

## **The Green Paper as a tool for Rural Policy formation: Lithuania's experience**

### **Introduction**

Prior to the accession to the EU, rural policy measures in Lithuania were financed only from the national budget and were in compliance with such rural vision of Lithuania that was visualized by the national policy makers. After the period of preparation for the accession into the EU was started, the EU priorities, formulated on the basis of the rural and agricultural development in the EU countries and political experience, started predetermining the trends and scope of support in rural policy.

The current CAP restructuring poses new challenges to Lithuanian rural policy makers. Whilst preparing the support system at the level of the entire EU, the primary rural problems of each country become inevitably leveled off. Therefore, *the ability to achieve that the EU support model would evaluate the specificity of the country to a maximum has become the major challenge to the national rural policy makers.* It will be of special importance when negotiating in respect of a new EU support model after 2013.

Until recently, the first version of various economic and social national strategies in the Lithuania was created by a small group of experts. In 2010, for the first time in Lithuania, attempts were made to take the first step in the strategy development by using another method – the Green Paper. The Green Paper in the knowledge-based society is becoming the especially effective tool in implementing reforms, since consultations with the public help to obtain a great deal of the tacit knowledge, permitting to create the high value added. Thus, answers to the questions, raised in the Green Paper, make it possible to integrate knowledge, accumulated in the state, and to use them in improving solutions, proposed by civil servants.

The Green Paper “Future of Rural Areas in Lithuania” was prepared on the initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Lithuanian Institute of Agrarian Economics. This initiative attracted great attention of society and may serve as an example of how the citizens can be involved in the discussions with the Government.

The objective of this article is to present the Green Paper as a tool, intended for discussion with the public, and results of the discussions for formulation of a rural policy in Lithuania. The research was conducted on the basis of systemic and holistic methodologies, using content analysis, analogy, logic comparison, induction methods and scientific and information literature analysis.

### **Concept and Purpose of the Green Paper**

The Green Paper as a special document was used for the first time by the Parliament of Great Britain in 1967 (GREAT BRITAIN. PARLIAMENT. HOUSE OF COMMONS. Parliamentary Debates. 5th ser., v. 744, April 5, 1967, col. 245.). The term “green paper” was coined by London newspapers from the green colour of the covers of the document. It was “a statement by the Government not of policy already determined but of propositions put before the whole nation for discussion” (Ibid. v. 747, June 5, 1967, col. 651). This document has set the example for the continuing public discussions, initiated by the consultative document of the Government.

The Green Paper was started to be used later in other countries as well. In particular, a document of that type was used in Australia, Ireland, and Canada. The Green Paper in those countries is an official document of the Government whereby the public is informed of the planned guidelines in political solutions when they are still under debate. The Green Paper introduces policy innovations, and it is just the first step in the formation of the provisions of a new law or strategic political trends, the *stage of vision formation* in the future of the object under debate. Following consultations with the public, policy trends and ideas presented in the Green Paper are corrected to be in better compliance with the vision prevailing in the society.

The procedure for a public debate of political solutions may be prolonged. Following the debate of the ideas, incorporated in the Green Paper, another document, the White Paper, is being prepared by the Government. Political solutions, necessary for the implementation of a new vision, are described more specifically in the White Paper, and the ways of solution are planned in more detail.

Recently, the Green Paper has been started to be used more widely in the European Union (EU). The Green Papers released by the European Commission, are designed for initiating discussions, helping to stimulate debates and launching the process of public consultations on the selected topic throughout Europe. The Green Papers, published by the European Commission, commonly introduce new ideas and/or key problems that arose in dealing with the topic and are

