

# FARMERS' DIALOGUE

## Romania

Visiting the Romanian region of Transylvania farmers and agricultural officials from Mauges – (Western France) exchanged and explored ways of developing rural production and associated projects. By Claude Bourdin.



Jean-Pierre Emeriau with the lady from the project in Viscri

The venture began in 1990 as part of "Operation Romanian Villages" a partnership involving the twinned villages - Posesti (Romania) and Beaupreau Centre Mauges (France), with the aim of studying agricultural issues, understanding the current situation and plan with Romanian partners to develop and support projects in rural areas.

European funds are available and must be processed and implemented by the Group for Local Action (GAL). In France the procedures and requirements are well known. Access to funds remains low in Romania (only 25% of funds are used). The purpose of the visit was to meet people already with experience to apply for grants to implement rural development.

Travelling together for five days in Transylvania allowed the group and their guests from Posesti to study existing developments and exchange experiences with their managers and the farmers involved. There are few professional agricultural organizations in Romania and many needs exist: development of production, land re-organization, the willingness of farmers to join together to build joint projects groups such as Coopérative d'Utilisation de Matériel Agricole (CUMA)- is a cooperative of farmers using farming equipment purchased and operated on a shared basis agro-tourism, more efficient distribution of produce...) to name several opportunities.



A local market near Posesti



Aurel Nita, a bee-keeper in Posesti

Two situations aroused the admiration of the group: the first, in a remote mountainous area, showed the fruits of 20 years of work based on mobilisation of local people in small projects leading to the revitalization of the Viscri village: crafts, sales from farms, guest houses and agro-tourism, a phyto-purification station, organization of common pastures, restoration of traditional buildings (house, fortified church and old crafts)... The town has stabilised its population and stopped the rural exodus and succeeded in integrating the Roma members. It hosts 3,000 tourists every year.

Alba Afroda is an agro-tourism association in Alba Julia region. It has worked with the Rhone Chamber of Agriculture (France), facilitated many exchanges of trainees and developed Bed & Breakfast (B & B) on many farms that are owned by members. The Rhone Chamber of Agriculture had helped launch CUMA by sending second hand and pre-used equipment.

There was a warm welcome in a third village, Purcaren - But is also showed the difficulties of coordination between the very different activities: agro-tourism associations, farmers and municipalities. The unity between these three groups is essential for the success of development projects across the village.

Our return to Posesti allowed the Franco-Romanian group to share their findings with local stakeholders, the exercise will lead to a development project supported by the GAL. There remains to do to raise awareness and to urge Posesti farmers who apparently do not seem interested to become involved in the process. This is essential since the City Council of Posesti voted for its participation in the process implemented by the GAL.

Hopefully the meetings held during this visit will motivate and inspire people to ensure continued rural development in Posesti, a village with great possibilities.



Local transport for tourists