

# ANNALES

*Anali za istrske in mediteranske študije*  
*Annali di Studi istriani e mediterranee*  
*Annals for Istrian and Mediterranean Studies*  
*Series Historia et Sociologia, 35, 2025, 2*





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**Series Historia et Sociologia, 35, 2025, 2**

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Založništvo PADRE d.o.o.

**Založnika/Editori/Published by:**

Zgodovinsko društvo za južno Primorsko - Koper / *Società storica del Litorale - Capodistria*® / Inštitut IRRIS za raziskave, razvoj in strategije družbe, kulture in okolja / *Institute IRRIS for Research, Development and Strategies of Society, Culture and Environment / Istituto IRRIS di ricerca, sviluppo e strategie della società, cultura e ambiente*®

**Sedež uredništva/Sede della redazione/  
Address of Editorial Board:**

SI-6000 Koper/Capodistria, Garibaldijeva/Via Garibaldi 18  
**e-mail:** annaleszdjp@gmail.com, **internet:** https://zdjp.si

Redakcija te številke je bila zaključena 30. 06. 2025.

**Sofinancirajo/Supporto finanziario/  
Financially supported by:**

Javna agencija za znanstvenoraziskovalno in inovacijsko dejavnost Republike Slovenije (ARIS)

*Annales - Series Historia et Sociologia* izhaja štirikrat letno.

Maloprodajna cena tega zvezka je 11 EUR.

**Naklada/Tiratura/Circulation:** 300 izvodov/copie/copies

Revija *Annales, Series Historia et Sociologia* je vključena v naslednje podatkovne baze / *La rivista Annales, Series Historia et Sociologia è inserita nei seguenti data base / Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in:* Clarivate Analytics (USA): Arts and Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI) in/and Current Contents / Arts & Humanities; IBZ, Internationale Bibliographie der Zeitschriftenliteratur (GER); Sociological Abstracts (USA); Referativnyi Zhurnal Viniti (RUS); European Reference Index for the Humanities and Social Sciences (ERIH PLUS); Elsevier B. V.: SCOPUS (NL); Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).

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received: 2024-11-26

DOI 10.19233/ASHS.2025.12

## INTEGRATION OF PEASANTS INTO THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEMS IN SOCIALIST SLOVENIA

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### ABSTRACT

*The present contribution examines the integration of peasants into the social security systems in the second half of the twentieth century. In the first part of the article, the historical context (ideological background, agricultural and social policies, structural changes) is presented, while the second part focuses on the long-term social position of agriculture and peasants. The third part examines the acute problems of agricultural poverty and systemic measures to improve the situation of the agricultural population, based on the example of health and pension insurance.*

**Keywords:** economic and social policy, peasants, social security systems, socialism, Slovenia

## L'INTEGRAZIONE DEI CONTADINI NEI SISTEMI DI SICUREZZA SOCIALE NELLA SLOVENIA SOCIALISTA

### SINTESI

*Il presente contributo esamina l'integrazione dei contadini nei sistemi di sicurezza sociale nella seconda metà del XX secolo. Nella prima parte dell'articolo viene presentato il contesto storico (sfondo ideologico, politiche agricole e sociali, cambiamenti strutturali), mentre la seconda parte si concentra sulla posizione sociale assunta dall'agricoltura e dai contadini nel lungo periodo. La terza parte analizza i problemi acuti della povertà agricola e le misure sistemiche per migliorare la situazione della popolazione agricola, basandosi sull'esempio dell'assicurazione sanitaria e pensionistica.*

**Parole chiave:** politica economica e sociale, contadini, sistemi di sicurezza sociale, socialismo, Slovenia

## INTRODUCTION

To understand the social position of peasants and agricultural poverty in socialist Slovenia, it is necessary to outline, at least roughly, their social position before World War II. The social position of the agricultural and rural population was the focus of considerable public attention. When the communists rose to power after World War II, they introduced measures to tackle the prevailing poverty in rural areas. In general, economic and social policies were focused on improving the social position of the classes disadvantaged before World War II, i.e. during the Great Depression of the 1930s, which had profoundly affected the society and the political actors. The position of some social groups had improved at the expense of the social humiliation of other social classes, such as the bourgeoisie or private peasants. The policies introduced after the World War II changed the society. In the middle of the 1960s, it thus became necessary to alter the implementation and orientation of the prevailing development concepts, which had to be adapted to the new economic and social structure emerging with the implementation of communist social and economic policies. At that time, private peasants were gradually included in the various forms of insurance, slowly bringing them on an equal footing with the employees in the so-called social sector. This process was neither swift nor free of ideological controversies. In fact, ideological moments persisted until the beginning of the transition at the turn of the 1990s. Hence, the article is divided into three parts. In the first part, the agricultural situation before World War II is presented. The second part focuses on the period of socialist agricultural policy and the role of private agriculture. The third part is dedicated to the integration of private peasants into the social security systems and thus society.

