



European Rural Parliament 2050
National report from Turkey
prepared by
Development Foundation of Turkey
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I. Introduction

The Development Foundation of Turkey (TKV) acted as ERP national champion for Turkey, collecting the ‘upward cascade’ of ideas and aspirations of rural communities.

The key themes were as follows :

- Access to government supports for small farmers
- Participation of rural people in defining agricultural and rural policies
- Added value to local products and the amount that farmers get from the market price of products
- Migration of young people from the rural areas
- Social inclusion of vulnerable people (women, youth and children)
- Social services in rural areas.

TKV used several methods to gather ideas of rural communities:

- Questionnaires. The first method was to conduct interviews with the farmers and rural community-based organisations, using an open ended questionnaire. Two types of questionnaire (one for individual farmers, and the other for rural organisations) were prepared and sent to the relevant persons to fill them through internet or post. The farmers’ questionnaire was filled by 89 farmers and sent back to TKV. The questionnaire for rural organizations was filled by 9 rural organizations and sent back to TKV.
- Local and regional meetings. The second method was to conduct local and regional meetings with rural people and rural organisations. Four meetings were conducted in the first half of 2015. There are two reason for the limited number of meetings : one was the sensitivity of people, due to the general election process in Turkey between March and June 2015, and the other was that Ramadan started in June and ended in mid-July. But TKV is planning to form a rural civil society platform and network and will continue to conduct local and regional meetings up to October 2015, and bring the results of these meeting to the ERP 2015 Gathering.
- National meeting. TKV had intended to organize a national meeting, but due to the reasons mentioned above, this was not possible in th first half of the year. A national meeting will be organised in September 2015, and the results of the meeting will be brought to the ERP 2015 Gathering.

II. Results of the Interviews

II.1. Results of Farmers' Interviews

The minimum and maximum ages of respondents to the interviews with farmers were 33 and 77 respectively : the average age of 53 is one indication of the aged population in the rural areas of Turkey. Only 25 percent of the total population in the responding households was under the age of 30, and in 40 percent of those households there were no people under 30 years old. This indicates that the rural population in Turkey is getting older, due to the out-migration of young people to the urban areas.

The proportion of female respondents was only 8.6 percent, which indicates the dominance of males in rural areas.

Most of the respondents have a small size of agricultural land : the minimum land size is 2 da and maximum 80 da, and the average is 22 da. 5.7 percent of the respondents do not sell any agricultural products. 65.5 percent sell their products directly to consumers, 27.6 percent through mediators, and only 6.9 percent through cooperatives. According to the respondents, producers get only 52 percent of consumer prices, and the main reasons for low level of income are high prices of agricultural inputs, lack of organised marketing (lack of farmers' organisation for marketing), and lack of processing plants in the rural areas. 16 percent of respondents stated that organisation of rural people is needed in order to increase the income share of farmers, and 8 percent stated the need to establish processing plants.

In 56.7 percent of households, small processing and handicrafts are made, mainly for self-consumption, and 56.7 percent of those making small processing of agricultural products and handicrafts sell and get income from these products. This indicates the low level of diversification of the rural economy.

83 percent of respondents were members of a rural organisation. However, most of these are members of chambers of agriculture or producer unions, of which membership is compulsory and which do not have any role in production and marketing. 23 percent of respondents were members of a cooperative, and 15 percent members of an association : this indicates the low level of local organisations which play a role in production and marketing.

In terms of social services, 33 percent of respondent stated the lack of schools and studying places in their villages, 20 percent stated the lack of any health services, 60 percent stated the lack of sport facilities and of playgrounds for youth and children.

More than 80 percent of respondents referred to the out-migration of young people from their villages, stating that the main reasons for this are unemployment and lack of education and social facilities in the villages.

20 percent of the respondents stated that they do not have any information about the rural development supports of the Ministry of Agriculture. But the real figure is more than 20 percent, because most of the remaining 80 percent understand direct payments to farmers as to be rural development supports, and do not know about the separate grants for rural development. More than 60 percent stated that they have never received any such grants,

because they do not have any information about them supports : for a further 7 percent, the other reason is that they could not afford the procedure needed to apply for grant.

50 percent of the respondents do not have any information about the IPARD programme of Turkey; and no one benefited from the IPARD programme grants. They demand more information and less complex procedures if they are to benefit from the IPARD programme grants. Their recommendation for the IPARD programme is to give priority to young people and rural organisations in order to achieve the targets.

