

# Land deals and dynamics in Europe

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# Land concentration, land grabbing and people's struggles in Europe



**HANDS OFF  
THE LAND**

TAKE ACTION AGAINST  
LAND GRABBING

# Key findings

- Europe is experiencing tremendous and rapid land concentration
- Land grabbing is underway in Europe
- Green grabbing is an emerging phenomenon in Europe
- Land use change and commercial pressures are driving these trends
- Institutional rules and market forces put up barriers to entry for new farmers
- Against these trends, alternatives are growing



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# EXTENT OF FARMLAND GRABBING IN THE EU

STUDY



# Key findings

- Land grabbing in Europe is defined by deals that:
  - Are out of standard European proportions
  - Represent a deep rupture with the European model of family farming
  - Involve a new set of actors and investors
  - Imply an 'extra-economic' force
- Land grabbing must be understood within the context of broader structural changes in EU agriculture

# The decline of small farms in Europe, 1990 - 2013

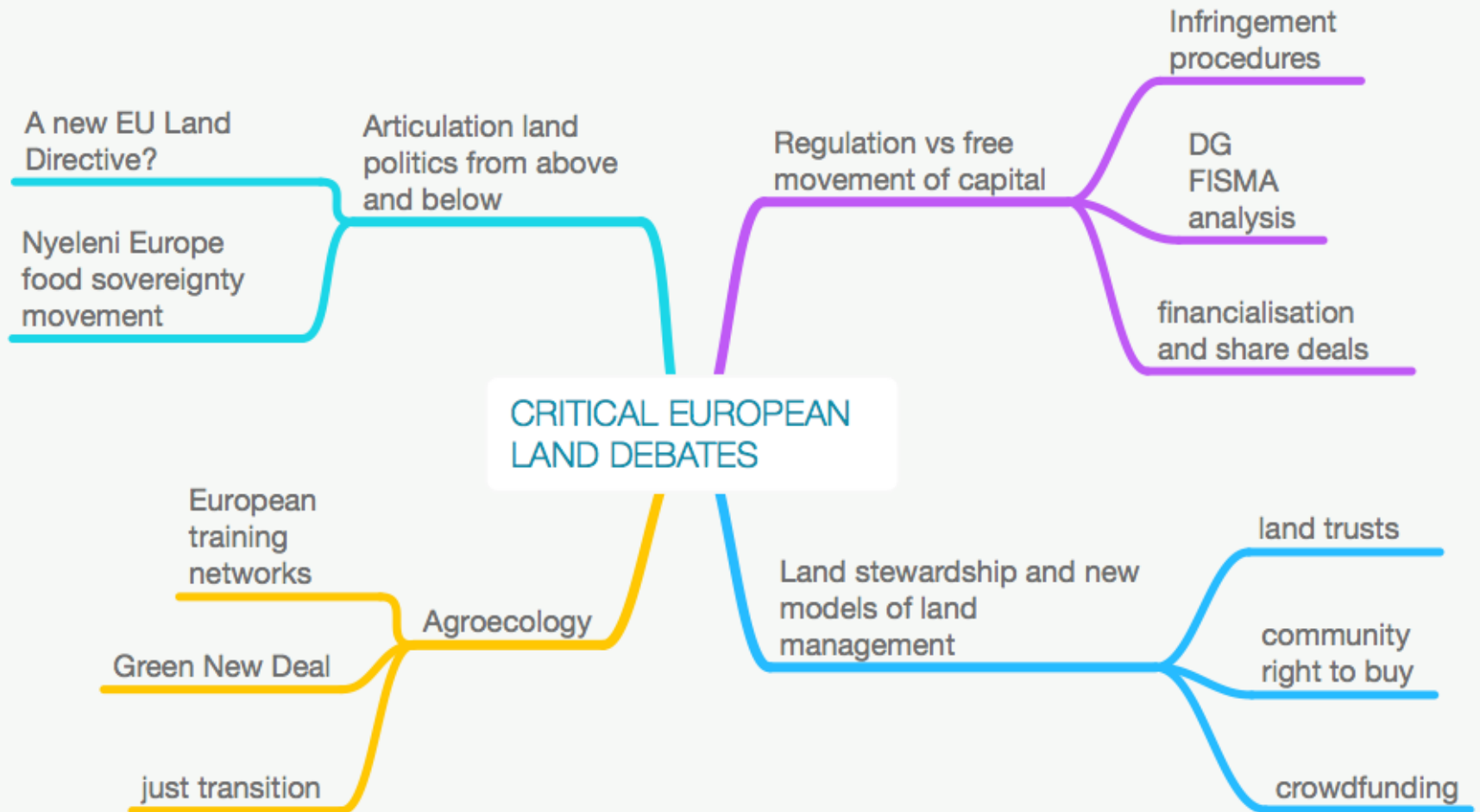
Agricultural Holdings <10 ha	1990	2000	2005	2010	2013	1990- 2013 Variation
Austria		108,310	86,310	72,970	66,680	<b>-43%</b>
Bulgaria			507,550	336,080	222,330	<b>-65%</b>
France	339,430	243,150	194,270	175,910	148,960	<b>-32%</b>
Germany	316,870	189,510	143,020	73,260	66,310	<b>-79%</b>
Hungary		876,140	617,730	485,340	402,860	<b>-54%</b>
Netherlands	59,310	46,030	10,850	12,140	26,190	<b>-56%</b>
Italy	2,376,440	1,901,570	1,474,600	1,363,180	764,740	<b>-68%</b>
Poland			2,110,420	1,158,370	1,078,560	<b>-40%</b>
Spain	1,194,540	904,310	725,560	644,930	626,630	<b>-48%</b>
United Kingdom	62,050	68,520	96,650	39,370	38,700	<b>-38%</b>

