultural enterprises underwent a transformation known as the “second wave of privatisation”. This means that the member’s shares or assets of the company in liquidation were bought up by one or more persons, who either changed the legal status of the company or retained the old status of an “agricultural company” in order to obtain state benefits. A new type of capitalist agribusiness was created by concentrating capital and resolving internal conflicts.

Acquiring private ownership of land is a key criterion for setting up an individual farm. Land restitution created unequal access to land for all rural people. In addition, different entities with different plans for land use were involved in the process. The restoration of land to its previous owners led to the involvement of individuals in private farming without any connection to agriculture. This is primarily because of the significant decline in the rural population from 80% to 23% during the Soviet era. Based on research conducted by the Lithuanian University of Agriculture, approximately one-third of landowners opt to either rent out their land or allow it to remain fallow, rather than cultivate it themselves (Aleknavičius 2001). For these owners, the land is not an object of production and use; in case of such owners, the restitution of their land rights only had a signification of social rehabilitation. Nevertheless, a group of landowners and their descendants were granted the right to establish family farms upon the restitution of their land ownership. A distinctive feature of the Lithuanian land reform, compared to other post-socialist countries, is the granting of personal farm land (three ha) to families who do not have the right

to the restitution of land ownership rights or who only want to develop an auxiliary farm. The granting of a plot of three ha to rural families led to the creation of a large number of small farms. In 2000, there were 274,600 users of personal farms (Lietuvos agrarinės ekonomikos institutas, 2001).

In 2003, prior to Lithuania's accession to the EU, there were 272,051 family farms possessing more than one ha of land and 331,980 land users with less than one ha. Collectively, family farms constituted 89% of the agricultural area in the country. After fifty years of collective farming, it is safe to affirm that Lithuania has returned to the family farming model that the independent state of Lithuania was developing during the interwar period.

4. Diverse Structural Profiles

The restitution of land ownership and the privatisation of the means of production triggered a transformation of social relations, which manifested itself in the emergence of new social forms of production in agriculture. The collectivist structures were replaced by the following three new agrarian structures: agricultural companies, which emerged from the privatisation of collective farms and state farms; family farms, which have mostly been established on land returned to the former owners; and personal farms, which are a legacy of the auxiliary farms from the Soviet years. As decollectivisation progressed, the way in which the above structures interacted with each other and were distributed changed (Table 2).

In 2016, there were 149,461 family farms with more than one ha of land (Table 3). All family farms accounted for 87% of the country's agricultural area. An analysis of farm size shows that small farms predominate: farms with less than

Table 2. The evolution of agrarian structures in Lithuania (2003–2016)

Tabela 2. Ewolucja struktur agrarnych na Litwie (2003–2016)

Indicators	All farms			Family farms			Agricultural companies and enterprises		
	2003	2010	2016	2003	2010	2016	2003	2010	2016
Number of farms (thousands)	272,1	199,9	150,3	271,5	199,3	149,5	0,6	0,6	0,9
Utilised agricultural land (thousand ha)	2491,0	2734,7	2924,6	2188,3	2367,0	2529,8	302,7	367,7	394,8
Average farm size by area of utilised agricultural land (ha)	9.3	13.8	19.5	8.2	12.0	16.9	504.7	580.8	461.2

Source: own study based on the data from The State Data Agency of Lithuania.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie danych Państwowej Agencji Danych Litwy.

Table 3. Family farms in Lithuania (2003–2016)**Tabela 3.** Gospodarstwa rodzinne na Litwie (2003–2016)

Area of agricultural land (ha)	2003		2016		Area of agricultural land (ha)		2016	
	Number	%	Number	%			of agricultural land (ha)	%
less than 5	166,243	61.1	75,119	50.3	470,296	21.1	202,278	8.0
5–<10	58,431	21.5	32,733	21.9	408,436	18.3	229,260	9.1
10–<20	29,834	11.0	19,282	12.9	408,461	18.3	269,380	10.6
20–<50	12,862	4.7	12,129	8.1	379,951	17.0	370,234	14.6
50–<100	2,977	1.1	5,383	3.6	203,052	9.1	378,137	14.9
100–<300	1,447	0.5	3,965	2.7	227,522	10.2	651,299	25.7
300 or more	257	0.1	850	0.6	133,867	6.0	429,212	17.0
Total	272,051	100	149,461	100	2,231,600	100	2,529,800	100

Source: own study based on the data from The State Data Agency of Lithuania.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie danych Państwowej Agencji Danych Litwy.

10 ha (excluding farms with less than one ha) account for 72% of all family farms. Between 2003 and 2016, the number of family farms decreased by almost 50% as small producers withdrew from agricultural production. This caused a decline in the number of farmers, leading to larger farms. The average size of a family farm has increased from 8.2 to 16.9 ha of agricultural land. Small family farms with up to 10 ha of agricultural land dropped by 52% due to low productivity, ageing farmers and emigration.

The number of family farms ranging in size from 10 to 50 ha decreased by 26%, with a corresponding 19% decrease in cultivated land. However, their share among all family farms slightly increased from 16% to 21%. As the number of medium-sized family farms and their cultivated land declined, there was a slight increase in the average farm size, from 18.5 ha to 20.4 ha.

As the CAP promotes the emergence of large farms, the number of farms exceeding 50 ha doubled, and their cultivated land area grew 2.5 times. However, they account for only 7% of all family farms. Of large farms, the average size significantly increased from 126 ha to 143 ha.

Research at the local level enabled a thorough investigation into the restoration and development of the family farm. Three categories of family farms can be identified based on their approach to production and connection with the market: commercial

farms, farmers' farms, and subsistence farms (Mačiulytė 2009). Around one third of all family farms belong to the group of commercial farms, which is identified by a significant number of products sold on the market. Some commercial farms are multi-branch farms and do not have a specific specialisation, but they do produce products for the market. Since being established, commercial farm owners have heavily invested in agricultural machinery, constructed production buildings, and expanded their farms by either leasing or buying land. They plan to further increase the size of their farms and make additional investments in the future. With regard to the production system, investment, and desire to expand the farm, this group displays a dynamic nature with the potential to create a modern family farm. A farmer's social and cultural capital is a crucial determinant of farm development success. The commercial farm group has the highest percentage of agricultural professionals, farm managers, and farmers with specialist or higher education in agriculture. The owners of these farms, who have achieved significant economic progress in a relatively short period, form the new rural elite and have the greatest potential for farm sustainability and growth.

