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ADJUSTMENT CHALLENGE FOR RURAL FAMILIES:  
EXPERIENCE FROM TURKEY AND POLAND

Small family farms are still predominant in Turkish agriculture. They challenge to the pressure of market economy by providing wage labour while retaining their lands. This adjustment strategy allows them to supplement their diminishing agricultural income through making better use of their only rich resources: the labour.

Polish farmers try to find another solution: they change the type of production, escaping from low market prices. In order to dispose of cereals that are difficult to sell they introduce more intensive livestock or hogs breeding. Some of them produce vegetable seeds.

At present small farmers in Poland have no other job opportunities. In Turkey there has been growing permanent and seasonal migration from villages to urban centres where non-farm job market is available. Consequently, at present there are many rural households depending upon income from male migration rather than on their subsistence agricultural enterprise, where women play a major role as unpaid family labour (and as *de facto* heads of their families).

In Poland there are households run by single women and single men, too (a few cases in field studies). They are widows, unmarried or divorced. In Płock environment extra income from migrants is not visible. Young people settle in the cities and marry there. They do not send money back to the village for two reasons: their parents, former farmers, according to Polish law receive pension from the state, and on the other hand, wages outside agriculture are not so high.

Market economy also expands wage labour in agriculture. Women participate greatly in paid labour, in some cases together with their family members (harvesting) or in other cases exclusively for female labour (hoeing). It can be related to both reviewed countries. There is some Polish specific wage labour of farmers but outside agriculture. 'Peasant-workers' go to the city everyday by bus and stay at work for eight hours. They come home late in the evening so their participation in farm work is limited. High unemployment rate in Poland today and hard competition to find job cause this category of workers may disappear.

Female members of the farm family are in both countries basically involved in manual agricultural operations while male members enjoy with mechanization.

An improved level of mechanization may decrease the need for female labour in a particular task, but an intensive agriculture requires more manual labour and heavier work for women. One of the prominent changes in the transformation process in both samples is a small number of extended families in favour of nuclear families which represent physically and economically independent units. This shifting from extended families to nuclear families may not provide a relaxation to younger women in terms of their workload but bring an improvement in their decision making power and control over the family resources. This process is more advanced in Turkey than in Poland. Housebuilding costs and prices of heating may differentiate family behaviour in both countries.

As a result of the general improvement of the living conditions in villages, the welfare of the families is relatively high and comparable in both countries. Listening to peasants families in both countries one may conclude that even though the level of life is similar, expectations of Polish farmers are far higher than of the Turkish ones. Optics of the life can also be determined by some national specific features i.e. more or less optimistic relation to the reality of life. Turkish families enjoy their conveniences, they are proud of them and, first of all, they used to present their achievements. Polish farmers treat their goods as something very obvious and, expressing themselves they used to pay attention to what is wrong and short of in material and in other sense.

Half of the interviewed Turkish women answer that they do not work in the field but they work only at home. Some of them work everyday half of the time, while the others work 7-8 hours during the harvest of chickpeas and after that only 2-3 hours in the field. The common opinion is that because of high mechanization level in Turkish villages women do not work hard. Only those who are engaged in chickpea harvest in the hot summer days find it very hard. Chickpea harvest is always considered as a duty of women. Women generally work to-gether in the field, helping one another.

Vegetation season is longer in Poland which involves a bigger number of field tasks. Women start with their family gardens at the beginning of April, then weed root plants after helping in hay harvesting, finally in October they are busy with root crops harvest. Thus they face a few peak seasons of work. Polish farmers admit they have to continue few kinds of economic activities to survive. This old-fashioned agriculture is continued because it protects peasants against prices instabilities. Animal husbandry is present on each family farm in Poland. Generally, taking care of livestock are women's and grandparents' tasks.

According to the opinion of the half enquired Turkish women the most troublesome is the inadequency of health services, the difficulty of agricultural works, dirtiness of village, as well as marriage between relatives. Only few women express that they do not like the life in the village and prefer to have home in a town because of higher standards of life in urban areas.

Polish women mostly say they would not change their dwelling place. On the one hand they complain of heavy work, but on the other, they accept village. Marriages

between relatives in Poland are very rare. Parents pressure on such marriages does not exist at all and girls and boys have bigger and free choice of partner.

Most of the women in Turkish villages leave the village only 2-3 times a year. The main reason to go out of the village is to visit doctors. Shopping, visits to relatives or participating in a wedding ceremony are the other reasons of leaving the village. Polish women enjoy their visit to the city because of relatives, shopping, hairdresser, and they usually travel once a week. Needless to say that the distance to the city is approximately the same in both countries.

There is no substantial difference in answers to the question, to whom women confess their personal problems. Women talk about their sorrows or troubles in most cases with their husbands. Parents and children are the second in turn to share with some secrets. In Poland only few women answered they use to confess their problems to relatives.

There is a general difference between Polish and Turkish customs connected with marriages: problem of dowry, partner's choice and age of marriage. Dowry does not play an important role in Turkey like in previous times but it still exists. Only some old women in visited villages expressed that their husbands gave money as dowry to their parents. In Polish reality dowry has never existed but according to the old habit the bride's parents provide the couple with the basic stuff or also with money.

The matchmakers are a dominant factor in a Turkish village life, but that is always an unpaid mediation. As the half of the women got married with a person from the circle of their relatives, matchmakers acted as a mediator for the other half of the women in the villages. However, the interviewed women prefer their children marry after knowing and understanding their partners. Only some of them prefer to choose the partners for their children from among their relatives. Some of them wait even now for the help of a matchmaker. In some cases, boys and girls know each other and their parents agree to their marriage.

In Poland we found only three cases of matchmakers' interventions. Young people meet each other on discos, wedding receptions, at school, during relatives' meetings. Polish boys and girls find their future partners themselves without intervention of parents. They are not pushed to get married very early. Compared to Turkey, (13-18 years of age), Polish youths marry later (at the age of 18-23).

The abortion rate in Turkish villages is not high. Women are principally against curettage, but they find it unavoidable if it is necessary. Most of them have not practiced the curettage, while one of them six and another ten times suffered it. Polish women were less open to inform us about abortion. They used to say only the general opinion on it. There were, however, few cases of miscarriage caused by environmental pollution from petrochemical industry in Plock.

It must be emphasized as the most impressive conclusion that despite the differences of culture, religion and habits rural families reveal similar reactions in both cases.

