

**A GYEPEK SZEREPE, JELENTŐSÉGE A VIDÉKFEJLESZTÉSBN****KOVÁCS PÉTER**

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**ABSTRACT**

Due to the drastic economic and political changes in Central and Eastern Europe in 1990, many elements of economy, society and politics have changed in Hungary, which have had a great impact on rural areas, rural people and the agricultural sector. Consequently, the regional and rural developments have become extremely important to find a solution to the enormous difficulties of the transition process. The development programme mainly focuses on social, infrastructure and labour aspects of rural areas; demographic processes, social structures, employment programmes, level of education, level of entrepreneurial skills, attitudes toward farming.

However, the development concepts should also cover the progression of agriculture entirely and combine different concepts and methods and put them into an integrated system to manage rural problems.

In fact, the importance of grassland management can be examined in different aspects regarding rural development. On the one hand, we can investigate landscape and grassland usage and conditions, on the other hand, the importance of grasslands in maintaining ecological balance and environmental protection in general. Besides, grazing animal production is profitable and may be a vehicle for rural economic development.

After Hungary had become a member state of the European Union, general provisions were laid down regarding grassland management in our country. Prior to the accession, the *National Agricultural and Environmental Programme (NAEP)* involved objectives for an extensive use of grasslands to encourage farmers to comply with the regulations by financial support. In 2004 NAEP was replaced by the *Agriculture and Rural Development Operational Programme (ARDOP)*, which ensured the realisation of the strategic objectives followed by the *New Hungary Rural Development Programme* in 2007.

In this paper I examine the economical and environmental importance of grassland management as well as the condition of grasslands and its potential for rural economic development.

**Kulcsszavak:** gyepgazdálkodás, gyeppek szerepe, vidékfejlesztés, földhasználat, lehetőségek