

**Economic History****Someș County Agrarian Economy  
During The Inter Wars Period of Economic Growth****Radu Pavel Gavrilă<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract:** After the Great Union of 1918, Someș County, one of the seven counties in the Someș Zone, Zone situated in north-western Transylvania, passed through different stages of economic development. It knew the recovery phase, followed by the reconstruction phase, it underwent the crisis and, finally, the growth stage. Given that agriculture accounted for over two thirds of household income is important to analyze the structure of the agricultural economy of the county, in those years of economic growth. Similar the place of each economic category was compared, hierarchical and compared to the similar categories in the Someș Zone and Romania. The result was a detailed picture of the agrarian economy of the county next to witch there were added the measures for modernize and streamline. Was analyzed the legal status of land, through the application of appropriation laws.

**Keywords:** Someș Zone; economic growth; agrarian economy; modernization

**JEL Classification:** N54; O13; O16; O47

**1. Introduction**

Transformations, momentum, progress made by Romania in the interwar period were due to the perfection of the national state of Greater Romania, which increased human and material potential of the country.

In the interwar period (1918-1938), Romania has gone through several stages of witch the period of 1934-1938 was the period of recovery due to protectionist policy and state intervention in the economy.

Romanian society was a society of contrasts; there is a difference between urban areas, where about 18% of the total populations were living, and the rural areas.

The peasantry is the main social class (about 80% of the population).

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Enterprises and economic branches have established a direct links, leading to a restructuring and integration of the industry and agriculture, transport and communications systems.

The Great Union was unbound energies and induced an economic and social changes throughout Transylvania, and more so in the land at the confluence of the Someş Rivers. In a poor county, mainly dominated by Hungarians both in administration and especially in what was the "engine" of development, the large estates, Someş County became in the interwar years a county of rapid development in all areas. Someş County proved a balanced, with a natural and human potential capable of development and able to adapt.

SOMEŞ County has a strong agriculture. Hills and mountains were forested and had set up some wood exploitation. The predominant industry was a food industry especially around Dej and Beclean. There were salt and gold mines, which were state property. Trade centres: Dej, Gherla and Beclean. Trade is mainly with pigs, cattle and hides. (\*\*\*, 1939; Encyclopedia, vol. 3, p. 413)

Someş county had an area of 688.595 jugăre (396.500 ha). The landscape was varied with two distinguishing regions: the southern part that was part of the Transylvania Plain and the northern part belonging to the Lăpuş mountains region.

The county land distribution by category was as follows (in parentheses, percentage of total group and county total):

1. Arable lands	131.641 ha	(33%)
• Cereals	35.252 ha	25%
• Meadows	10.865 ha	2%
• Other cultures	25.524 ha	6%
2. Natural meadow	73.922 ha	(20%)
• Meadows	30.245 ha	8%
• pastures	43.677 ha	12%
3. Tree crops	3.581 ha	(0,89%)
• Orchards	3.230 ha	0.8%
• Vineyards	351 ha	0.09%
4. Forests	131.151 ha	(33%)
5. Building, roads, etc.	59.205 ha	(13.11%)
TOTAL	396.500 ha	(100%)

## 2. County Agrarian Economy

### 2.1. Cereals, Food and Industrial Plants, Forests

Arable land was 131,641 hectares, or 33.20% of the county total area and 0.45% of total country land. Of the total arable area of the county, large estates had 3,844 hectares, or 2,92%, and smaller property 127,797 hectares, or 97,08%. (\*\*\*, 1939; Encyclopedia Romania, vol. 2, p. 413). In 1940 arable land in Someș County (133,099 ha) represent 1% of the total arable land of Romania (13.357.817), a percentage of 4,1% from the total area of Transylvania (3.268.130) and 34,16% of total arable land in Northern Transylvania (389.675). County average was: 188.138 ha in Romania, 142.093 in Transylvania and 97.419 ha in Northern Transylvania. Compared with the national average, Someș County was below average (71%) but very close to Transylvania average (93.7%). (Rădulescu, 1942, p. 4)

Of the total arable land, grains occupied 95.252 ha, distributed as:

Corn occupied 42.855 hectares, with a production of 305.217 quintals. (average production of 7.1 quintals per hectare.), worth 72 million lei.

Wheat occupied 33.659 hectares, with a production of 319.436 quintals. (average production of 9.5 quintals per hectare), worth 126 million lei.

