

## **AGRICULTURE IN MARAMUREȘ COMPARED TO THE REST OF THE NORTH-WEST REGION**

**Sabou Simona**

*Economic Sciences and Physics Department, Faculty of Science, North University Center of Baia Mare, Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania  
simona.sabou@gmail.com*

**Abstract:** *This paper presents aspects of agriculture in Maramureș, compared with the situation recorded in the region to which it belongs, the North - West, at the end of 2010. Thus the work is addressed to all those interested in these issues. Maramureș County is part of the North – West Region, along with Bihor, Bistrița-Năsăud, Cluj, Satu Mare and Sălaj. The paper is based on statistical information provided by the National Institute of Statistics, Cluj Regional Department of Statistics. In March 2013, the latest data available are those that refer to the end of 2009. Thus, based on this information, it pinpoints the area cultivated with the main crops, the land by use, agricultural production of goods and services, the average yield per hectare for main crops, total fruit production, number of animals, farm vehicles. After 1989, Maramureș County, as well as the entire North - West region, underwent major changes. Population decreased from year to year, however the lack of jobs has become a constant reality. The mining of ore, the processing of metals other than iron and the auto industry, which used to cover most of the jobs in Maramureș, entered into a continuous decline, which culminated in the closure of all mines in the county. In this situation, adapting to the new conditions, the current economic reality, is a daily problem for the people of this county. Maramureș is known for its wooden churches, its rural architecture, its old traditions - preserved until today - its craftsmen and its impressive landscapes. Much of the county remained non-industrialized in the communist period, so that traditional agriculture is at home in this part of the world. In Maramureș, agriculture is not an option. It is the result of the lack of jobs in other areas, which lead to the return of the population to rural areas. It is a way of making a living.*

**Keywords:** *Maramureș, NW Region, agriculture, cultivated area.*

**JEL** Q15, R10.

### **1. Introduction**

Talking about agriculture in Maramureș seems illogical, given that according to data from the National Institute of Statistics, from a total of 86.3 thousand employees in the county in 2010, only 1.3 thousand are employed in this field (Cluj Regional Department of Statistics, 2013), i.e. 1.55%. In this county, the mountain area represents 43%, plateaus 30%, and the remaining 27% is covered by plains. Even if the relief is mostly mountainous, agriculture is present in Maramureș, being adapted to the existing landscape.

But in terms of the percentage of employees in the population, the county recorded a value of 16.90%, well below the regional average of 21.12%. The explanation for

this could be related to subsistence agriculture, unregistered workers, working abroad and smuggling (alcohol, tobacco, wood).

In addition, the difference between employment and employees is 101.1 thousand people. We assume they work either in subsistence agriculture or on their own.

Under these circumstances, we conclude that most inhabitants of the county of the occupied population are engaged in agriculture.

Thus, we need to address the issue of agriculture in Maramureş County. Moreover, agriculture is an important sector of the economy and the fact that so many county residents are involved in this area represents a rather positive thing.

## 2. Agriculture in Maramureş, compared to the rest of North-West Region

The total area of Maramureş County is 630436 ha. Out of it, the agricultural area is 309325 ha (Cluj Regional Department of Statistics, 2013), as can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Agricultural area for the counties of the North – West Region in 2009

Indicator	NW Region	BH	BN	CJ	MM	SM	SJ
Agricultural area - ha	2079369	491124	295221	427273	309325	317032	239394
Percentage of agricultural area in the total area - %	60.87	65.10	55.13	64.02	49.07	71.76	61.95

Source: Cluj Regional Department of Statistics (2013), *Regional Statistics*, [Online], Available: <http://www.cluj.insse.ro/cmscluj/rw/pages/statReg.ro.do> [March 30, 2013]

In Maramureş County, the agricultural area is only 49.07%, well below the regional average of 60.87%, the county being in last place in this regard. Justification is given from the fact that Maramureş has the largest forested area in comparison with other counties in the region, about 40%.

Of the 309325 ha of agricultural area in 2009, the largest part is grassland (38.77%), well above the regional average (18.51%), as shown in Table 2.