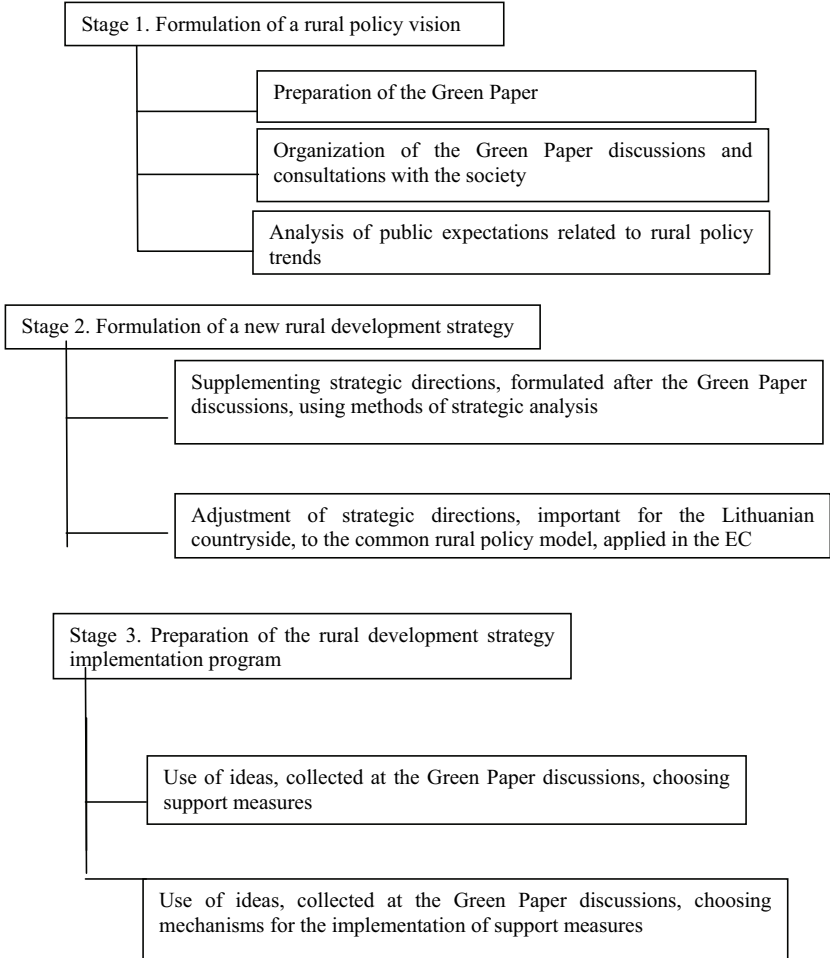
designed to encourage the people concerned or organizations to express their opinion and share the available information. Following the Green Paper the White Paper may also be prepared in the EU, which is a collection or a communiqué of official proposals which could later become the basis for legal acts.

The key task of the Green Paper is to discuss policy innovations and alternative ways for solving a problem. This is done by giving questions to the public and providing a brief explanation why such a question is being asked and what the context of a problem related to a question is. Questions are formulated believing that organizations or the individuals will submit not only their opinions, as is done during sociological surveys, but also arguments for their substantiation. The participants are requested to share their knowledge with the public as specialists. Thus, answers to questions, set forth in the Green Paper, make it possible to integrate knowledge accumulated by the citizens and to use them in improving solutions, proposed by civil servants. With the involvement of society into public debates, initiated by that document, an opportunity appears to use tacit knowledge, accumulated in the country, which often is left without due application. This tacit knowledge covers special research results, experience, gained by the citizens of the state in foreign countries, achievements in the spheres of activities, that are not directly related to the topic under discussion, etc.

The need to prepare the Green Paper on the future of Lithuanian countryside appeared as a result of the extremely rapidly changing public values and new information-communication technologies. This process requires not only new strategic solutions, but, in general, a new vision of rural Lithuania. Questions, raised in the Green Paper, should help to highlight the principal aims of the state and the value-related attitudes in Lithuanian rural policy after 2013, acceptable not only to lobbyist groups, but the whole society. Simultaneously, it is aimed at making use of knowledge and experience, obtained by different layers of society, especially urban residents, who until recently have been seldom involved in a rural policy decision-making process, disclosing the shortcomings of the present methods of support and creating new and more efficient support mechanisms.

Discussions in the Green Paper is just the first step necessary for the consistent implementation of the strategic planning process – to highlight expectations of society regarding the Lithuanian rural policy trends and to formulate political guidelines for the formation of a new Lithuanian rural development strategy.

Figure 1. The place of the Green Paper in the strategic planning process



Source: Compiled by authors

At Stage 2, in preparing a rural development strategy of Lithuania for a new programming period after 2013, the strategic rural policy directions, following the Green Paper discussions, should be harmonized with the structure of the common rural policy model proposed for the European Union. The strategy may be also supplemented by necessary strategic directions based on the opinion of experts, if it becomes clear that certain important issues were not given attention during Green Paper discussions.

At Stage 3 of strategic planning – preparation of the Lithuanian rural development strategy implementation program after 2013, ideas, collected during

the Green Paper discussions, on the possible support measures and their implementation mechanisms may be used (see Fig. 1).

