

# COOPERATION – SUSTAINABLE FORM OF MANAGING PRIVATE FOREST PATRIMONY

## COOPERAREA – FORMĂ VIABILĂ DE GESTIONARE A PATRIMONIULUI PRIVAT FORESTIER

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**Abstract:** *Following application of property laws (Law no. 18/1991 and Law nr.1/2000) much of the state forest heritage in Romania passed to private property. The new owners either of ignorance or greediness did not ensure an appropriate management of the forest, which led to massive uncontrolled deforestation without regeneration measures. This has resulted in ecological imbalances in many areas, especially mountainous, with medium and long term negative economic and social repercussions. The analysis of the experience of forest management in common till 1949, especially in Transylvania, but in other areas where there was a cooperative-type organizational structure, called "composesorate" in Transylvania or "parish" in other areas, can be a starting point to reorganize these properties. In the paper it is presented the organization and management of the Poiana Sarata former "composesorate" from the mountainous area of the Bacau county, which operated between 1823 and 1949, with an area of over 3500 meters. The good organization, the democratic and transparent leadership assured a high economic efficiency. The re-setting up of these structures, whose operating principles are valid even today, would be beneficial for human communities with forest properties.*

**Key words:** cooperation, forest, management, community, efficiency

**Rezumat.** *În urma aplicării Legilor proprietății (Legea nr. 18/1991 și Legea nr.1/2000) mare parte a patrimoniului forestier de stat din România a trecut în proprietate privată. Noii proprietari din neștiință sau din lăcomie nu au asigurat o gestionare corespunzătoare a pădurilor redobândite, fapt care a dus la defrișări masive necontrolate fără măsuri de regenerare. Acest fapt a generat, în multe zone, în special montane, dezechilibre ecologice, cu repercursiuni economice și sociale negative, pe termen mediu și lung. Analiza experienței gospodăririi în comun a pădurilor până în anul 1949, în special în Transilvania, dar și în alte zone în care au existat structuri organizatorice de tip cooperativ, numite „composesorate” în Transilvania sau „obști” în alte zone, poate constitui o bază de pornire pentru reorganizarea acestor proprietăți. În lucrare este prezentat modul de organizare și conducere a fostului „composesorat” Poiana Sărată din zona montană a județului Bacău, care a funcționat între anii 1823-1949., având o suprafață de peste 3500 ha. Buna organizare, conducerea democratică și transparentă îi asigurau o eficiență economică ridicată. Reînființarea acestor structuri a căror principii de funcționare sunt valabile și astăzi ar fi benefică pentru comunitățile umane cu proprietăți silvice.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** cooperare, pădure, management, comunitate, eficiență

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

At the completion of the study were the current regulations, but also those from the interwar period on cooperation and forest management in Romania. To substantiate the necessity of the cooperation actions in the forest domain we studied the experience of the people sharing the Romanian territory in the forest and grassland form communities.

For example, we present here the system of forest organization, leadership and management of Poiana Sarata village, the former Trei Scaune county which was operating a forest "congregation" entitled *Poiana Sarata Composesorate*. There is a status of organization. This status has been updated since 1932, based on the Forest Code published in 1923 and Regulation of "Law for the needs to meet normal firewood and construction", published in 1925.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The cooperation in modern thinking, is that collaborative process, bonding force individuals or businesses in different industries.

More than in other economic sectors, the cooperation in the private forest heritage, due to the country peculiarities, is the only form of economic exploitation of forest products (timber, game, berries, sources of pleasure, etc.).

The forest heritage must be protected and properly managed. Most European countries have a policy that preserve the forest available sources to protect domestic industry and wood processing. Whatever the ownership of land with woody vegetation, forests - whether state owned or private property that are - are subject to forest and considered by law, public national good.

Currently, due to property laws (Law 18/1991 and Law 1/2000), much of the forest patrimony of the State passed into private ownership. Part of the new owners, inexperienced and means for protecting and higher recovery of these forests have fallen prey, in many cases, some speculators were buying with low prices and moved to action by clearing of significant areas. This has resulted in many areas of the country, especially mountainous ecological imbalances, with negative economic and social medium and long term repercussions.

