

# Development of a land consolidation instrument in the Republic of Azerbaijan

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**Keywords:** Land Consolidation, land reform, legal and institutional framework, Azerbaijan

## SUMMARY (1/2 page)

The Republic of Azerbaijan implemented during the late 1990s a land reform, which distributed the state owned agricultural land to the rural population but also led to excessive land fragmentation and small farm sizes. Agricultural and rural development is high on the political agenda in Azerbaijan and is seen as an important sector to development as part of an overall strategy of reducing dependency on income from oil production. *The Strategic Roadmap on production and processing of agricultural products in the Republic of Azerbaijan* adopted in December 2016 has land consolidation among its strategical priority areas.

To address the problem, FAO implemented upon request from the Ministry of Agriculture in Azerbaijan a project that for the first time introduced land consolidation in the country. The project supported the implementation of a land consolidation pilot project, the development of a draft land consolidation strategy, a draft land consolidation law and a state programme on land consolidation.

This paper provides the background for introduction of land consolidation in Azerbaijan, discusses in the light of good international practise the experiences of the project implemented with support of FAO during 2016-2019 and the way forward.

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## 1. Introduction

In the late 1990s, land fragmentation and land consolidation appeared on the political agenda in many countries in Central and Eastern Europe where land reforms from the beginning of transition in 1990 had led to excessive land fragmentation and small farm sizes in most of the countries.<sup>1</sup> FAO has supported the introduction of land consolidation and building up of national land consolidation programmes in so far 11 countries in Central and Eastern Europe since 2002.<sup>2</sup>

The Republic of Azerbaijan implemented during the late 1990s a land reform, which distributed the state owned agricultural land to the rural population but also led to excessive land fragmentation and small farm sizes. To address the problem, FAO implemented upon request from the Ministry of Agriculture in Azerbaijan a project that for the first time introduced land consolidation in the country.

This paper provides the background for introduction of land consolidation in Azerbaijan, discusses in the light of good international practise the experiences of the project implemented with support of FAO during 2016-2019 and the way forward.

## 2. Land reform in the 1990s and its outcome

The Republic of Azerbaijan had no experience with land consolidation before the independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Land reform in Azerbaijan began in 1996 with the adoption of the *law on land reform*. The *law on privatization of state property*, adopted in 1993, already gave the general principles and procedures for the privatization of all state property.<sup>3</sup> In 1996 most of the agricultural land in Azerbaijan was still managed by large collective farms. In the first phase of land reform, the rural families received only paper certificates of entitlement to unspecified land shares, similar to the land reform process in countries such as Georgia, Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

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<sup>1</sup> Hartvigsen, M. (2015a): *Experiences with land consolidation and land banking in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989*. FAO Land Tenure Working Paper 26.

<sup>2</sup> Hartvigsen, M. (2019): *FAO support to land consolidation in Europe and Central Asia during 2002-2018 – Experiences and way forward*. FAO Land Tenure Journal 1/2019.

<sup>3</sup> Hartvigsen, M., (2013a): *Land Reform in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989 and its outcome in form of farm structures and land fragmentation*. FAO Land Tenure Working Paper 24, p. 47-48.

Azerbaijan chose in the second phase of land reform starting from 1997-1998 to distribute state agricultural land to the rural families in physical parcels. The initial phase of the distribution process was carried out through the World Bank-funded Farm Privatization Project, which was a pilot project with the objective to establish the model for large-scale privatization and distribution.<sup>4</sup> The land to be privatized was divided into parcels of equal value, taking into account location and soil quality. Then the eligible families were allocated land parcels after a lottery in each village. The local distributions were approved by State Reform Commissions. In parallel, a cadastre and land registry was build up within the State Committee on Property Issues (SCPI), where the new private ownership after land reform was registered and ownership certificates were issued to the new owners.

The land reform was completed in 2004. During the land reform process, only the best agricultural land was subject to privatization, a total area of 3.62 million ha. Overall, 76 percent of the total arable land and 70 percent of the total area with meadows was privatized. Pastures and forests were kept in state ownership. A total of 869 000 rural families were each distributed an average of 1.6 ha of agricultural land, typically divided into two to four parcels.

The farm structures are today characterized by many small and medium-sized family farms and with relatively few larger corporate farms. Some 80 percent of the family farms chose to farm the land themselves.<sup>5</sup> Land reform in Azerbaijan resulted in excessive fragmentation of both land ownership and land use.<sup>6</sup>

### **3. FAO Land consolidation pilot project in Shorsulu village**

Agricultural and rural development is high on the political agenda in Azerbaijan and is seen as an important sector to development as part of an overall strategy of reducing dependency on income from oil production. The *Strategic Roadmap on production and processing of agricultural products in the Republic of Azerbaijan* adopted in December 2016<sup>7</sup> defines among its priorities that actions should be taken to i) improve the means of agricultural production, ii) develop agricultural land markets and iii) consolidate agricultural land and iv) prevent that agricultural land would become unutilized.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has during September 2016 – August 2019 upon the request of the Government of Azerbaijan implemented the project *Support to the Preparation of a National Land Consolidation Strategy and a Land Consolidation Pilot Project* (TCP/AZE/3601). The project was planned to have three main components: i) formulation of a draft National Land Consolidation Strategy, ii) implementation of a land consolidation pilot project and iii) training and capacity building.

