SETTLEMENT DEVELOPMENT AND THE ROLE OF AGRICULTURE NEXT TO THE SERBIAN BORDER IN SOUTH GREAT PLAIN REGION IN HUNGARY

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Abstract: The main aim of present study is to introduce the particular situation of the settlement named Kelebia as well as to analyse the livelihood of local inhabitants. From the viewpoint of the settlement, special attention is devoted to the investigation of the role of Szeged as the regional centre. The social and economic characteristics of the settlement are also analysed. In our days, the future of Kelebia seems to be unpromising. Local people especially fresh graduates find hardly any job. Therefore creation of new jobs would be important in order to young people remain there and their living standard could improve. It would be important if the settlement could find those tasks, which based on local resources it could provide in the best way. Since it is a complex procedure, besides that, it should be underlined that the local inhabitants’ activities and wills as well as state and EU subsidies also play an important role. It has also been investigated that how does Szeged affect the everyday life of the local population and agriculture in Kelebia.

Keywords: settlement, development, agriculture, livelihood, inhabitants

INTRODUCTION

Recently, the differences between economically developed and less developed areas could have been seen in terms of cities and rural settlements. Village can be considered such kind of settlement where traditions of religious and cultural life have been remaining on a better way as well as they are more honest to foreigners. Rural areas are one of the losers of the regime change since they lost the majority of their highly-skilled workers because of the lack of jobs. Young graduates have easily found job in urban areas than in villages. Developed services provided by towns lead to the increase of population at surrounding settlements. Due to the greater entrepreneurial activity and greater capital stock, towns can usually provide more jobs which attract the population who are willing to work. Regional convergence in the EU-15 has been remarkably slow, and while recent regional productivity growth has been rapid in Central and Eastern European Enlargement Member States, suggesting possibilities for catch-up in those countries, it seems to have been accompanied and, indeed, in part achieved by falls in regional employment rates, a combination hardly sustaintable in the long run (Gardiner et al. 2004). The nearly 110 Hungarian functional urban areas can be grouped into four hierarchical categories:

- Budapest metropolis area of international importance,
- functional urban areas of national (and of international in long-term perspective) importance,
- functional large and medium-sized city areas of regional importance and
- functional small town areas (Faragó 2008).

The territory of County of Csongrád falls into three different natural geographic regions: the Tisza valley in the centre, the sandy ridge between the Danube and the Tisza in the west, and in the eastern part, the Békés loess tableland. Almost 60% of the land is arable land with plough land in the east, and vegetable and fruit farming on the sandy soils in the west (Anonim 2004). At the same time Veha and Gal (2009) underline that environmental concerns of industry and agriculture have started to reshape the landscape of Central- and Eastern European countries. In Komarek’s (2012) opinion the regional and sector structure changes in industry might induce a number of positive economic processes (increasing
efficiency, competitiveness, deepening cooperation), may help considerably the rise of the
given area and the whole national economy.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Present study aims to present the settlement Kelebia as well as to analyse the living
conditions of local inhabitants and the effect of the relative closeness of Szeged. We have
interviewed one of the executive officers of the village and the principal of the primary
school. We have gathered basic data on the settlement as well as application and
enrollment data on which secondary schools in which settlements are mostly chosen by
pupils.

We have constructed a questionnaire of factors expressing the state of development
in Kelebia. During the survey we have unintentionally chosen local inhabitants and
recorded their answers. The questionnaire has opened and closed questions as well. The
first part of the questionnaire deals with demographic data (gender, age, job, qualification,
workplace, relationship with Szeged, etc.) The second part contains the questions related to
agriculture such as the asked persons’ relationship with the sector, their opinion on the
prospects of the main branches in the settlement, etc. The size of the sample is 100 (which
means 3,8% as sampling ratio), results are processed by Microsoft Excel.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The total territory of Kelebia is 6670 hectares from which 6102 hectares are
cultivated. Farming is on lower level there are few well-equipped and rentably operating
farms. Cattle and pig breeding have fallen back, traditional Hungarian breeds are hardly
present. According to the interviewed executive officer of the settlement, the resolution
could be as follows:
  – creating cooling, storing and buying up capacities,
  – establishment of enterprises fitting to agricultural production and landscape,
  – increase of added value of products sold,
  – increase the ratio of bioproducts,
  – development of marketing information channels for the sake of higher selling-
    prices,
  – development of agricultural programs related to touristic activities,
  – formation of competitive model farms,
  – increase the preparedness and economic skills,
  – integration based on European co-operation principles.
As we can see on Figure 1, the population has been decreasing from 2002 (the peak was in
2002). That is caused by the decrease of the number of births as well as migration since
young people usually cannot find jobs in the settlement and they move off.