## THE SITUATION BEFORE WORLD WAR II

Before World War II, peasants represented the most numerous segment of society. Slovenia was predominantly agrarian, with agriculture still contributing half of the national income. Approximately 60% of the population depended at least partly on agricultural income (Erjavec, 1928, 12). As an economic and social group, peasants were essential for social stability. Land ownership fragmentation represented a fundamental fact that determined the results of agricultural work, the structure of the agricultural economy, and the living standard in the countryside. On the one hand, a large number of peasants possessed tiny plots of land, while on the other hand, very few owned extensive areas. In this regard, it should be emphasised that it is impossible to speak of large estates with a lot of cultivable land, as the large farms typically included extensive forest areas. In such cases, the economisation of forest potentials represented the main activity. The 1931 farm census revealed that one third of farms were smaller than two hectares, while a

quarter of them measured up to five hectares. The distribution of plots also represented a considerable problem for suitable cultivation of fields. Most peasants did not own a homogenous piece of land but rather small plots at different locations. According to the census, there were 1,882,245 land parcels in the Yugoslav part of Slovenia, significantly exceeding the number of inhabitants. The forest ownership structure was equally fragmented.

According to public opinion, land and forests represented indispensable elements of survival in the countryside. Aspirations for a political intervention that would ensure a more balanced land ownership structure were constantly present, especially to secure sufficient areas of land and forests for small and tiny farms. In the prevailing opinion, the ideal farm consisted of approximately five hectares with the production potential ensuring the survival of an agricultural family. Due to the political pressure after World War I, an agrarian reform was introduced, but it failed to fulfil the public and political expectations.

Rural overpopulation represented an acute economic and social problem in the countryside, as the population growth outpaced the increase in agricultural productivity. Employment opportunities outside agriculture were also limited, while travel abroad was difficult or impossible between the two wars. Farm profitability was low. The differences between the individual types of farms were significant. Profitability only started increasing in the case of farms measuring almost ten hectares or more. Regarding the living costs, the agricultural production of small farms (measuring up to two hectares) only sufficed for a single person, while farms between two and five hectares were enough for 3.32 persons, on average. Only farms that came close to ten hectares or more could provide for more people than the average agricultural household (Uratnik, 1938, 61). The estimated average size of an agricultural family at the time was somewhat more than five members (Maister, 1938, 94). Except for bare survival (and even this barely), small farms did not ensure anything else. Small farms (up to two hectares) did not even suffice for the basic existential needs of all the family members. To meet their entire families' needs for food, peasants had to look for additional land. The information regarding the leasing of arable land shows that in the case of small farms measuring up to five hectares, the percentage of rented areas was high. In the size category up to a single hectare, leased land represented 27%, while in the category between one and two hectares, it amounted to 17%. Even in the case of farms measuring up to five hectares, the percentage of leased land was 10%. Only in the case of larger farms was this percentage statistically insignificant (Uratnik, 1938, 53).

Anton Pevec (1924, 5) presented the dilemmas related to agriculture without embellishments. He wrote: "In Slovenia, it will be necessary to either increase the agricultural production or reduce the size of the agricultural population by half." He believed that this would happen on its own but that such a result should be prevented with

the agricultural policy measures that would ensure the restructuring aimed at more efficient production and increased size of farms. He was convinced that small farms did not meet the conditions for long-term economic survival. Meanwhile, another contemporary of Pevec wrote that small peasants, in particular those who owned up to two hectares, were already coming close to the position of wage workers due to their non-agricultural activities (Möderndorfer, 1938, 155).

It was obvious that small peasants urgently required other sources of income to cover the investments into social and economic modernisation. Even with leased land, agriculture as the primary activity did not suffice. Half of all the farms whose majority of income originated from non-agricultural sectors were smaller than a single hectare. These were followed by farms measuring up to two hectares, and then by those between two and five hectares. Of the total number of farms whose majority of income originated outside agriculture, as much as 84% did not measure more than five hectares of land (Uratnik, 1938, 54). Peasants and rural population also had to engage in non-agricultural activities to survive. They developed various crafts and resorted to retail trade. According to this model, farms served to provide basic food, while other activities (hired work, crafts, migration) provided the means for other life necessities.

