



On June 10, the Second Mediterranean Agricultural Forum AGROMED was held in Šibenik with the theme "Mediterranean Agricultural Policy and Demography".

One of the biggest structural development problems of the Mediterranean today is the rapid reduction of the rural population (rural depopulation), which exceeds the trend of decreasing the agricultural population (deagrarization). Such a situation leads to a gap between large producers and family farms.

As a solution, various forms of cooperation between small and large-scale agricultural production are found where the rural identity is preserved, such as the case of Greece. In Spain, the deficit production of traditional Mediterranean crops (wine, olives, fruit) was maintained, but agriculture turned to atypical production such as dairying. The threat to the sustainability of the environment is also related to the disappearance of migratory pastoralists throughout the Mediterranean.

The 2021 population census led to a serious demographic picture in Croatia, as a consequence of the spontaneous development of rural areas. The country also faces questionable economic sustainability, social infrastructure, communal facilities, level of education, diversification of agriculture and innovations in the sector, as well as various lifestyles in Adriatic Croatia.

The answer to these key factors leads to alternative ways of developing rural areas.

Experts predict that instead of a rural renaissance and the growth of innovation and networking, Adriatic Croatia is headed for growth without development and a downward path, characterized by emigration and depopulation, and in the best case, demographic stagnation in which mass tourism and weekenders remain. The labor force is maintained by immigrants, and dependence on tourism is linked to geopolitical stability.

Instead, what is needed is an intensive policy change, activation of the elderly population, selective tourism focused on the eno-gastronomy of indigenous domestic products. There is a need to develop innovative solutions to the problem of ownership and management of agricultural land, while at the same time strengthening vocational education and the multifunctionality of agriculture through intersectoral cooperation.

Importing labor is necessary, but as a compensatory measure. All this is not possible without decentralization of the institutional framework, reduction of administrative obstacles and emphasis

on locality. At the same time, selective stimulus measures and an active demographic policy should also attract Croatian emigration, both those who emigrated recently and those who have lived in other countries for generations.

Regional and local approaches must be guided by the specificities of the islands, the coastal belt and the coast, the northern, central and southern Adriatic. For example, regional winemaking organizations such as Vinistra can protect the viticulture and winemaking of a particular region, while increasing knowledge.

The distribution of funds for the strategic plan of agricultural development should be directed towards labor-intensive branches of agriculture (fruit growing, vegetable growing, viticulture, wine growing), and the increase in productivity will depend on investment in knowledge and technology. These products should not only be protected, but also take care of their brand and promotion.

All these components are being developed in accordance with the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU, but it is also necessary to work on the common Mediterranean policy on all three shores of the Mediterranean.