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<sup>4</sup> World Bank (2008): *Project performance assessment report; Farm Privatization Project, Azerbaijan*.

<sup>5</sup> Dudwick, N. et al. (2005): *A stocktaking of land reform and farm restructuring in Bulgaria, Moldova, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan*, p. 30.

<sup>6</sup> Hartvigsen, M. (2013b): *Land reform and land fragmentation in Central and Eastern Europe*. Land Use Policy 36 (2014), p. 339.

<sup>7</sup> Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2016): *Strategic roadmap on agriculture and agricultural products processing sector in the Republic of Azerbaijan*.

In March 2017, the Ministry of Agriculture conducted an extensive exercise for the selection of a pilot community based on selection criteria developed by the project team and finally selected Shorsulu village in Salyan Rayon in the south-eastern part of Azerbaijan. Shorsulu is a rural community with around 3,700 inhabitants (around 600 families).<sup>8</sup> The pilot project had three main components; i) conduct a land consolidation feasibility study, ii) prepare a draft Re-allotment Plan (Land Consolidation Plan) for the project area and iii) elaborate a Community Development Plan for the pilot community in a participatory and inclusive process.

### 3.1 Land consolidation feasibility study

In the initial stage of the feasibility study, a Land Ownership Map was prepared based on data from the State Committee on Property Issues (SCPI) of formally registered land ownership in the project area (See figure 1). In total the project area of 2,206 ha was formally owned by 608 families, divided in a total of 1,448 land parcels. The municipality was the owner of 271 ha of agricultural land divided into 43 parcels. A serial number was attributed to each landowner (family) to simplify the identification and help with cross-referencing documents. A questionnaire to conduct individual interviews with the landowners was developed based on experiences from pilot projects implemented by FAO in countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and North Macedonia. The questionnaire included information and questions about; i) the owner and contact details, ii) information about owned agricultural land parcels (cadastral numbers, size, land use etc.), iii) land use (including land leased in and out), iv) main agricultural production and v) interest in and wish for the land consolidation pilot project (parcels interested to sell, parcels interested to exchange (consolidate) and parcels interested to consolidate around (fixed parcels), or not interested to participate in the land consolidation project).

During August - November 2017, in total 543 interviews with the landowners were conducted (89% of all formally registered landowners). The data collected through the interviews were analysed using a database developed for this purpose and reported in a Baseline (feasibility study) Report.<sup>9</sup> The average size of owned agricultural land per landowner was 3.98 ha with a minimum of 0.26 ha and a maximum of 87 ha, while the average number of owned parcels per landowner was 2.58.

The feasibility study found that in total 103 landowners (16.9 % of the interviewed families) had already sold–purchased in total 143 land parcels (8.5 % of all agricultural land parcels) since the state land was distributed to the rural families during the land reform in the late 1990s. However, these land transactions remained informal as the new ownership had not been formally registered in the land registry. In Azerbaijan, the so-called technical inventory of agricultural land plots is required for any transfer of property title in order to eliminate the inconsistency between the property titles and the reality on the ground such as mismatches of surface area, boundary inaccuracies, errors in names, etc.

The feasibility study also found that as many as 30.4 % of the agricultural holdings in the project area had unresolved inheritance, i.e. that the registered owner had passed away but the land ownership remained registered in the name of the deceased person. This affected in total 463 land parcels or 32 % of all parcels. Finally, it was found that parcel boundary inaccuracy affected in principle all parcels in the project area due

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<sup>8</sup> FAO (2018): *Baseline Report - Land consolidation pilot project in Shorsulu village, Salyan Rayon*. Unpublished project report (TCP/AZE/3601).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

to use of imprecise land surveying during the land reform period. In reality, the situation is even more complex as for many of the parcels the described land registration problems overlap.