II.2. Results of Interviews with Rural Organisations

As indicated above, 8 rural organisations filled and sent back the questionnaires. These organisations are the chambers of agriculture, producers' unions, cooperatives and rural associations. Chambers of agriculture and producers' unions are the organisations of which membership is compulsory for farmers in order to get direct payments, whereas membership of associations and cooperatives is voluntary.

According to the results of these interviews, the main obstacles and problems that are faced by these organisations are:

- Lack of awareness among rural people about the structure of rural organisations
- Lack of government supports and incentives to the rural organisations, especially to cooperatives and associations
- Lack of processing plants, due to the low financial resources of organisations
- Insufficient professional staff, due to low financial resources of organisations.

According to the responses from these interviews, the main problems of rural people are :

- Lack of sufficient employment and income opportunities
- Lack of sufficient education, health, social services and basic infrastructure
- Low level of participation in rural organisations
- Partition of lands into very small plots, due to inheritance
- Lack of social security for rural people.

The problems of small farmers are summarised by the rural organisations as access to market, higher prices of agricultural inputs, very small size of land owned by small farmers, migration of young generations to the urban areas, low level of income and lack of social security.

Problems of young people in the rural areas are summarised as lack of sufficient employment opportunities, and lack of sufficient educational and social facilities.

According to the representatives of rural organisations, the main problems for women living in rural areas are low level of education, heavy work, lack of social facilities, lack of social insurance, and traditional values against women.

Young girls, women and older people are seen as the most disadvantaged groups in rural areas.

The recommendations of the representatives of rural organisations for the solution of these problems are : decrease the price of agricultural inputs through decreasing taxes; create new employment opportunities in rural areas; create organisations of farmers for direct access to

the market; reduce the price of farm inputs and information; improve infrastructure and social services in rural areas; and diversify the rural economic activities.

The representatives of rural organisations shared the opinion that national rural development policies are defined without participation of rural people; these policies do not meet the real needs of the rural areas; these policies mainly target the large farmers, and there are no incentives and supports for the small producers which constitute the majority of the rural population in Turkey. The policies do not include any production planning : this leads to instability in product prices.

The rural organisations want to see the following elements in the national rural development policies:

- Support and incentives to small producers
- Support to training and organisation buildings in rural areas
- Policies to decrease agricultural inputs through decreasing taxes
- Involving rural civil society organisations in defining and implementing rural development policies
- Improving infrastructure and social services and facilities in rural areas
- Establishment of agricultural high schools in rural areas
- Support and incentives to young farmers.

Participation of rural people in defining national rural development policies is seen as very limited; the governments do not listen to rural people. This is partially because of low level of education and lack of sufficient and effective rural organisations. In order to ensure participation of rural people in defining rural development policies, the creation of powerful rural organisations and assembly of farmers is proposed.

II.3. Ideas of Rural Communities under the Main Themes according to Regional Meetings

In order to gather the ‘upward cascade’ of ideas from rural communities in Turkey, four local and regional meetings were held. The main ideas from these meetings are summarised below:

Access to governmental supports for small farmers

Common idea is that small farmers cannot get rural development supports from government because of the following reasons:

- Small farmers are not informed about the rural development supports of the government, including IPARD programme supports,
- The procedures to apply for rural development grants are very complex and heavy for small farmers, and they cannot afford to apply. They need to use advisory services to prepare applications, which is expensive for them.
- Due to lack of sufficient farmers’ organisations, small farmers cannot get any advisory services to prepare application services.
- Rural development supports generally target the big farmers, and there is no incentive for small farmers.

Proposals. The rural communities propose the following regulation and actions, in order to increase the access of small farmers to the governmental rural development supports:

- a. Actions by rural communities themselves:
 1. Small farmers should be organised within cooperatives, unions or associations,
 2. Rural organisations should play a role in informing farmers about the rural development supports, and in preparing application on behalf of small farmers.
- b. Regulation and actions by the national government:
 1. The procedures for applying the rural development grants should be simplified
 2. The special quota and incentives should be adopted for small and young farmers
 3. The rural development supports and grants should be used through farmers' organisations rather than individual farmers, and special incentives should be given to farmers' organisations
 4. Farmers should be informed extensively about the rural development supports by the local government officials
 5. The government should support farmers' organisations to employ professional, technical staff.

Regulation and actions by the European Union Commission

1. Out of the 81 provinces in Turkey, only 42 provinces are included in Turkey's IPARD programme 2014-2020. Other provinces, for example Izmir and Giresun, should be included by the IPARD programme.