The second group, called farmers' farms, is characterised by a wide variety of products and low market sales. Their operational approach to production is driven primarily by family food needs and the desire to generate additional income from the market by disposing of surplus products not consumed by the family. The farms are very diverse in terms of farm size, equipment and investment levels, which are much lower than in the group covered above. Only a small proportion of holdings have increased the area under cultivation since they started farming. Farmers in this group are characterised by modest farm development plans, usually limited to the purchase of small machinery. The small amount of produce they sell does not provide them with sufficient income to expand and develop their farms. On farms, a large number of farmers have an additional income or are retired. In the 2016 survey, 42% of farmers and their family members reported having another paid job in addition to farm work, and 68% of them reported the job other than farm work as their main job. Farm employment is only part-time, with as many as 86% of workers working part-time. With low profitability, farms face difficulties in adapting to EU market conditions.

The aim of subsistence farming is to meet the food needs of the family. As many as 45% of family farms consume more than 50% of the products produced on their farms. Subsistence farms are a continuation of the *kolkhoz* workers' auxiliary farms of the Soviet era. Most subsistence farms have not increased the size of their holdings since they were established; on the contrary, in some cases their size has decreased. For a large proportion of subsistence farms, the sale of a small quantity of milk is a source of income necessary for the functioning of the farm, as well

as a source of some additional income. Despite being excluded from the market and economically unviable, subsistence farms play an important social role, providing a survival option for families impoverished by rural decollectivisation.

At the beginning of the decollectivisation process, agricultural companies were the dominant form of production; they replaced the collective farms and Soviet state farms (sovkhoz) of the Soviet era. However, during the reform process their numbers declined sharply due to internal conflicts between different social groups and broken links between land, capital and labour (Mačiulytė 2001). At the beginning of the decollectivisation process, agricultural companies were the dominant form of production, replacing the Soviet collective and state farms. During the reform process, however, their number declined sharply due to internal conflicts between different social groups and broken links between land, capital and labour (Mačiulytė 2001). On the eve of Lithuania's accession to the EU, there were 610 agricultural enterprises, of which 285 were agricultural companies. Agricultural companies are very similar to agricultural enterprises in terms of their operating logic and ownership structure, so they are analysed together. In 2016, there were 856 agricultural companies and enterprises, which cultivated 395,804 ha, or 14% of the country's total agricultural area.

Small and medium-sized farms (cultivating up to 100 ha) predominate among agricultural companies and enterprises (Table 4). However, very large farms with more than 1,000 ha of agricultural land co-exist with the above-mentioned farms. Together with large family farms, these latifundia-type farms account for up to 9% of the country's agricultural land. Although the economic and social role of agricultural companies and agricultural enterprises has declined sharply in the overall national context (in 2016, these structures accounted for 28% of total

Table 4. Agricultural companies and enterprises in Lithuania (2016)

Tabela 4. Przedsiębiorstwa rolne i spółki rolnicze na Litwie (2016)

Area of agricultural land (ha)	Number	%	Area of agricultural land (ha)	%
less than 100	380	44	12,234	3
100–<500	241	28	59,251	15
500–<1000	99	12	69,926	18
1000 or more	136	16	253,393	64
Total	856	100	394,804	100

Source: own study based on the data from The State Data Agency of Lithuania.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie danych Państwowej Agencji Danych Litwy.

agricultural production), there are still regions where this social form of production remains dominant (Figure 1). Agricultural companies and enterprises, as the predominant form of production, are widespread in the northern and central plains of the country. This form of production has persisted here because of the good material base created during the Soviet era, the natural conditions

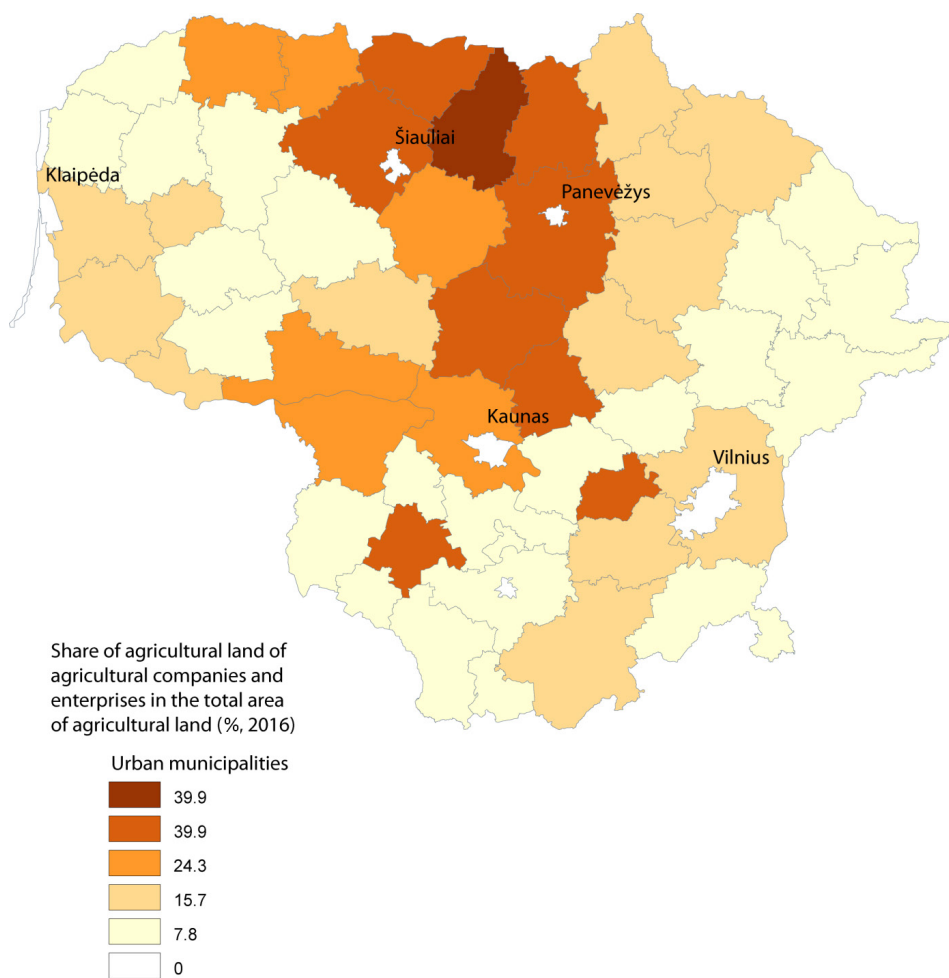


Figure 1. Territorial disparities of agricultural enterprises in Lithuania across municipalities

