

# Rural Development by Land Consolidation in Sweden

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## ABSTRACT

Rural development is closely related to the improvement of living conditions in rural areas regarding housing environment, infrastructure, communications, employment possibilities, land management etc. In this context the division of land into property units as well as the ownership conditions of real properties have a great influence on rural development from various point of views – society, business and environment. In the county of Dalarna there is a unique fragmentation of real properties/parcels combined with very complex ownership conditions in large areas which causes essential disadvantages in agriculture, forestry and for the development of good living conditions in rural areas. The situation is a result of private subdivision of real properties during generations and inheritance pattern among the farmers.

Land Consolidation is the main tool used to achieve land concentration and simple ownership conditions in areas with cadastral problems. Since 1930 the Cadastral Authority has implemented Land Consolidation covering 400,000 hectares, but there is still an additional urgent need of Land Consolidation for at least 400,000 hectares.

In the County of Dalarna the authorities have established a partnership with the associations of farmers, forest owners and sawmills in order to prepare programmes for land reform activities. The possible measures are:

- Voluntary or gradual measures
- Radical land consolidation including compulsory measures.

The choice of consolidation scheme depends on various factors. In areas with moderate fragmentation of properties voluntary procedures are recommended. Radical Land Consolidation, however, is required for major areas which are badly fragmented and where there is an urgent need of Land Consolidation. Normally 300 – 700 participants are involved in such projects.

According to the Real Property Formation Act and present policies a Land Consolidation procedure has to be initiated by the owners of real properties. Therefore information and communication activities are essential. For the success of a project it is important to increase the awareness of the efficiency and the benefits of a better land consolidation among the land owners as well as among the public in general. Property owners in fragmented areas must be convinced that it is beneficial to them to sign the applications of the proposed Land Consolidation procedure. For both participants and authorities the following issues are important:

- Cost and financing
- Public opinion among the participants
- Influence by the participants on the procedure
- Location of the new consolidated properties
- Implementation time of the procedure.

To match these requirements the Cadastral Authority has emphasised

- Elaborating a cost-efficient procedure and methodology
- Developing a trustful partnership together with other authorities and associations
- Introducing a high- technological GIS-technique
- Establishing a trustful dialogue between participants and officials
- Attaining political support on local, county and parliament level
- Solving the financial problems with satisfactory subsidies from the government and EU.

**The results** from implemented projects show clearly that the number of real properties has been reduced considerably with a subsequent improvement of division into property units and ownership conditions. As a result of these improvements essential benefits for society and business have been achieved.

The main **benefits to society** are:

- Decreased costs for authorities
- Increased activity and employment in agriculture and forestry
- Increased tax revenues
- Documentation and securing of valuable natural and cultural environments.

The main economic and commercial **benefits** are:

- Decreased costs for agriculture, logging and silviculture
- 80 – 90 % reduction of the total length of property boundaries
- Clear and secure boundaries
- Simple ownership conditions.

The **Cadastral surveyor** leads and is responsible for the whole process from the application until the conclusion of a Cadastral procedure. He, or she, co-ordinates information, process, decisions and investigates, evaluates and proposes solutions, negotiates and takes important decisions. The Cadastral surveyor's role in Sweden is unique – it is strong and involves great responsibility.

The **Cadastral procedure** is a good way to solve matters of land and compensation. The Cadastral procedure has proved to be capable to serve as a democratic tool in order to achieve consensus and user participation. Appeals to the courts, for example, are rare, - even in such controversial matters as compensation. In Sweden our experience of this model is very good. It is a secure, simple, neutral and cost-efficient procedure. The Real Property Formation Act has also proved to be applicable - even in large-Land Consolidation.

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