Participation of rural people in defining agricultural and rural development policies

A common thought arising from the local and regional meetings was that rural development policies are defined at central level by the government bureaucrats and experts, and the government does not listen to the rural communities. There are two main reason for that : the first one is that representative rural and farmers' organisations are too weak to apply pressure on the policy-makers, and the other reason is the negative attitude of the central government to the involvement of civil society organizations. The president of the İzmir Tire Milk Cooperative stated that "even there is no farmer representative in the National Parliament", which further indicates the powerless of farmers and farmers' organisations.

The participants in the local and regional meetings proposed some solutions for the improvement of participation of rural and farmer communities in defining and implementation of national rural development policies:

- a. Actions to be carried out by rural and farming communities by themselves:
 1. Rural communities and farmers should form powerful organisations, and these organisations should be united under effective organisations and platforms to express their views. Those organizations and platforms that represent rural communities should identify their policy proposals and submit them to the government. Chairpersons of the Beekeeper Unions of Ordu and Giresun stated during the regional meeting in the Black Sea Region that "When we go to the Ministry of Agriculture with some proposals, we are able to ensure that the government listens to us and accepts

our proposals. If the farmers' organisations become powerful, they can affect the government's policies".

2. Farmers should form farmers' assembly to identify rural development policies.

b. Regulation and Actions to be carried out by the National Government:

1. A favourable environment should be established by the government for the development of farmers' organisations, especially cooperatives.
2. Special incentives and priority in rural development supports should be given to farmers' organisations, in order to encourage rural communities and farmers to unite under rural and farmers' organisations in which membership is voluntary.
3. A system in which production and marketing process of farmers is controlled by the farmers' organisations.
4. Some responsibilities of local branches of public bodies should be transferred to the municipalities, because they are closer to the local communities than the central public

c. Actions to be taken by EU Commission

1. EU Commission should make pressure on the government to support farmers' organisations.

Added value to local products and the amount that farmers get from the marketing price of products

The share of farmers' income in consumer prices of food varies change between 10 percent in vegetables and fruits, and maximum 50 percent in animal products in Turkey, bBecause these products are generally marketed through mediators and big shopping centres. Farmers do not have direct access to markets, because of the lack of sufficient farmers' organisations. The other reasons for the low income share among rural producers are high value added tax on agricultural inputs and lack of post-harvest plants in rural areas. The proposition of the representatives of rural producers to increase the income share of rural producers are summarised below:

a. Actions to be Taken by Rural Producers themselves:

1. Rural producers should form producers' organisations that play a role both in production and marketing processes
2. Local producers' organisations should control the quality of products and create trade marks for their members' products.

b. Regulation and Actions to be Carried out by the National Government and Local Administration

1. Value added tax on agricultural inputs should be decreased
2. Local producers' bazaars should be established by the municipalities in district and province centres, so that producers can sell their products directly to consumers
3. Space should be given to producers' organisations (cooperatives and producer unions) to establish big shopping centres, so that they can have direct access to the consumers on behalf of their members
4. The law of the producer unions should be revised, so that producer unions can undertake commercial activities on behalf of their members

5. Producers' organisations should be supported to establish post-harvest and processing plants to store, pack and process products
6. The government should undertake production planning in consultation with producer organisations, in order to ensure price stability for agricultural products.

Migration of young people from the rural areas

Young people tend to migrate to the urban areas because of limited employment and income opportunities and lack of educational and social facilities in rural areas. For that reason, rural areas lose population, and rural enterprises face problems to find labour force for agricultural activities. The participants in regional meetings proposed some solutions to keep young generations in rural areas :

a. Actions to be carried out by the Government

1. The Government should give priority to the young generation in rural development supports and grants
2. Educational, infrastructural and social services (school, health clinics, sports areas, culture centres, children parks etc.) in the villages should be improved. Social and infrastructural facilities, similar to those in urban areas, should be developed in the rural areas. Most of the school and health clinics in the villages have been closed, and they should be re-opened to keep young people in the rural areas,
3. Special support should be given to diversify the rural economic activities and employment of young people.
4. The social insurance fee of young people that involve in production in rural areas should be paid by the government.

Social inclusion of vulnerable (women, youth and children) and social services in rural areas

Women and children are the most disadvantaged groups in rural areas. The villages lack basic social services (schools, health clinics, socialisation centres etc.) and infrastructure. Especially the participants of the Black Sea Regional meeting emphasised the need for infrastructure and social services to ensure the inclusion of disadvantaged groups. They indicated the following development needs for disadvantage groups in rural areas:

1. Schools should be reopened in the villages, and access to health services should be improved to increase the quality of life in rural areas,
2. Children's parks should be established in the villages.
3. Cultural centres for women and young people should be established in the villages for the social inclusion of disadvantage groups.