Rysunek 1. Dysproporcje terytorialne przedsiębiorstw rolnych na Litwie wg gmin

Source: own study based on the data from The State Data Agency of Lithuania.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie danych Państwowej Agencji Danych Litwy.

that are better than elsewhere, and the small number of former landowners living locally (as a result of the post-war deportations) who are able to set up family farms. In the municipalities of Šiauliai, Joniškis, Pasvalys, Kėdainiai, Jonava districts, as well as in the municipalities of Marijampolė and Elektrėnai, agricultural companies and enterprises account for a quarter or more of the total share of agricultural area, whereas in the municipality of the Pakruojis district they account for as much as 40% of the total area. In rural areas where economic diversification is still weak agricultural enterprises play an important social role, employing 17,340 permanent workers and 658 temporary workers.

Cereals and industrial crops are grown by agricultural companies and enterprises who lease most of their land.⁷ The creation of a network of private companies providing services from upstream (distribution of fertilisers and plant protection products, consultancy services) to downstream (purchase of agricultural products through forward contracts) encourages the specialisation of cereal production on farms. The production intensity of agricultural enterprises is twice as high as that of farmers' farms, thanks to a high level of mechanisation and the use of advanced technologies.⁸ On average, an agricultural company or an enterprise produces fifty times more standard products than a farmers' farm. Initial capital raised at favourable conditions and EU support has led to the emergence of very large, productive farms in Lithuania as well as in other post-communist countries of Central Europe. In Lithuania, one third of agricultural companies and enterprises cultivate 84% of the agricultural land under cultivation by all agricultural holdings and account for the production worth more than EUR 250,000. Agricultural enterprises are competitive and profitable thanks to EU support, relatively low land rents and sales prices, and low wages paid to agricultural workers. Large-scale agricultural structures play an important economic and social role, but the productivist mode of production that is developing in the image of Western European agriculture is having a negative environmental impact.

In order to prevent speculation on agricultural land and to preserve the traditional family farm, the Lithuanian government has consistently sought to limit the concentration of land in the hands of a single owner. However, restrictions on the purchase of agricultural land were first introduced in 2003. Under the law in force at the time, a natural person was not allowed to own more than 300 ha of agricultural land, a legal entity could not own more than 2,000 ha, and an agricultural cooperative company could own up to 1,000 ha. The amendments introduced in 2006 to the Law

⁷ Agricultural companies and enterprises lease 74% of their agricultural land under cultivation.

⁸ The production intensity is calculated in terms of the standard output per hectare of agricultural land. Agricultural holdings produce standard output per hectare of agricultural land at a cost of EUR 1,250, while farms produce standard output at a cost of EUR 685.

on the Acquisition of Agricultural Land increased the area of agricultural land owned per person to 500 ha. The amendments of the year 2014 to the above-mentioned law introduced the concept of related persons. Related persons are family members and legal entities in which the person wishing to acquire the land owns more than 25 of the shares. The law has introduced a limit of 500 ha of agricultural land to be jointly owned by all the relatives, rather than by a single person, unless the agricultural land has been acquired for the development of livestock farming. Since 2003, the recognition of the right to private ownership of agricultural land has strengthened the economic position of agricultural companies. The area of private agricultural land owned by legal entities has been increasing: in 2004, legal entities owned 15,458 ha of agricultural land, whereas in 2020, this area was as much as 256,214 ha, i.e., some 8% of the entire agricultural area. Foreign investors are interested in owning agricultural land. In 2014, after the end of the transition period, foreign entities were granted the right to acquire agricultural land. In several countries that experienced decollectivisation, the penetration of European and international investors has accelerated the process of land grabbing in favour of very large farms, thus marginalising small and medium-sized structures (Maurel 2018). Despite the government's ambition to regulate the agricultural land market, there has been a concentration of agricultural land among a small group of natural and legal entities. Most land acquisitions have been made by powerful agro-holdings and Lithuanian or foreign investment companies. As a journalistic document revealed, Lithuania's largest landowner, who is a farmer and the sole shareholder of the Agrokoncernas agroholding, owns some 22,000–24,000 ha of land.⁹ The Lithuanian capital companies Linas Agro Group, Auga Group, Austrian capital groups Agroforst Gmbh and Agra Corporation, Danish investors Ingleby and other financial groups are among the largest landholders. Some agricultural companies are part of agroholding groups, which, in addition to their agricultural activities, are involved in the wholesale marketing of agricultural inputs, the purchase and processing of agricultural produce and other activities. Agroholdings and investment companies hold member shares in agricultural companies.¹⁰ For example, Agroforst Gmbh, an Austrian company which started operations in Lithuania in 2011, owns member shares in 15 agricultural companies (Laurinaitė-Šimelevičienė, Rakauskė 2019).

⁹ The Agrokoncernas group is one of the biggest partners of Lithuanian farmers in the sectors of agrochemical service, sales of agricultural products and other areas of the agricultural industry.

¹⁰ A member share (a member share contribution) means the contributions, both contributions in kind and non-pecuniary contributions, made by the members of a company or its shareholders. Member shares may not be sold or bought through stock exchange facilities or public auctions. If the members of a company and holders of member shares so wish, the company shall, in accordance with the procedure laid down in its articles of association, organise private auctions for the purchase and sale of member shares.

The CAP has had a major impact on the transformation of agrarian structures. The direct-payment support mechanism is particularly favourable for large farms and has little impact on small and medium-sized family farms. Furthermore, attaining financial aid for rural development schemes aimed at restructuring subsistence farms or modernising farms presents a challenge for small and medium-sized family farms. There have been attempts to build Central Europe's post-collectivist agriculture on medium-sized family farms, but instead, the CAP support measures have reinforced large agrarian structures. The support provided has also enabled the survival of a large number of small farms. Family farms (100 to 300 ha), which are in line with the "Western European family farm model", account for only 3% of all family farms in Lithuania and a quarter of the total agricultural area.