The analysis of the organization and operation of joint forest by the year 1949 (the year the property was carried out nationalization of all forest), especially in Transylvania, but in other areas where there were cooperative organizational structure type called "*Composesorate* in Transylvania or "communities "in other areas, can be a starting point for organizing and managing these properties.

This paper aims to present the organization and management of the former Poiana Sarata "*Composesorate*", Trei Scaune County (from the current mountain area of Bacau County), established in 1823, at the same time with the village.

The Composesorate worked until 1949, with a surface, in the interwar period of 3382 hectares.

The good organization, democratic and transparent leadership, way of exploiting forest products, wood in particular, have provided a high economic efficiency. The reinstatement of these structures in the counties with forest heritage of Moldova, whose operating principles are largely valid today, would be beneficial for human communities with forest properties.

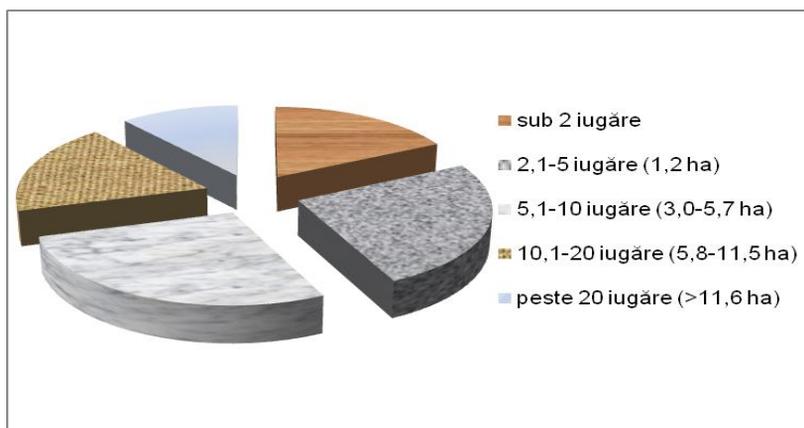
Poiana Sarata is a village belonging to Oituz commune, and is located in the western province of Bacau, in its mountainous area.

The study refers to the situation in 1932, when it was updated the status of the Composesorates.

On the date mentioned above Poiana Sarata Composesorate held 4834 yokes (2782 hectares) and 1043 yokes forest (600 ha) meadow, all being operated in a cooperative system.

In the village there were a number of owners, with higher surface areas who exploited them in the private system. The number of individuals with a nominal title, who formed the congregation, called "composesori" was 452. This number is added to two institutions: the church and school, with above-average land areas. Persons included in Composesorate, mostly heads of households were, with no partition of property between their members. Average area which was owned by a composer was of 10.64 yokes (6.12 hectares).

We present in figure 1 the structure of composers according to the size of the area held.



**Fig. 1.** Structure of Composers by land owned

From the presented structure it is clear that more than half of composers (53%) had areas ranging from 1.3 ha to 5.7 ha. Only 11.2% of families had larger areas of 10 ha and the number of holding areas over 30 ha was low.

This shows the balance between forest owners, with no polarization of the owners, which strengthened the democratic spirit of the cooperative structure type.

The statistics data show that only two people had areas of 50-60 hectares.

This type of cooperative system based on sound strictly principles, was particularly appreciated by people and it lasted 126 years without interruption, until the mid twentieth century when forests were nationalized.

At the basis of this perenniality stood this system of organization and leadership based on simple democracy, but with maximum efficiency (fig. 2).