Oats occupied 14.624 hectares, with a production of 105.179 quintals. (average production of 7.2 quintals per hectare), worth £ 32 million.

Barley occupied 2.501 hectares, with production of 21.962 quintals. (average production of 8.8 quintals per hectare), worth 5 million.

Rye occupied 1.578 hectares, with production of 18.503 quintals. (average production of 11.7 quintals per hectare), worth 5 million.

Millet occupied 13 ha and buckwheat 4 ha.

Area planted with cereals increased from 94.383 ha in 1934 to 104.909 ha in 1937. Corn (47.332) and spring and autumn wheat (47.813) are the dominant cultures. To these there added oats (15.352 ha), barley (2.546) and rye (2.076). (\*\*\*, 1937, p. 185)

Cultivated hay and other forage crops occupied 10.865 hectares. From this area, clover occupied 6.207 ha, with a production of 115.580 quintals. Hay (average of 18.6 quintals per hectare), worth 16 million lei and 475 quintals Seed.

Lucerne occupied 2.024 ha, with a production 43.304 ha hay (average 21.3 ha quintals.) worth 6 million lei and 300 quintals Seed.

Fodder roots occupied 544 hectares, with a production of 32.540 quintals. (average 59.8 quintals per hectare.), worth 2 million. In 1937, the hayfields most cultivated were the ones with hay clover (6.377), plus lucerne (2.510).

Food plants occupied 3.388 hectares. From this area potatoes occupied 886 ha with a production of 32.931 quintals (average 37.1 quintals per hectare.), worth 4 million lei, cabbage occupied 819 hectares, with production of 23,354 quintals (average 28.5 quintals per hectare.), worth 5 million lei, pumpkins occupied 528 ha. With a production of 2.112 quintals. (average 4.0 quintals per hectare.). Potatoes amongst corn gave a production of 61.624 quintals, worth 8 million lei. Beans amongst the corn gave a yield of 12.216 quintals, worth 4 million lei. Pumpkins amongst maize gave a production of 169.434 quintals worth 8 million lei. Vegetables were grown in irrigated areas, which amounted to 1.032 ha. The county occupies the 16 position of 71 and represented 1.83% of total area cultivated in Romania. (Săvescu, 1939, p. 373). In 1940, the area cultivated with vegetables (2.229 ha) is 0.51% of the cultivated area in the entire country (438.834), a rate of 3.51% of the cultivated area in Transylvania counties (63,519) and 33.1% in Transylvania North (6.742). County average was: Romania - 6.181 ha/county, Transylvania - 2.762, Northern Transylvania - 1.685. Someș County was well below the national average (36.1%) and over three quarters of Transylvania average (80.7%). Area planted with beans in Someș county (2.069 ha) is 0.62% of the bean culture of Romania (332.344), a percentage of 3.85% of the cultivated area in Transylvania (53.758) and 33% of Northern Transylvania (6.285). County average of areas planted with beans was: Romania - 4.681, Transylvania - 2.337 ha/county, North Transylvania - 1.571. Compared to Romania, the county was well below the average cultivated area (44.2%) and compared to Transylvania it was at 88.5%. Of total arable land of the county, the areas cultivated with beans represent 1.6%.

Industrial plants occupied 2.882 ha. From this area hemp occupied 1.676 hectares, with a production of 5.164 quintals. Bundle (average 3.0 quintals per hectare.), worth 18 million lei and 3.821 quintals. Seed (average of 2.2 quintals per hectare.) worth over 1 million lei. Sunflower occupied 1.003 hectares, with a production of 5.112 quintals. (average 5.1 quintals per hectare.), worth 2 million. In 1938, industrial plants have been grown on a total area of 3.572 ha as follows: hemp (2.017), sunflower (1.371), flax (139), canola (6), and soybean (4). (\*\*, 1939, p. 414)

Natural meadows occupied 30.245 ha with a production of 456.699 quintals. (average production of 15.1 quintals per hectare average.), worth 50 million lei.

Grasslands occupied 43.677 hectares.

Diverse cultures. Of the total county area (396.500 ha), barren fields occupied 19.254 hectares decreasing to 11.947 ha in 1938.