Concerning the survey it can be stated that 53% is female and 47% is male among
the surveyed people. The majority of asked people are in the age-groups of 21-25, 36-40,
and 41-45. Most of the people have secondary school graduation as their highest
qualification, 24% graduated only in primary school (some of them are studying in
secondary schools), 12% have degree, 11% are still studying in higher education.
According to the investigation done by Benko-Kiss et al. (2010) among agricultural
enterprises in South Great Plain Region the educational skills show, that approximately 60
% of the leaders has agrarian skills (on intermediate or high level, mainly university
degree). Szeged, as regional administrative, industrial, commercial, educational, scientific
centre may affect the development of Kelebia significantly as well as the services provided by the city determine the everyday life of the inhabitants of the settlement.

![Figure 1](image1.png)

**Figure 1 Changes of number of inhabitants in Kelebia**

Figure 2 shows that 90% of the respondents have some kind of relationships with the capital of Csongrád county, 2% of the surveyed people have their workplaces there. Only 7% of the people do not visit Szeged regularly. People, who travel to Szeged only once a year, usually do it for the purpose of shopping, medical examination or entertainment. Young people usually travel to Szeged once a week who are studying and being accommodated there. There are the daily commuters who have entered employment in Szeged as well as some of the students also commute daily.

![Figure 2](image2.png)

**Figure 2 Respondents’ frequency of travel to Szeged**

More than three third of respondents have said that Szeged has positive effect to Kelebia (Figure 3). Most of the respondents find favourable that Szeged can provide education possibilities (secondary schools, University of Szeged) as well as it also provides more workplaces than Kelebia or the surrounding settlements.
The questionnaire also asked what kind of agricultural linkages do people have. The survey tries to evaluate the position of agriculture in Kelebia as well as it wants to present what people find the future of the sector like in the settlement. Among the respondents directly connected to agriculture the self-sufficient producer is the most characteristic category.

![Figure 3 The effect of Szeged to Kelebia by the respondents](image)

The 85% of the surveyed respondents somehow are farming at their own small market garden. The remaining 15% do not farming at all, they always buy the agricultural products. It can be seen on Figure 4 that vegetable- and fruit growing are the most prevalent agricultural activities. The majority of respondents produce fruits and vegetables for themselves, 37% of them do not produce but buy at local marketplace, groceries or hipermarkets. Almost two-third of surveyed people usually buy local food products at marketplace instead of other possibilities. The main cause of the lower significance of hipermarkets is the fact that there is not available any supermarket and hypermarket in Kelebia. The most frequent fruits and vegetables are as follows: cucumber, onion, cabbage, green peas, asparagus, grape, peach, cherry, sour-cherry, plum and apple. Most of the farmers dealing with animal husbandry usually buy fodder for their livestock.

![Figure 4 Frequency of the appeareance of agricultural branches at respondents’ farms](image)
Figure 5 shows that the main objective of farming also has been asked. The majority of respondents farm for the sake of generating alternative income source, in other cases farming can fall into a habit which means that agriculture is their style of living. The efforts to reach a healthy way of living have been ranked at the third place.

The above presented results argue that agriculture plays a key role in Kelebia regardless how many inhabitants deal directly with food production. In most of the families’ cases agriculture serves self-sufficient as well as it can generate some additional income for those inhabitants who are employed in other sectors, too.

CONCLUSIONS

After the change of regime the number of people being able to live on agriculture has been decreasing, some of them have been employed in the tertiary sector. Reach of the settlement is uneasy and slow, the railway between Budapest and Kelebia has not been constructed. The settlement can be characterized by high unemployment as well as the well-qualified laborforce is scarce. From the viewpoint of age composition it can be concluded that young people represent the greater proportion in the settlement. The special geographic position of Kelebia as being next to the Serbian border is a determining factor, there is an international railway crossing point near the settlement. As a result of this Hungarian State Railways Co. is the biggest employer in Kelebia.

According to the survey done it can be seen that young people usually travel to Szeged since they are studying there in secondary school or at University of Szeged as well as they often go to do the shopping or having fun. It can be observed from the survey that agriculture as economic activity has smaller role in the settlement, one-third of respondents are only consumer.

Summing up the economic problems of Kelebia it is visible that the settlement can be characterized by fallback of quality and quantity of agricultural production, lack of the proper utilization of the geographical position as well as the default of the development of transport infrastructure. Authors agree with interviewed chief officer who urges that up to date and well-equipped buying up points should be set up motivating local inhabitants to produce more agricultural goods. Initiation of these conditions should be one of the priorities of next period. Due to the shortage of suitable workplaces young and highly
skilled people migrate from the settlement. Settling of such enterprises which can contribute to job creation as well as to the increase of inhabitants’ and local governments’ revenue, thus to the continuous enrichment of local population’s living conditions.

REFERENCES


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