## Distribution of CAP direct payments in 2013, for selected MS

Member State	The top x% of beneficiaries	Received x% of the CAP direct Payments
Bulgaria	1,1	45,6
France	1,2	9
Germany	1,2	28,4
Hungary	0,9	38,5
Italy	0,8	26,3
Poland	2,0	28,5
Romania	1,1	51,7
Spain	1,3	23,4
United Kingdom	0,9	14,4

# Policy recommendations

1. Develop a European Land Observatory
2. Allows Member States to better regulate their land markets
3. Use the most progressive schemes available under CAP
4. Work towards a holistic and human rights based land governance framework



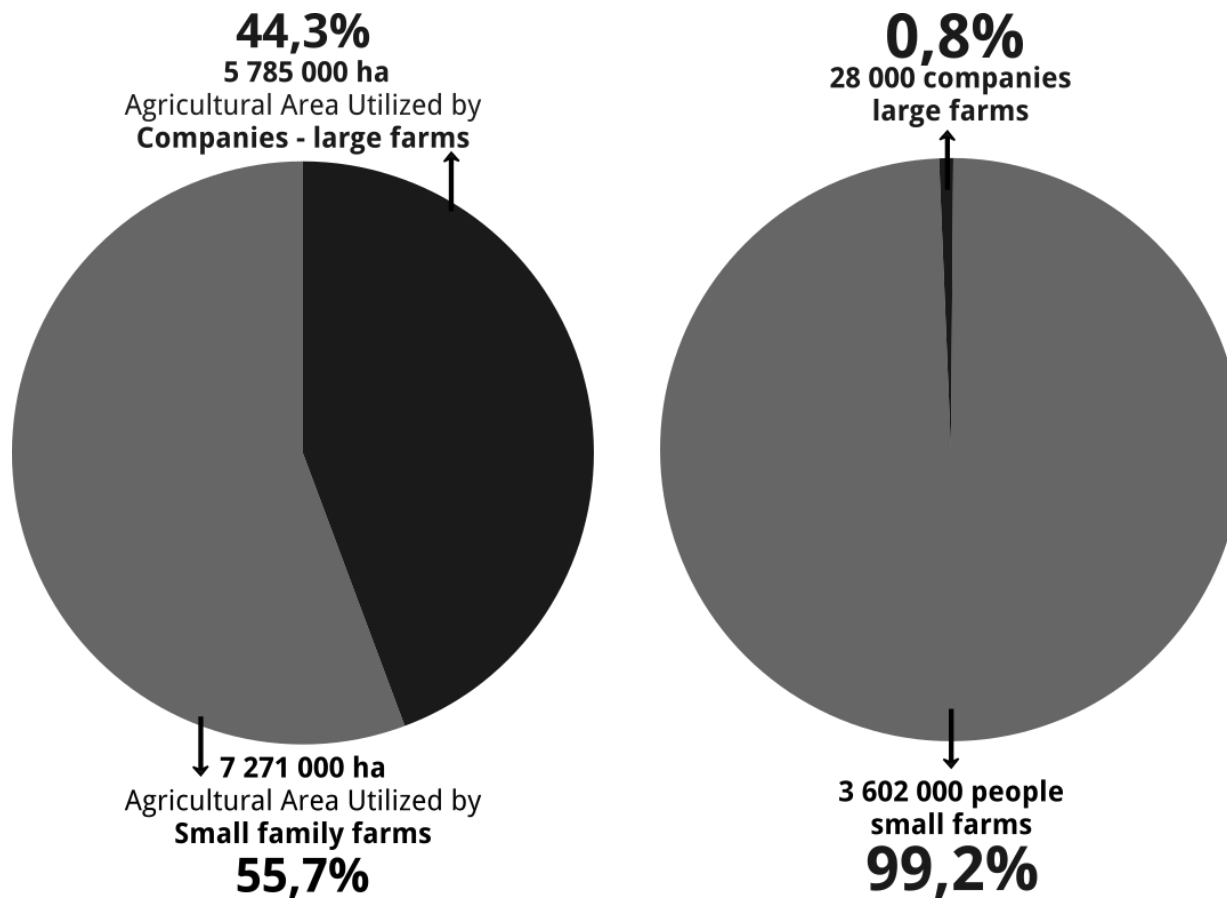
# The control of farmland in Romania

- *Before '89:* the communist regime, almost everything forced into "collective" state control;
- *Early 90's:* post communist governments created a land re-distribution and privatisation reform: collective farms were dismantled and given back to previous owners (most rural dwellers, small farmers), state farms remaining in Governmental control;
- *Early 2000's:* Statistically already a dualistic agricultural system is developed: on one hand lands being privately owned by the rural population (aprox. 4 million landowners with an average of 2 hectares) on the other the State Domains Agency (Govt Agency) still holding 1 milion ha of agricultural land but a
- \*Here an interesting angle of the "commons" arises, where local animal breeders kept their lands in common control for the sake of animal breeding rentability, but local authorities maintained part of the decision making on land use and control.
- Presently, the balance of control is quickly and continuously being reshaped by control of capital: large agroindustrial holdings, speculative investment funds, banks, local and multinational oligarchy is grabbing large amounts of land this being backed up also by Govt. agenda of land consolidation and EU policies like the CAP;

# The control of farmland in Romania

- 99,2% of peasant farmers control 55,7% of the agricultural lands
- 0,8% companies control 44,3% of the agricultural lands
- The average size of a peasant farm is 2,02 ha
- The average size of an industrial farm is 207,49 ha but...