Forests covered 131.151 hectares. The forests in Someș County were administered by four Forest Districts. Communal forests, church, school and composesorale (770 forests covering an area of 42.277 ha) were managed by th Forest Districts from

Dej, Beclean and Gâlgău, and the state forests, by the Forest District of Strâmbu-Baiuț. There was also the private property, 6.416 owners with 36.636 hectares. By species, most (89.6%) were hardwoods (beech, oak, hornbeam). Resinous (fir, spruce) were only 0.5% and Others (hornbeam, locust) 9.9%. Of 370 forests summing 22.297 hectares, 458 hectares were exploited. Resulted in 1.530 cubic meters working wood (275.400 lei), 23.600 steri meters of firewood (1.888.000 lei) and 44.400 mc diverse (1.333.200 lei). The total value of holdings was 3.496.600 lei. In subsequent years these values have steadily increased reaching 5.44 million lei in 1936. (\*\*\*, 1937, p. 198)

Plum orchards occupied 1.699 hectares, with a production of 23.786 quintals. (average 14.9 quintals per hectare.), worth 7 million lei. Northern Carpathians had nearly 3 million trees, scattered in Satu-Mare, Someș, Năsăud and Maramureș counties. Plum had a production rate of 46%, apple 34%, pear 7%, walnut 7.5%. Dej was part of the towns known as a fruit fairs and where you can resupply with larger quantities of apples, pears and plums. For comparison, in Romania there were 81 million trees, of which 77% plum. Other fruit trees occupied 1531 hectares. Vineyards occupied 351 hectares. (Teodorescu, 1939, pp. 424)

## 2.2. Animal Husbandry

After cereals, especially maize, Someș county economy was dependent on livestock.

Before 1930, it grew only steppe cattle breeds. From 1931 the Simmenthal race was introduced, in the towns of Cernuc, Reteag, Cuzdrioara and Cășeu. Around Tg.Lăpuș it was introduced the Pintzgau race and the Schwyz race. With pig farming, the race Mangalita, the people from Chiochiș were involved.

The distribution of breeds that are raised in the county Someș was as follows: horses (Lipitzan, Mountain Horse, English), cows (Simmenthal, Schwyz, Steppe), sheep (Țurcană), pigs (Mangalița, Bazna and York). (Conțescu, 1939, pp. 497, 499, 502, 504)

In SOMEȘ County there were in 1935: 56.803 cattle, 14.934 buffalo, 164.685 sheep, 11.647 goats, 21.428 pigs, 7,571 horses, 1,091 and 6.030 primitive hives. (\*\*\*, 1939, p. 414)

For 1938 the statistics of domestic animals, poultry and beehives shows the Someș County structure quite different from the Someș Zone<sup>1</sup> or the national level. In horses category there were 7.827 horses, of which more than 3.160 mares older than three years and 2.485 horses over 3 years. The figure represented 3.56% of Zone and 0.36% of the country. The county was in the last place in the Zone, 7<sup>th</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Someș Zone = 7 countys (Bihor, Cluj, Maramureș, Năsăud, Sălaj, Satu Mare, Someș);

place. There were 87 donkeys (6.03%) and 15 mules (17.86%), and for the numbers in Romania they were 0.64% and 0.52%. The place held by the county in the Zone hierarchy was 5 and 4. The fewer horse from the Zone of Someş were in Someş County even in the categories with the most exemplars. (\*\*\*, 1939, pp. 3-11)

Because farm work was done mostly with oxen and buffaloes, horses' breeding was not very developed. The horses were used mainly for light traction or riding.

In the category of cows and buffaloes there were 73.400 exemplars. Buffalo were 14.332, ie 17.79% and 8.18%, ranking at 3th place. The highest number is represented by buffaloes, 11.342 copies (20.49%, 8.94%, 2th place) and youth (up to 2 years), 2.293 exemplars (13.10%, 6.67%, 4<sup>th</sup> place). The number of cows was 59.068 exemplars, representing 11.27% and 1.42%, being at 5<sup>th</sup> place. Most were cows (over 3 years), 36.260 copies (12.97%, 1.79%, 4th place), and young cattle (up to 2 years), 13.092 copies (10.45%, 1.46% , 6<sup>th</sup> place).

Sheep were 212.894 exemplars, ie 17.93% and 1.68%, being the second county in number of sheep. Most were mature sheep (over 1 year), 186.013 exemplars (19.90, 1.76%, 1<sup>st</sup> place) and young sheep (up to 1 year), 23.950 exemplars (12.01%, 1.45%, 4<sup>th</sup> place). Note that Someş County has the most mature sheep and was second in total.