Field workers represented a pressing issue. Wage labour was by far the most important category for acquiring additional income at small farms. On the one hand, farms larger than ten hectares already required additional workforce during the peak of the season, as family members were unable to do everything on their own. On the other hand, however, smaller farms, in particular, had an excess of workforce at their disposal due to the problem of agrarian overpopulation. Regarding employment in agriculture and forestry, we should distinguish between two categories. The first was permanent employment (farmhands, maids), where people would perform all of the agricultural, forestry, or household jobs. As a rule, the permanently employed individuals were not married. They belonged to the agricultural households and lived at the farms where they worked. They were paid in kind – with food, clothes, and accommodation. Only occasionally would they receive modest monetary payments. Their position depended on the economic power of the farms where they were employed. On medium-sized and smaller farms, the permanently employed workers shared the living standard of the farm owners. The only difference was their accommodation: the lodging assigned to the employees was exceedingly modest, and the habit of simply sleeping in stables was widespread. The living and working conditions were somewhat better in the case of larger, more profitable farms (Vodopivec, 1940, 227).

The status of farmhands and maids was regulated only informally, with oral contracts in line with the principles of the natural (people's) law. In the case of old age, exhaustion, or illness, such workers only had

the right to minimal care and modest accommodation as associated family members but were otherwise completely unprotected. In some cases, the farm owners and the municipality shared the care for obsolete workers. However, this did not sufficiently protect the permanently employed agricultural workers. The obligations of the owners were merely moral rather than stemming from the workers' social security. Farm owners could dismiss their workers without any reasons, explanations, or sanctions. The owners' moral reputation might have suffered in the community, which, however, acknowledged their right to dismiss workers – and they would regularly exercise it. This was the main problem of many farmhands, who became the burden of their municipalities and were forced to live in poverty as beggars once they could no longer work. Due to such circumstances, conflicts and doubts abounded in the agrarian communities. The problem was far-reaching, exceeding the limits of the people's law and moral obligations. In the 1930s, demands for precise regulation of the position of agricultural workers were frequent but remained at the level of ideas.

The second type of employment was not permanent but temporary, while the seasonal nature of work called for a larger number of workers. Payments were almost exclusively monetary. Such workers, paid by workdays (day labourers), were mostly hired by the owners of larger farms – i.e. the ones boasting more than ten hectares of land. According to the calculations, at the farms smaller than five hectares, the hours spent by the peasants and their families working at their homesteads represented only 40% of their potential working time. Hired work was thus crucial for a significant percentage of the rural population. According to the research conducted by Filip Uratnik in 1938, towards the end of the 1930s, as much as a third of the rural population gained additional earnings by working at other farms. Due to the predominantly low profitability in agriculture, the wages of hired workers were correspondingly modest. Filip Uratnik estimated that the average daily wage of hired workers amounted to half of the daily earnings of industrial workers, which only covered the bare existential minimum (Uratnik, 1938, 5–12, 62–76).

#### AGRICULTURAL POLICY STAGES AFTER WORLD WAR II

According to the social consensus before World War II, the agricultural structure needed to change. The average size of farms was to be increased, while peasants should be steered towards entrepreneurship. Simultaneously, industrialisation should reduce the burden of agrarian overpopulation, freeing up a part of the revenue for the much-needed investments in technology. However, there was no consensus on how to bring about the necessary changes in social development planning and, in this context, rural poverty alleviation. Before World War II, society did not generally support the communist

vision of social and economic development. Almost ten years after World War II, agricultural policy was based on the “Marxist interpretation” that peasants could not survive in the long term as small-scale producers due to the processes of concentration of land ownership and the monopolisation of production in the form of large-scale capitalist farms using mechanisation. The inevitability of the proletarianisation of peasants in the capitalist system is exactly what justified the principles of the communist agricultural policy in Slovenia (Yugoslavia). Following the Marxist tradition and the Soviet model, the Yugoslav ideologues of agricultural policy built upon the thesis that private agriculture (regardless of its size) constantly opened up the possibility of strengthening capitalist relationships in the countryside, which they saw as contrary to the aspirations of the communist economic system. The agricultural policy had a twofold objective: either the abolition of peasants as a distinct social stratum in the initial period, or its political, social, and economic confinement to very narrow production contexts later on.

The initial period encompasses the period from the agrarian reform in 1945 to the abandonment of collectivisation. During that time, the policy was aimed against peasants as individuals and as a social group. Under the concept of the centrally planned system, peasants were subject to strict control, while crop production and stocking with compulsory purchases were regulated in detail. The market was formally abolished and could only exist informally. Peasants were deprived of their economic subjectivity, while the existing system did not allow for economic incentives (Čepič, 1999, 176), which were to be replaced by ideological incentives.