### **Methodologies and principles for preparing the Green Paper**

Whilst preparing the Green Paper, certain changes occurring in the rural areas should be assessed. In the period of transition from the industrial to knowledge based society, the new lifestyle and values are being formed; the economic, social and cultural rural environment undergoes strong changes. Therefore, the concept of a rural development policy has to be changed and the rural areas should be treated as a territorial rather than sectoral formation. The time when national policy makers could put a sign of equality between the concepts “rural” and “agricultural” is already far behind. Many foreign (Diakosavas, 2006; Herrschel, 2005; Johnson 2001; Knickel, Renting, 2000; Kostov, Lingard, 2001; Kraybill, Kilkenny, 2003; Marsden, 2006; O’Conner et al, 2006; Storti, etc., 2004), as well as Lithuanian (Atkočiūnienė, 2008; Jasaitis, 2008; Melnikienė, Vidickienė, 2008; Svirskis, 2008) experts follow this approach. The newest rural policy paradigm seeks the comprehensive solution of all the problems of the rural areas as a “certain locality” (OECD, 2005; OECD, 2006 a and b). The main differences between a new rural place-oriented policy paradigm and the traditional rural paradigm are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The new rural paradigm

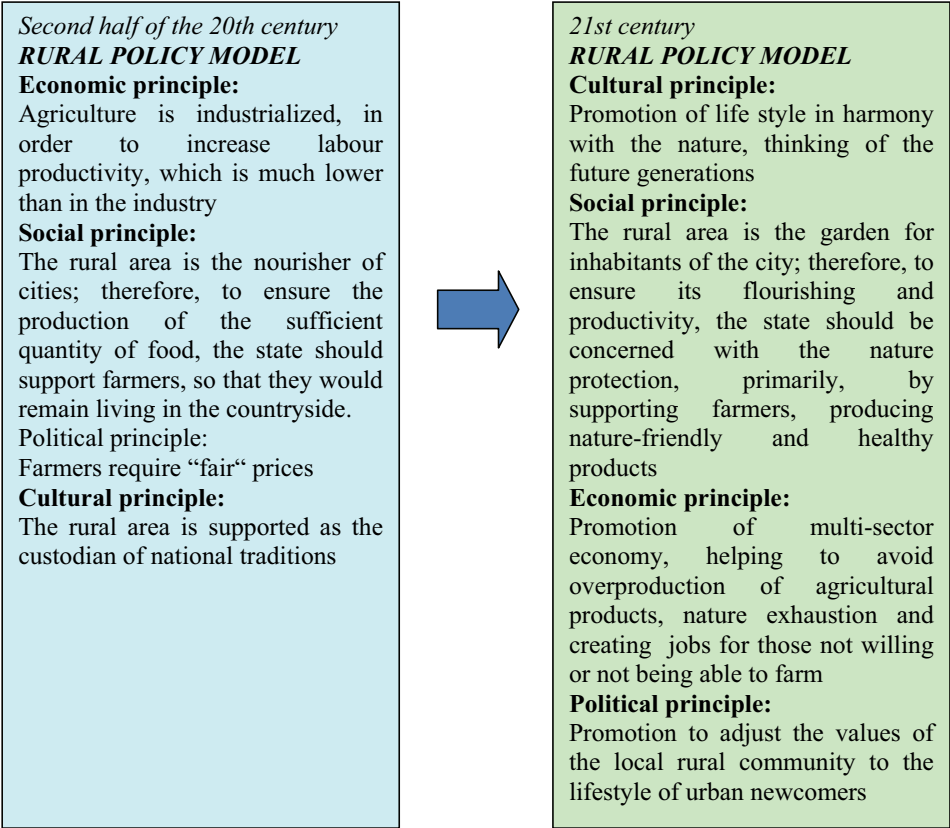
Specification	Old approach	New approach
Objectives	Equalization, farm income, farm competitiveness	Competitiveness of rural areas, valorisation of local assets, exploitation of unused resources
Key target sector	Agriculture	Various sectors of rural economy (ex. rural tourism, manufacturing, ICT industry, etc.)
Main tools	Subsidies	Investments
Key actors	National governments, farmers	All levels of government (supranational, national, regional, local), various local stakeholders (public, private, NGOs)

Source: OECD, 2006, p. 60.

A new paradigm has evolved in response to the knowledge society requirements. Therefore, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century rural policy, the stress is put already not on the economic but on the cultural principle, putting forward concern, what

we will leave to future generations and how to adjust their welfare to the present activity in the rural areas.

Figure 2. Comparison of rural policy models of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and of the 21<sup>st</sup> century



Source: Compiled by authors.

