

SOME CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF THE TERRITORIAL CONNECTIONS OF AGRICULTURAL CO-OPERATIVES IN THE SOUTHERN HUNGARIAN PLAIN

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As regards to the rate, the greatest changes have taken place in rural areas during the past quarter of a century. As a result of a rapid and thorough social and economic development, the rigidness of the system of villages which used to be "motionless", used to lack horizontal and vertical connections almost entirely for centuries, ceased to exist. Economic, social and settlement-hierarchical differentiation of rural areas started. Extension of economic functions became a characteristic process and, changes took place in the internal system of the rural areas. Rural areas cannot be described by only one function today. In my opinion however the decisive condition of the development of the rural areas as an economic and settlement-system is, that certain function(s) should get stable and should develop to be decisive. Thus the presentday course of the change of the villages — which resulted in a functional enrichment compared to the earlier period — can be considered as a certain transitional period — one searching for a new economic trend. Thinking over the socialist development of rural areas, we must observe that getting "multi-functional" — often in the case of single villages, too — shows great variety and variability. Therefore we can state — in order to increase its living capacity — the rural area tries to perform many kinds of functions. On the whole, this is what makes it possible to develop areal connectionend variability. However these new areal connections are not merely results. Their effect in the development of the rural areas and in the changes of the structure of the areas must also be taken into consideration. I think it is essential to clarify which trends of the areal differences of the economic and social change of the areal connections are strengthened or weakened.

Of the areal connections in the areas which are well utilizable agriculturally (so in the Southern Hungarian Plain) it is the connections of the agriculture which are the most significant. This is caused by the role of agriculture. It is known that in our country a very important factor in the economic growth and development in the state of food-production which — in our days — depends mostly on agricultural production. Since the most important agricultural areas can be found in rural areas, it can be supposed that development in these areas will be continous agriculture remains the basic economic function.

Areal connections of industrialited agriculture form complicated system. Their trends and effects show great areal differences. The factors causing the connections are also various. There are — as an ordering principle — an approach from the side of agricultural production was found. Thus the elements of the agricultural production of co-operatives which resulted in creating new areal connections, too, could be grouped together.

Areal Concentration

The optimal size of the agricultural co-operative depends on the given natural and economic conditions as well as on the applicable technique and technology. Areal concentration was however effected by other factors (e.g. more favourable tax and support-possibilities) which — in some areas — resulted in a forced pace of concentration. The increase of the size of the land has been an accompanying phenomenon of the development of the agricultural co-operatives from the beginning. In the period of the organization of co-operatives, some unfavourable size co-operatives were formed. It was characteristic in the Southern Hungarian Plain that in rural settlements with large pieces of land around them — more than one and often small size — co-operatives were formed within one village. Even then it was areal concentration that seemed to be an appropriate solution in order to create a more favourable rate of arable area and labour forces. At that time however, the union of co-operatives was not so general in the Southern Plain as in the small-village region of the country. It also was slower. The areal concentration of agricultural co-operatives in this area became rapid in the 70-ies.

Table 1. *Changes in the Number and Average Area of Co-operatives and of State-supported Farms in the Southern Hungarian Plain*

Year	Co-operatives		State-supported farms	
	average area ha	number	average area ha	number
1960	904	762	2 927	69
1965	1 802	533	5 944	37
1970	2 392	429	6 380	33
1975	3 602	291	7 465	28
1977	4 076	267	7 923	27

In this process the following areal differences can be recognized:

- the most prominent areal concentration took place in towns,
- in the areas belonging to the region of attractiveness the system of one village — one co-operative was virtually formed,
- a concentration process took place in the special co-operatives, too,
- a very interesting characteristic feature of the areal concentration is the union of co-operatives,
- special co-operatives which occurred prominently in areas of Bács-Kiskun County with unfavourable natural conditions,
- in some places (mainly in regions with small villages) the concentration exceeded the administrative borders of villages so the co-operative includes more than one village (Pitvaros, Forráskút, Újkígyós, Dombegyház, etc. fig. 1.).