In 1953, collectivisation was officially abandoned. The legislation was amended to allow peasants to leave agricultural cooperatives without punishment, triggering an avalanche of peasants leaving the cooperatives. After years of violence and alienation, it was crucial to appease peasants. The 1957 Resolution of the Federal Assembly, aimed at peasants, implied that in the future, the agricultural policy would be implemented without any violent interference in individual land ownership (Veselinov, 1987, 50).

In relation to peasants, a major step was taken by legitimising their economic interests. Private peasants were recognised as legitimate economic entities with their own economic and social interests. The economic relevance and potential of private farming were thus also recognised, paving the way for a different regulation of agricultural production relations. However, the fundamental focus remained intact, as agricultural production had to be based on a state-owned agricultural sector, which would act as the vehicle for technical transformation and increasing productivity. A reorganised and reformed cooperative sector would represent a complement and a mechanism for integrating workers into the so-called “socialist production relationships”. Simultaneously, measures were adopted to safeguard “socialist production relationships”

or prevent the “reproduction of capitalist relationships”. When collectivisation was abolished, the scope of the maximum land ownership was also changed. From 1953 onwards, peasants were only allowed to own ten hectares of land. Any excesses of this limit were nationalised and peasants were compensated according to the estimated land profitability (Veselinov, 1987, 32).

The recognition of the peasant’s economic interest had positive consequences, as production increased and peasants accepted cooperative participation. Interestingly, peasants who owned land holdings near the maximum allowed size were predominant in joining these forms of cooperation. In Slovenia, 44% of all peasants were involved in cooperatives, which was significantly more than at the Yugoslav level (25%). The economic potential of this cooperation was not negligible either, as private peasants, for example, accounted for one third of all wheat production and one quarter of potato production in Slovenia (Čepič, 1999, 187–188).

The abandonment of ideological rigidity in relation to private agriculture progressed along with the liberalisation of the socialist economic system. However, the system was designed to keep peasants within the socialist cooperative sector through economic and social measures. As of the mid-1960s, state-owned agricultural enterprises received intensive investments, increased their production and productivity, and, to a considerable extent, installed and modernised their technological equipment. The economic importance of private agriculture was generally declining. De-agrarianisation was an accompanying process, and the problem of agrarian overpopulation was gradually losing its relevance. Extensive migrations of rural populations, both to live in cities and work in industry and service sectors at home and abroad, reduced the social significance of the agricultural population.

In the political vocabulary, the class-oriented approach was receding, along with the fear of “wealthy” peasants. Gradually, the peasant’s status was equalised with that of other economic entities. In 1967, the last remaining restrictions on purchasing heavy machinery and other equipment needed for agricultural production were lifted, and peasants could buy state-of-the-art equipment freely. This facilitated the modernisation of private agriculture, allowing many peasants to adapt their previously close involvement in the “socialist cooperation” with the cooperative sector. They were allowed to enter the market independently and sell their products directly to end customers. This change raised the issue of maximum land ownership, as the ten-hectare limit had become an obstacle to the development of private agriculture. This is why the 1974 Constitution already provided for the possibility of land leases. The possibility of leasing land, which, in theory, was not limited in scope, definitely paved the way for more ambitious entrepreneurship in private farming – only within the limits of the existing communist system, of course. As in all other areas, the main restriction was the possibility of hiring labour, which

was limited to a few people. Agriculture as a whole also benefited from the correction of relative price ratios in favour of agriculture (Loncarevic, 1987). Simultaneously, the tax system was amended to make it more favourable for peasants. After the abandonment of collectivisation, where the above-average peasants tax burden was aimed at capturing accumulation, gradual changes made the tax system relatively favourable for private peasants. The progressive tax bases, determined in an arbitrary political manner, were replaced by a system of cadastral income taxation, with a deduction for the operating costs of production. After 1971, Slovenia switched to a system of taxing the peasant's real income.

The relevant items of economic discrimination against peasants also affected profitability and productivity. The profitability and productivity of the private agricultural sector in Slovenia (like elsewhere in Yugoslavia) regularly lagged behind the state agricultural sector, both because of the pricing policies and administrative restrictions on investments at private farms. The gap in the relative magnitude of growth in production and profitability kept widening, especially since the 1960s, to the detriment of private agriculture in the long term (Turk, 1996; Bojnec, 1991; Nishimizu & Page, 1982; Boyd, 1987; Hofler & Payne, 1993).

