

# THE SUPPORT OF AGRICULTURAL LAND THROUGH THE “CENTRAL EUROPEAN INITIATIVE ON AGRICULTURAL LAND PROTECTION”

## PODPORA POĽNOHOSPODÁRSKEJ PÔDY PROSTREDNÍCTVOM “INICIATÍVY STREDNEJ EURÓPY NA OCHRANU POĽNOHOSPODÁRSKEJ PÔDY”

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### I. Introduction

Agricultural land is typically land devoted to agriculture, the systematic and controlled use of other forms of life—particularly the rearing of livestock and production of crops—to produce food for humans <sup>(1)</sup>. Agricultural land is currently considered as vulnerable natural resource, which is affected by diverse human activities - on one hand, ‘land take’ for housing, industry, roads or recreational purposes, on the other hand intensification of the agricultural production resulting in the use of chemical preparation, fertilizers, heavy machinery for big plots, etc. These processes lead to the progressive erosion, loss of humus in the land, contamination and compacting of the land. Decreasing of the agricultural land quality has an impact on reducing the capability of agricultural land to ensure food

<sup>(1)</sup> Oxford English Dictionary (2012)

security and food self-sufficiency in the EU.

A number of studies, political statements and non-binding political documents aimed at detecting soil quality in Europe pointed out the deteriorating state of this area.

Competences in the field of agricultural land protection are exercised by concrete European states because until now, at the EU level, political will to adopt legally binding actions is missing. In spite of this fact, European and international environmental documents encourage European states to set up actions to maintain and protect agricultural land based on the sustainable principles.

### II. Material and Methods

The aim of this paper is to present the objectives and activities of the international project Jean Monnet “Central European

#### Abstract (EN)

The protection of the qualitative aspects of agricultural land is in the interests of both Slovakia and the European Union. Several policy documents have emerged in the European Union over the last few years, however, they have not been legally binding, as the EU Member States refuse all binding legal acts in this area. Therefore, solving the problem of agricultural land protection is left to the exclusive competence of the EU Member States. On the other hand, problems related to agricultural land cross the borders of states and that is why the Department of Law, Faculty of European Studies and Regional Development, Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra submitted an international research project under the Erasmus + program, Key Action 3: Jean Monnet entitled “Central European Initiative on Agricultural Land Protection”. The aim is to strengthen the dialogue between key stakeholders in the protection of agricultural land in Central Europe what will have a positive impact on the achievement of the EU agri-environmental and food policy objectives.

#### Keywords (EN)

Erasmus+, agricultural land protection, agricultural land, legal acts, European Union

#### Abstrakt (SK)

Ochrana kvalitatívnej stránky poľnohospodárskej pôdy je v záujme jednak Slovenska a jednak politiky Európskej únie. Na pôde Európskej únie vzniklo v priebehu posledných rokov viacero politických dokumentov, ktoré však neboli právne záväzné, nakoľko členské štáty EÚ dlhodobo odmietajú v tejto oblasti akékoľvek záväzné právne akty. Riešenie problematiky ochrany poľnohospodárskej pôdy je teda ponechané vo výučnej kompetencii členských štátov EÚ. Problémy týkajúce sa poľnohospodárskej pôdy však prekračujú hranice štátov, a z tohto dôvodu podala Katedra práva, Fakulty európskych štúdií a regionálneho rozvoja, Slovenskej poľnohospodárskej univerzity v Nitre medzinárodný výskumný projekt v rámci programu Erasmus+, Kľúčová akcia 3: Jean Monnet pod názvom „Iniciatíva strednej Európy na ochranu poľnohospodárskej pôdy“. Cieľom projektu je posilnenie dialógu medzi kľúčovými aktérmi ochrany poľnohospodárskej pôdy v strednej Európe, čo pozitívne ovplyvní dosiahnutie cieľov agro-environmentálnej a potravinovej politiky EÚ.

#### Kľúčové slová (SK)

Erasmus+, ochrana poľnohospodárskej pôdy, poľnohospodárska pôda, právne predpisy, Európska únia

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Initiative on Agricultural Land Protection”, which was selected for co-funding through the program Erasmus+, Key Action 3: Policy- Jean Monnet Project, No. 600441-EPP-1-2018-1-SK-EPPJMO-PROJECT.