Following the new policy paradigm, support to the rural areas in EU is not any more identified with the support to farmers. In implementing those ideas, *alongside agriculture, the main axes of rural policy have become environmental protection, the quality of life and promotion of local initiatives.* Furthermore, the ways are considered of how to change the direct support mechanism, for it to contribute to environmental sustainability and orientation of farmers to the new needs of consumers for food quality. In addition, the EU residents require not separate and minor rural policy improvements, but to review the es-

sence of support provision, substantiate the public interest for support and indicate explicitly which public commodities and services the supported farmers produce. Safe and healthy food, nature-friendly farming, beautiful landscape and clean environment are the main items, for which still the few are ready to pay. However, the majority considers them to be valuable to the society. In respect that market forces do not promote the production of such goods and services so far, it is proposed to buy them for the money of taxpayers, providing support to those who experience additional costs when producing the healthier food, protecting the quality of soil and water, the biodiversity of nature, safeguard the cultural and historical heritage and landscape, etc.

Aiming to evaluate the ongoing changes, the systemic methodology was applied in the preparation of the Green Paper “Future of Rural Areas in Lithuania”. This methodology requires analyzing rural areas as the part of a bigger system. Lithuanian rural policy analysis was performed in three aspects as the part of:

1. Post-industrial knowledge-based society;
2. EU budgetary and Common Agricultural Policy reform;
3. Lithuania’s economic, social and environmental policy.

In the analysis of the rural policy as the part of the post-industrial society comparison was made of rural policy measures, characteristic of the industrial and post-industrial based society. Thus, the systemic methodology helped to stress the most important changes to occur in the formation of rural policy in the post-industrial knowledge-based society.

In the analysis of the rural policy as EU budgetary and Common Agricultural Policy reform, the systemic methodology helped to reveal alternative positions, which could be used in the negotiations for the EU policy in the agrarian sector and countryside.

In the analysis of the rural policy as Lithuania’s economic, social and environmental policy, a comprehensive evaluation of Lithuanian rural policy measures was carried out on the basis of comparative analysis with other states. The systemic methodology helped to reveal the areas where Lithuania is lagging behind compared to other developed counties in the rural policy measures, important for the post-industrial society. Issues raised in the Green Paper should assist in elucidating the reasons for such lagging behind.

The content of the Green Paper consists of six parts.

Part 1 of the Green Paper proposes a discussion on WHAT the aim of Lithuanian rural policy will be after 2013: industrial (modernist) or post-industrial (post-modern) countryside. In response to the serious discussions

concerning the EU budget and CAP reforms, Lithuania should have its own position based on the opinion of not only farmers' lobbyists, but also other parts of the society.

Part 2 of the Green Paper discusses WHICH approach of the rural support will be used:

- Countryside is lagging behind, it has to adjust to the modern city (modern approach);
- Lifestyle in the rural areas differs from that in the urban areas; therefore, the quality of life must be also measured by other indicators (post-modern approach).

The Green Paper invited Lithuanian rural inhabitants to state their criteria, which predetermine their preference to live in the rural areas rather than in the city, and to propose methods of how to ensure the improvement of the quality of life in the entire rural community.

The third part is devoted to discuss TO WHOM rural policy is beneficial. Do only the concrete receivers of the support feel the benefit or the whole society as well? It is stressed that lately support to farmers by urban and other rural inhabitants may give benefit only when the support will be intended for the supply of healthy and qualitative food products for Lithuanian consumers. Assistance from the society is also requested in constructing such support mechanism where the major part of the support funds, assigned for farmers and rural residents, would pass over to other Lithuanian rural areas – related producers, creators of local plant or animal species and new technologies. As a result funds would support their business development.

Part 4 of the Green Paper discusses WHAT we create when applying support measures, stressing possible negative effects of each support model:

- If an agricultural modernization model is applied, negative consequences may manifest themselves by agricultural concentration and monopolization; income disparity may become still more significant between the rural residents rather than urban;
- If the traditional rural reconstruction model is applied, negative consequences may appear as the cultural life stagnation, loss of economic and social viability;
- In the application of a post-modernization model, negative consequences may be revealed as conflicts between old rural residents and newcomers from towns, abuse of support in the suburban areas.



The public is invited to contribute to the elimination of the negative effects of support, sharing their experience and knowledge, since a possibility to improve the mechanisms for support provision always exists.