Almost the same situation is seen with goats that have been 11.528 exemplars, representing 13.58% for the total Zone, second place, and 2.89% for the country. Most were adult goats, 10.715 exemplars (13.81%, 3.17%, second place).

An animal raised throughout Someş County was the pig. However, only 27.160 pigs were registered, representing 4.35% and 0.86%, being the 5<sup>th</sup> in the Zone. Most were adult pigs, 13.140 exemplars (3.02%, 0.65%, 5<sup>th</sup> place).

Poultry category consisted of chickens, geese, ducks and turkeys. In total, there were 286.554 exemplars representing 8.06% and 0.83%, 5<sup>th</sup> place. The majority were chickens, 260.958 exemplars (8.30%, 0.88%, 5<sup>th</sup> place). A significant percentage of the poultry in Someş Zone were ducks and turkeys. Ducks were 12.879 exemplars which represent 10.95% (60%, 4<sup>th</sup> place) and turkeys were 3.177 copies, ie 15.06% (0.62%, 3th place).

Rabbits were gown as well, 7.58% and 1.54%, or 1.402 exemplars. Place in the county was 5<sup>th</sup>. Also, beehives were 7.980 which represented 10.68% and 1.36%. Unfortunately most of them were primitive hives, 6.710 (18.48%, 2.61%, second place). (\*\*\*, 1939, pp. 3-11)

**Regional and national Animal Husbandry statistics<sup>1</sup>**

	<b>Someș County</b>	<b>Someș Zone</b>	<b>Transyl vania</b>	<b>Romania 1938</b>	<b>Romania 1937</b>
Horses	7.827	220.128	372.073	2.158.266	2.064.976
Donkeys	87	1.444	3.477	13.668	16.092
Mules	15	84	903	2.861	1.510
Ox	59.068	523.957	1.476.792	4.161.056	4.184.400
Buffaloes	14.332	80.564	169.785	175.265	184.714
Sheep	212.894	1.187.515	3.632.689	12.767.510	12.372.390
Goats	11.528	84.896	189.353	398.501	407.803
Pigs	27.160	624.724	1.545.296	3.164.571	3.169.969
Rabbits	1.402	18.506	51.921	90.778	117.672
Poultry	286.554	3.553.672	8.208.171	34.666.031	38.281.449
Chickens	260.958	3.142.405	8.417.818	29.702.656	32.292.909
Geese	9.540	272.618	648.590	2.292.283	2.759.301
Ducks	12.879	117.588	332.536	2.157.326	2.588.548
Turkeys	3.177	21.061	58.053	513.766	640.690
Beehives	7.980	74.711	208.120	588.298	578.513
Dogs	15.536	183.508	518.221	3.040.299	3.091.088

**3. Modernizing the County Agrarian Economy. Agrarian Reform**

In the action of modernizing the county agriculture and aid given to farmers there have been taken different actions:

a) Points agricultural and demonstration plots was in Șintereag, near Beclean (30 jug.) and in Dej (9 jug.). In Dej the land was cultivated with wheat (variety Cenad 117). Here was also a tree nursery (4 yoke).

b) Distribution of improved and selected seeds.

Improved wheat seeds were distributed in 1933, thru the Agricultural Service and the Chamber of Agriculture, with grants and cost reimbursement for treatment of diseases. Varieties distributed were: Bank 1201, Cenad 117 (wheat) and Ardelean (corn). Seeds were distributed to 10 communes; a quantity of 7.940 kg at a cost of

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<sup>1</sup> Year 1938.

4.50 lei/kg of which the Chamber of Agriculture has supported the share of 1 lei/kg. In 1934 other 10 communes received 40.000 kg, distributed with 2.5 lei / kg, with a subsidy of 2 lei/kg of the purchase price (4.50 lei/kg). Other 29 communes received in 1935 over 200.000 kg seeds at a cost of 4.50 lei/kg (2 lei/kg, subsidy). For corn, were allocated 65.882 kg for 38 communes. Corn was purchased at the price of 5 lei/kg and distributed at a price of 1.25 lei/kg, following that 75% of the amount to be repaid in nature, at the harvest. In 1937, were distributed seeds of lucerne (1.416 kg), clover (5.429), mash (504) and beet (57 kg).

c) Fertilizer

Manure platforms were built and lectures were held on how to keep it in storage. Amongst the artificial fertilizer, Ciclovina phosphate was the most used, which were distributed two cars (approx. 30 tons)

d) Distribution of agricultural machinery and rent spots for them

To replace wooden tools and machines, the Chamber of Agriculture subsidized by 25% the price of modern machines purchased.