Thus the areal concentration reached a qualitatively new period and created an entirely new form of agricultural areal connections — which is of high importance for the future. It is expected that this new agricultural organization will include not only agricultural production but also the whole of these villages thus creating a new situation in both the agricultural and administrative management. It may be supposed that in

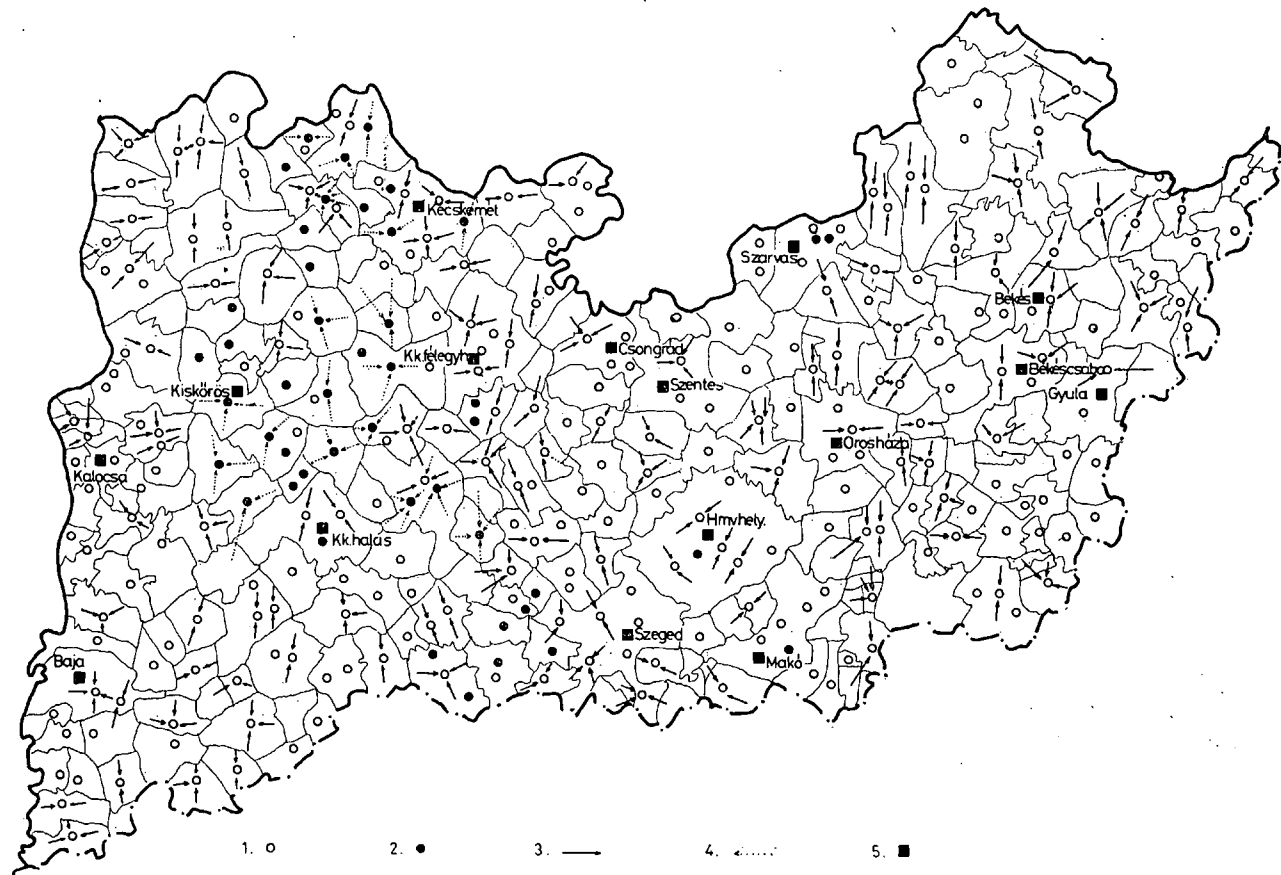


Fig. . Areal concentration (1970—1977) 1: co-operativa 2: special co-operative 3: the direction of the union (co-operative) 4: the direction of the union (special co-operative) 5: town

