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IN THE CONTEXT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT
IN CROATIA**

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1 Introduction and background

1.1 An introduction to rural employment

“National action plan for employment 2005-2008” (NAPE) - CROATIA

The labor market in Croatia is insufficiently flexible in order to use a modern market economy. There is a very small percentage of part-time workers, low mobility between profession and occupation, and insufficient investment in improving the knowledge and skills of employees.

The great regional differences are also a problem, with particularly marked differences between the urban and rural areas. Besides the traditionally rural regions, there are also problems in the border regions, regions with a great decline in industrial production, mountain regions and islands where there has been economic decline. Some of them are labeled as regions of special state concern and are the subject of target policies and measures (NAPE -2005-2008: 9-10).

Demographic trends, a low retirement age and widespread early retirement during the restructuring of companies contributed to a situation that in the year 2002 nearly three employed persons were supporting two retired persons. In recent years, the conditions for going into retirement have become significantly stricter (NAPE -2005-2008: 9-10).

Unemployment is one of key problems of Croatian economy (see Table 1-annex). According to Croatian Bureau of Statistics the total registered unemployment rate in August 2006 was 15.7 percent. Experts' analysis shows that the number of unemployed persons is higher in rural than in urban areas (Vejic et al. 2002; see Table 2 and 3-annex). Unemployment is greater among less educated and older parts of population. The prospective for employment of these groups are very slim, so they frequently depend on different forms of social supports.

1.2 Agricultural employment

During the transition period, socio-economic transformation in Croatian rural areas has developed with different dynamics and with geographically differentiated effects. Polarized development of rural regions (as a result of socialist system, additionally aided by war and transition process difficulties) and unfavourable biodynamic characteristics of rural population, have contributed to rapid decrease in agricultural population. In the period between two censuses (1991-2001) rural population in Croatia halved in number which is mostly the consequence of biological depopulation rather than the result of economic and social factors (see Table 4 and 5 - annex). Active contingent of agricultural population has also diminished, but at a slower rate than agricultural population. The differences in the spatial distribution of active agricultural population are also evident (see Table 6 - annex). The differences in the concentration of work potential and its biodynamic characteristics (older and uneducated population) indirectly influence the usage of agricultural resources in the sector of family agriculture.

In Croatian agriculture there are two parallel production systems: business subjects (agricultural companies and cooperatives) and family farms. In the last ten years (1995-2004) the fall in the number of people employed by agricultural companies and cooperatives is evident, largely due to unsuccessful restructuring and privatisation of former state farms (see Table 7 and –annex). The project of reconstruction of agricultural companies and their privatisation will be performed under the Program Loan for

Adjustment (PAL) of the World Bank (Draft of the National Program for Agriculture and Rural areas 2006-2008, p:74).

The largest part of agricultural structure in Croatia is made of family farms whose work force situation is also unfavourable. Active farmers on family farms are a minor group and most of the work in family agriculture is provided by non-agricultural population. According to data from agricultural census in 2003, 77.2% of population on family farms aged 15 and up are more or less involved in agricultural work. On average, family agriculture is characterized by a relatively low degree of professional work force which is a disadvantage in creating a more productive and economically efficient agriculture. This is supported by the fact that most members of the household (76%) who contribute to agricultural production, base their knowledge exclusively on acquired practical experiences (Radinovic, Žutinic, 2006).

Expert analyses show that a relatively small proportion of family farms go into the process of property enlargement and professional work, but for a better estimate of their perspectives it is necessary to monitor them systematically (Radinovic, Žutinic, 2006).

Except general analyses on employment in agriculture which are based on statistical data, there is little research on structural characteristics of work force in agriculture, and there are no scientifically based projections on national or regional level.

1.3 Non-agricultural employment

The changes in Croatian economy, especially in rural areas, had happened mostly through “cutting” work places in agriculture and industry and with an increase in some activities in the service sector (see previous tables). Because the spatial component of development was neglected, usually at the expense of rural areas, many of these areas today are faced with economic and social problems and they offer very limited work potentials and conditions for development. This results in high unemployment and further depopulation, especially of young and educated people. For instance, in some rural regions, the percentage of the active working population in the total population reaches only 37% (for example, in Zadar County), in comparison to 43% in the urban milieus in the same county or 46–47% in the majority of urban regions in the other counties. There are also great differences in the employment of women who live in rural regions in comparison with those who live in urban regions. The percentage of women in the active working population in rural regions is much lower (35–42%) than in the urban regions (45–47%) (NAPE -2005-2008: 35).

