

## **OPTIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN SEMI-SUBSISTENCE FAMILY FARMING**

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To understand the present situation properly, we have to get back to the 1950s, when forced state socialism taught our grandparents and parents that cooperatives mean to lose the family's own property. Everybody had a state job, so that communism took care that farmers couldn't be independent, and shouldn't think about how to earn tomorrow's bread.

Now, the so called "free" European Union turned this upside down, and the basic requirement is independence and self-sufficiency, but farming means at the same time a dependence on the state so that it can control the basics of the activity, including western type cooperatives.

Here, in the Gyimes valley we inherited beautiful and valuable hay meadows, and a unique farming tradition. The young generation, attracted into the towns' schools, don't see its importance. On the contrary, they consider it a curse; something to be ashamed of, which separates them from the shiny global culture. It separates, because there is a lot hard work to maintain these inherited lands, which brings only a very moderate livelihood, instead of the luxury lifestyle shown on TV. This way the artificial light of western world casts a deep shadow on the invaluable treasure left to us by our ancestors.

### **Livelihoods for youth in the Gyimes valley today**

Nowadays most young people who stay in Gyimes try to reach this artificial town-lifestyle by forest extermination. I use the word extermination, because the way of deforestation isn't sustainable at all, I wouldn't even call it forest management. Almost 90% of young people live like this in Gyimes. Those, who didn't integrate into this system (yet), try to survive by traditional animal husbandry. And the rest, who don't have these opportunities or who want to try they fortune, go to the west and become "slaves" in private companies or farms.

### **What are the results of the outmigration of youth?**

The most important problem is that the villages don't have enough local work force, especially since the good workers leave. Most of them work on German farms, where they are not their own masters: someone else tells them what to do, when and how, to manure, clean the stable or to make German cheese.

After a while they return, with plenty of bad experiences and some money, and then they go shopping to the next town's supermarket to buy German cheese and Polish milk. In fact they spend the money they earned there, and then they have to return to Germany to work hard and earn money again.

### **What could make our youth stay here?**

First of all we have to strengthen their identity: to make them know about the value and uniqueness of their own Csángó culture. To make them know of the responsibility, that if they don't take care, there is the risk of dissolution and disappearance of the whole community.

Second, we have to create a local economy, in which we can sell and buy local products in

local shops, which isn't the case nowadays. This gives a chance for us to survive by earning money from products, using our traditional knowledge and maintaining our wonderful landscape. Give us a chance to buy local food and handicrafts in the local shops!

Third, the authorities should enable young people to start their own small businesses locally. I don't even say help us, just don't hinder us! They shouldn't kill the very limited entrepreneurial intentions before it can even start.

Finally we have to raise awareness about the risks and possible results of this very strong outmigration from Gyimes. Without youth there is no future, and the famous Csángó culture will be just a couple of pages in some ethnologists' nice books. Every local family has to work on ways and reasons for our youth to stay! This is our common responsibility!