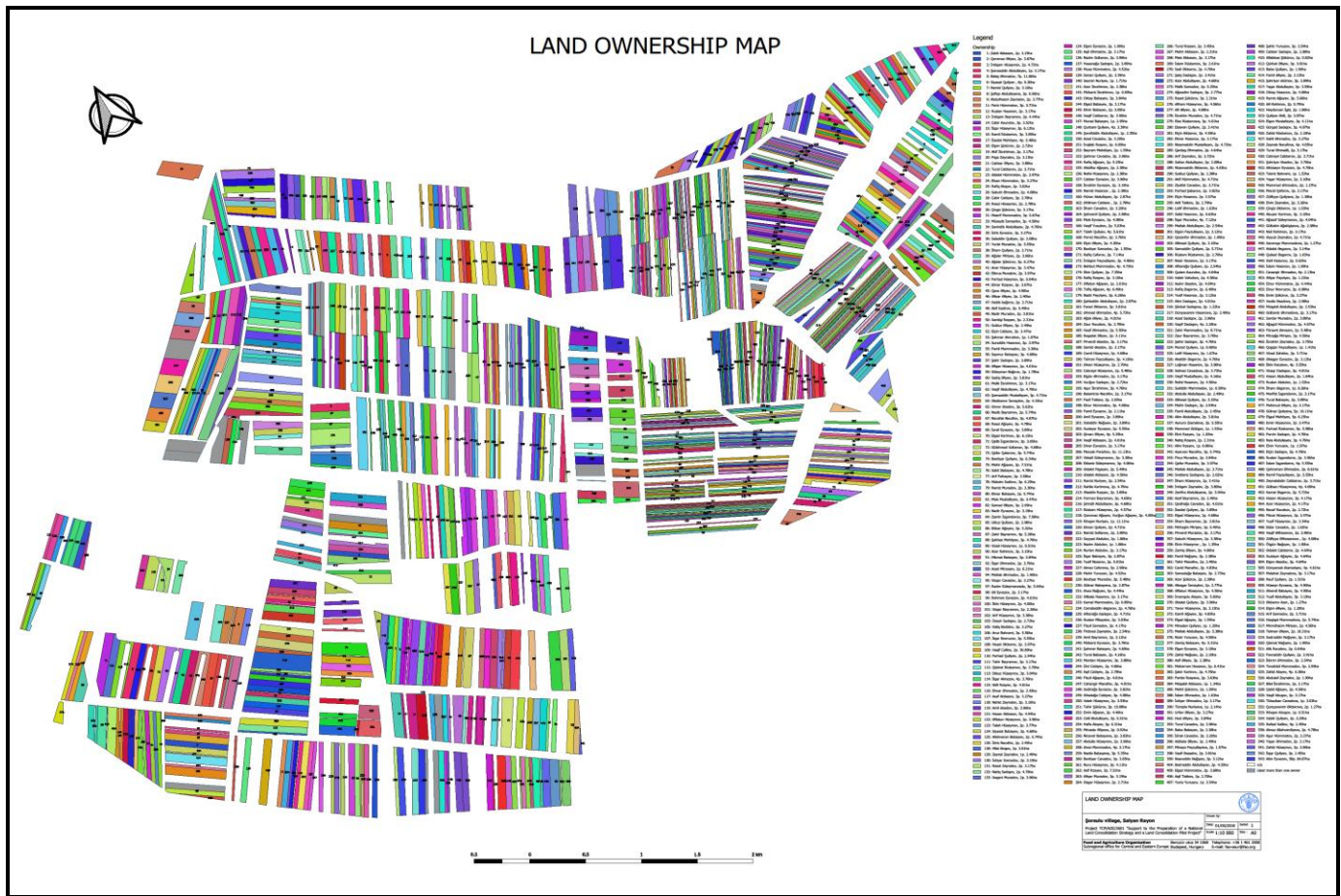


Figure 1: Land Ownership Map for Shorsulu land consolidation pilot village (2017).

| Size class    | No. of households <sup>10</sup> | %   | Ha   |
|---------------|---------------------------------|-----|------|
| 0 – 1 ha      | 22                              | 4   | 16   |
| 1.01 – 2 ha   | 44                              | 9   | 68   |
| 2.01 – 3 ha   | 79                              | 15  | 195  |
| 3.01 – 5 ha   | 278                             | 54  | 1076 |
| 5.00 – 10 ha  | 80                              | 16  | 484  |
| 10.01 – 20 ha | 5                               | 1   | 67   |
| >20.00 ha     | 3                               | 1   | 150  |
| Total         | 511                             | 100 | 2057 |

Table 1: Distribution of agricultural land owned by rural households by size categories in Shorsulu pilot village (including informal land transactions).

| Number of parcels | No. of Households | %   | Ha   |
|-------------------|-------------------|-----|------|
| 1                 | 37                | 7   | 52   |
| 2                 | 281               | 55  | 978  |
| 3-4               | 176               | 34  | 758  |
| 5-10              | 13                | 3   | 99   |
| 11-20             | 3                 | 1   | 61   |
| >20               | 1                 | 0.2 | 109  |
| Total             | 511               | 100 | 2057 |

Table 2: Distribution of agricultural land owned by rural households by number of owned land plots in Shorsulu pilot village.

<sup>10</sup> Based on 511 interviews. Some landowners have informally sold their land and some other just lease in without owning any land themselves.

As displayed in Table 1, 78 % of the interviewed families / households own between 1 and 5 ha in the project area and only 2 % own more than 10 ha. Table 2 shows that 89 % of the households own 2-4 land parcels in the project area and that as many as 62 % of the households have only 1 or 2 land parcels. The large share of landowners with one only or two parcels turned out to negatively affect the outcome of the pilot project as they could not benefit from reducing the number of owned land parcels. Furthermore, most of the owners with two parcels (55 % of all owners) owned a parcel in each of the two very different parts of the pilot area, the irrigated western part and the non-irrigated eastern part, around 700 ha in total (see Figure 2).