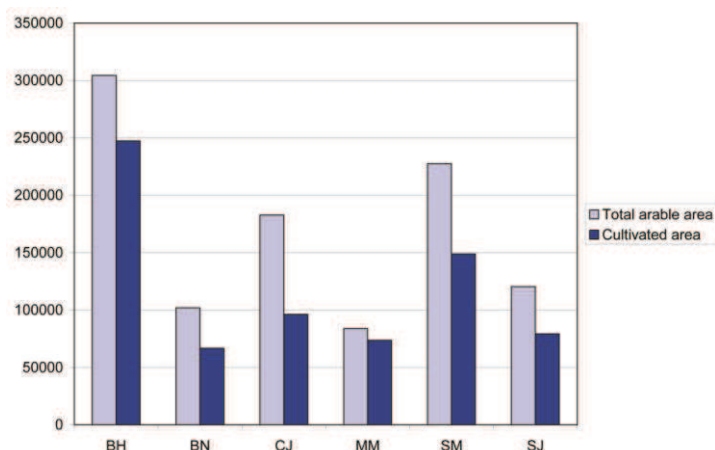
**Table 2:** Agricultural area in 2009, on components, in the NW Region in Maramureş - ha -

Area	Agricultural area	of which				
		arable	pastures	grassland	vineyards	orchards
NW Region	2079369	1020880	629234	384829	9160	35266
MM	309325	83784	98765	119930	243	6603

Source: Cluj Regional Department of Statistics (2013), *Regional Statistics*, [Online], Available: <http://www.cluj.insse.ro/cmscluj/rw/pages/statReg.ro.do> [March 30, 2013]

Pastures are 31.93%, while 27.09% is taken by arable land. Livestock production is a common occupation in the area.

Arable land, presented in comparison with the cultivated area, is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Arable and cultivated area for the counties in the NW Region in 2009  
 Source: taken after Cluj Regional Department of Statistics (2013), *Regional Statistics*, [\[Online\]](http://www.cluj.inse.ro/cmscluj/rw/pages/statReg.ro.do), Available: <http://www.cluj.inse.ro/cmscluj/rw/pages/statReg.ro.do> [March 30, 2013]

Maramureş is found to have the highest percentage of arable land use of all counties within the Region. Specifically, the percentage is 87.90%, while the average in the region is much lower, just 65.75%. In second place after Maramureş is Bihor with a percentage of 81.25%, and the last place is taken by Cluj with only 52.68%. The explanation for this phenomenon is related to the economic situation of the region. The lack of jobs in other sectors of the economy and the relatively low net monthly earnings in Maramureş determine the people to return to their villages and practice agriculture as a last resort. Instead, the situation is very different in Cluj. Employment opportunities are more numerous, so that agriculture is no longer a priority for county residents and uncultivated land is a problem. Uncultivated areas increase from year to year and their growth trend is evident in all counties of the Region.

In Maramureş most of the arable land is cultivated with the following crops:

- grain cereal: 41.86%;
- corn: 26.52%;
- potatoes: 20.03%.

In the Region, the largest surfaces are also cultivated with grain cereals and corn, but regional averages are higher than 60.45% and 30.14%.

In terms of the area planted with potatoes, the regional average is 7.52%. Thus Maramureş has the largest area planted with potatoes in the Region, both in absolute numbers and percentage.

In terms of average yields per hectare, Maramureş lies at the bottom of the ranking, with values generally below the regional average. Above regional average values are recorded only in the category of grasslands.

Table 3 presents the agricultural production of goods and services.

**Table 3:** Agricultural production of goods and services in 2009 in the counties of the North - West Region

Indicator	NW Region	BH	BN	CJ	MM	SM	SJ
Agricultural production of goods and services - current prices - lei	8503453	2075195	1178705	1681413	1451824	1206700	909616
Percentage of agricultural production in the regional total - %	100	24.40	13.86	19.78	17.07	14.19	10.70

Source: Cluj Regional Department of Statistics (2013), *Regional Statistics*, [Online], Available: <http://www.cluj.insse.ro/cmscluj/rw/pages/statReg.ro.do> [March 30, 2013]

Maramureş County has recorded an agricultural production of 1451824 lei in current prices in 2009, which represents 17.07% of the total agricultural output in the Region. The county ranks 3rd after Bihor with 24.4% and Cluj with 19.78%.

Even if it has a larger area of pastures and grasslands (70.70% of total agricultural area), the share of livestock production in total agricultural production is 42.03% in 2009, as can be seen in Table 4.

