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# AGRICULTURAL ECONOMIC STRUCTURE AND HUMANITY BALANCE IN KÜÇÜNLÜ VILLAGE

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## ABSTRACT

Küçünlü Village (KV) is a village located in the Thrace Region of Edirne Province. This region is very important for Turkey's grain and oil sunflower production. In this research, the assumption is set out that "producers in KV cannot do agriculture at the size of an economic enterprise". With this assumption, it has been resolved by considering the size of the land where the communities in the village cultivate agricultural activities between the years 2012-2022. The subject has been discussed with explanatory research and historical structuralist approach model. The finding that the desired increase in the total land assets of the producers still continuing production could not be achieved, that the producers are moving away from the active working age range in agriculture day by day, and that sustainable agriculture cannot be achieved in the future has been obtained through observation, structured personal interviews and survey methods.

## Introduction

The purpose of the Law on Soil Conservation and Land Use; to protect and develop the soil, to classify agricultural lands, to determine the minimum agricultural land and agricultural land sizes with sufficient income and to prevent their division, to determine the procedures and principles that will ensure the planned use of agricultural land and agricultural lands with sufficient income in accordance with the principle of environmental priority sustainable development.

According to the subparagraph (h) of the first paragraph of Article 3 of the Soil Conservation and Land Use Law No. 5403, the minimum agricultural land size is: If the production activities and inputs are used rationally and economically, the productivity obtained in an agricultural land will result in more of the agricultural land in question. It

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refers to the smallest agricultural parcel size determined by the Ministry, which cannot be obtained in case of shrinkage. Again, in the Clause (i) of the same Law; Agricultural land size with sufficient income: It refers to the agricultural land sizes with sufficient income determined in the list of provinces and districts, taking into account regional differences. In the aforementioned list, the size of agricultural land with sufficient income for Lalapaşa District of Edirne was determined as 55 decares for irrigated agricultural lands, 135 decares for dry agricultural lands, 10 decares for planted land and 3 decares for greenhouse land (RG, 2014).

Irrigated agriculture is not practiced in KV. For this reason, the research was carried out to cover the lands with sufficient income, which is the lower limit of the agricultural land size of 135 decares, which is engaged in dry farming. The aim of this study; It is to analyze what kind of consequences the size of agricultural land with sufficient income, implemented as a government policy by the Ministry during a 10-year period, causes for producers. "The main thing in scientific knowledge is generalizability. In other words, the more scientific knowledge can be generalized to a large group, the more scientific value that knowledge is (Suğur, 2010). The fact that this study is up-to-date in its field suggests that it will shed light on the resolution of other villages of the Thrace Region over time.

### **Material and methods**

According to the Farmer Registration System (FRS); In 2012, 79 households were engaged in agricultural production activities in Lalapaşa district KV (Anonymous, 2022). The main material of the study consists of 63 producers engaged in herbal production activities in 2022 in KV. In addition, information was collected by semi-structured interview method as well as verbal interviews with the producers living in KV, the village leaders and the headman. This method; A part of the interview consists of questions that allow the response of the respondents, while a part of the pre-planned part of the interview. The questions that allow reaction consist of open-ended questions. It is unpredictable what kind of responses will be received to open-ended questions (Anonymous, 2020). However, open-ended items allow respondents to express themselves freely and measure high-level cognitive skills (Tan & Erdoğan, 2005; Turgut & Baykul, 2015).

It is possible to talk about three groups of approaches focused on rural change and development.

1-System approaches: It focuses on the relationships between environmental, demographic and technological factors and the system.

2- Decision-making approaches: It focuses on resource allocation and farmers' responses to innovations and markets.

3-Historical-structuralist approaches: It focuses on the examination of human relations with the natural environment and production. This approach also includes

the relationships between the whole and the part. Examining these relations gives the opportunity to observe the mutual interaction between the whole and the part from a wider perspective. The relationship between the countryside-state-globalized world can be exemplified by the relationship between the part-whole. In general, although the individual is also included in the studies, the social character of the individual is emphasized (Öztürk, 2009). In this context, the change in KV is handled through the change in the total census sample size and the farmer's land assets by considering the crop production activities. In the research area, the data of 2021 was not used on purpose. The reason for this is that due to the pandemic, the law allows people registered with the FRS to go to their villages and the registration requirement for the FRS has been abused since it is at least 2 decares. In other words, the main livelihood activity is the official inclusion of people who do not have farming activities in the system.

## Results

The population between the ages of 15-64 is called the working age population (Sertkaya and Bostan, 2019). There are 45 family heads in the working age (15-64 age group) engaged in agricultural production activities in the village, and their ratio to the total family heads is 71.42%. The age of 18 family heads is over 65 years old.