Expert analyses show that, in spite of the process and industrialisation and reduced importance of agriculture, primary sector of activities has maintained relative majority in the eastern part of Croatia while the development of tertiary sector has been the strongest on the Croatian seaside (Živic, 2002). Recent research shows regional inequality regarding agricultural and non- agricultural activities (see picture 1 –annex) (Pejnovic, 2004).

The most dynamic part of the business sector in Croatia are small private companies and crafts.* In rural areas these are mostly small companies dealing in services (trade, catering, tourism etc.) but their spatial concentration depends on the distance from the regional centre. In passive and depopulated rural areas, entrepreneurial activities are very rare.

In years to come, due to stimulating policies of employment and opening of entrepreneurial zones on the local level (municipalities) it is realistic to expect expansion of small and medium enterprises in rural areas.

** International research conducted by the Center for developmental policy of small companies (CEPOR), published in 2003, showed that Croatia is at the low end of scale in Europe regarding the entrepreneurial activity. However, in the period between 2003 and 2005 that has changed significantly and Croatia has reached the global average of entrepreneurial activity (6.9 %) as measured by TEA index.*

2. The context of rural employment

2.1 New employment opportunities

In Croatia in the last few years, several programs were launched in order to stimulate employment, but most of them were shaped for urban areas. In fact, economic diversification of rural space with the goal of reducing regional disparities in economic development is proclaimed instrument of state politics that is not (or not sufficiently) realized in practice.

Local authorities/counties have specific programs and support aimed mostly at developing agricultural production and additional activities within a family farm (example: processing of agricultural products, agro-tourism etc.). As a candidate for EU accession, Croatia uses SAPARD program, and this year the support will be issued for the following measures: (a) investment into agricultural farms; (b) processing and marketing of agricultural and fishery products (c) strengthening the public infrastructure in small rural towns. The *Annual plan of employment stimulation for 2006* finances the programs of rural tourism and organization of new rural tourism enterprises (in continental rural areas) for small and medium entrepreneurs and programs of filling up the basic network of health services in areas where there are vacant positions (mostly rural areas) for medical doctors and dentists. Other measures in this Plan are „Opening new work places and the development of entrepreneurship, „Promoting the development of human capital and life-long learning“ and „Promoting the integration and fighting against discrimination of persons at disadvantage in the labour market“, aimed mostly at certain target groups (small and medium entrepreneurship, unemployed war veterans, unemployed women and men of older age, employment of persons with disability etc.) have a more general character and goal to improve the state of labour market as a whole. Considering the acute current state especially in rural areas, available financial means for realization of this plan are modest.

The support for the development of entrepreneurship in Croatia is also the introduction of “HITRO.HR” web page which is the service of the Government of Republic of Croatia intended for quick communication of citizens and business subjects with the state administration. Hitro.hr service enables people to do the whole procedure of setting up an enterprise in one place, so that the procedure is shortened to only six work days. The service is available in all Croatian counties.

2.2 Education and skills – levels, access and provision

Education level of the rural population (expressed as the number of illiterates and school graduates) points to the fact that the Croatian rural areas are generally lagging behind the urban areas. In early nineties, 5.3% of the rural population was illiterate. More than one third has not finished the elementary eight-year education, and only 3.1% of that population graduated from the non-university or university colleges. The 2001 Census data on formal education of the Croatian rural population (see Table 9 - annex) show also a comparatively high share of population without any or with incomplete basic schooling (28.3%) and a small share of graduate groups (4.7%). The differences in formal education of men and women are also significant. On average, women are less educated compared to male population, and their share in illiterate and formally uneducated population is high (see Table 10; 11; 12 - annex).

Although the school system in Croatia provides programs for general and professional education of adults, these institutions are usually located in towns, and to some extent programs are offered in some elementary and professional high schools. At the same time there are no alternative forms of education in rural areas (if they exist, they are fairly modest and related to agricultural production). One of the problems is the information on the possibilities of funding for professional education offered by Croatian employment agency - information is on the Internet, which is still inaccessible to most of the rural population. This makes it difficult to organise professional education for rural population, for alternative employment and self-employment.

The policy of lifelong learning is insufficiently developed and there are poor opportunities for additional training and advanced studies for unemployed persons.