The feasibility study found that the average farm size in the pilot village was 5.20 ha, taking into consideration land leased in and leased out. The variation is huge from a farm size of 0.2 ha to one farm of 190 ha. 136 households (farms) are leasing in land in the pilot community and in total 193 land parcels with a total size of 569 ha are leased. Most of the lease agreements are short-term and informal. At the time of the interviews, 48 land parcels (in total 41 ha) of agricultural land was not in agricultural use.

Cattle breeding and livestock production is the main type of agriculture practiced by the local population in the village. In addition, farmers grow various fish species in lakes, artificial ponds and sometimes in canals. Among crops, the farmers cultivate mainly maize, cotton, barley and alfalfa. This is used mostly as fodder for the animals. From 1 ha of arable land the farmers can get a yield of 3-4 tons of wheat or one ton of cotton.

As key objective of conducting the feasibility study and interviewing the landowners was to determine the need, interest and the support of the landowners for the implementation of a land consolidation project in the area. The initial idea was to implement a land consolidation project in a fully voluntary approach, i.e. only landowners who provide written consent with the draft Re-allotment Plan would participate. The feasibility study found based on the conducted interviews that 88 % (476) of the interviewed private landowners (families) expressed an interest to participate in the land consolidation project. 68 % of the landowners were interested to participate through exchange (consolidation) of parcels, 52 % indicated interest in purchase of additional land, 55 % in leasing additional land, while only 3 % indicated interest in selling agricultural land. Land mobility is an essential element in land consolidation projects, particularly those following a voluntary approach.<sup>11</sup> The land mobility is a term describing the potential transfer of land rights through sale (buy), exchange and lease in land consolidation projects. The low interest for selling land among the private owners was an indication of low land mobility in the project area and raised a warning that it would be difficult to successfully complete re-allotment planning in a voluntary approach.

The Baseline Report, reporting on the outcome of the feasibility study, concluded that a land consolidation project is feasible in the pilot area, in particular because of the strong interest and support from the landowners and farmers in the area. It was also concluded that the land consolidation project, because of the high level of informal land ownership, would need to be able to clarify and update the formal land registration in the project area. Finally, the Baseline Report recommended shifting the land consolidation approach from voluntary to majority-based land consolidation, mainly due to the expected low land mobility and the high level of informal land rights<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Hartvigsen, M. (2014a): *Land Mobility in a Central and Eastern European Land Consolidation Context*. Nordic Journal of Surveying and Real Estate Research. Volume 10, Number 1, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Hartvigsen, M. (2015b): *Integrated voluntary land consolidation – A Third model for land consolidation in Central and Eastern Europe*. FAO Land Tenure Journal 1-2015, 9-43.

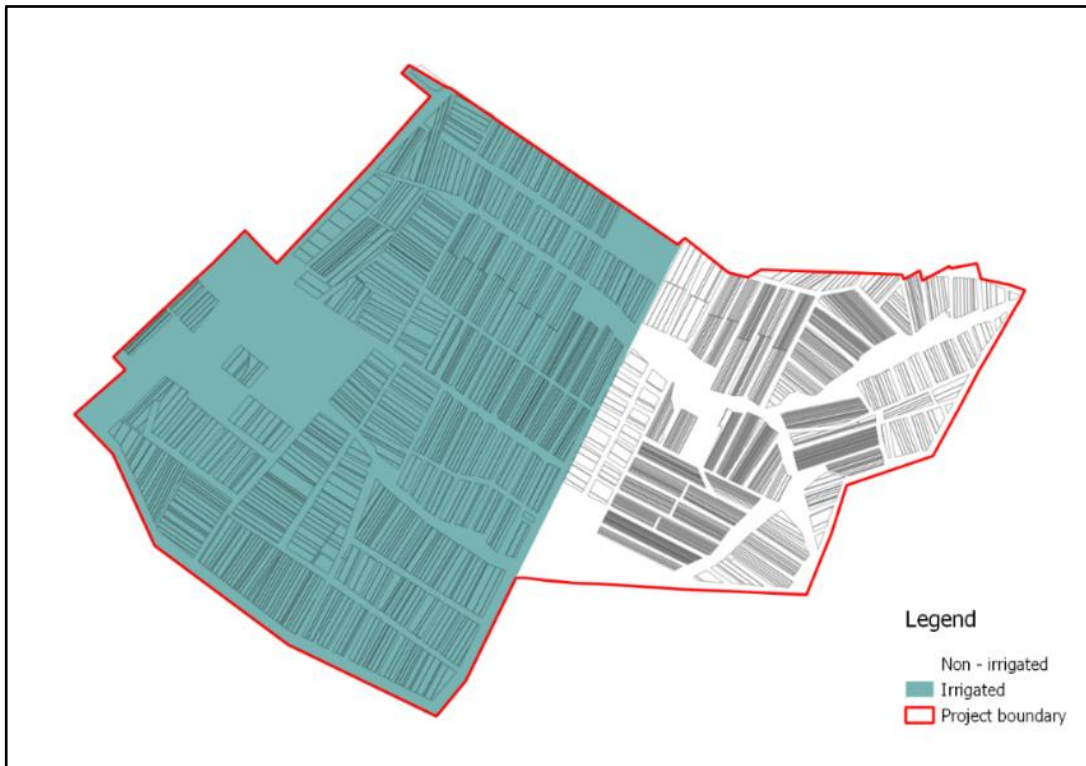


Figure 2: The irrigated and the non-irrigated part of the pilot village.