All of the family heads living in the village have a social security; 29 of them are retired. It is observed that all of the retirees are still actively engaged in agricultural activity. The reason for this situation; It can be explained by the desire to benefit from the agricultural supports applied, to ask the family members to consult him in the transactions necessary to receive the supports, and to continue to take an active role in monetary transactions.

The widespread use of machinery in agriculture encourages the use of machinery by the population older than the active working age, and ensures the continuation of the ties of the elderly with agricultural efficiency (Sarıoğlu and Irmak, 2020). In addition, agricultural mechanization provides the opportunity for the young population who does not want to live in the village to participate in plant production activities for processes such as planting, planting, fertilizing, spraying and harvesting, which are considered as agricultural work time.

As reported by Karagül (2013), it should not be denied that the person in the role of entrepreneur taking part in the production process receives a significant share of the resulting income. However, at this point, it should not be overlooked that the "human balance" that should exist between the person who plans the production with "intellectual labor" and the person who actually realizes the production through "knowledge and manual labor" must be preserved. Undoubtedly, it would be an irony to expect human balance from individuals over the age of 65 and even from individuals over the age of 91, as in the case of KV.

### **Economic situation of the village**

According to Boran (1945), a village is a community whose main economic base is agricultural production. The occupation of the peasant is mainly agricultural activity. This is a profession based on the cultivation and collection of animals and plants. This profession has been going on for years between generations.

According to Saint Simon; society is in constant movement and transformation. The main task of sociology is to examine society in motion and transformation and to examine it with scientific techniques used in natural sciences. The social order is determined by the economic structure of that society (Aktaş, 2017). With this point of view, the economic structure of KV consisting of plant and animal production activities has been the subject of a detailed examination. The economic structure of the village is based on agriculture, and plant and animal production is carried out in the village. Within the plant production pattern, barley, wheat, sunflower and canola products are grown. As animal production; cattle breeding, ovine breeding, beekeeping and poultry breeding are carried out. Although the products grown in the village are usually taken to the Edirne Commodity Exchange and sold, they are sometimes sold to the merchants in Edirne and its districts. The use of agricultural technology is common in the village, and each household has tractors and agricultural equipment compatible with their tractors. Plant production activities are carried out using these tools and equipment.

The income obtained from the cultivated lands does not leave enough profit after the expenses made to grow that product are deducted. Agricultural price policies implemented in recent years have led producers to distance themselves from agricultural activity. For this reason, the young population in the village chosen as the research area is considering leaving the village for various reasons. The departure of the young population from the village and the elderly population in the villages cause interruptions in agricultural production and pose a problem for food security. This situation is the result of wrong national agricultural policy. For this reason, considering the high average age of those currently engaged in agricultural activity in the village, it is thought that the number of people who will be engaged in agricultural activity will decrease in the coming years.

According to the agricultural censuses, there has been a general decrease in the average farm scale in Turkey from the 1950s to the 2000s. As a matter of fact, the average enterprise scale, which was 77 decares in 1950, decreased to 61 decares in 2001. As of 2011, the size of the operating land was 68 decares (Anonymous, 2018).

The average land size for agricultural enterprises operating in Edirne, Tekirdağ and Kırklareli provinces was calculated as 117.49 decares (Aydin, 2014).

The average business size of KV in 2022 was calculated as 147,826 decares. Distribution of land size in the KV; 0-50 decares 12 businesses (19.05%), 51-100 decares 19 businesses (30.16%), and 101-200 decares 18 businesses (28.57%), 8 businesses between 201-300 decares (12%, 70), 3 enterprises (4.76%) between 301-400 decares, 2 enterprises (3.17%) between 401-500 decares. Between 7001-800, there is 1 business (1,59%).

Total land assets of KV were 117,936,00 da in 2010 and 147,826,00 da in 2020. While the average land size was 117,936 decares in 2010; In 2020, this average increased and reached 147,826 decares. Between these years, 16 producers have completely abandoned their plant production activity. Considering the number of people engaged in agricultural activities over the years, it is seen that the number has decreased and the amount of cultivated agricultural land per capita has increased on a decare basis. The reason for this change can be explained by borrowing, leasing their land to someone else, or taking over/purchasing or leasing the fields of the producers who gave up on agriculture by other producers.

The economic enterprise size for the producers producing in dry conditions in Lalapaša has been determined as 135 decares (Aydın, 2014). In this context; It is seen that the enterprise size of 22 producers is over 135 decares. In other words, 65.08% of KV producers cannot meet the economic enterprise size determined by the Ministry. The fact that the size of agricultural holdings is below the economic criterion has a negative effect on agricultural income. Producers who want to get rid of these negativities either do additional work or give up agricultural production.