During 1934 - 1937 were distributed: 22 usual plows, 4 seeders for corn, 4 thresher, 3 harrows, and 1 shredder for fodder, 6 pumps for trees, 2 pumps for vineyards, 1 brooding, and 26 systematic hives. For small land holders, who could not to buy certain agricultural machinery and tools required for certain works of the season were 12 spots were they could rent. The machinery stock consisted of 3 wheat seeders, 4 corn seeders, 2 clover seeders, 2 fanner, 13 trioare, 2 weeding, 1 harrow. Charges for some tools were: large drill - 50 lei/day, corn seeder 30 lei/day, etc..

e) Agricultural exhibitions were held in:

- September 1934: for products of fruit, wine, agricultural, domestic industry and agricultural tools were awarded 56 medals (21 gold, 34 silver, 1 bronze) of over 100 exhibitors.

- May, 17 to 24, 1935, "Wine Week": wine samples were presented from 39 owners; the wines were from the following varieties: Pinot Gris, Riesling, Silvaner green and Muscat Ottonel.

f) Support for orchards

Due to favorable conditions of climate and soil, fruit was an important source of revenue for farmers. Most experienced people, whose main occupation was represented by fruit trees, were those of Ciresoaia, Maluț, Unguras and Uriu. Action of planting fruit trees has resulted in over 90.000 seedlings, selected from the tree nurseries holding the best material. The amount by which these purchase was subsidized was 398.508 lei. For fruit industrialization there were built two fruit kilns, one in Dej and one Bârsău, worth 95.592 lei.

#### e) Build and maintain of pasture

Pastures were less fertile and could not provide adequate food for all animals. To improve their quality there has been clearing of weeds and thorns, harrowing and even new plating. To improve the common grazing flora, the most efficient system proved to be the cultivation for 1-2 years with plants (corn, beet, sunflower, soybean), and then a year with forage crops (lucerne, clover). Was practiced moving animal into stalls, on pastures. This way there was improved more than 250 ha. (\*\*\*, 1937, pp. 195-200)

Agrarian reform works were far from being completed, due largely to lack of funds and cadastral experts.

Surface situation was:

- From the total surface of 688.595 yoke were expropriated 98.406 yoke;
- From this area 4.666 yoke, were yet to be measured;
- Estates measured but remaining to be broken apart: 6.438 yoke;
- Estates with established plot device but not yet broken apart: 9.764 yoke;
- Final allotment of land was made for 75.737 yoke;
- There have been reports for payment for 240 estates with an area of 53.362 yoke worth 49.686 lei (\*\*\*, 1937, pp. 195-200)

#### 4. Conclusions

Although Someș County, as well as all of Transylvania, was a region that did not have a very large area that is good for agriculture, the population survived with agriculture. The plains of the Great Someș River, Small Someș River and, after confluence, Someș, were very productive and gave a significant production especially after floods. Soil, in agricultural terms, is relatively easy to work with more or less modern machines, especially when normal rainfall during the year was distributed.

Among cereals, maize and wheat is cultivated in almost equal areas, the difference in favor of corn (20%). There were cultivated as well oats, rye, beans, potatoes and vegetables. They used to fertilize the earth with manure and less chemical fertilizers. They used to execute improvements of soil and pasture, especially locally. Due to favorable conditions of climate and soil, fruit was an important source of revenue for farmers. What characterizes the best this region, rich in pastures, meadows and forests, was the rugged configuration suitable for livestock.

The statistics of domestic animals, poultry and beehives shows a structure for Someș County quite different from the Someș Zone<sup>1</sup> or the national level. Horse

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<sup>1</sup> Someș Zone – 7 countys (Bihor, Cluj, Maramureș, Năsăud, Sălaj, Satu Mare, Someș);

breeding was not very developed because farm work was done mostly with oxen and buffaloes. Moreover, the number of buffaloes was only one that is significant both at in Someș Zone (almost 21%) and national (9%). Compared to the situation in Someș Zone, important were mature sheep (20%) and primitive hives (18.5%).

Agrarian reform works were far from being completed, due largely to lack of funds and cadastral experts. In the action of modernizing the county agriculture and aid given to farmers there have been taken different actions.

The agricultures in Someș County proved a well-balanced structure, with natural and human potential capable of development and adaptation.

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