- The top 10 largest agro-industrial holdings in Romania control together 251.243 ha! (2015)
- From 2010-2013, the number of farms dropped with 6%
- From 2010-2013 76.000 peasants farms disappeared, 3 farms/hour!
- Conclusion: Still, from 14 mill ha of agricultural land around half is controlled (owned) by small farmers and their descendants (which are not all farmers, many migrated) while the other half is controlled by large capital (including almost all the lands of the State Domains Agency which are concessioned out to large investors).

# Distribution of farmland in Romania



# Obstacles of accessing farmland in Romania for peasant agroecology

- **Policy level:**

- EU free circulation of capital: massive amount of multinational capital invested into Romanian farmland, creating an unbalance of power between local communities vs. large multinational investors;
- Permissive national legislation: based on preemption rights but ultimately linked to financial capacity while there are no ceilings or other safeguarding measures defined;
- Area based CAP subsidies;
- The history of the land market: lack of cadastration (a blessing or a curse?), Rising prices of farmland due to land concentration and commodification of the land;
- Rural underdevelopment;

- **Economic and Cultural:**

- Access to capital for new entrants and young farmers;
- The trauma of communism lead to very individualistic approaches, hard to create cooperation;
- Isolation of the community from the outside world: it was a way of preservation, but now in the light of very low succession of farming and high age of farmers this approach limits the welcoming and integration of new entrants or setting up “extra-family” farm succession plans;

# Peasants defining land grabbing

“Land grabbing is the control – whether through ownership, lease, concession, contracts, quotas, or general power – of larger than locally-typical amounts of land by any persons or entities – public or private, foreign or domestic – via any means – ‘legal’ or ‘illegal’ – for purposes of speculation, extraction, resource control or commodification at the expense of peasant farmers, agroecology, land stewardship, food sovereignty and human rights.”

