

# The development of the agricultural economy in Greece during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

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## Abstract:

The investigation of the way the agriculture development took place in Greece during the first three decades of the 20th century is of a great interest, considering the socio-political and economic changes of that period. Purpose of this study is to investigate the contribution of the decisions of the governments of Eleftherios Venizelos to the promotion and development of the agricultural economy in Greece during the period 1910-1932.

The objectives of this research are to investigate whether through the study of the historical archives of the specific time period, a substantial promotion of the agricultural economy will emerge and whether the decisions of the governments of Eleftherios Venizelos regarding the agricultural sector were progressively essential in the periods 1914-1917 and 1924-1930 given the historical circumstances (end of the Balkan Wars and the Asia Minor disaster).

The present research uses the Grounded Theory as a methodological tool. Grounded Theory is a systematic research method according to which the generated theory is inductively derived from the study of empirical data and therefore knowledge is built as the researcher discovers logical relationships in the results of his observations to correlate them with the research data.

Studying and analyzing the archives, the texts of the decisions of the Greek governments as well as the projects implemented in the period 1910-1932, Greece succeeded in the modernization of the agricultural sector and the strengthening of farmers and breeders by emphasizing the importance of the primary sector in the economic development of the country.

**Keywords:** agricultural economy, Venizelos, Grounded Theory, reforms

## 1. Introduction

"Agriculture is defined on the basis of an internal social bond and an external political affiliation." In this context, the processes of social integration of the rural population in modern society play a dominant role in shaping rurality, which can be identified at three levels: economic, political and cultural.<sup>1</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> Ersi Zakopoulou, *The position of Stathis Damianakos on the rurality of the New Greek society*, in *Rurality, Society and Space* (Athens: Plethron, 2008), 26.

aim of this study is to investigate the transformation of the farmer into a citizen equal to others, the functionality of the peasantry in the governmental system, the importance of rural confrontation, the integration policy, the importance of family farming and the importance of the agricultural sector for the modernization of the Greek state in the first decades of the 20th century.

The rural community was an important part of modern Greek society that acted resisted and exerted a lot of influence. It was a community that tried to manage and negotiate the terms of its integration into society, as it was formed after 1909 and as envisioned by Eleftherios Venizelos through the decisions of his first governments in the period 1910-1930. The present research attempts to answer the following questions that have been raised during the study of the agricultural economy in Greece regarding the governmental decisions of this period:

a) through the study of the historical records of the specific period, will a substantial support of the agricultural economy emerge?

b) will the decisions of the governments of Eleftherios Venizelos regarding the agricultural sector be more and more substantial in the periods 1914-1917 and 1922-1924 given the historical circumstances (end of the Balkan Wars and Asia Minor disaster)?

The radical decisions of the governments and their modernity led to the social transformation of the rural area in Greece. The legislative decrees and laws of 1911, the educational reform that began in 1913, the establishment of new Ministries and the agrarian reform of 1917 are the result of the dynamic relationship between the rural Greek population and the government's policy.

During the first three decades of the 20th century substantial developments took place in Greece such as the establishment and strengthening of agricultural cooperatives, etc. which drastically changed the landscape of the rural area in Greece<sup>2</sup>. The agrarian reform opened the way to economic development and contributed significantly to the formation of cooperatives<sup>3</sup>. In addition, the Greek government aimed to optimize the capabilities of the rural economy, using agronomists and bureaucrats who were specialized in the management of peasant cooperatives<sup>4</sup>. The establishment of the Ministry of Agriculture and Public Lands was essential at that time given the fact that the

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<sup>2</sup> Kostas Papageorgiou,, "The Venizelian period and today: agricultural cooperatives", in *The Greek Agrarian Society and Economy during the Venizelian Period: Proceedings*. (Athens: Greek Letters, 2004), 460

<sup>3</sup> Kostas Vergopoulos, *The Agrarian Question in Greece. The social integration of agriculture* (Athens: Exantas, 1975), 174.

<sup>4</sup> Dimitrios Panagiotopoulos, Carmona-Zabala, J, "The first peasant and his fellow travellers: state control over Greek agricultural institutions under Metaxas", in *Rural History*, nr. 30 (2019), 149.

Ministry was responsible for expropriations, the management of public estates, and the distribution of land to the landless<sup>5</sup>. It is worth noting that the government made a lot of progress in the manufacturing sectors as well during this period forming a new industrial policy<sup>6</sup>. Also, the state intervention in agriculture caused an important development in the society of the interwar era: the dynamic appearance of agronomists in the public economy and their rise as intellectuals in the country's bourgeoisie<sup>7</sup>.

The land reform of 1917 was the most radical in Europe in terms of both the number of expropriations and the number of new small landowners that emerged from it. Among the countries that carried out agricultural reforms in the interwar period, Greece ranks second, with Latvia (1922) in first place<sup>8</sup>. The changes that took place during this period highlighted the essential role of the agricultural sector both in the Greek economy and in society and at the same time created the conditions for further commercialization of agricultural production through the reorientation of crops production. The decrease in raisin production was compensated for by the improvement of olive cultivation, by the strengthening of cotton cultivation and above all, by the rapid expansion of tobacco cultivation<sup>9</sup>.