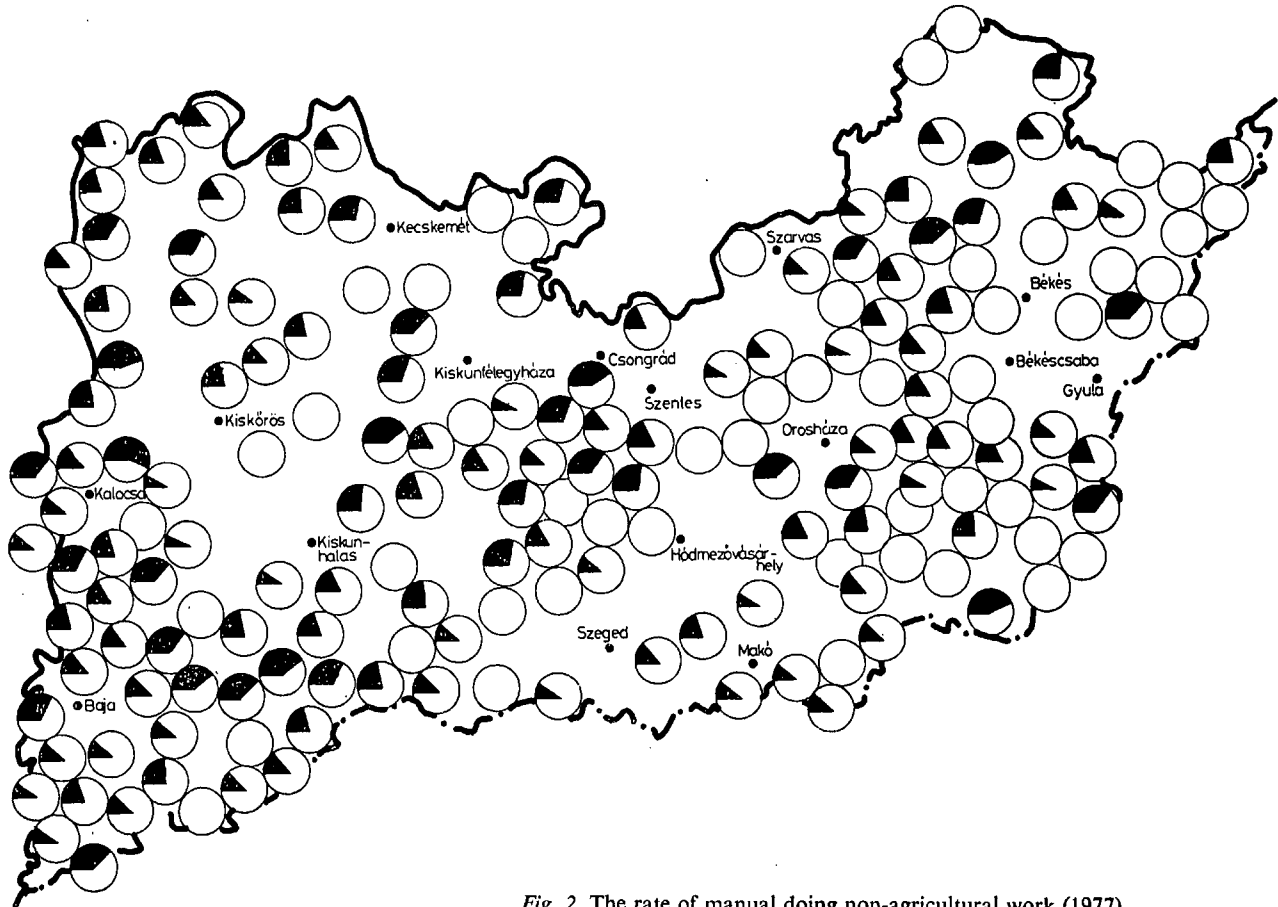


Fig. 2. The rate of manual doing non-agricultural work (1977)

these areas it is the agriculture that is the decisive factor in the development of the rural area even now. This agricultural organization also has a function of areal organization and reinforces the central role of the settlement in the centre of the co-operative.