2.3 Other key factors in employment (if any)

In Croatia, there is no adequate infrastructure for the transfer of technology and efficient transfer of knowledge and innovations into economy. Much more investment by the state is needed in order to create conditions for research work and higher education because these areas can contribute significantly to the development of the economy.

3 Specific rural employment issues

3.1 The nature of under-employment

Although there is no conclusive data or research on “disguised unemployment”, experts and public think that this phenomenon exists within Croatian economy.

3.2 The scale of semi-subsistence farming

In the last decade, Croatian family agriculture shows a strong tendency of differentiation on small and semi-subsistence farming on one side and large commercial agriculture on the other side (Župancic, 2005). According to agricultural census from 2003 there is 449 thousand households with agricultural production (agricultural holdings) in Croatia, half of them having only up to 1 hectare of land. All relevant indicators show that only 10 to 15% of family farms have economically efficient production (Župancic, 2005). According to the Registry of agricultural households run by the Ministry of agriculture, in the beginning of 2005 there were 150 thousand agricultural farms; most of them used models of state support destined for so called commercial farms. The same source shows 2500 family farms in the system of income support. Although there are no sufficient data on the scale of semi-subsistence farming, above stated facts clearly show that this group is dominant in the sector of family agriculture. The group of semi subsistence farms is not homogeneous. It includes farms with different size, production objectives and share of produce for marketing. The main purpose of these owners is to produce sufficiently products for their own consumption.

The research on poverty conducted by Croatian Caritas and Centre for promotion of social doctrine of Catholic Church in 2004 showed that 40% of rural households are poor and whose farm (a part of them receive modest social support) is the only source of livelihood. These are mostly households with elderly people or singles.

Empirical research shows that unemployment in rural areas causes the downfall of standard of life, therefore people turn to agriculture as an only source of making a living (Štambuk *et. al.* 2001, Žutinic *et. al.* 2005; Žutinic and Bokan 2005).

3.3 The implications of the ‘Lisbon Strategy’

In December 2004 the Government of Croatia accepted the *National action plan of employment for period 2005-2008*, which is based on European strategy of employment. The plan is divided into 10 guidelines/measures trying to achieve a flexible and efficient labour market and reduce unemployment. Measures proposed by the Plan are aimed at stimulating the employment of young people entering the labour market, older workers and persons with disability, raising the level of education, knowledge and skills of workers, and simplifying and speeding up the procedure of registration small and medium enterprises, as a basis of economic development and opening of new work places. Based on the National action plan of employment interdisciplinary task force has made a plan of stimulating employment for year 2006. Measures from the Annual Employment Promotion Plan for 2006 are: Active and preventative measures for the unemployed and inactive; Creating new jobs and development of entrepreneurship; Promoting human resources capital and lifelong learning; Promote the Integration of and Combat the Discrimination Against People at a Disadvantage in the Labour Market; Undeclared Work and Regional differences.

4 Overview and prospects

The changes in the Croatian rural economy happened mostly through “cutting” work places in agriculture and industry and with an increase in some activities in the service sector. Because the spatial component of development was neglected many of rural areas today are faced with economic and social problems and they offer very limited work potentials and conditions for development. This results in high unemployment and further depopulation, especially of young and educated people. The policy of lifelong learning is insufficiently developed in rural areas and there are poor opportunities for additional training and advanced studies for unemployed persons.

In Croatia in the last few years, several programs were launched in order to stimulate employment, but most of them were shaped for urban areas. Considering the acute current state especially in rural areas, available financial means for realization of this plan are modest.

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Table 1 Indices of employment in Croatia

Indices	Year			
	2002	2003	2004	2005
Employment rate	53.4	53.4	54.7	55.0
Employment rate – females	46.7	46.7	47.8	48.6
Employment rate – males	60.5	60.3	61.8	61.7
Average exit age from the labour force	....	....	63.6	59.6*
Average exit age from the labour force - females	....	...	63.5	59.8*
Average exit age from the labour force - males			63.7	59.1*
Percentage of the adult population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.3
Percentage of the adult female population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training	2.2	2.1	2.3	2.3
Percentage of the adult male population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training	2.0	2.1	....	2.3
Unemployment rate - total	14.7	14.1	13.6	...
Unemployment rate-females	16.5	15.6	15.6	...
Unemployment rate -males	13.2	12.8	12.0	...