### III. Results

Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection (2006), Strategy 2020, Road Map for Resource-Efficient Europe (2011), results of the conference “Land as a resource“ (2014), have given formal recognition to the severity of the soil and land degradation processes within the European Union and its neighbouring countries. Available information suggests that, over recent decades, there has been a significant increase in soil degradation processes, and there is evidence that these processes will continue if no action is taken. Agricultural land degradation processes are driven or exacerbated by human activity, especially by a trade-off between various social, economic and environmental needs. At the same time, in many regions, soil is irreversibly eroded; it has a low content of organic matter or is contaminated.

As it is demonstrated in several EU documents, the competition for land resources creates serious risks of geopolitical imbalances both worldwide and in the EU. The EU will thus be even more dependent on its land resources and their sustainable use in the future.

The project proposal originated from the need to contribute to processes aiming at sustaining the quality of agricultural land and food security in Europe. Therefore, the objective of the international project is to foster a dialogue between the key stakeholders of agricultural land protection in Central Europe affecting the achieving of the objectives of the EU agri-environmental and food policy. Central Europe is a specific geographical region with significant share of agricultural land in Europe with a good quality and climate conditions<sup>(2)</sup>. For the project purposes, following states were selected as the Central European states: Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Lichtenstein, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Switzerland.

Specific objectives of the project are:

- to promote discussion about sustainability of the agricultural land quality in Central Europe;
- to boost knowledge about the quality of agricultural land in Central Europe.

Objectives of the proposed project will be achieved through the cross-sectorial approach used for the project implementation. Project activities will promote discussion and reflection on agricultural land protection in the Central Europe and will enhance knowledge about the EU.

The following outputs were designed to achieve the project aim:

1. International conference - for the conference stakeholders at different competence level will be invited in order to strengthen mutual multispectral synergy between them:
  - academics/researcher from the educational and research institution, who introduce and present high

theoretical and research expertise on agricultural land protection in a concrete Central European country;

- expert from the managing or controlling authority (depending on which authority has wider competence in the field) who will discuss about the practical cases of land protection in terms of managing/control competences;
- expert from the agricultural practice who could explain everyday practical experiences with the protection of agricultural land.

International conference will be held in Nitra, on April, 2-5, 2019. 31 experts from the Central European states are expected to participate at the event.

2. Proceeding from the conference - online proceeding will contain all scientific papers from the conference “Central European initiative on agricultural land protection” from significant researchers, academics and experts on agricultural land protection in Central Europe. The scientific papers will analyse and evaluate socio-economic, ecological, legal and political aspects of agricultural land protection in the Central Europe within the context of the EU agri-environmental policy and the effort to sustain quality of the agricultural land in Europe.
3. A book, which will present the European legal regulations and requirements that are necessary to sustain the quality of agricultural land and will summarize analyses and expertise of agricultural land protection from the Central European countries. The book will contain the best practices in maintaining the quality of agricultural land.
4. Presentation of the land protection in the Central European countries - will be used as a didactic material to provide basic information about the land protection in the Central European countries and to provide overview about the research activities in the area of land degradation in the project research institutions.

All relevant information concerning the project and results are available at the project website: [www.ceiland.uniag.sk](http://www.ceiland.uniag.sk). Dissemination outputs contribute to the transparency and visibility of relevant information about agricultural land protection in the Central Europe for professionals and civil society that may lead to increase awareness of land value in the EU and neighbouring states.

### IV. Conclusion

The approved international project will contribute to the political discussion about the agricultural land protection in the Central Europe. The discussion and reflection on the specific European issue from the wide angle will have relevance in the following:

- to increase knowledge about the agricultural land protection in the Central Europe with the impact on encouraging further research and educational activities within the field;
- to stimulate cooperation between stakeholders individually and across their competence levels with the impact on developing pointers for further actions in agricultural land protection in the Central Europe;
- to raise awareness about the value of agricultural land in

<sup>(2)</sup> World Factbook (2009)

the Central Europe for academics, researchers, professionals and civil society.

Impacts of the project in the short term and long term are:

- to sustain the quality of agricultural land in the Central Europe within the context of the EU agri-environmental and food policy;
- to contribute to development of land footprint of the EU for Central Europe;
- to harmonize the political tools and implementation measures related to agricultural land protection in the Central Europe;
- to increase the awareness of the land value for civil society.

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