While it was expected to implement voluntary land consolidation in the pilot area following normal land transaction procedures (without prior adoption of land consolidation legislation), this was found to be not possible due to high degree of informality and the low quality and completeness of cadastral and land registration data. Solving all cadastral and registration problems in Shorsulu would be an unbearable task during the lifetime of the project and was beyond the scope and the budget of the pilot project.

As opposed to a voluntary approach, in majority-based land consolidation, a qualified majority of the landowners, e.g. at least 70 % of the landowners representing at least 50 % of the land in the project area, have to vote for the adoption of the draft Re-allotment Plan before it is approved. Furthermore both majority-based and voluntary re-allotment planning requires the adoption of land consolidation legislation in order to ensure a one-step approval of the Re-allotment Plan, and a system of safeguards to protect legitimate land rights.

Instead, it was agreed during the re-allotment phase of the project to “simulate” majority-based re-allotment planning and to prepare a draft Re-allotment Plan with the aim that the Plan could be adopted after land consolidation legislation was adopted. The majority-based approach is more suitable in terms of a comprehensive reorganization of the territory and to support rural infrastructure works and given the magnitude of land registration problems more appropriate for the systematic clarification of ownership in projects.

Therefore, a consequence of shifting to a majority-based approach was that it would not be possible to fully finalize the land consolidation pilot within the life of the project since land consolidation legislation was not adopted in Azerbaijan when the project ended in August 2019 (see Section 5).



*Photo: Final community workshop in Shorsulu pilot community in August 2019 when the final draft Re-allotment Plan was presented and discussed with local landowners and farmers.*

### **3.2 Community development planning**

It is the recommendation of FAO to integrate land consolidation with the broader needs of local rural development.<sup>13</sup> The landowners were during the interviews in the feasibility phase (see Section 3.1) individually asked about their broader local development needs. A Community Development Plan for the pilot community was elaborated<sup>14</sup> through a participatory process in which the backbone was a series of three community workshops. It was a specific challenge in the conservative pilot community in the south-east part of the country to fully engage the women in the community development planning process that took place during the series of community workshops. This was overcome by organizing specific focus group discussions with representatives of the women in the village.

The drafted development plan includes both agricultural and non-agricultural elements. The most urgent and important agricultural need identified by the community was to provide irrigation water to the non-irrigated 700 ha of the agricultural land in the village (see Figure 2). A second priority was the construction of a new passage over the main canal in the village. This passage was installed with the financial support from FAO during the summer 2019 (see photos).

<sup>13</sup> Hartvigsen, M. (2016): *Land consolidation in Central and Eastern Europe – Integration with local rural development needs*. Paper presented at World Bank Land and Poverty Conference, March 2016.

<sup>14</sup> FAO (2019): *Community Development Plan for Shorsulu Village (Pilot area)*. Unpublished project report (TCP/AZE/3601).





*Photo: The old and not safe passage of the main canal.*



*Photo: The newly constructed passage.*

### **3.3 Re-allotment planning**

Based on the findings and recommendations of the Baseline Report reporting the outcome of the feasibility study, a draft Re-allotment Plan was prepared for the pilot area by the project team of local and national consultants supported by an international FAO team. The Plan was drafted through an inclusive and participatory process and in close dialogue with the landowners and farmers, in particular the Local Stakeholder Committee representing the general interests of the local stakeholders.

In the first stage of re-allotment planning, land valuation was conducted of all agricultural land in the project area by the project team and the Local Stakeholder Committee. The project area was first divided into blocs of parcels with natural boundaries. The outcome was a Land Valuation Map (Figure 3) with relative value of the land in the project area from 0 to 100 where value 100 was allocated to the best agricultural land in the project area. Subsequently during the re-allotment planning the Land Valuation Map was used to set the value of land parcels when they were re-allocated from one part of the project area to another.

The re-allotment planning was made complicated by two main issues. First, the project area is divided into numerous small sub-areas divided by natural boundaries such as roads and canals. This gives high limitations for how large it is physically possible to design new consolidated parcels. Second, as many as 62 % of the landowners had only 1 or 2 land parcels (see Section 3.1, Table 2). For those with two parcels, it was usually one irrigated and one non-irrigated parcel. Since very few owners were interested to give up land in the irrigated part of the village, it was usually not possible to reduce then the number of parcels for these owners from 2 to 1. In this sense, the pilot area despite the best intentions turned out not to be the most suitable.