Attraction of Labour Forces

Agriculture became a dynamically developing branch of the people's economy at the beginning of the 70-ies. The pace of the development, as well as the character of work is getting similar to industrial production. The qualitatively higher level of agricultural production as well as food and provender-production in the agricultural area creates a wider branch-and-profession scale in principle and after all, it differentiates the formerly homogenous agricultural activity from the point of view of profession. The results of the investigation indicate that the agricultural-professional structure of the rural area is a lot more complicated than it is shown by statistical data. Statistical data do not go into details as far as the different branches of agricultural labour is concerned. *By a deep analysis of the labour data of co-operatives one must notice that the rate of manual workers doing non-agricultural work is increasing generally* (fig. 2.). On the other hand, if these data are compared with other data (functional, structural) of the co-operatives one must come to the conclusion that the rate of manual workers doing non-agricultural work is in close connection with the higher technological level of the activity only in a few places. However, a definitely close connection can be found in co-operatives where there are other forms of activity apart from the basic function (industrial, servicing, transport, etc.). This is however only one side of the question. It is worth observing the surprisingly close connection between the number of manual workers doing non-agricultural work and that of the ones going to work to the co-operatives (fig. 2., 3.). The attraction of labour force by co-operatives is also a new characteristic feature in the rural areas, but this type of mobility of the labour forces also indicates some important contradictions:

- attracting labour forces does not solve the problem of the lack of labour forces in co-operatives since it exists mainly in the immediate agricultural branches — commuters do not work in these branches,
- agricultural commuting does not effect great masses (only 3.1% of the workers in co-operatives in the Southern Hungarian Plain), but it can be observed in the case of more than 80% of rural co-operatives,
- commuting from towns to villages is outstandingly prominent,
- the attraction of labour forces of co-operatives (similarly to that of the industry) exceeds the borders of counties, but has a considerably shorter radius than that of the industry,
- characteristic feature of the whole area is a sort of cross — commuting, i.e. from one village to another. This phenomenon has the same direction as commuting in connection with rural industry,
- a concentration process can be observed in the mobility of the labour forces. Some centres of labour force-attraction can be recognised (Mélykút, Szank, Székkutas, Örménykút, Sarkad, Felgyő, Szeghalom). This function — if it becomes prominent — will undoubtedly reinforce the central role of these settlements.