Part 5 is devoted to those WHO will be referred in the formation of Lithuanian rural future for the youth. It is underlined that a successful solution of the problem related to the change of generations in the Lithuanian the rural areas, is the most important guarantee of success, and therefore it is necessary to devote more attention to the needs of the youth. The large organizations, operating on the principle of membership were requested to group their answers by age groups, in case their expressed attitudes differ: youth (under 30), seniors (over 60) and others (30–60-year age group). The public is invited to contribute to the arsenal of political measures, to offer the ways of how young people could be stimulated to engage in farming, and young families to settle in the rural areas.

Part 6 of the Green Paper discusses WHERE the worthiness of rural areas is. It is invited to discuss what we would like to preserve in rural territories and in what ways they would be preserved, so it does not to stop the natural development of the life. The major part of the new 21<sup>st</sup> century ideas on the ideal future lifestyle model integrates in the world movement for the creation of eco villages. Simultaneously, new ideas are requested to be proposed of how the improvement of legal basis and support measures could help the more rapid spreading of ecological lifestyle in the rural territories of Lithuania, such as ecological farming and implementation of energy generation, housing construction technologies, but also fostering of family households, traditions and craft secrets and their transfer to the future generations.

The *structure* of the Green Paper became *oriented to target groups in the society*:

- Part 1 is devoted to experts, politicians, civil servants, interested in the general trends of the EU and Lithuanian rural policy reforms, and farmers, whose business may be directly influenced by the reforms;
- Part 2 is intended for collecting opinions and knowledge of local activity groups, rural community activists, municipalities and neighborhoods, school teachers and doctors;
- Part 3 is designed for clarifying consumers' approach and collecting of proposals on what agricultural, food product producers, methods of trade should receive support in the future so that the majority of the needs of the Lithuanian urban and rural residents could be satisfied by local producers;

- Part 4 is meant for collection of support mechanisms proposals of those Lithuanian inhabitants, who faced directly the concrete consequences of rural policy solutions;
- Part 5 is intended for different rural and urban youth organizations, expecting that they will help to direct the state support measures towards making Lithuanian rural areas ‘younger’;
- Part 6 is aimed for rural communities, settled in the territories, cherishing certain values, seeking new solutions how to make such the rural areas viable and to spread values in the society.

Titles to the parts of the Green Paper, the text structure and questions for discussions were formulated on the basis of the 21<sup>st</sup> century approach to the principles for selecting of public policy measures. The 20<sup>th</sup> policy measures most often were oriented to the struggle against negative social rural life phenomena, e.g., unemployment, poverty, crime, etc., i.e. attempts were made to overcome consequences. *Lately, efforts have been made to affect not the consequences, but causes; moreover, orientation is made towards the measures of stimulation of positive processes rather than fighting the negative ones.* In the post-industrial knowledge-based society such principle of policy formation, based on the positive thinking and the aim to “recruit” all local resources and to employ the creative potential, is much more efficient (Žalioji knyga, 2010).

Following this principle in the formulation of the future Lithuanian rural policy vision, the selected six target groups of the population were asked which rural policy measures could stimulate the greatest breakthrough in the development. The questions in the Green Paper shall help to clarify to what extent the Lithuanian population is ready to use the available resources, and what support measures would stimulate their creativity to the greatest extent.

### **Summary of Green Paper discussion with the Lithuanian society**

Despite a rather skeptical approach of some agricultural policy formatting experts to the potential benefit of Green Paper as a tool of rural policy formulation, discussions and consultations with the society have been very active and productive. Nearly a thousand statements, identifying problems and concrete suggestions on how to improve the Lithuanian rural development have been received. They have helped to highlight the unidentified problems by organizations that are representing farmers and the ones that yet have not been researched; original support measures have been proposed as well as their implementation mechanisms. It is a pleasure to know that socially active part of people in Lithuanian society is of very similar values, the same as the most famous

rural policy experts report, in terms of new rural development and policy trends of the counties with the highest level of development.

### ***Features of Lithuanian National Rural Policy after 2013***

Prior to accession to the EU the rural policy was financed entirely from national budget and corresponded the vision of national policy makers. The start of preparations for EU accession period, rural policy directions, tools and scope began to be formed on the EU priorities, on the basis of rural and agricultural development and policy experience of the EU countries. However, in the process of development of a system of support across the EU, each country will inevitably face the essential rural concerns. Therefore, the major objective of questions in the first section of the Green Paper was to clarify specific policy priorities for the future from the perspective of the rural population in Lithuania (Žalioji knyga, 2010).