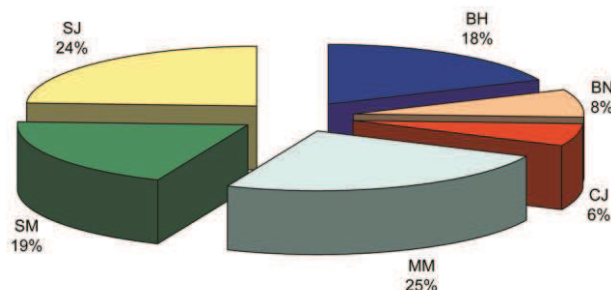
**Table 4:** Agricultural production of goods and services, on categories, in 2009 - lei current prices -

Indicator	NW Region	MM
Agricultural production in lei – current prices	8503453	1451824
Of which:		
▪ crops	5022147	840197
▪ animals	3441397	610247
▪ agricultural services	39909	1380

Source: Cluj Regional Department of Statistics (2013), *Regional Statistics*, [Online], Available: <http://www.cluj.insse.ro/cmscluj/rw/pages/statReg.ro.do> [March 30, 2013]

In terms of percentage, the situation in the county is part of the trend in the NW Region. In all counties of the region, crop production exceeds livestock production in terms of value. Livestock production has recorded the highest percentage of total agricultural production in Bistriţa-Năsăud and Cluj, Maramureş being 3rd.

Regarding fruit production, the Cluj Regional Department of Statistics website has only published information for 2008. The largest amount of fruits was obtained in Maramureş, resulting in a quarter of the total fruit production made in the region, as shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2:** The distribution of fruit production in 2008 for each county of the North-West Region

Source: Cluj Regional Department of Statistics (2013), *Regional Statistics*, [Online]. Available: <http://www.cluj.insse.ro/cmscluj/rw/pages/statReg.ro.do> [March 30, 2013]

This was done while orchards in Maramureş only represent about 2.13% of the total agricultural area, below the average of the NW Region which is 3.45%, according to data for 2009. It should also be noted that Sălaj has achieved about 24% of the fruit production in the Region, with an area of orchards related to agricultural area of only 1.81%.

Even if ranks 3rd in the Region in terms of agricultural production expressed in current prices (lei), Maramureş occupies the last places in terms of agricultural vehicles, according to information provided by the National Institute of Statistics for 2005, as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Tractor park and main agricultural machinery, at the end of 2005

- units -

Territory	Tractors	Tractor plows	Mechanical seeders	Propelled combines
NW Region	26464	20230	7976	3870
BH	9520	7152	3167	1339
BN	1862	1360	465	222
CJ	5184	3904	1410	731
MM	2495	1934	331	203
SM	4362	3170	1684	969
SJ	3041	2710	919	406

Source: Cluj Regional Department of Statistics (2013), *Regional Statistics*, [Online]. Available: <http://www.cluj.insse.ro/cmscluj/rw/pages/statReg.ro.do> [March 30, 2013]

Maramureş records low values in all categories shown here. Insufficient equipment is one of the explanations for the low yields per hectare. In addition, there are areas where agriculture is practiced traditionally using rudimentary means.

Maramureş has large areas of pastures and grasslands (70.70% of the agricultural area in 2009), so that livestock production should be a more widespread activity in the county. Livestock situation is shown in Table 6.

**Table 6:** Livestock in late 2005 in the counties of the NW Region

- units -

<b>Territory</b>	<b>Cattle</b>	<b>Swine</b>	<b>Sheep</b>	<b>Goats</b>
NW Region	481008	1073294	1051341	63259
BH	106897	328533	159800	18692
BN	68253	113991	223167	11221
CJ	85303	227660	326071	7341
MM	98475	141692	128016	11675
SM	67484	162917	103354	6734
SJ	54596	98501	110933	7596

Source: Cluj Regional Department of Statistics (2013), *Regional Statistics*, [Online], Available: <http://www.cluj.insse.ro/cmscluj/rw/pages/statReg.ro.do> [March 30, 2013]

Maramureş ranks 2nd in both the number of cattle and goats and 4th in the number of swine and sheep.

If we consider the large areas of pastures and grasslands, livestock in Maramureş is reduced, the breeding potential being insufficiently exploited.

### 3. Conclusions

Traditional agriculture is gaining more ground today. Thus, the inhabitants of this county could take full advantage of this. However, we must not forget that for the people of Maramureş traditional agriculture is more a way of life and not a business. In Maramureş, agriculture is not an option. It is the result of the lack of jobs in other areas, which lead to the return of the population to rural areas. It is a way of making a living. This explains the fact that arable land is cultivated in such a large proportion (87.90% in 2009) compared to the rest of the counties in the Region. The people of Maramureş are too poor to afford the luxury of not working their lands, even if yields per hectare are lower than the regional average and even if their agriculture vehicles are few and outdated.

Regarding the future, agriculture in Maramureş should be directed mainly towards livestock production - due to the vast areas of pastures and grasslands-, fruit production, the cultivation of potatoes and corn, fields in which the results obtained so far have placed Maramureş in top positions within the Region, fields where there is still an untapped growth potential.

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