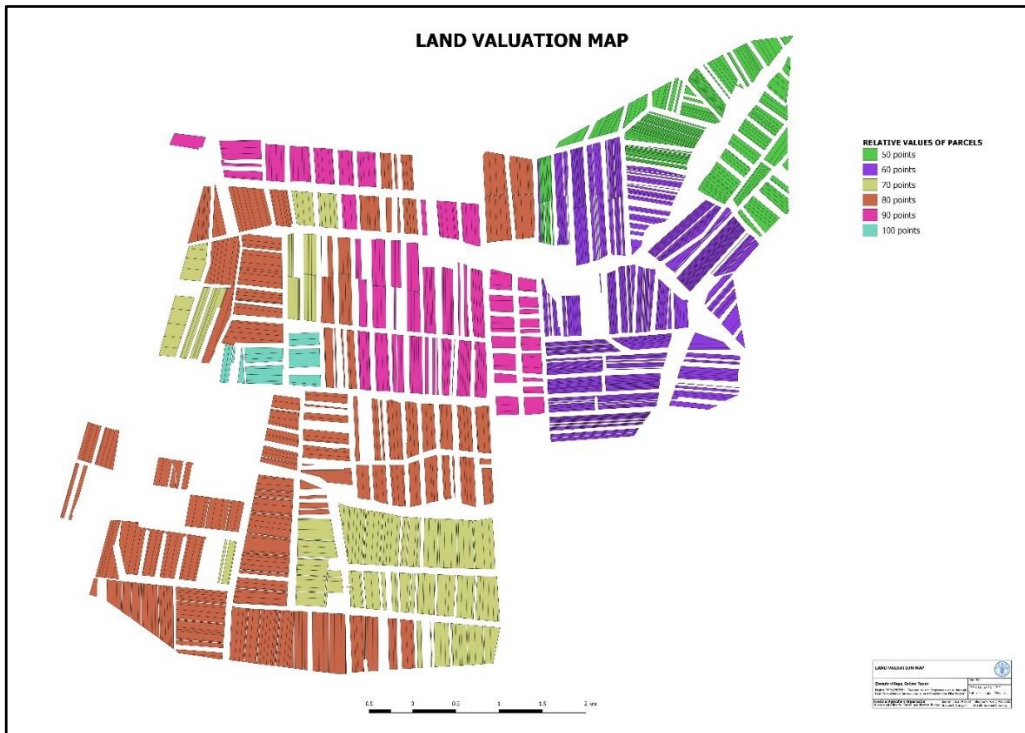


Figure 3: Land Valuation Map for Shorsulu Land Consolidation Pilot Area

It is obvious that landowners with many land parcels in the project area can benefit more from the consolidation process than those with few. In the prepared final draft Re-allotment Plan, 245 or around 40 % of all landowners change location of their land parcels. In total, the Plan includes 1,076 out of the total 2,206 ha in the project area, while the remaining parcels do not change location. For the landowners that change land, the total number of parcels through the draft Re-allotment Plan is reduced from 728 parcels to 341 parcels, a reduction factor of 2.14. At the same time, the average parcels size for the benefiting landowners is increased from 1.48 ha to 2.19 ha.