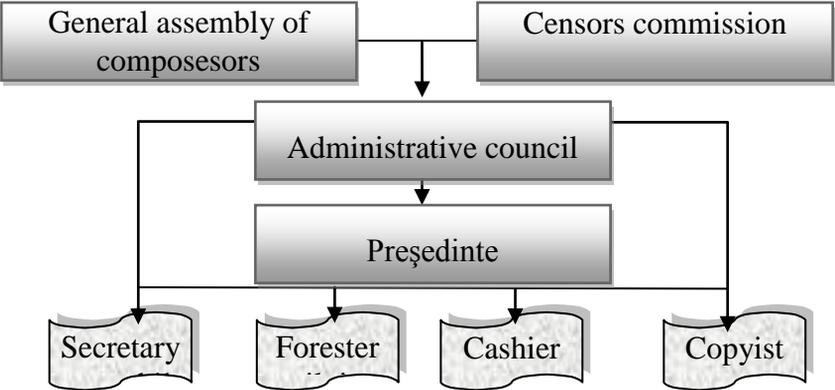


Fig. 2. Structure of Composesorate management

On the organization and functioning of the composesorate sat its status, called "Property", which included six chapters with 30 articles.

The first chapter contains four articles. The first article presented the concept and content of the phrase "Composesorate". It shows that it is "gang" of "moșneni" (composesors) in "joint property" in the ownership of the land surface (forest and agricultural land) and on other property in common property (buildings, machinery, tools, animals employment etc.). Further, in Article 2, there are passed the properties of the composesorate, both in hectares and yokes on separate categories of use, forest and arable land and other inventory assets.

Article 3 contains the name of the composesors and the size of properties they possess (in yokes and hectares). This article is accompanied by the rights of the "moșneni", like "shares" of today, the first and last name of the composesors are entered, if the person is an adult and the number of rights (shares) held by them on which they vote. The higher the area held by a composesor, the greater the rights in decision making and hence the revenue sharing.

In the last article of this chapter there are contained the obligations of the composesors (to participate in the maintenance of common property, not to execute cuts without authorization) and penalties for violations (payment of damages or loss of rights to annual income etc.).

Chapter 2 includes 13 items and refers to the organization and management of the composesorate. The General Assembly is the supreme leading forum of Composesors. It meets once a year in January, in a session and, if necessary, arrange meetings and extraordinary emergencies such as fires or possession violations occur.

The general meetings had subjects for discussion such as: choosing managers (3-5 people and the president) for a period of five years may be re-eligible, election auditing committee (three people) review and approval of the board of directors' annual report, discussion and approval of the budget revenue and expenditure, changes of status, conducting sale, purchase or allotment of land, determining the rate of timber to be exploited, dividing the net profit. It shows the end of the article, how to vote, directly or by proxy. Minors had the right to vote from the age of 14 years.

Voting is by acclamation (as the ancient Greeks), and if there is doubt, the vote is passed to persons.

Chapters 3 and 4 contain provisions on the rights and obligations of directors, the President and other staff.

Of those obligations we mention the effective management of congregation property, lease of land of stone quarries, the hunting and fishing, hiring qualified staff, afforestation and maintenance work, etc.

The President shall have some special obligations: to represent the composesorate in public actions, monitoring income and expenditure budget, accounting control.

The final chapter, 5, containing aspects of qualified personnel: secretary, accountant, cashier, forester, copyist.

If there we litigations in court they appealed to a lawyer whom they paid for the services.

The budget revenues were related to sale quantities of timber, leasing of land for grazing, hunting and fishing and other income.

The costs were represented by administrators and staff payment, expenses with forest replanting and maintenance, payment of taxes.

The obtained profit was allocated according to the general assembly's decisions, some form of dividends, and another for development (land purchases), etc.

Among villagers, few were those who exploited the forest areas in the private system. The fact that over 95% of inhabitants were members of the composesorate shows the superiority of this type of cooperative form of exploitation (the joint property).

## CONCLUSIONS

1. Since ancient times until the modern era (since 1949), residents of communities in Transylvania exploited the forests in the cooperative system (the joint property) as an organizational structure called Composesorate.

2. The organization and operation of Composesorate based on a statute that contained democratic principles, assuring high economic efficiency. Its sustainability for hundreds of years show the superiority of this form of forest management.

3. Resurrecting the cooperation in areas of private forest properties would eliminate a number of irregularities in forest management and ensure effective economic operation.

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