*Eco Ruralis and European Coordination Via Campesina - What is Land Grabbing? 2016*

# Land Grabbing in Romania

## Who?

- Banks, investment and hedge funds;
- Multinational and Romanian large agroindustry;
- International traders (contract farming);

## How much?

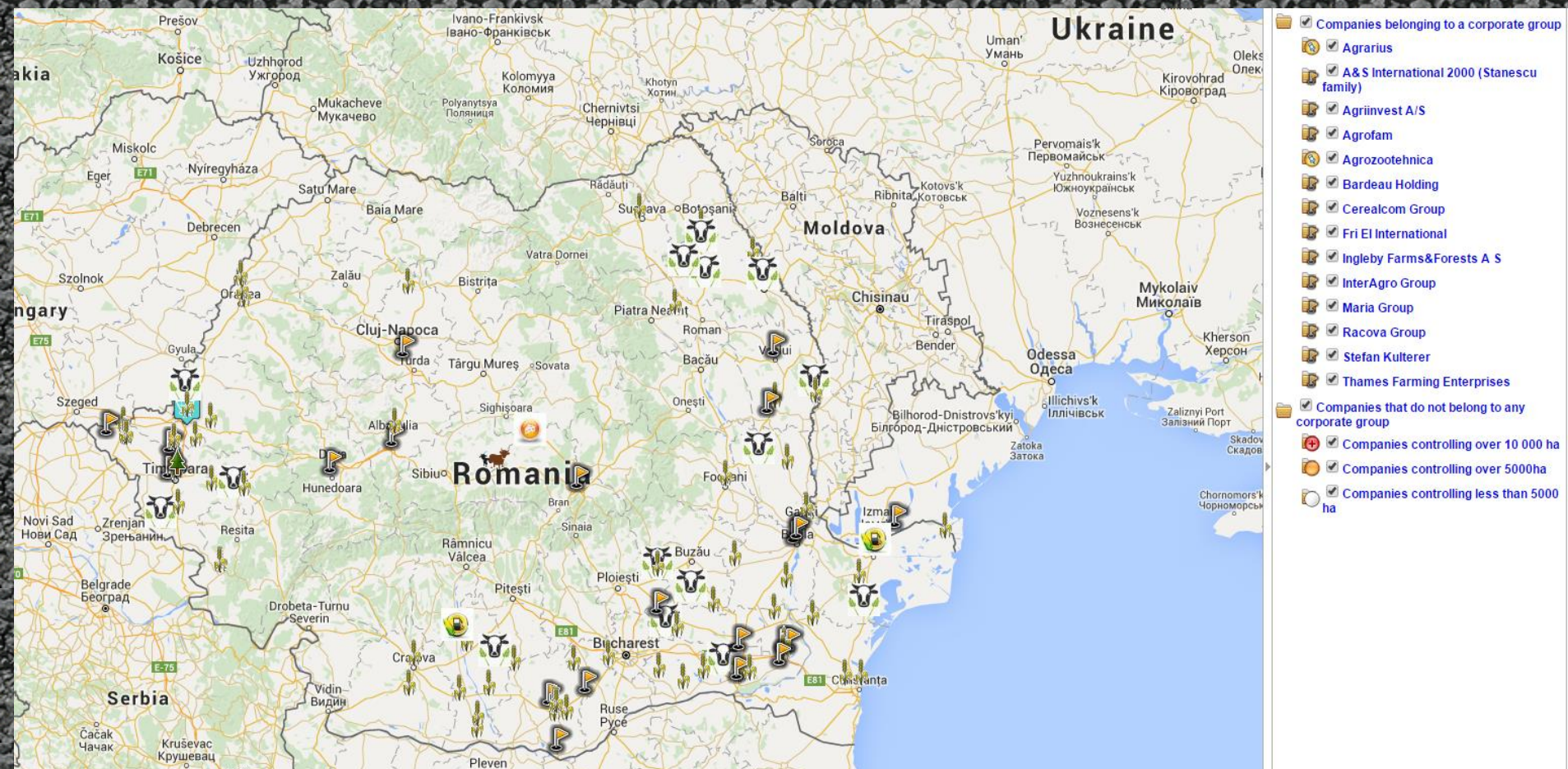
- Almost 4 million hectares of agricultural lands;;
- Hundreds of thousands of forests;
- Thousands of hectares for large industrial and mining projects;

## Eco Ruralis case studies;:

- Italian investors: Geneagricola, Padova Agricultura, Riso Scotti
- Austrian aristocrats: Bardeau Holding;
- Forests : Schweighofer, Tornator;
- Banks and speculative funds: Generali, Rabobank







# The peasant way: What are our demands?



**Transparent and accountable public institutions** in the problem of land grabbing and concentration;

Amending the Romanian Land Law (14/2014) based on international human rights based instruments like the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and the UN Tenure Guidelines**;

**Harmonizing EU laws via a European Land Directive!**

**An active state when it comes to intervening on the national land market**; in parallel with securing the rights of peasants to the commons;

Consultation of peasants and involving our needs and aspirations in future policy changes on a national and EU level (EU Common Agricultural Policy, national laws, status of peasant farmers);