5. Territorial Development of Agrarian Structures after Lithuania's Accession to the EU

Lithuania's accession to the EU marks a new stage in the development of agriculture. The support this provided has had a positive impact on the development of agriculture. After a decline in agricultural production as a result of functional and structural reforms carried out during the pre-accession period starting in 2004, gross agricultural output started to grow, productivity has risen due to the increasing use of modern machinery and more advanced technologies; and there has been a significant improvement in the skills of agricultural workforce. Nevertheless, EU support mechanisms and the CAP are selective in socio-economic and territorial terms. This raises several questions about how agricultural structures have changed in the EU context or which farms have benefited most and for what reasons. It would be interesting to see whether the agrarian structures formed during the decollectivisation process have continued to exist. It would also be useful to identify the factors that influence the territorial differentiation of the agrarian structures. In the section below, family farms and agricultural enterprises are considered together regardless of the nature of work and the capital structure.

Following Lithuania's accession to the EU, the number of agricultural holdings has fallen, but the area of agricultural land in use has increased and the average size of holdings has doubled. Between 2003 and 2016, more than 120,000 farms ceased agricultural production (Table 5). The decline in the number of holdings has been at the expense of smallholdings (less than 10 ha). The number of small farms fell by more than 52% over the period. The reduction in the number of small farms was accompanied by a concentration of land in large farms (over 50 ha), whose number and area more than doubled (Table 6). In contrast, the number and area

Table 5. Development of the number of agrarian structures in Lithuania according to their size (2003–2016)**Tabela 5.** Zmiany liczby struktur agrarnych na Litwie według ich wielkości (2003–2016)

Size of farms, ha	2003		2010		2016	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
less than 5	168,904	62	117,399	59	75,202	50
5–<10	57,207	21	39,897	20	32,770	22
10–<20	28,477	10	21,473	11	19,318	13
20–<50	12,452	5	12,512	6	12,250	8
50–<100	3,006	1	4,830	2	5,486	4
100 or more	2,065	1	3,802	2	5,291	3
Total	272,111	100	199,913	100	150,317	100

Source: own study based on the data from The State Data Agency of Lithuania.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie danych Państwowej Agencji Danych Litwy.

Table 6. The development of areas of agricultural land in Lithuania used by agrarian structures (2003–2016)**Tabela 6.** Zmiany w powierzchni gruntów rolnych na Litwie użytkowanych przez struktury agrarne (2003–2016)

Size of farms (ha)	2003		2010		2016	
	Agricultural land (ha)	%	Agricultural land (ha)	%	Agricultural land (ha)	%
less than 5	474,625	19	312,596	11	202,390	7
5–<10	398,844	16	276,810	10	229,563	8
10–<20	389,801	16	296,009	11	269,923	9
20–<50	368,900	15	388,690	14	374,011	13
50–<100	205,558	8	328,409	12	385,636	13
100 or more	653,230	26	1,140,044	42	1,463,081	50
Total	2,490,958	100	2,742,558	100	2,924,604	100

Source: own study based on the data from The State Data Agency of Lithuania.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie danych Państwowej Agencji Danych Litwy.

of medium-sized farms (those between 10 and 50 ha) decreased (by 23% and 16% respectively).

Since 2004, agrarian dualism has become even more pronounced, characterised by the coexistence of a large number of small farms and a small number of very large farms. Although the number of small farms is decreasing (especially personal farms of three ha or less), they still account for three-quarters of the total number of farms, but cultivate only 15% of the agricultural area. Very large latifundia-type farms are a distinctive feature of the agrarian structure of Central and Eastern Europe (Maurel 2012; Vandenbroucke, Fehér 2011). The surviving agricultural companies and enterprises have been transformed into capitalist farms, where the land and capital are owned by one or more owners and the workers are hired. The development of some family farms also led to this form of production.

According to some experts, direct agricultural payments have had the greatest impact on transforming the agricultural sector (Lietuvos Respublikos žemės ūkio ministerija, 2013). Direct payments per hectare of agricultural land were of great benefit to large farms, which were already on the path to modernisation before Lithuania joined the EU. In addition, large farms had sufficient financial resources to benefit from other measures of the Rural Development Programme, which require having some initial capital and advisory support for the preparation of investment projects. EU support had relatively little impact on modernising small farms but helped to consolidate these structures.

For some time now, there has been intense public debate about very large farms. However, this study shows that extreme cases of land concentration do not dominate Lithuanian agriculture. The analysis of large farms (farms larger than 100 ha) at national level shows that more than three quarters of farms (78%) have between 100 and 300 ha and cultivate 47% of the agricultural area of all large farms, which accounts for 23% of the agricultural area used in the country as a whole. Very large farms (those with more than 1,000 ha) account for 3% of all large farms, i.e., 179 units, and they cultivate 21% of the agricultural area used by all large farms, which accounts for 11% of the total agricultural area used in the country.

Territorial disparities are a typical feature of the transformation of agrarian structures. In the northern and central regions, the conversion process has led to the emergence of a latifundia-type agrarian structure characterised by a large number of small farms, the so-called three ha, and a small number of large family farms or agricultural enterprises (e.g. agricultural companies, sole proprietorships, and limited companies). In south-western Lithuania, the transition from a collective to a family farming model has been faster than in other regions and is characterised by a more active formation of medium and large family farms. Since Lithuania's accession to the EU, the highest direct payments to cereal producers and relatively

high purchase prices for cereals have encouraged large farms to increase the area under cultivation. In the municipalities of Šakiai, Kaunas, Jonava, Kėdainiai, Panevėžys, Radviliškis, Akmenė, Pasvalys and Biržai, large farms with more than 50 ha cultivate more than three-quarters of the agricultural area, while in the municipalities of Joniškis and Pakruojis such farms cultivate as much as 86% of the municipality's total agricultural area (Figure 2).

The consolidation of farms has been at the expense of small farms. Between 2003 and 2016, the municipalities of Joniškis, Pakruojis, Pasvalys and Radviliškis saw the largest number of small farms cultivating less than 10 ha of land disappear (70% or above) (Figure 3). Prior to EU accession, large farms had a greater economic, social and cultural capital than medium and small family farms. Under the pre-accession programme SAPARD, most of the funds (EUR 130 million for the period 2000–2006) were earmarked for farm modernisation. Unfortunately, only a small number of very large farms that were already economically strong were able to benefit from the programme. Due to the partial reimbursement of investments, the fact that only machinery from EU or candidate countries could be purchased, and the unfavourable bank credit system for farmers, only a very small number of economically strong farmers were able to take advantage of this relatively important financial support. In addition, the complexity of preparing a business plan and the inactivity of the agricultural advisers also hindered a better absorption of the funds allocated for this purpose. The agricultural support mechanism in place since 2004 has further widened the gap between economically strong and weak farms.