So far, Lithuania's main uniqueness has been associated with the need to implement the process of land restitution and to reform the collective farming system inherited from the Soviet Union meanwhile, the Lithuanian agriculture after the regaining of independence in 1990 did not only have to formulate the private sector again, but also to provide farms with modern means of production. Consequently, rural policy has been concentrated on the agricultural industrialization in accordance with the twentieth century characteristic, following the view that only large farms can be modern and can achieve economies of scale in agriculture sector.

Society involved in the debate on features of national policy after 2013 is rather skeptical about further agricultural industrialization in Lithuania. Statistics show that Lithuania has successfully overcome the most important problems of restructuring and modernization in agricultural sector: labor productivity in the Lithuanian agriculture has grown much faster than in other industries and major threats have been evaded (mass migration to the city of rural residents). However, support measures and public opinion were only in favor of large farms. In the dispute on the rural policy after 2013, the participants stressed the need to draw attention to the differences of agricultural development policy methods in small and large countries. Lithuania as a small country is proposed to focus more on smaller farms to compete in the global market as a producer of environmentally-friendly products that acquire increasing demand in the world. Strengthening the Lithuanian farmers' competitive advantages, it is proposed to make Lithuania a synonym of environmentally clean area in the European Union (EU) and the world. Opinion holders stressed that if large quantities of organic

production were produced, it would be an additional guarantee to customers that the products produced in Lithuania are really healthy and clean. The debate clearly distinguished opinions by the large and small farmers, because they focus on different competing strategies, therefore, it would be appropriate to develop different packages of support – one suited to large, the other to the smaller ones (Vidickienė, 2010).

According to the most opinions it is asserted that Lithuanian agriculture is oriented towards market needs sufficiently enough, however, in the future it is important to maintain measures of market regulations – as the guarantee of stability of Lithuanian agricultural sector. It is proposed to introduce some completely new market-regulating measures, with particular emphasis on importance of the creation of crisis and risk management tools.

The opinion holders stressed in the debate that Lithuanian society does not sufficiently assess benefits of the environment-friendly farming practices, which, in turn, discourages farmers to practice it on a massive scale in their farming. It is, therefore, proposed to focus measures of state support on consumer education, organization of accessibility of ecological products from the manufacturer to the consumer, as well as the reduction of price.

### ***Quality of life differences between rural and urban areas***

In the second section discussions of the Green Paper, the majority of participants of dispute stressed that there must be an attractive rural model promoted, which provides living conditions for residents, which become increasingly valuable in the Lithuanian society: a peaceful, clean, healthy, socially friendly and safe environment surrounded by nature. Survey data shows that even ¼ of the population of the largest Lithuanian cities are considering migrate to the countryside (Žalioji knyga, 2010). However, particular importance to making the final decision to migrate to the rural area is the possibility of access to qualified health care, education, social security, police, government authorities and other services. Citizens want to know not only which lack of service development is considered to be self-evident part of life in the rural areas, but also to be involved in the decision making process.

In developing a new rural support program after 2013, it is proposed to direct more support to funding the projects for improving rural infrastructure, housing, and other important concerns which deal with quality of life. Lack of centralized water supply, sewage and even shortages of electricity supply systems are suggested to be compensated by the priority support for solar,

wind and other alternative energy sources in small towns and remote farm-houses and farms.

There has been a serious discussion if the state must assume obligations only for those services, which are dominated by the public sector (education, health, police and fire station). Partial view of the speakers considered support of businesses which are not able to survive in small towns on market conditions, for example, village shops or pharmacies.

There were also comments that the lack of desire to live in rural areas is determined not only by the lack of services, but the lack of diversity in jobs and employment, poor working conditions, poor relations between employers and employees. Farm modernization has led to structural changes in employment of the rural population. Only  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Lithuanian rural population are involved in agricultural activities and this kind of income takes only one sixth of all rural household income. Therefore, rural residents want more future support for employment creation as alternative activities and businesses with long-term promotion. It must also be focused on how economic activity is compatible with sustainable use of natural resources and health of population.

In order to take into account all the villagers' major concerns, speakers suggested a mechanism of cooperation among the ministries, which would allow to coordinate the flow of funds received from various national and international rural support programs. Many respondents have stressed that the quality of life depends largely on the rural community; it can greatly contribute to improving the quality of life. Support measures should encourage rural residents to get involved into rural communities, local activity groups and other community organizations more actively.

