

A RURAL DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE ON THE CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF THE HUNGARIAN LIVESTOCK FARMING SECTOR

Jenő Zsolt Farkas^{1*}, Irén Rita Kőszegi², Edit Hoyk^{1,2}, Ádám Szalai¹

¹Centre for Economic and Regional Studies, Great Plain Research Department, Kecskemét HUNGARY

²John von Neumann University, Faculty of Horticulture and Rural Development, Kecskemét, HUNGARY

* corresponding author: farkas.jenozsolt@krtk.hu

This research explores the challenges facing livestock farming in developed countries, such as environmental impacts and the disappearance of the backyard and small-scale farms. Focusing on the Hungarian livestock sector from the 1990s to recent years, the study used statistical analysis, policy document and literature review, and interviews (n=66) in Hungary's Southern Great Plain NUTS2 region. The aim was to investigate farm concentration, environmental effects, and young farmers' difficulties. The results show a significant decrease in the number of farms and animals kept in rural areas. The reasons are complex, ranging from the weakening of cooperatives to market problems and animal welfare measures. The established large-scale industrial animal husbandry is an environmental burden without positive externalities. The loss of backyard and small-scale livestock farms from the Hungarian countryside has resulted in multifunctionality loss and social exclusion and negatively impacted local communities. In our opinion, a diversified farming system and balanced policy preference for small-scale animal husbandry meeting family and local needs can bring many environmental, economic, and social benefits to rural Hungary. It may promote biodiversity, self-sufficiency, food security and sovereignty and help young farmers start their businesses. This research was supported by the János Bolyai Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (BO/00413/17/10).