Small farms continue to exist due to the support of direct payments, the low labour supply in rural areas, the low standard of living and the need for additional income for people living in rural areas. A large number of small farms and a relatively high proportion of the agricultural area they cultivate are located in the eastern and southern regions and in Žemaitija (Figure 4). These are the rural areas of “social exclusion” where agriculture has a social rather than a productive function. The historical legacy has influenced the territorial spread of small-scale farming. During the interwar period, small family farms were established in the southern and south-eastern parts of Lithuania where land was granted on the basis of agricultural ownership to those who wished to engage in farming after the restoration of the country's independence. The development of agriculture has been hampered by poor agronomic conditions, which make these farms less profitable than those in regions with fertile land. Livestock farming has developed in these regions, but has received less support than the cereal sector.

The Vilnius district has a particularly large number of small farms, which account for a third of the agricultural area. In the region around the capital, farms are kept for the purpose of resale as building land. However, thanks to the proximity

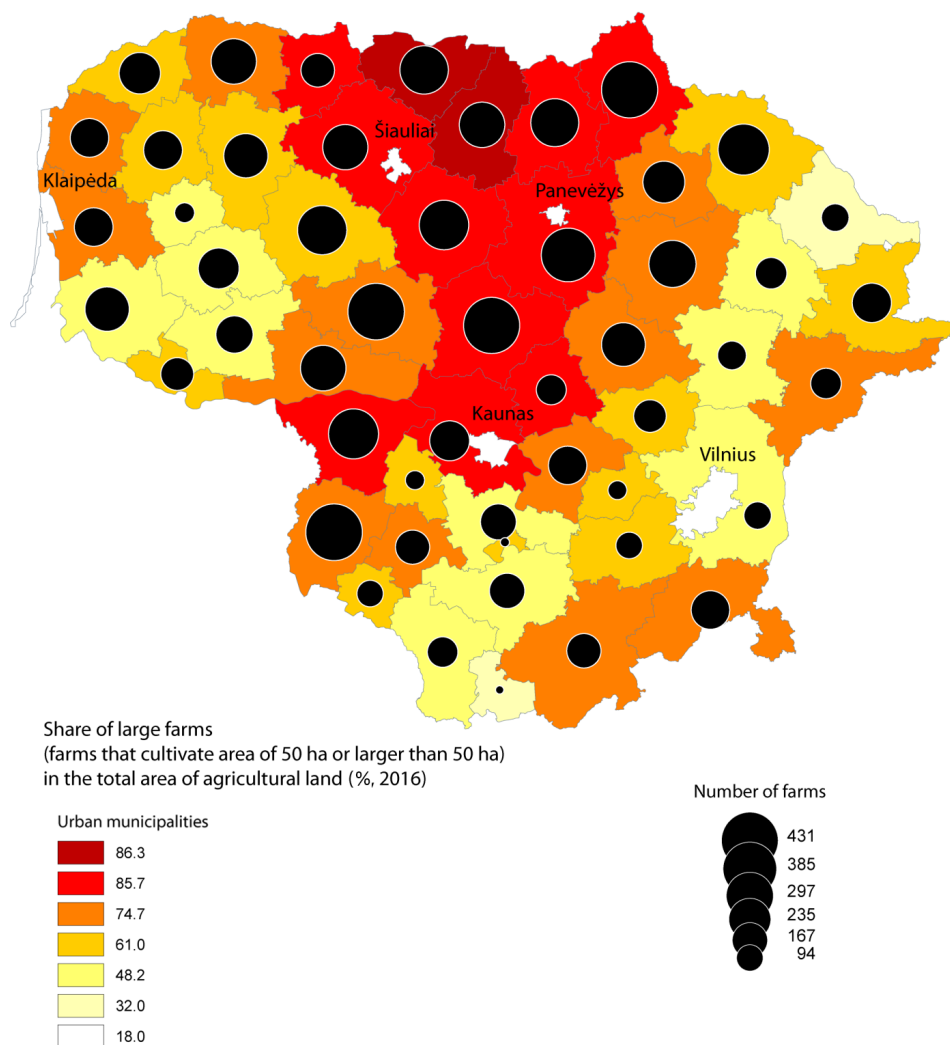


Figure 2. Distribution of large farms in Lithuania across municipalities

Rysunek 2. Rozmieszczenie dużych gospodarstw rolnych na Litwie wg gmin

Source: own study based on the data from The State Data Agency of Lithuania.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie danych Państwowej Agencji Danych Litwy.