### ***Rural policy benefits for consumers***

In the discussion in this section of the Green Paper, the current support system for farmers has been criticized as overly focused on the individual interests of the beneficiaries. Participants have said that each support receiving project, in particular, should indicate how the other members of society, rather than the supported project owner will benefit. It was desirable that the support measures for farmers, in particular, pose such challenge, as healthy food supply for local consumers.

In addition to the support of individual initiatives of farmers and entrepreneurs, which strengthens the competitive capacity of individual operators, public interest (business infrastructure) projects should as well receive support, and the project would be implemented and co-financed by local governments and local

businesses. Consumers aim to eat fresher fruits and vegetables, require growers to deliver them to the consumer and create a completely different system of trade of the products. Therefore, as the most current issue of common interest projects where not only farmers but also society as a whole would benefit, was the setting of community pavilion, shops of farmers and their cooperatives, also mobile markets, facilities, roads and access to the reach places to the urban residents. It has also been proposed to support, not only production but also marketing, as well as permanent advertising and promotion of farmers' products. Restructuring of Lithuanian farms from mass, low cost production makers to healthy production manufacturers, who deliver products to the consumer quickly, would not only give benefit to consumers but also to farmers. This would strengthen the economic competitiveness of rural municipalities.

Lithuanian rural area is no longer only a food producer. Rural regions are increasingly seen as a place where it is a pleasure not only to relax, but to live regularly and lead a healthy life, that is, they are considered to be essential public recreational resources. Urban inhabitants wanted to strengthen this role of rural areas and support such measures, which provide better conditions to spend their leisure time, instead of in the areas of the intensive agriculture and pollution, but adequate resting-place surrounded by nature. This poses new challenges for support system to Lithuanian farmers, as it requires a new dimension to assess the benefits of intensive farming for community of Lithuania as well as EU.

### ***Undesirable effects of rural policy***

Long-term world practice indicates that the rural policy measures can lead to both positive and negative changes. Lithuanian society participated in the Green Paper discussion and named a number of worrying problems associated with the lack of spread of support, production and pollution levels, decline of small farms and growing social exclusion. It was stressed that the support of agriculture takes into consideration only the business through encouraging an increase of the size of farms, usage of chemicals, production of the same agricultural products (both in terms of range and quality), therefore, the number of jobs in rural areas decreases. Support for the majority of the rural population has been completely unavailable because of the conditions of its complexity. Support is primarily used in large farms, their competitiveness has increased, while the model of "small and medium business in agriculture" has suffered a complete failure. Small family farms, with an emphasis on careful use of natural resources, are excluded from the market by large agricultural producers with short-term profit aim. Participants also criticized the EU and Lithuania's gov-

ernment rural vision which is restricted to agriculture and activities similar to them. In their view, role of farmers is overestimated in the current rural policy as they are the only capable of diversification of the rural areas. This approach leads to a loss of economic vitality in rural areas and stagnation of other rural residents (non-farmers). Excessive emphasis on rural productive functions (to produce food) suppresses a number of other initiatives to exploit the benefits of rural tourism, health, recreational and educational activities and promotes the development of over-intensive use of natural resources.

Due to an improper or vague definition of rural regions, some rural policy has caused such negative phenomena as the support abuse in suburban areas, conflicts between the long-term rural residents and newcomers from the city.

### ***Generational change problems***

Lithuanian rural areas, as well as society as a whole, are aging rapidly. Rural population is aging not only due to declining birth rates, but also the reluctance of young people to live in rural areas. In particular, this is applied to intergenerational change in agriculture, because half of the owners of the land holdings are of retirement age, and young farmers (less than 40 years of age) account for only about 18 percent of those registered in the farmers' list. Most of the young, well educated people did not wish to inherit their parents' farm. Some of those young people who decide to farm, however, feel their potential is not totally used and they have given up their dreams to make a career in other fields.

During the Green Paper discussion that deals with problems of change of generations, the people highlighted that in order to maintain Lithuanian rural areas viable in the future appropriate support measures should be more focused on the needs of the youth. In order to attract more young people to the rural areas of Lithuania, it is not sufficient only to solve the problems of young farmers. In the process of the natural decline in employment of the Lithuanian rural population in agricultural sector, ***there must be conditions for young people living in rural areas to develop their professional activities consistent with their interests.*** New information and communication technology recently has created a large potential for jobs to move from institutions into home. Those living in Lithuanian rural areas can work in any location in Lithuania or in another country. Measures to encourage Lithuania's business people from cities to create such modern jobs for rural residents, could be an important stimulus towards encouraging more high-skilled young families to live in the rural areas.