It is seen that national governments, as well as international organizations, have an important role in the production of agricultural producers for the market instead of their own needs. As a result of the change in the understanding of the nation-state, states' withdrawal of their hands from the economy and starting to implement a "global market economy" adversely affect those engaged in agricultural activity (Öztürk, 2009). Producers should not consider the sale of land as a method to compensate for the serious losses that arise as a result of economic activities, as in KV.

36 out of 63 producers (57.14%) residing in KV and engaged in plant production are also engaged in livestock production. Animal production is a branch of agricultural activity that is concentrated in rural areas. In addition to meeting the protein needs of families such as milk and meat, animal husbandry is also a useful occupation in terms of meeting the urgent cash needs. Families diversify their income by making use of their spare time, other than plant production, with animal husbandry. The use of materials such as straw and straw, which emerge as a result of plant production activity, makes livestock activity attractive in rural areas. On the other hand, the fertilizers obtained from animals are used as fertilizer in the vegetable and fruit gardens established for family needs, especially on the rose plant in front of their houses or in the fields.

In KV, goat breeding is carried out due to animal diversity as well as sheep breeding. Goat milk is not evaluated. It is sold from time to time as a votive or for the food needs of the kids.

### **Reasons for producers to quit agricultural activity**

According to Durman (2002), both the quantity and the efficiency of the factors of production are tried to be increased in order to reach the development goal. Since the factors of production are labor, capital, entrepreneur and natural resources, it is seen that labor and entrepreneur are the "human" elements from these factors. As a result, human has an important place for your

production. Because even if the labor, capital and natural resources of the production factors are found to be sufficient in terms of quantity, if the entrepreneurial element is not sufficient or the productivity is low, the desired development will either be delayed or not realized. Likewise, the labor factor has an important place in the development process as an actor who both does the work and uses the capital and technology in the production process.

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As reported by Karagül (2013), labor always maintains its feature of being the basic element of production under all circumstances. What can be said about the sharing of labor and income is not very heartwarming. The contribution of labor, which is one of the four factors of production in traditional economic theory, to production and its share from income constitute one of the weakest aspects of capitalist economic theory that is subject to criticism. Although labor is the most indispensable element of the production process from the past to the present, it can never be said that it receives the share it deserves from the income to the extent of its contribution to production, although it shows relative differences from place to place and over time.

Kurtkan (2011); In an article covering the years 1960-1992, "Agriculture is a branch of activity that does not allow other professionals to infiltrate and become involved. With this character, it is the most similar profession to caste. Farming is handed down from generation to generation. In other words, those who are farmers are those whose fathers were also farmers. Although the cadres of the current branches of activity in the city are generally filled by individuals born in the village, entering the farming profession is more difficult than exiting.

**Table 1.** Grouping of producers according to the results of the reasons for leaving their agricultural production efficiency

Results	Reason for leaving agricultural activities	Number of People	Index (%)	
Sociological results	Aging and family transfer	6	18,75	59,37
	Migration	1	3,12	
	Death	12	37,50	
Economical results	Transfer to a family member due to debt	3	9,38	40,63
	Quitting farming with land sale	1	3,12	
	Leaving farming by renting out his land	6	18,75	
	Changing profession	3	9,38	
TOTAL		32	100,00	

Kurtkan (2011) found three different conclusions when he examined the producers in the United States from a sociological point of view. These inferences; sociological implications, economic implications, and political implications. The results of the producers in the KV leaving agricultural activities can be quantified in 2 groups as sociological and economic results. According to the sociological results (59.37%) in the village, the reasons for quitting agricultural production seem to be more effective than the economic results (40.63%) (Table-1). Although the political results are not open to full evaluation with qualitative data; It is very effective in KV producers giving up agricultural production. Because the reasons such as the absence of schools and hospitals in the village are directly related to political decisions.

According to Öztürk (2009); The decision-making approach generally focuses on the distribution of resources in the agricultural field and the farmers' responses to innovations and markets. The basic assumption accepted in the studies based on this approach is the decision-making approach of individuals according to changing conditions in their own values and behaviors.