Once peasants were economically and socially re-integrated into society, and as the importance of private farming for the food balance was undeniably recognised, cooperative farming was revitalised. Based on a new conceptual framework, cooperative farming was supposed to enable the modernisation of private agriculture to better meet the agricultural policy objectives. Modernisation called for financial resources, which is why the development of cooperative credit and savings institutions began in 1969. In 1971, they merged into the Credit and Savings Institutions Association of Slovenia, making the loans more accessible for peasants. In 1972, the Peasants Associations Act followed, once again enabling the voluntary establishment of cooperatives based on the peasants' interests. In 1972, the Cooperative Association of Slovenia was established, undertaking an organised expansion of the cooperative network. The Association contributed to improving the peasant's economic situation, market regulation, crediting, and education, as well as encouraged the upgrading of the agricultural legislation. An agreement was reached on the state, banks, and savings banks providing loans to finance farm development and the agricultural sector. After 1975, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development also participated in the reconstruction.

Within the cooperatives, agricultural promoters advised peasants on how to adapt to expand the marketable production. The first agricultural tractors with attachments, along with the first silos, modern facilities for indoor livestock farming, milking machines, and collection facilities were introduced, while pedigree breeding services proved to be very successful. The

extensive technological modernisation of farms began. Peasant mainly focused on cattle farming, producing meat and milk. New investments also rapidly boosted food production on farms, increased farm incomes, and improved the peasant's living standard. In the 1980s, collective insurance became widespread. A significant shift was made in the collective insurance for livestock, plantations, and crops, with 20% of all plantations and crops insured. Cooperatives were the main organisers of collective insurance (Avsec et al., 1997, 4–9).

#### MIXED FARMS

Economic incentives and the partial functioning of the market gradually encouraged the industriousness and entrepreneurship of peasants – within certain limits, but nonetheless. Ana Barbič's research has revealed that peasants quickly turned liberalisation to their advantage as soon as they were given the chance. They started working on their own account, rapidly expanding their range of activities and thus diversifying their income. The long-term agricultural management strategy, abruptly interrupted by collectivisation, was revived. According to Ana Barbič, all peasants activities were also directly or indirectly aimed at generating income. Of course, in accordance with the rhythm of farm work, wintertime was suitable for additional activities. Barbič also introduces a distinction between formal and informal agricultural activities. This category is more analytical, as it points out that it is difficult to draw a line between agriculture as a formal and informal activity in everyday life. For those members of agricultural families whose primary source of income is agriculture, it represents formal employment, while for those who earn most of their income with non-agricultural activities, it is informal (Barbič, 1990, 128–129). The distinction is relevant because historical experience also shows a division of labour within agricultural families, not only by gender but also by farm activities (Lazarević, 2018).

According to a survey of individual farm households in the 1980s, almost half (47.1%) of the households gained their income from two sources: agricultural activities and regular employment of members outside agriculture. Only 20% of farm households received income exclusively from agricultural activities. 12.5% had three sources of income – agriculture, regular employment, and agriculture-related activities. 6.6% combined income from agriculture and agriculture-related activities. However, 13.8% of the farms relied on combinations of very diverse activities in addition to farming, which are difficult to categorise (Barbič, 1990, 131).

From a historical perspective, these results are not surprising. They correspond to the conclusions of Filip Uratnik, who also examined sources of income in the period before World War II. His assessment is unequivocal: hired work was crucial for a significant percentage of the rural population. In 1938, only 40% of working time

was devoted to agricultural activities at farms not exceeding five hectares and even less at smaller ones. These peasants had to look for additional employment and thus a supplementary income outside agricultural activities (Uratnik, 1938, 5–12, 62–76). The pre-war and post-war socio-economic contexts shared the same characteristics, while only the employment sector was different. Before World War II, most peasants were employed in the agricultural sector (farmhands, maids, day labourers). Only some who lived in the vicinity of industrial centres also held jobs in the cities (Lazarević, 2014). After World War II, when private sector employment was banned, it was replaced by employment in the industry and service sectors. Like in the Western countries during that period, this represented a conscious income strategy of the agricultural population (Gasson, 1986; Robson et al., 1987).

Since most employment outside the farm household before World War II was in agriculture, the phenomenon was not as socially visible. After World War II, this changed, and the employment of farm household members outside of agricultural activities attracted the attention of the authorities and researchers. The structure of farm households and the countryside kept changing (Klemenčič, 1974; Klemenčič, 1968; Munton et al., 1989). When, in socialism, peasants also started working in factories, the question was how to name this group of the rural population. Terms such as *polkmet* (semi-peasant), *kmet-delavec* (peasant-worker), or *delavec-kmet* (worker-peasant) were used to describe the phenomenon. The expressions “semi-peasant” or “peasant-worker” stemmed from the Marxist logic of the transitory nature of such phenomena, leading to the inevitable proletarianisation of peasants. Later, as the authorities became more pragmatic, the term *mešana kmetija* (mixed farm or part-time farm) became established in the expert community, modelled after the term “part-time farming” in foreign literature. The meaning of the two terms is identical. The sources of income, i.e. the combination of income from agriculture and non-agricultural activities, represent the criterion for defining the status of mixed farms (Barbič, 1990, 16–29; Fuller, 1990).