In order to ensure a smooth takeover process of family farms in Lithuania it is not only important to motivate young people and engage farming, but also to find the best approaches for regulating inheritance. Discussions mainly focused on setting of a minimum knowledge requirements for the future heirs. The second problem, which appeared after the land restitution, was how to manage the farm with a few owners.

### ***The Life in value upholding rural areas***

Lithuania has many rural areas, where the main purpose is to protect and uphold certain historical, cultural and natural values. Most of these sites (in ethnographic villages, estates, national and regional parks, nature reserves and others protected areas) have a variety of activity restrictions which may limit people's initiative to develop business activity and adapt their homesteads for daily needs. Some rural communities, for example, eco-villages, follow certain restrictions voluntarily.

According to the assessment of experts of UNESCO and other international cultural organizations, Lithuania has still widely maintained the unique rural features; each region has characteristic architectural features of settlements planning, residential and farm buildings. Lithuania has 43 villages with a historical or cultural heritage. The wooden heritage is particularly appreciated, because of its unique construction techniques and decorative forms as it is not only national but also European value. 59 protected estates, parks and gardens are also located in rural areas.

Green Paper debate participants believed that preservation and renewal process of viability of the ethnographic villages and estates is impossible without private initiative. However, in order to encourage activity of local residents and supporters of heritage strict prohibitions should constantly be reviewed; also compensating mechanisms for those who follow the restrictions should be improved. At the same time it is important that Lithuania's rural tradition and the ancient craft techniques would spread to other villages, would become well-known and popular in society. It is, therefore, proposed to promote the craft and develop it as a business activity, combine it with rural tourism, recreation, administration, educational institutions and the various communities (e.g., artists, retired people), which could be located in former estate houses and can contribute to estate management and preserving.

A particularly large quantity of the speakers, in the discussion of the last chapter questions of the Green Paper, talked about a new phenomenon, so called eco-villages, and encouraged to establish procedures to ensure the ecological



state of the area. It has been proposed to support the pilot projects of promoting and establishing the idea of eco-villages.

### **Lithuanian rural policy vision proposed by the society**

Speakers' views in the Green Paper debate has shown that there is a positive attitude being formed towards living in Lithuanian rural areas and the desire to eat food produced in Lithuania. Ecology is no longer just one of the many rural policy aspects corresponding with the social vision, ecological concepts and eco-thinking permeates all proposals received by the Green Paper debate. Not only governmental but also the responsibility of farmers is emphasized in the process of conservation of natural resources for future generations in rural areas.

People particularly emphasize the quality of life in rural areas as they are largely determined by human choice, when the living place is considered. This kind of choice in Lithuania is still favorable for the city. Therefore, only an integrated approach to the key needs of people living in rural areas, in the process of formulating rural policy may stop migration of rural population to the city and encourage the development of modern Lithuanian rural areas.

Concisely described vision of Lithuanian rural areas, that has been expressed through the Green Paper discussions and covering parameters of the essential needs of people living in rural areas, which are important in the process of the modern rural policy formulation is as follows:

- Cherish Lithuanian rural areas where people would LIVE well;
- Create the conditions for Lithuanian rural population to WORK in their desirable field of activity;
- Lithuanian rural areas must become a place which people would like to VISIT (Vidickienė, 2010).

Participants of the dispute emphasize future of rural policy instruments which must be focused on the youth needs and values. Otherwise, it is difficult to expect that young people, especially after studying in the city for a few years will return to live in the rural areas, when there is the opportunity to stay in the city.

According to the summary of the views of the Green Paper debate, directions of strategic support to Lithuanian rural areas have been formulated, that can accelerate the implementation of the rural vision:

1. Adaptation of rural settlements to modern needs of their population;
2. Access to services for rural population;
3. Governmental support for public initiatives in rural areas;

4. Viability of family farms;
5. Bringing organic products closer to the consumer;
6. Improvement of business environment in rural areas;
7. Development and support of high-skilled jobs in rural areas,
8. Orientation of rural tourism towards services to families and foreigners on holiday;
9. Promotion of organization of events of national and regional importance in rural areas.

According to the Green Paper debate, strategic directions of rural support were presented in Lithuanian Government meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> of December, 2010 and according to the protocol of government's decision it was recommended for the ministries to take into account public opinion on issues of rural development in the process of formulation of long term development strategy "Lithuania in 2030" and other strategic documents.

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