Death (12 people) takes the first place among the reasons for the producers to quit their plant production activities. People over the age of 90 live in KV and death is inevitable for people who have reached this age. The rate of abandonment of plant production activity due to death in the village is 37.50%. The desire to withdraw from agricultural activity by renting out the land (6 people) and the reason for withdrawing from agricultural activity by aging and transferring the land to a member of the family (6 people) are in the second place (18.75%). The lands were mostly inherited by the producers, who see agricultural lands only as a source of income from year to year. The reason why those who transferred their lands to a family member by not selling them think this way; their belief that the land should not be sold. Despite this, the producers are moving away from farming due to reasons such as the fact that agricultural activity does not bring enough profit, old age, agriculture is a profession that requires constant effort, risk and uncertainty in agriculture are high, there are no factors that make life easier in the village, there are no institutions such as hospitals and schools.

The results such as the producer's inability to make sufficient profit from agricultural activities, their continuous borrowing and the exponential increase in these debts from year to year make it necessary to withdraw from agricultural activity. In order to solve this problem, the young producer has changed his profession (9.38%) or tried to pay his debts by selling and transferring his land (12.50%).

As reported by Durman (2002), low per capita income prevents the formation of savings that will finance the investments necessary to increase capital accumulation. A low income level causes the marginal propensity to consume to be high and the marginal propensity to save to be low. The most important feature of underdeveloped countries is that they are deprived of the capital accumulation necessary for production. However, capital is one of the most important factors used in production.

It has been determined that 13 of 16 people newly registered to the FRS between 2010

and 2020 have inherited agricultural land, and these people are already engaged in agriculture and reside in the village. It was determined that 2 people in the village had to transfer their fields to a person they trust due to debt, and 1 person retired and started to deal with farming in the village.

### **Discussion**

Mandatory retirement age in Turkey is 65, but; Even if those engaged in agricultural activity gain the right to retirement, they continue their agricultural activities. He specializes in those who have been engaged in agricultural activities for many years. Producers who cannot transfer the knowledge in their field of expertise to the younger generations cause the agricultural memory to disappear. Agricultural activity is an applied science, and climate, geography and natural conditions have an effect on agricultural efficiency. Subjects such as knowledge, skills, experience and expertise are important in agricultural efficiency and are gained over many years. The increasing use of technology in agriculture is increasing the age of those engaged in agricultural activities. However, as in the KV example, 28.57% of the producers are over 65 years old. It is a question mark to what extent the producers of this age can manage their agricultural enterprises profitably.

When agriculture is considered as an economic activity; The aging of the producers from year to year and their inability to increase their capital due to the inability to profit from field agriculture prevent them from investing in the agricultural sector in the future. The land size of 65.08% of the producers in KV is less than the land size (135 decares) determined by the Ministry. This economic result forces the producer to transfer, lease or sell his field. Although there is an increase in the land, which is considered as a natural resource, on paper (the average land size was 117,936 decares in 2010; this average increased to 147,826 decares in 2020). is out of the question. The solution to these problems should be determined as the lower limit (18 years) and the upper age limit (such as 65 years) for applying to agriculture through official means. Compared to other sectors, agriculture is a sector in which family business continues its existence intensively. In this way, the authority of the “father”, who is the patriarchal decision-making authority of traditional agriculture, can be broken to some extent. In particular, producers who are below the economic enterprise size should do vegetable-fruit cultivation as well as field agriculture. The surplus of these products produced for family subsistence will be able to eliminate the cash shortage in the short term. In addition, the economic enterprise size, which can be considered low for field crops, is large for fruit and vegetable cultivation.

### **Conclusion**

Rose was used quite frequently in Edirne as an ornamental plant during the Ottoman Empire. It is an advantage that KV is suitable for rose cultivation and that the producers have knowledge about its cultivation. KV is an opportunity to meet the rose needs of cookies and patisseries, which continue their activities as medium-sized businesses, in the production of rose jam and Turkish delight with roses.



Although sheep and goat breeding are carried out in the village, it is not possible to evaluate the milk of these farm animals. It is also a negative situation that almost every woman over the age of 50 in the village does not milk, although she knows how to make cheese from milk. It is necessary to carry out a series of studies that will encourage village products and encourage women to produce. As a result, it should not be forgotten that each product produced can also contribute to the country's economy.

The rate of producers who left their production efficiency due to aging and consequences such as transfer to a family member, migration, death is 59.37%. The rate of quitting production due to economic consequences such as transferring to a family member due to debt, giving up production by selling land, giving up production by renting out the land, changing profession is 40.63%. The inability of producers to earn enough profit from agricultural activity cannot be explained only by human capital. This result is also a result of wrong government policies. The fact that villages and rural areas are being emptied, as revealed by our research and similar studies, may make it difficult to meet the food production needs of healthy generations in today's years and in the future. It is necessary to develop policies that prevent the emptying of villages and provide financial support to producers. In addition, social and economic policies should be established to encourage living in the village. Services such as natural gas that facilitate village life should be brought to the village as soon as possible.

### Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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