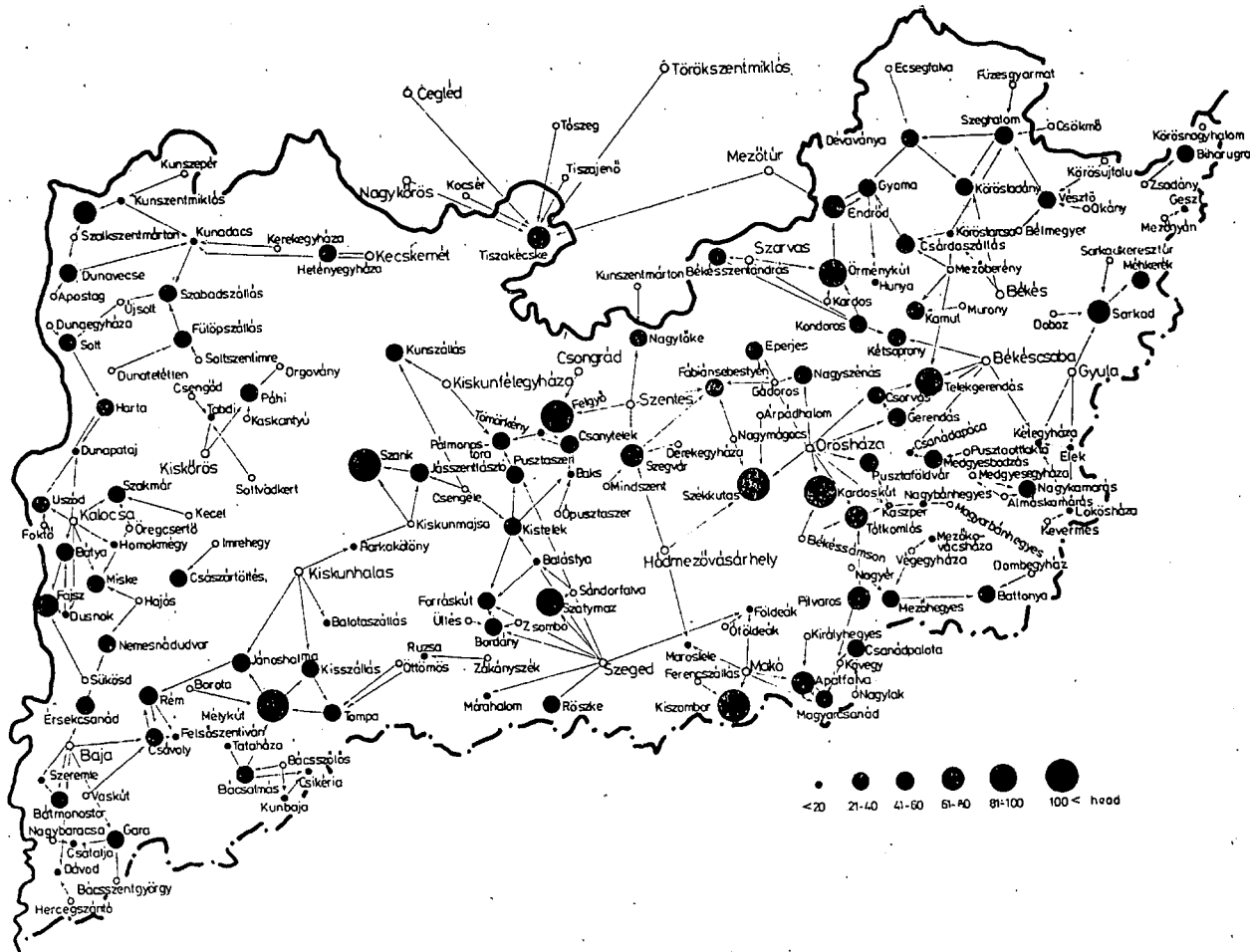


Fig. 3. Labour force attraction of co-operatives (1977)

Production Connections

Parallel with the increasing industrialization of the activity of co-operatives, with specialization, with goodsproduction becoming prominent, a new type of production connections develop in agriculture. These new production connections create new forms of organizations on the one hand and result in new trends in the system of areal connections on the other. It is not our task to analyse and connections thoroughly (as organizational forms they mean a new phenomenon mainly in the production and proprietorship). We are interested in the effect that these new organization forms have on the rural areas.

(a) *Joint Enterprises*

Of the new organizations of production it is the new enterprises that are special importance in the Southern Hungarian Plain. It is interesting to observe, that both in the case of the agricultural and non-agricultural joint enterprises the areal location is scattered.

It is a main characteristic feature of the agricultural joint enterprise, that they are specialized in one product (in Békés county it is pork, milk, eggs-production and marketing; in Bács-Kiskun county it is fruit, wine). Their circle of attraction includes two or three co-operatives.

The areal effect of the non-agricultural enterprises is greater, but it remains within the administrative borders (town, district). However it seems, that the areal connection significance of these organizations is not great; their effect on the rural areas is weak yet.

(b) *Productions Systems*

The development of industrial production systems in the Hungarian agriculture started in the second half of the sixties, at the beginning of the period when large-scale farming became prominent. At first it started in branches which were independent of the natural environment (chicken, eggs); later from the beginning of the 70-ies — at the same time as areal concentration became rapid — in plantcultivation, as well (Table 2.). Since the majority of the agricultural co-operatives, are not able to work out a production system even today (probably it is not needed) — rather constant connections were created between the system-farms and co-operatives. Special attention should be payed to-and-an analysis should be carried out in connection with the relationship between the system-farm and the co-operative within the system, which can be an important factor in the change of the areal structure of a given region and in the development of the internal dynamism of agriculture. One must not forget about the effect that the production system has within the rural area. The production system industrializes agricultural (farmer's) work and makes it modern; puts its technical level higher, makes it of a high value from social point of view. In my opinion the production system is likely to become the most important factor in the social change of the rural areas.