Source: EUROSTAT

Table 2 Rural and urban population in Croatia by economic activity, 2001

Population by activity	OECD criterion		EU criterion	
	Number	%	Number	%
Rural	903 776	100.0	676 097	100.0
Employment	717 051	79.3	534 846	79.1
Unemployment	186 725	20.7	141 251	20.9
Urban	1 048 843	100.0	1 276 522	100.0
Employment	836 592	79.8	1 018 797	79.8
Unemployment	212 251	20.2	257 725	20.2

Source: Vejjic et al. "Rural Development Plan – draft version", 2002, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Zagreb

Table 3 Unemployed persons registered by level of professional attainment in Croatia, 2001

Unemployed persons by level of professional attainment	OECD criterion		EU criterion	
	No	%	No	%
Unskilled	70 309	100.0	70 309	100.0
Rural	45 352	64.5	37 931	53.9
Urban	24 957	35.5	32 378	46.1
Semi skilled and basic school	62 770	100.0	62 770	100.0
Rural	34 593	55.1	27 033	43.1
Urban	28 177	44.9	35 737	56.9
Skilled, highly skilled	125 138	100.0	125 138	100.0
Rural	67 166	53.7	51 328	41.0
Urban	57 972	46.3	73 810	59.0
Secondary school education	91 187	100.0	91 187	100.0
Rural	37 848	41.5	27 939	30.6
Urban	53 339	58.5	63 248	69.4
Non-university college degree	11 982	100.0	11 982	100.0
Rural	4 045	33.8	2 874	24.0
Urban	7 937	66.2	91 08	76.0
University degree	14 409	100.0	14 409	100.0
Rural	32 32	22.4	21 37	14.8
Urban	111 77	77.6	122 72	85.2
Total unemployment	375 795	100.0	375 795	100.0
Rural	192 236	51.2	149 242	39.7
Urban	183 559	48.8	226 553	60.3

Source: Croatian Employment Service, situation as on 30th September 2002

Table 4 Trends in Croatian farm population in 1991-2001

Farm population	Year		Index 2001/1991.
	1991	2001	
Total	409 647	245 987*	60.0
Active	264 895	165 942	62.6
Dependant	144 752	79 724	55.1

* The difference from total refers to unknown persons

Source: 1991 and 2001 Censuses, Croatian Bureau of Statistics

Table 5 Farm population in Croatia by gender in 1991-2001 (in percent)

Farm population	Year	
	1991	2001
Total	100.0	100.0
Male	46.5	50.6
Female	53.5	49.4
Farm labour	100.0	100.0
Male	56.2	57.1
Female	43.8	42.9
Dependent	100.0	100.0
Male	29.7	37.1
Female	71.1	62.9

Source: 1991 and 2001 Censuses, Croatian Bureau of Statistics

Table 6 Farm labour in Croatia by counties, 2001

County	Total active population	Economically active farm population	
	Number	Number	% in active population
Zagrebacka	144 406	14 788	10.2
Krapinsko-zagorska	69 480	14 812	21.3
Sisacko-moslavacka	75 951	7 081	9.3
Karlovacka	62 295	5 605	9.0
Varaždinska	81 828	8 513	10.4
Koprivnicko križevacka	57 127	14 088	24.7
Bjelovarsko-bilogorska	63 963	19 620	30.7
Primorsko-goranska	141 139	2 087	1.5
Licko-senjska	20 561	1 943	9.4
Viroviticko-podravaska	39 098	8 096	20.7
Požeško-slavonska	34 954	5 407	15.5
Brodsko-posavska	71 519	8 879	12.4
Zadarska	65 154	2 649	4.1
Osjecko-baranjska	137 948	12 723	9.2
Šibensko-kninska	44 892	1 733	3.9
Vukovarsko-srijemska	82 798	10 717	12.9
Splitsko-dalmatinska	194 082	5 178	2.7
Istarska	95 694	3 157	3.3

Dubrovačko-neretvanska	52 242	2 737	5.2
Medimurska	61 302	13 037	21.3
Grad Zagreb	356 186	3 092	0.9
Croatia	1 952 619	165 942	8.5

Source: 2001 Census, Croatian Bureau of Statistics

Table 7 Persons in paid employment in Croatia according to UCEA, 1995 (annual average)

