



Common grazing land in Bulgaria: current status and challenges

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Definition of common land use in BG

*Act on ownership and use of agricultural land
para.2(d):*

*“traditional practice of the inhabitants of
settlements with small livestock grazing farms
on public “meri” and pastures,
including by forming one or more “collective”
herds for grazing”*



Size and ownership of common grazing land

Total area of “meri” & pastures - 1.105.911 ha

Public “meri” & pastures - 439.452 ha

OR

Common grazing = 40% of total pasture land

= 62% of all state or municipal land















Regulated common land use

- *First Act on use of common lands in 1904*

Use rights decided in common village assembly

2/3 of farmers need to participate

Final decision taken by Minister of Agriculture

At least 0,4 ha for hay making per farmer

- *Act on High Mountain and Forest Pastures in 1941*

Grasslands > 30 ha and based on grazing plans



Current arrangements

- Prior to 2007 based on historical regulations and mostly, informal
- CAP support prompted changes:
 - Giving legal base to the general assembly decision
 - Issuing rules for common land distribution:
 - Encourage the establishment of associations of land users
 - Require land to be in good agri and environmental conditions
 - Set a levy for the use of meri
- In 2009, the rights for state meri were transferred to municipalities



Rules for distributing 'meri'

- List of 'meri' in GEAC prepared by mayor
- List of livestock farmers that use the meri
- Farmers provide certificate from vet on type, No and age of registered animals
- Min area per farmer is defined on the basis of min area per animal
- Priority is given to land for public use if there is a registered association
- Then, tenders are opened for individual use



Open issues and challenges

- New legal framework, still developing
- Reality often differs from legal arrangements:
 - First the individual tenders are opened and
 - Then the remaining land is given for public use
- Unclear responsibility of 'meri' maintenance
- Unclear role of municipal grazing plans



Open issues and challenges (2)

- Some CAP support (LFA) discourages cooperation due to its digressive payment:

<50ha highest,

> 100ha nothing

- Negative experience in administering the distribution – entire area given for individual use, nothing for public

- Farmers are unwilling to cooperate and to take group responsibility for the use of “meri”