A few clarifications are required to understand the broader context of the phenomenon of mixed farms. The revived long-term logic of the agricultural economy was nevertheless stifled by the political and economic measures of the socialist authorities. The nationalisation of land further contributed to the fragmentation of landholdings. Unsurprisingly, the smallholder structure represented a problem for the intensification of private farm production, along with an unfavourable tax system, the relative price level that was detrimental to agriculture, the modest buy-in prices of agricultural products, and the restrictions regarding the maximum farm size, the purchase of machinery, and the amount of investments in private agriculture. The social disadvantage of peasants, who were not entitled to health and pension insurance for a long time, also contributed to this. If they were

regularly employed, they gained all the social security rights. The state’s intensive industrialisation policy was also not in favour of agriculture. This led to a drift from the countryside to the cities, and de-agrarianisation was a rapid process. Barbič argues that “the reliable and regular income and the guaranteed social security provided by regular employment at least partially deprived the agriculture of a large part of the agricultural population, who otherwise did not want to completely abandon farming” (Barbič, 1990, 128–129).

In the process of increasing the percentage of mixed farms, a social misunderstanding of the phenomenon emerged. It was not seen as a systemic feature of the agricultural economy, but as a sort of social and economic anomaly – perhaps not in those exact words, yet not very far in terms of implications. One of the studies focusing on the reputation of the agricultural profession in the second half of the twentieth century concluded that peasants were subject to considerable criticism as a distinct social and economic stratum. Based on almost half a century of public opinion polls, it was obvious that the agricultural profession was considered one of the least respectable in society. Another conclusion of the study – that mixed farms were supposed to be harmful – was also difficult to ignore. According to public opinion, these people, who combined income from regular employment and agriculture, were responsible for neglecting farmland and the traditional agricultural landscape. Simultaneously, they were also thought to be less effective in regular jobs due to exhaustion (Razpotnik Visković & Seručnik, 2013). Such a negative public attitude was also pointed out by Ana Barbič in the early 1990s, as she detected other “criticisms” of mixed farms while researching the reputation of peasants in society. It was believed that individuals from mixed farms had not acquired the work habits and values of the industrial society. Reportedly, they were frequently absent from work, especially during major farm works, and represented a greater burden for the health care system than others. Interestingly, these claims were not empirically confirmed facts but rather generally attributed characteristics. In fact, research revealed a different picture. The employees from mixed farms did not deviate in any way from the general conditions in the companies (Barbič, 1990, 16–19, 41). This might also be a reaction to the fact that mixed households tended to have above-average incomes (Rendla, 2022, 190–191) because they integrated incomes from agricultural and non-agricultural economic activities.

#### PEASANTS’ SOCIAL SECURITY AND PENSIONS

Before World War II, the social situation of peasants was not regulated. Social security systems were based on dependent forms of work and tied to employment. As landowners and independent economic operators, peasants were not included in this category and were thus excluded from all insurance schemes, even after the Pension

Insurance Act of 1937. Regularly employed agricultural workers (farmhands, maids, vineyard workers) were no better off. Although the precariousness of their situation and the reality of the existing employment relationship were known facts, their situation was not regulated until World War II, despite many initiatives. The situation of peasants and agricultural workers depended on the so-called natural law and the solidarity within families and local communities.

In socialist Slovenia, the employment relationship remained a precondition for social security. Therefore, the state promoted the employment of the population and thus the right to social security services through economic policies. The policy of accelerated industrialisation and nationalisation of agriculture was intended to gradually abolish peasants as a separate social stratum. Most of them would find employment in non-agricultural activities, while others would become some sort of workers in state-owned (cooperative) agricultural enterprises, thus also attaining the right to social security services. The case of private peasants deviated from this principle. While the authorities tolerated them, they did not make their situation any easier, as they did nothing to regulate their social security. Thus, private peasants had two options: they could commit to cooperating closely with the socialist (social/cooperative) agricultural sector and therefore gain the right to inclusion in social security schemes; or, alternatively, a family member could become employed in the industry or service sector and thus qualify for the inclusion in the social security schemes. The agricultural population was certainly pragmatic, as the data on collaboration with the cooperative sector and the existence of a significant number of mixed farms reveal that these were conscious strategies to ensure social security. However, this solution was neither comprehensive nor systemic. Many family members and peasants who were not in contractual relations with social agricultural organisations remained excluded from social security schemes.