Agriculture and fishing	35 196
Forestry	10 888
Water management	4 025
Manufacturing and mining	349 249
Transport and communication	84 069
Trade	109 806
Crafts and trades	20 075
Community service activities	24 050
Financial and other services	51 335
Non economy	234 578
Education and culture	88 786
Health care and social welfare	95 301
Central and local government bodies funds, associations and organizations	50 378
Total	1 026 784

Source: 1996 Statistical Yearbook, Croatian Bureau of Statistic

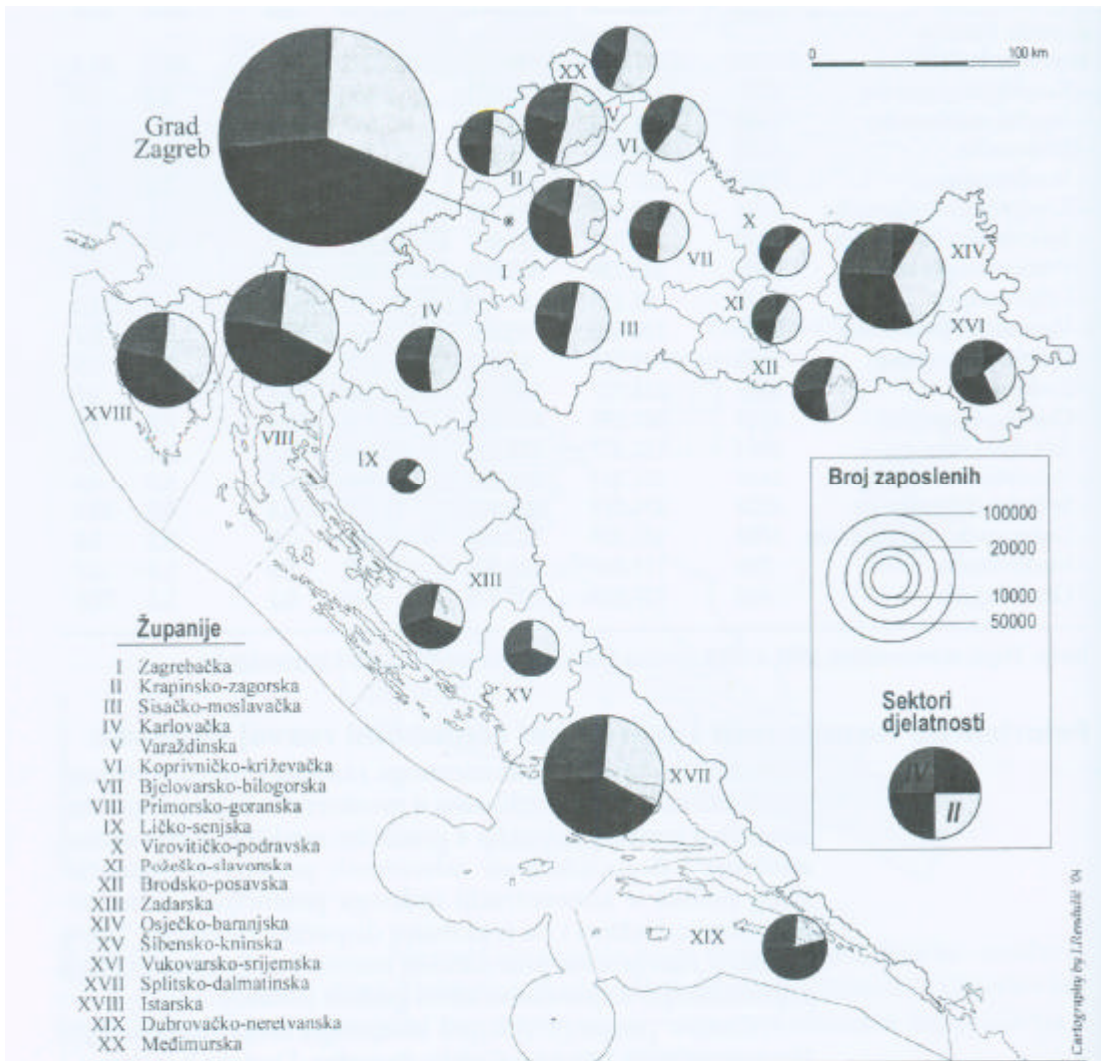
Table 8 Persons in paid employment in legal entities in Croatia, 2004, according to UCEA -2002 and by type of ownership