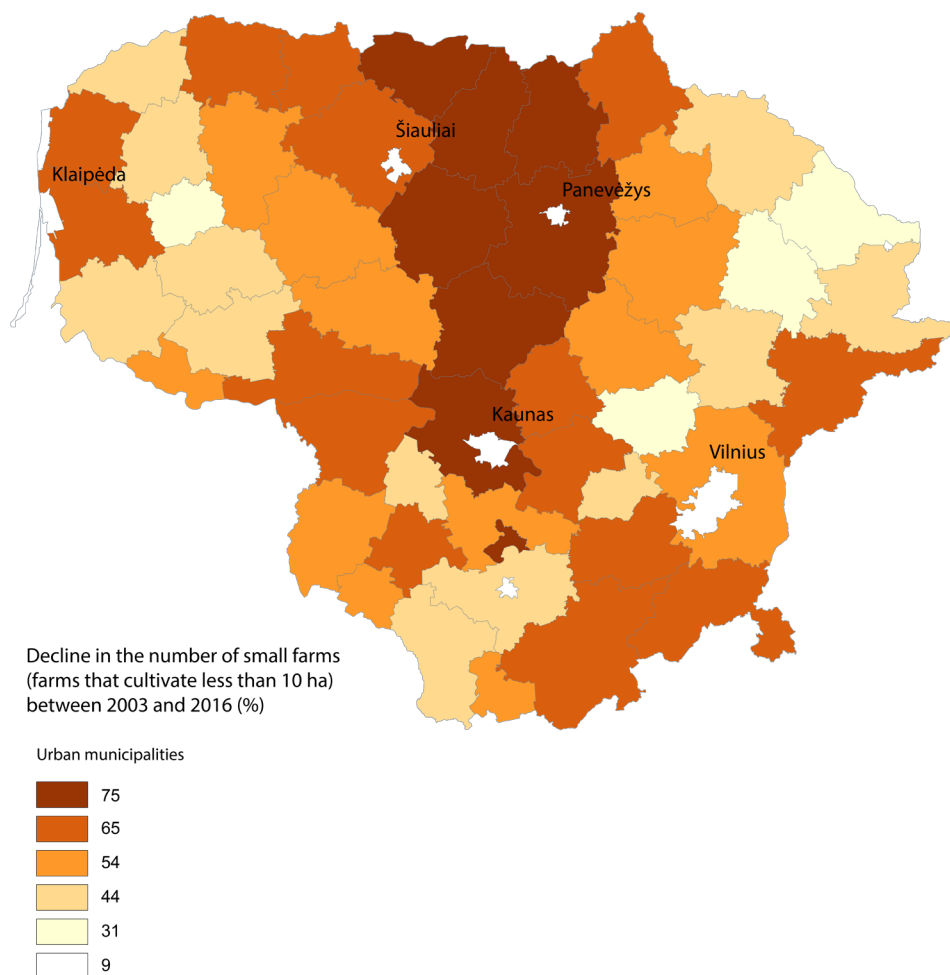


Figure 3. Changes in the share of small farms in Lithuania across municipalities

Rysunek 3. Zmiany w udziale małych gospodarstw rolnych na Litwie wg gmin

Source: own study based on the data from The State Data Agency of Lithuania.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie danych Państwowej Agencji Danych Litwy.

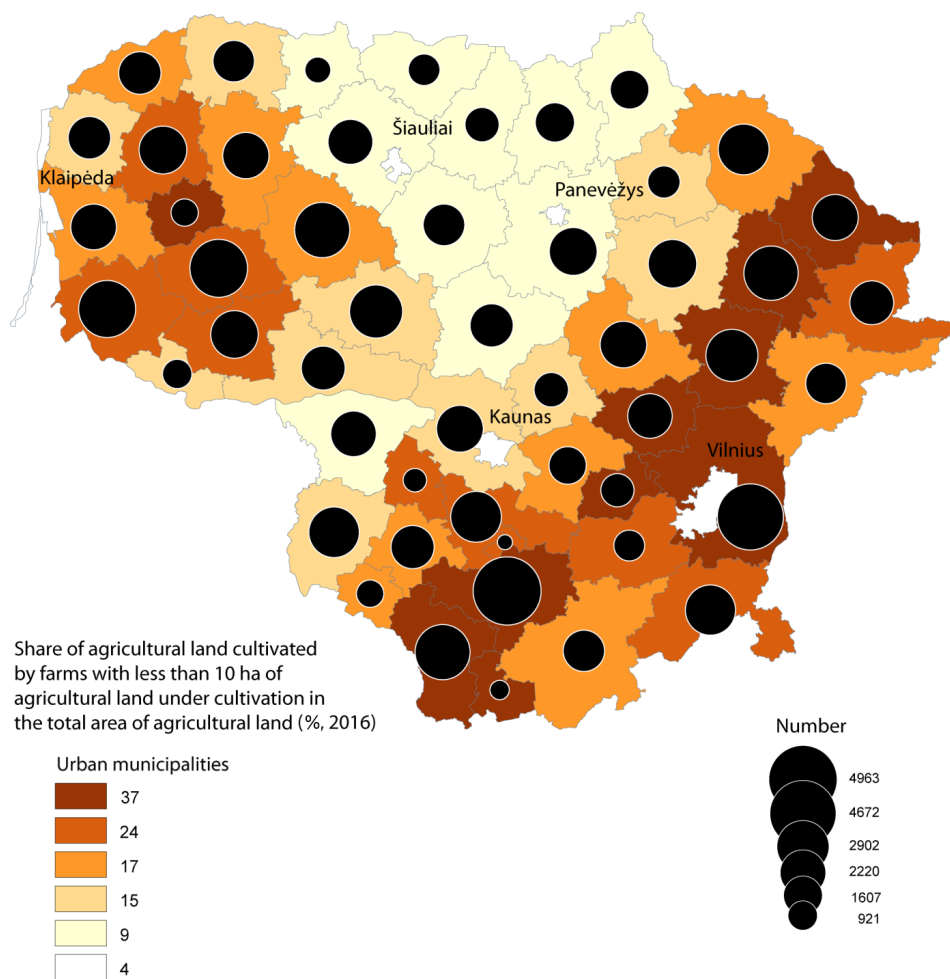


Figure 4. Territorial disparities in terms of small farms in Lithuania across municipalities

Rysunek 4. Dysproporcje terytorialne małych gospodarstw rolnych na Litwie wg gmin

Source: own study based on the data from The State Data Agency of Lithuania.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie danych Państwowej Agencji Danych Litwy.

of the capital, family farming can also be developed, focusing on the “short distance” model, i.e. the direct sale of products (vegetables, meat, dairy products and organic products) to urban consumers.

Lithuania’s accession to the EU boosted agricultural production. Between 2010 and 2016, standard production increased from EUR 1,526,724.6 to EUR 2,226,207.6, i.e., a growth of 31%. However, the rate of economic growth varies between farms and regions of the country. An analysis of the economic size of farms shows a high degree of differentiation between them (Table 7). Despite a general trend towards an increase in the economic power of agricultural holdings, a third (38%) of holdings are in the lowest category, i.e. their standard output is less than EUR 2,000.¹¹ Nevertheless, the share of economically weak farms is declining: in 2010, farms in the lowest economic class accounted for half of all farms in the country. While the number of economically weak farms decreased and the number of medium-sized farms (farms with a standard output of up to EUR 15,000) remained relatively stable, the number of economically strong farms (farms with a standard output of between EUR 100,000 and EUR 500,000) increased somewhat.