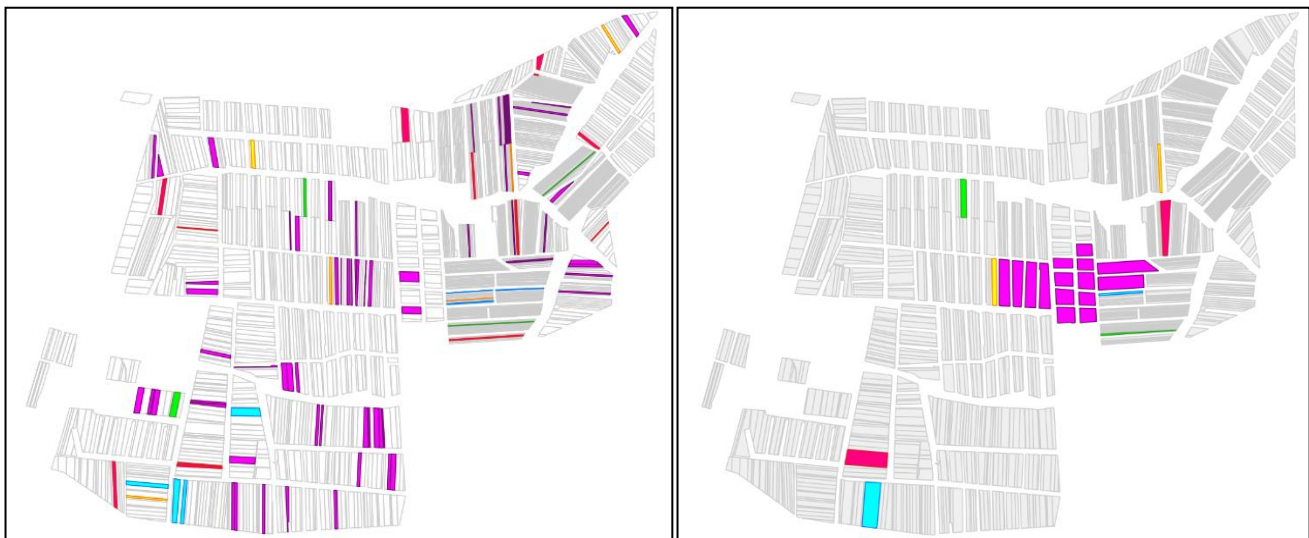


Figure 4: Land ownership for five selected landowners before (left) and after (right) FAO land consolidation pilot project in Shorsulu pilot village.

The land ownership for five of the participating landowners before and after the re-allotment is displayed in Figure 4. It is the hope that it will be possible to go back to Shorsulu and ensure the full finalization of the re-allotment planning after land consolidation legislation is adopted allowing for majority based land consolidation. The pilot experiences have been very valuable for the elaboration of the draft law, strategy and state programme (see Sections 4 and 5).

#### **4. Development of the land consolidation strategy and state programme**

From the formulation of the FAO project, it was planned that the project would support the Ministry of Agriculture at the policy level with elaboration of a national land consolidation strategy. The Ministry established at the beginning of the project a Working Group on Land Consolidation with participants from different relevant units in the Ministry. In the first stage, an analysis of the legal and institutional framework in the country as it relates to land consolidation was conducted by the project team and the outcome<sup>15</sup> was discussed with the senior management and working group in the Ministry and also with representatives from the State Committee on property Issues – the cadastre and land registry (SCPI).

In the second stage of the strategy development, the project team prepared a discussion paper. The paper contained a discussion of all the different options to be considered for the strategy, including the objective of land consolidation, land consolidation principles, land consolidation approaches, organizational and institutional framework, decision making bodies, land consolidation phases and process, combining with other land management measures, financing etc.<sup>16</sup> A series of combined strategy and legal workshops (see Section 5) were organized with the working group in the Ministry and representatives from SCPI. At the end of the process consensus was reached at the technical level on the different options and the project team in consultation with the Ministry drafted the strategy document.

Key features of the discussions at the technical level are that land consolidation in Azerbaijan from the beginning is suggested to have a multi-purpose objective but with the main focus on agricultural development in the first period of implementation. It is planned to implement land consolidation projects in three main phases; i) feasibility phase, ii) re-allotment phase and iii) registration and implementation phase. It is suggested to open for implementation of land consolidation in two approaches, voluntary and majority-based, depending on the specific situation and needs in the project area. In voluntary land consolidation, only those landowners participate who have provided their written consent to the Re-allotment Plan, while in a majority based approach, the Plan can be implemented when a qualified majority of the landowners in the project area vote for the implementation. Furthermore, it was suggested to establish a Land Consolidation Commission with the mandate to approve the Plan. The main responsible public institution for the implementation of the state programme is suggested to be the Ministry of Agriculture in close cooperation with SCPI.

In addition to the planned support to development of a National Land Consolidation Strategy, the Ministry of Agriculture requested during the summer 2018 FAO in addition also to support development of a draft

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<sup>15</sup> FAO (2018): *Land Consolidation Strategy Framework Paper - Analytical part*. Unpublished project report (TCP/AZE/3601).

<sup>16</sup> FAO (2019): *Land Consolidation Strategy Framework Paper - Strategic part*. Unpublished project report (TCP/AZE/3601).

land consolidation law (see Section 5) and a state programme on implementation of the land consolidation strategy. The draft state programme for the period 2020–2025 was developed in the final stages of the FAO project and includes the next steps towards a fully operational land consolidation instrument in the Republic of Azerbaijan. The draft state programme contains five sections; i) a short background section on the need for land consolidation, ii) objective of the state programme, iii) planned implementation activities including the finalization of the legal and institutional framework and the need for a final test in more pilots, iv) funding sources and v) monitoring and evaluation of the state programme. In addition, the state programme has in an annex an Action Plan, which clearly breaks down the next activities with deadlines and the institution responsible for the action.

### 5. Development of land consolidation legislation

As discussed above, it was not initially planned that the FAO project would develop also a draft land consolidation law but only a draft land consolidation strategy. However, the drafting of the land consolidation law began in autumn 2018 and largely followed the same development path as the strategy, drawing on the conducted analysis of the current legal and institutional framework and the prepared discussion paper.<sup>17</sup> A series of strategy and legal workshops were organized with the participation of the members of the Working Group on Land Consolidation in the Ministry of Agriculture, representatives from SCPI and the project team including international and national legal experts. During the final legal workshop in July 2019, consensus was reached on the main principles of the law.