(c) *Product-transporting Connections*

In the system of agricultural product-transport the main transport-directions are determined by contractual connections which are tied to the purchasing companies on the one hand, and, to the processing companies on the other. The traffic-directions

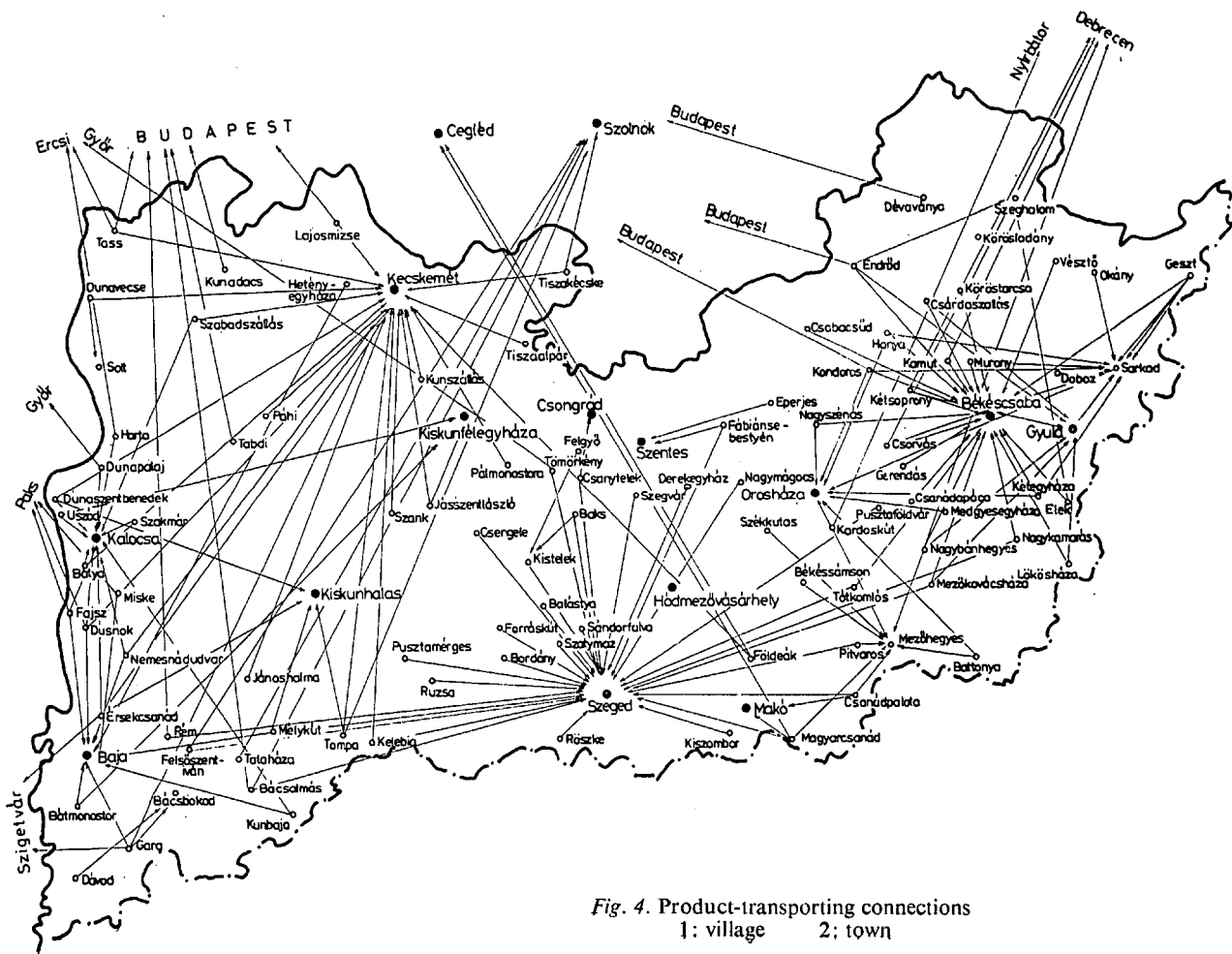


Fig. 4. Product-transporting connections
 1: village 2: town

between the purchasing companies and the co-operatives have been the same for a long time (they are mainly in connection with the centres of counties), therefore from our point of view the connections between the processing companies and the co-operatives are more important. These connections — as far as the product and company are concerned — are liable to change very often per co-operative (they basically depend on the production system of the co-operative), however, the main trends can be easily recognised by observing data concerning the past 7 years (Fig. 4.). The transport-routes of agricultural products indicate the exaggerated centralization of the processing companies. Foodprocessing (storing, cooling) takes place mainly in the traditional centres of food-industry. Areal disproportion is furthermore emphasized by the fact that the transport of products takes place mainly within the borders of the county. As opposed to this, the route of industrial raw materials of agricultural origin is a lot longer generally speaking it exceeds the centre — they go mainly to processing companies in Budapest. These disproportion make it necessary that agricultural product — procession should be increased in rural areas.

Table 2. *Production Systems in Plant Cultivation*

		1975		1978	
		size	size	size	size
		ha	rate	ha	rate
			%		%
IKR*	maize	39,372	21.4	40,370	20.5
	wheat	5,000	1.9	12,744	4.4
	sugarbeet	5,050	20.6	4,939	17.7
	sunflower	318	1.2	207	0.7
	medic	—	—	300	0.4
KITE	maize	42,030	22.8	47,230	24.0
	wheat	46,616	17.7	51,357	17.8
	sugarbeet	7,216	29.5	10,322	37.0
	sunflower	10,955	42.1	10,626	36.8
	soybean	1,670	14.6	1,631	15.0
	rice	—	—	1,170	14.2
BKR	rape	1,355	18.1	2,677	26.3
	maize	43,803	23.8	40,915	20.7
	wheat	26,869	10.2	26,609	9.2