When the development model changed in the 1960s, the need for a more coherent economic, social, and social policy development came to the fore. In practice, this meant regulating the situation of social groups that were not employed but were instead engaged in independent economic activities. Private peasants together with their family members, were a typical example. Health insurance was the first to be tackled. The Act on Peasants Health Insurance (1960) provided for health insurance for private Peasants and their family members. This was an essential step towards improving the social situation of the peasants who did not want to be included in the socialist agricultural sector. Simultaneously, this was the beginning of the equalisation of their status with other forms of employment. The next step was to regulate the pension and disability insurance for peasants. The situation was acute and called for urgent action, as the peasants age structure reflected the aging population. Intergenerational solidarity was undermined due to the

migration to the cities, and the risks of poverty among peasants were increasing. During the 1960s, agriculture showed all the signs of the uncoordinated (or onesided) economic and social policies of the post-war period. The neglect of private peasants and their social needs had consequences in everyday life, as relative poverty spread among the rural population.

Data on the population's personal income revealed that between 1963 and 1988, peasants had the lowest incomes, on average. Between 1968 and 1978, they lagged behind the average by as much as 37.4%. This was the exact period when the most vital steps were taken towards regulating the peasant's social situation. The number of exclusively agricultural households was modest, amounting to just 12% in 1968. However, their poor material situation was widely publicised in the media. The steady decline in their numbers (for example, in 1988, exclusively agricultural households represented only 1.7%) also allowed for the integration of peasants into the national social security systems, as ideological prejudices were disappearing. In terms of average income, the so-called mixed households (those combining two sources of income) stood out the most. They combined income from agricultural activities and employment in the industry or service sectors. In 1983, mixed households exceeded the average income by as much as 30%. At the same time, mixed households amounted to 24% in 1988 (Rendla, 2022, 190–191), as their share had been steadily increasing since the 1960s. The agricultural population consciously undertook this income strategy to maximise their incomes and gain access to the social security systems. However, implementing these strategies also led to an increased workload for the mixed household members. Thanks to the integration of different sources of income, social distress in rural areas was limited to a relatively small group of the rural population – to those who insisted exclusively on agricultural income.

The consensus on integrating peasants into the national social security systems was first reached in the political arena, with the decisions of the highest Party authorities, reached in 1970. After securing the political consensus, it was time to amend the legislation. Various acts, constitutional amendments, and ultimately the Constitution of 1974 established the framework for implementing peasants pension insurance. In 1971, a constitutional amendment granted the peasants who were members or associates of cooperatives the right to full health, pension, and disability insurance if they earned an income at least equal to that of workers in the social sector of agriculture (Lazarević et al., 2023, 235). The 1972 Peasants Old-Age Insurance Act set out the minimum peasants' pension. Peasants pension insurance was organised outside the existing pension insurance system in the context of a dedicated institution (the Self-governing Interest Community of Peasants Old-Age Insurance). The fund was financed by contributions from peasants and from the republic and municipal budgets. Importantly for family members,

especially women in agriculture, the Act also introduced survivor's pensions after the death of the insured agricultural activity operator. According to the principle of "one farm, one pension", women in agriculture were not included in the old-age insurance. The scope of benefits for peasants was minimal and could not be compared to the scope of benefits under the general pension insurance scheme enjoyed by other social groups. The difference was justified by low contributions (Remec, 2017, 94–95).

The Act still distinguished between peasants who maintained contractual relations with the socialist agricultural sector (the cooperative system) and independent peasants. The policy, introduced after the abandonment of collectivisation, thus persisted. The carrot-and-stick principle was introduced as early as the beginning of the 1950s. Peasants who cooperated with the socialist cooperative sector gained certain economic and social benefits, while those who refused to participate were left without benefits (various forms of insurance). The government's fundamental objective – the nationalisation of agricultural production – was abandoned as late as the 1980s, only shortly before the end of the socialist system.

To ensure the social security of peasants, the Cooperative Association of Slovenia concluded a contract with the Pension Fund for its members in November 1974. Only peasants who entered into a more permanent production cooperation agreement with an agricultural cooperative or a state agricultural enterprise were included in the insurance, while this cooperation also had to represent most of the farm's net income. The insured persons were free to choose between five classes of insurance bases, depending on their net income. The insurance depended on the production cooperation, whereby the insured person and the cooperative or state agricultural enterprise were jointly and severally liable for the payment of contributions (Lazarević et al., 2023, 235). At the end of the 1970s, the option of a maintenance allowance was introduced as a further way of strengthening the peasant's social security. Peasants became entitled to a maintenance allowance if they handed over their land to the social farming sector or farmland funds. Just like in the case of the old-age pension, they became entitled to this benefit after reaching the age of 65, and the amount of the maintenance allowance could not be lower than the minimum old-age pension (Remec, 2017, 95). It is important to note the extension of the right to maternity leave for female peasants. In 1981, the Cooperative Association of Slovenia regulated the right to maternity leave for its female members under the same conditions as for other employed women (Lazarević et al., 2023, 236).