	Total	State ownership	Private ownership	Co-operative ownership	Mixed ownership
<i>Agriculture, hunting and forestry</i>	27 137	13 782	8 505	1 514	3 336
Fishing	1442	32	1 160	13	237
Mining and quarrying	8 054	1897	1808	6	4 343
Manufacturing	246 752	19162	164 409	171	63 010
Electricity, gas and water supply	26 962	25 837	561	-	564
Construction	82 024	9 328	64 380	170	8146
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles and personal and household goods	185 362	4 424	163 123	900	16915
Hotels and restaurants	35188	3 768	20 296	40	11084
Transport, storage and communication	80 234	39 694	25 454	58	15 028
Financial intermediation	30 080	8 705	10 589	323	10 463

Real estate, renting and business activities	64 356	10416	50 858	78	3 004
Public administration and defence; compulsory social Security	107 411	107 237	174		
Education	89 273	84 942	4109	-	222
Health and social work	73 540	66 552	6168	-	820
Other community, social and personal service activities	37 828	23 622	11609	63	2 534
Total	1 095 643	419 398	533 203	3 336	139 706

Source: 2006 Statistical Yearbook, Croatian Bureau of Statistics

Picture 1



SLIKA 3
Polarizacija funkcije rada i socijalno-ekonomska struktura stanovništva u županijama Republike Hrvatske 2001. godine

Table 9 Education levels of Croatian rural population at age 15 years and over

School	Year			
	1991		2001	
	No	%	No	%
No formal education	145 593	8.1	70 208	4.3
1-7 grades of basic school	637 357	36.0	389 272	24.0
Basic school	447 340	25.1	431 287	26.6
Secondary schools	460 987	26.0	640 353	39.6
Non university colleges	31 969	1.9	33 182	2.1
Faculties, art academies and university studies	21 653	1.3	41 777	2.6
Unknown	29 318	1.6	12 526	0.8
Total	1 774 217	100.0	1 618 605	100.0
Illiterates *	96 672	5.3	48 401	2.8

* Population aged 10 and over

Source: Žutinic, 2003

Table 10 Education levels of Croatian rural population by gender in 2001

School	Men		Women	
	No	%	No	%
No formal education	15 040	1.91	55 168	6.63
1-3 grades of basic school	35 029	4.46	70 780	8.50
4-7 grades of basic school	111 239	14.15	172 224	20.69
Basic school	197 740	25.15	233 547	28.06
School for skilled and highly skilled	294 537	37.46	134 931	16.21
Vocational secondary school	73 435	9.34	101 011	12.14
Grammar school	13 779	1.75	22 660	2.72
Non-university college degree	17 598	2.24	15 584	1.87
Faculties, art academies and university studies	20 541	2.61	19 709	2.37
Master of science	699	0.09	368	0.04
Doctor of science	340	0.04	120	0.01
Unknown	6 284	0.80	6 242	0.75
Total	786 261	100.00	832 344	100.00

Source: Žutinic, 2003

Table 11 Distribution of illiterates by age in Croatia, 2001

Age group	Urban settlements			Rural settlements		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
10 - 19	447	387	834	512	499	1 011
20 - 29	439	444	883	595	600	1 195
30 - 39	384	466	850	766	800	1 566
40 - 49	371	614	985	883	1 255	2 138
50 - 59	297	1 078	1 375	924	2 661	3 585
60 and over	1 486	14 445	15 931	5 119	33 108	38 227
Unknown	219	299	518	251	428	679
Total	3 643	17 733	21 376	9 050	39 351	48 401

Source: Žutinic, 2003

Table 12 Data on active farmers as per age and qualifications, 1991

Age group	Qualification*			
	High	Undergraduate	Graduate	Working farmers
15-24	25.09	0.15	0.12	20,435
25-34	27.90	1.09	0.90	31,676
35-44	12.80	0.75	0.58	38,973
45-54	4.42	0.35	0.27	49,941
55-64	1.55	0.08	0.10	71,735
65 and over	0.69	0.07	0.04	51,172
Unknown	7.70	0.07	0.04	1,363
Total	8.58	0.36	0.29	264,895

* Only the percentages for the workforce with high, undergraduate and graduate education are shown.

The difference to 100% encompasses illiterate and those with elementary and unfinished elementary school.

Source: Brkic et al. 2002