	sunflower	1,118	4.3	1,456	5.1
	soybean	4,648	40.5	4,023	37.0
KSZE	maize	777	0.4	916	0.5
	wheat	1,054	0.4	1,150	0.4
	soybean	120	1.0	135	1.2
Bácsalmás	sunflower	650	2.5	1,497	5.3
GITR	soybean	1,643	14.3	1,408	13.0
BNR	sunflower	2,906	11.1	3,904	13.7
FLR	medic	7,612	11.4	2,375	2.8
Szarvas	rice	2,959	63.5	1,290	15.7
Salamin	potato	140	5.2	271	6.5
EZBT	potato	600	22.3	1,215	29.4
Szeged	hemp	900	17.1	1,836	28.2
Szeged	redpepper	1,588	38.1	2,438	48.2
Makó	onion	1,260	62.8	1,703	57.3
Ócsa	broomcorn	—	—	1,226	94.2

* Hungarian marks of plant cultivation.

(d) *Free Marketing*

A constant free marketing is not the aim of the co-operative activity in the present-day structure of product transport. Certain food-products produced in the co-operatives as well as kinds of provender necessary for live-stock breeding on small farms are however taken to the free market. In the case of provender it takes place in the centre of the co-operative exclusively. Some kinds of fruit, flowers, animal products go to free markets outside the centre. The map demonstrates that it is the attraction of far-away markets (Budapest, Salgótarján, Pécs). These areas of the centre can be found west of the river Tisza and are fruit and grape-growing areas. Free-market connections of other areas of the centre — mainly arable land cultures — are insignificant.

Summary

Qualitative and quantitative changes in the development of large-scale (co-operative) agriculture created areal connections in agriculture and turned them into a complicated system. Thus the formerly closed, small-scale agriculture was changed into large-scale farming which has manifold connections and which gets intergrated into the whole of the people's economy. An essential characteristic of the new areal connections is that they are not constant (rigid); they form an ever-changing structure. It can be stated that these new areal connections of agriculture significantly contribute to the fact that the formerly motionless rural area change into a mobile areal structure. This effect of the areal connections in the development of the rural areas is of basic importance.

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