Table 7. Development of the economic size of farms in Lithuania (2010–2016)

Tabela 7. Zmiany wielkości ekonomicznej gospodarstw rolnych na Litwie (2010–2016)

Economic size classes	2010	%	2016	%
Output accounts for less than EUR 15,000	185,838	92.96	130,539	86.84
15,000 EU–<50,000 EU	10,279	5.14	12,378	8.23
50,000 EU–<100,000 EU	2,172	1.09	3,936	2.62
100,000 EU–<500,000 EU	1,388	0.69	16,314	10.85
500,000 EU–<1,000,000 EU	127	0.06	205	0.14
1,000,000 EU–<3,000,000 EU	51	0.03	72	0.05
Output amounts to or exceeds EUR 3,000,000	58	0.03	109	0.07
Total	199,913	100	150,317	100

Source: own study based on the data from The State Data Agency of Lithuania.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie danych Państwowej Agencji Danych Litwy.

¹¹ To determine the economic size of a farm, the standard output of each crop or livestock/poultry species is multiplied by the corresponding area of crops or number of livestock/poultry species and the values obtained are added together. This sum represents the total standard output of a farm and describes its economic size. According to their economic size, farms in the EU are classified into 14 classes.

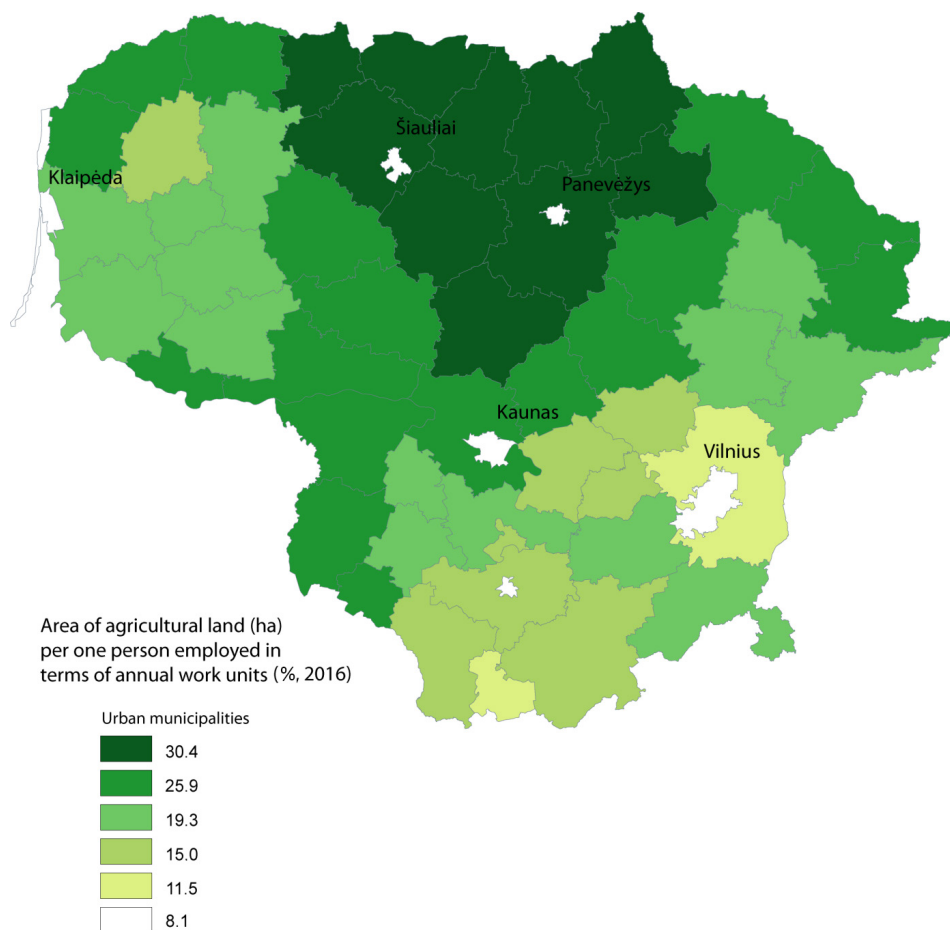


Figure 5. Territorial differences in labour productivity in agriculture in Lithuania across municipalities

Rysunek 5. Różnice terytorialne w produktywności pracy w rolnictwie na Litwie wg gmin

Source: own study based on the data from The State Data Agency of Lithuania.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie danych Państwowej Agencji Danych Litwy.

The agrarian reform carried out after the restoration of Lithuania's independence and the implementation of the CAP have led to a decline in the number of people working in agriculture. There was a significant drop in the number of people employed in agriculture between 2005 and 2016, i.e., from 545,400 to 256,800 of those employed. Despite the decline in the number of farmers, their share of the labour force remains twice that of many Western European countries.¹²

Support from the EU has stimulated an increase in labour productivity, which is measured by the area of agricultural land cultivated by one person employed in annual work units (AWU). In 2005, one person employed in AWUs cultivated 12.6 ha of agricultural land, while in 2016 the corresponding area cultivated was 19.7 ha. Although agricultural labour has become more intensive, it is still much lower than in Western Europe. Labour productivity varies between regions in Lithuania (Figure 5). The northern and central regions of the country (the municipalities in Akmenė, Joniškis, Šiauliai, Pakruojis, Pasvalys, Biržai, Radviliškis, Panevėžys and Kėdainiai districts) are characterised by the highest labour productivity due to a high degree of mechanisation, favourable agronomic conditions and their specialisation in the cultivation of cereals, which require little manual labour. On a 1,000-hectare it is estimated that only about five people work farm in arable production. Labour productivity is higher than the national average in the municipalities surrounding the most productive agricultural area, as well as in the municipalities in Suvalkija or the municipalities near the northern and north-eastern borders. In contrast, labour productivity was among the lowest in the Žemaitija region, which specialises in dairy farming, which requires more labour and investment, and in the southern or south-eastern regions, which are characterised by unfavourable soils and a large elderly rural population. In general, the CAP has been particularly favourable for the arable sector, where labour productivity has risen, land has been concentrated and the number of people employed has fallen. Livestock farming has become less attractive for medium and small family farms due to lower EU support (no direct payments at all for poultry and pig farming), higher labour requirements and a continuous production cycle.

6. Conclusion

Structural change is complex and can be radical, even abrupt, or gradual. The dismantling of collectivist agriculture can open up different pathways. In most Central European countries, path dependency mechanisms have worked in favour of the continuity of large farms as the basic form of production, with collective

¹² In 2017, 7.4% of the active population worked in agriculture in Lithuania, compared to an average of 3.1% in the old EU member states.

and state farms being transformed into neo-collectivist enterprises. Conversely, in Lithuania, the end of collectivism paved the way for the revival of the family-farm model. The Lithuanian experience of achieving agrarian reform based on restitution to former owners and the promotion of family farming was quite an exception.