Photo: Discussions during the final strategy and legal workshop in July 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

During the same period, in 2018-2019, FAO was preparing a Legal Guide on Land Consolidation.<sup>18</sup> The legal work in the same period in Azerbaijan provided valuable practical input to the preparation of the Guide and the work in Azerbaijan benefitted from the first drafts of the Guide. Thus, the Guide was tested during the development of the law in Azerbaijan.

Since the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of national Good Security (VGGT)<sup>19</sup> were endorsed in May 2012 by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) comprising all UN and FAO member countries, they have served as a reference for the improvement of the governance of all kinds of tenure issues, including promoting land consolidation that is based on international good practice. The VGGT should be taken closely into account when developing a national legal framework for land consolidation. One key principle of the VGGT related to land consolidation is the so-called “at least as well off” principle. Paragraph 13.1 of the VGGT provides that “States ... should ensure that participants are at least as well off after the schemes compared with before”. The principle has of course also been the basis for the development of the land consolidation law for Azerbaijan.

### 6. Perspectives for a national land consolidation programme

The Republic of Azerbaijan has during 2016-2019 with the support of FAO taken the first steps towards a fully operational national land consolidation programme. As discussed in the previous sections of this paper, a land consolidation pilot project has been implemented, a land consolidation strategy, land consolidation law and state programme drafted. Initial capacity to implement land consolidation projects in the field and to manage the future national programme has been developed through a series of project training seminars and workshops.

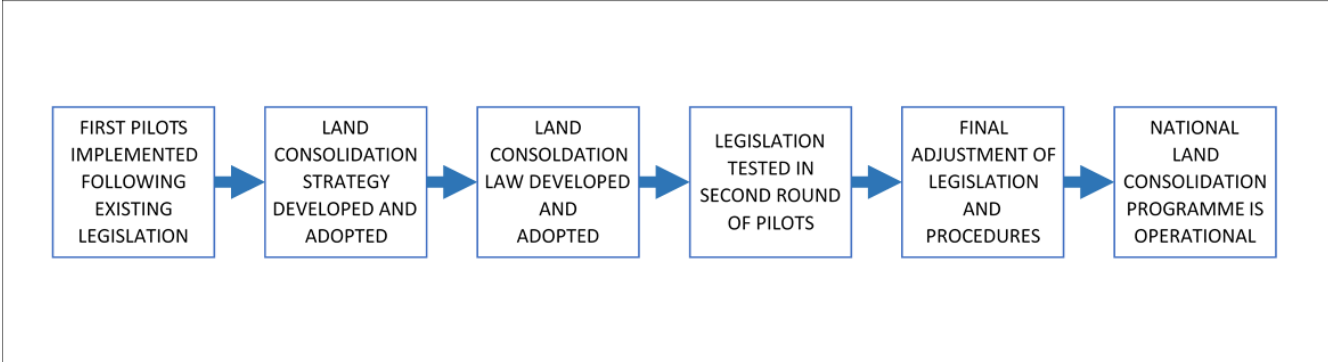


Figure 5: The optimal process from introduction of land consolidation to an operational programme.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> FAO (2020): *Legal Guide on Land Consolidation - Based on regulatory practices in Europe*. FAO Legal Guide 3. Rome.

<sup>19</sup> CFS (2012): *Voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests in the context of national food security*. CFS Rome.

<sup>20</sup> Hartvigsen, M. (2018): *FAO support to land consolidation in Europe and Central Asia during 2002-2018 – Experiences and way forward*. Paper presented at FIG Congress in Istanbul, Turkey, May 2018, p. 14.

The development of a land consolidation has so far largely followed the optimal process from introduction of land consolidation to having an operational programme displayed in Figure 5. The process was in 2018 identified by FAO based on the experiences with introduction of land consolidation in 11 countries in Central and Eastern Europe since 2002.

It is the expectation of the Ministry of Agriculture that the prepared Law on consolidation of agricultural land will be adopted mid-2020 and that the strategy and state programme will be adopted following the adoption of the law. When this will be accomplished, hopefully during 2020, Azerbaijan will have taken the first three of the six steps in Figure 5 towards a fully operational land consolidation programme. Azerbaijan will need additional international technical assistance with the implementation of the next steps and a concept note for a subsequent project funded from the FAO Azerbaijan Partnership Programme (FAPP) has already been developed. It is the proposal in the second project to i) support development of secondary land consolidation legislation, ii) test the adopted legislation in two-three full-scale pilot projects under different natural conditions and as necessary adjust legislation based on experiences, iii) develop the capacity on land consolidation in the Ministry of Agriculture, SCPI, regional and local government and private sector. The project is suggested to be implemented during 2020-2023.

Finally, Azerbaijan has indicated interest to be part of a regional project on land banking, including Turkey, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan. The project is expected to be funded from the FAO Turkey Partnership Programme (FTPP) and also begin from mid2020. The land banking activities are expected to complement the land consolidation activities with the objective of developing a land banking instrument in support of the future national land consolidation programme in Azerbaijan.

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