The changes to the pension legislation, introduced in the mid-1980s, were significant. Peasants were finally integrated into a uniform health and pension insurance system. They were no longer subject to exceptional treatment, which had also been discriminatory throughout the

period after World War II. The situation of the peasants who were not insured through cooperation with the state or the cooperative agricultural sector was regulated in 1984, as insurance became compulsory for the entire agricultural population. All peasants could choose between various insurance bases for their old-age pensions. Unlike in the case of workers, it was difficult to determine the exact income of a farm and assess contributions on that basis. The responsibility for the old-age pension was therefore left to the peasants themselves. The lowest insurance base included only old-age, disability, and survivors' pensions. The higher insurance bases also included the entitlement to a disability allowance for physical impairment, as well as to an assistance and attendance allowance. Those peasants who paid the contributions for the minimum pension for a completed pension qualifying period gained equal rights as all other population groups.

However, there was still a distinction between peasants who cooperated with the social agricultural sector and private peasants. The Act provided for three types of beneficiaries. The contributions of the peasants tied to the state agricultural sector who opted for higher pension-rating bases were partly covered by the organisation with which they cooperated. The second category included peasants who were tied to the state agricultural sector but paid contributions in the amount that did not guarantee a minimum pension. They had to pay the full contributions themselves. Independent peasants who were not contractually bound to the state agricultural organisations also had to cover the full cost of their pension insurance themselves. The obligation to pay contributions, regulated in such a manner, was a source of great frustration among peasants. In many cases, peasants were not included in the pension insurance at all, despite the legal obligation to do so, because the Act did not provide for any sanctions against the individuals who avoided insurance (Remec, 2017, 101).

In the late 1980s, during a profound economic and social crisis and hyperinflation, the peasant's health and pension contributions became a disproportionate burden, especially for those peasants who had to pay the contributions entirely out of their own pockets. The amendment of the Peasants Pension and Disability Insurance Act of July 1990 reduced the minimum insurance base for peasants to half of the guaranteed personal income. The issue of minimum pensions was resolved by an amendment to the Act in March 1991, when the pension assessment was set at a minimum of 35% of the minimum pension base. The 1992 Pension and Disability Insurance Act abolished the differences in peasants' rights. The extent of peasant's rights under this insurance depended on the level of the insurance base chosen. The peasants who did not meet the income condition for the compulsory inclusion in pension and disability insurance could opt for voluntary insurance (Lazarević et al., 2023, 236).

## INTEGRACIJA KMETOV V SISTEM SOCIALNE VARNOSTI V SOCIALISTIČNI SLOVENIJI

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## POVZETEK

*Socialne pravice so v socialistični Sloveniji izvirale iz delovnega razmerja. V kmetijstvu je bilo mišljeno, da bodo kmete s politiko pospešene industrializacije in podružabljanja kmetijstva postopno odpravili kot poseben družbeni sloj. Večinski del naj bi našel zaposlitev v nekmetijskih dejavnostih, drugi naj bi postali delavci v državnih (zadružnih) kmetijskih podjetjih. S tem bi pridobili tudi pravico do socialnih storitev. V primeru zasebnih kmetov je prišlo do odstopanja od tega načela. Oblast jih je sicer tolerirala, vendar jim ni lajšala položaja, saj ni regulirala njihovega socialnega zavarovanja. Zasebni kmetje so imeli tako dve možnosti za reševanje svojega socialnega položaja. Lahko so sodelovali s socialističnim (družbenim/zadružnim) kmetijskim sektorjem ali se zaposlili v drugih sektorjih. Tako so izpolnili pogoje za vstop v sheme socialnih zavarovanj. Ali pa so bili brez vsake oblike zavarovanja, če so vztrajali kot zasebni kmetje. V tej kategoriji so dolgoročno beležili naraščanje revščine, ki ni bila politično vzdržna. Zato so zasebne kmete vključili v zdravstveno zavarovanje leta 1960. Od sedemdesetih letih dalje je nato sledilo postopno vključevanje zasebnih kmetov v pokojninsko zavarovanje. Končno so v osemdesetih letih uredili še vprašanje porodniškega dopusta za kmečke ženske. Zasebni kmetje so tako postali statusno in po obsegu socialnih pravic izenačeni s prebivalstvom, ki je bilo redno zaposleno.*

**Ključne besede:** ekonomska in socialna politika, kmetje, sistemi socialne varnosti, socializem, Slovenija

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