The historical legacy has played a key role in the transformation of the agrarian structure as the legalisation of private land rights was based on the restoration of interwar land ownership. The restitution process was part of a new land reform designed to avoid excessive land fragmentation, i.e. on the basis of a planned land development plan on the local scale. In this way, family farms could be reconstituted on a coherent area of land, while the former collective farms were not fully dismantled. The strong ideological and political choice in favour of private landownership has had a regenerative effect on family farming (Alanen 1995). These new independent family farms coexisted with agricultural enterprises of a neo-collectivist nature. Initially, the economic environment gave these large farms an obvious comparative advantage. During the first decade of independence, these enterprises sought ways to adapt to market conditions and to manage internal conflicts between different social groups (landowners, pensioners, workers). Path dependent mechanisms are never completely absolute, and the policies implemented by successive governments have led to path shifts, creating a wide range of productive configurations.

Lithuania's accession to the EU has placed farms in a new institutional environment, which, thanks to CAP support, was generally favourable to agricultural development. However, the funding was based on a categorisation that was not, and is still not in favour of small and medium farms. The loss of know-how and skills felt by the family labour force during the Soviet years, lack of financial resources, ineffective professional organisations, unavailability of extension services and bureaucratic obstacles have hindered their revival. Moreover, the small- and medium-sized farms have not received significant support from the CAP measures. Semi-subsistence farms, enlarged by the allocation of three ha, still play a crucial social role for the most vulnerable families in the countryside, but they are deprived of any prospect of development. At the same time, some of the large neo-collectivist farms have been transformed into modern, capitalist-style enterprises, and the most successful have become subsidiaries of large agro-industrial groups owned by Lithuanian or by foreign investment companies. Legal provisions for controlling the land market, which are easy to circumvent, have enabled agro-industrial groups to grab large areas of land. Over the last decade, land concentration has increased to the benefit of large farms and to the detriment of small and medium-sized farms. The Lithuanian countryside bears the marks of an agrarian dualism, partly inherited from a painful history and partly reshaped by contemporary structural changes.

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Annex

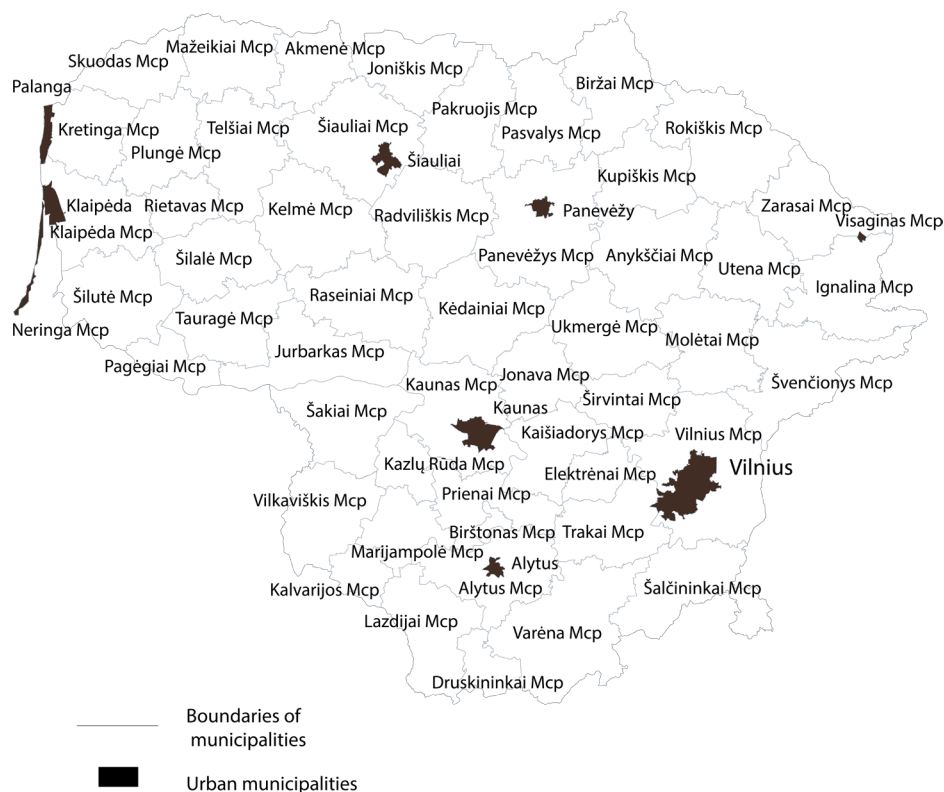


Figure A1. The territorial administrative division of Lithuania

Rysunek A1. Podział administracyjny Litwy

Source: own study based on the official map of the administrative division of Lithuania.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie oficjalnej mapy podziału administracyjnego Litwy.

Doświadczenie dekoloktywizacji w poszukiwaniu jej europejskiej drogi. Przykład Litwy

Streszczenie: Po upadku tzw. żelaznej kurtyny kraje postkomunistycznej Europy rozpoczęły proces dekoloktywizacji, który – ze względu na dziedzictwo historyczne, środowisko polityczne oraz metody prywatyzacji zastosowane w poszczególnych krajach – przybrał specyficzne cechy, tworząc mozaikę struktur agrarnych na Starym Kontynencie. Litwa, doświadczwszy sowieckiego kolektywizmu, powróciła do modelu gospodarstw rodzinnych, który funkcjonował w okresie międzywojennym. Jednak gospodarstwa rodzinne różniące się między sobą wielkością i celami produkcyjnymi współistnieją z przedsiębiorstwami rolnymi o różnych statusach prawnych. Artykuł miał na celu analizę przemian i terytorialnego rozmieszczenia struktur agrarnych na Litwie w kontekście radykalnie zmieniających się uwarunkowań politycznych i gospodarczych. Biorąc pod uwagę trwałość struktur terytorialnych, konieczna jest ocena roli czynnika historycznego w transformacji obszarów wiejskich oraz określenie, w jaki sposób odziedziczone struktury przestrzenne wpływają na adaptację nowych struktur agrarnych na danym obszarze. Transformacja struktur agrarnych została w artykule przeanalizowana na poziomach krajowym i gminnym.

Słowa kluczowe: Litwa, dekoloktywizacja, społeczne formy produkcji, gospodarstwo rodzinne, przedsiębiorstwo rolne.