In the next section there is a reference to the historical context of the research period. In the third section the methodology is presented explicitly followed by the discussion and results in the fourth section. Finally, in the last section, concluding remarks regarding this research are presented.

## 2. Historical context

Eleftherios Venizelos appeared in the Greek political scene in the first elections on August 8th, 1910, when he was elected as an independent Greek Member of Parliament. In his first public speech in Syntagma Square, he presented his political program, which aimed at social peace, the alleviation of the lower classes and in general a social, economic and political reform based on the rule of law. In the second elections in the same year, Venizelos was elected Prime Minister and was then ready to implement his political vision. He proceeded to revise the Constitution in 1911.

More specifically, the Revision of the Constitution brought substantial changes in political, economic and social sector of the country, changes that significantly affected the rural area of Greece. The end of the Balkan Wars found Greece victorious on many levels. The lands of Greece almost doubled which also meant an increase in arable land. In addition, the population

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<sup>5</sup> Socrates Petmezas, *Introduction to the history of the Greek agricultural economy of the interwar period* (Athens: Alexandria, 2012), 125-127.

<sup>6</sup> Lefteris Tsoulfidis, Michael Zoumoulakis, "Greek sovereign defaults in retrospect and prospect South-Eastern Europe", in *Journal of Economics* 2 (2016), 155.

<sup>7</sup> Spiridon Ploumidis, "The Greek agricultural crisis of the interwar period (Dec. 1920): social dimensions of the economic thought on the crisis", in *Dodoni*, 38-42 (2013), 313.

<sup>8</sup> Kostas Vergopoulos, *The Agrarian Question in Greece*, 175-177.

<sup>9</sup> Vasilis Patronis, *Greek economic history. Economy, Society and State in Greece (18th-20th century)*, (Association of Greek Academic Libraries – SEAB, 2015), 163-164.

increased, and the state had to manage the big changes by taking initiative in many areas<sup>10</sup>. The educational reform of 1913 was particularly important for the agricultural sector as well. Venizelos' political and ideological conflict with the palace came to a head when World War I broke out and the country found itself in the dilemma of whether to participate in it. The culmination of the opposition between Venizelos and King Constantinos manifested itself with two resignations of Eleftherios Venizelos and with the establishment of the National Defense in Thessaloniki by the former. The National Division (1915-1917) influenced Venizelos' later political decisions<sup>11</sup>.

The vision of the so-called Great Idea which was the effort to integrate the unredeemed Greek populations into the national body, led Venizelos to an alliance with the Balkan countries of Serbia, Bulgaria and Montenegro against the common enemy, Turkey. On September 30, 1912, Greece declared war on Turkey<sup>12</sup>. Greece's participation in the Balkan Wars 1912-1913 proved to be crucial for the expansion of the Greek borders (table 1). At the end of the war the country increased its territory by 70% and its population by 80%. It is important to emphasize that the lands added (Epirus, Central and Western Macedonia, Crete, Aegean Islands) were mainly lowland and irrigated, which created the best prospects for the development of the rural economy<sup>13</sup>.

Greece's entry into World War I delayed the land redistribution program, which was completed in the years immediately following the Asia Minor catastrophe disaster in August 1922, when nearly 1,500,000 refugees (table 2) were at the center of government policy and the issue of their restoration required immediate attention<sup>14</sup>.

The Peace Conference in 1918 that took place in Paris ended the Great War and Greece as an ally of the winning coalition had territorial claims from the Ottoman Empire. Greece claimed and succeeded in taking over the administration of the Smyrna region. The landing of the Greek army in Smyrna took place in May 1919. From that moment begins the Asia Minor campaign that ended on September 5, 1922, with the defeat of the Greek army. Consultations followed which led to the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne<sup>15</sup>.

The Lausanne Conference, which was attended by all the countries participating in World War II, began on November 7 and ended on July 24,

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<sup>10</sup> Vasilis Patronis, *Greek economic history*, 160.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.venizelos-foundation.gr/el/politikos/>

<sup>12</sup> Chris Hatzilefteris, *The "Big Idea": a highly strategic national goal or "small party pursuit"*, University of Macedonia, Higher Interdisciplinary School of War ((Unpublished Master's Thesis 2015), 51.

<sup>13</sup> Vassilis Patronis, *Greek economic history*, 160.

<sup>14</sup> Helen Kontogeorgi, "Rural refugee settlements in Macedonia: 1923-1930". *Bulletin of the Center for Asia Minor Studies*, volume 9, (Center for Asia Minor Studies, Athens: 1992), 49.

<sup>15</sup> Efstathios Pelagidis, *Refugee Greece (1913-1930). The pain and the glory*, (Thessaloniki: Kyriakidis, 2003), 13.

1923. This peace treaty with Turkey was multilateral and regulated transnational relations and international issues to a great extent. On January 30, 1923, the Agreement for the Exchange of Greek and Muslim populations was signed<sup>16</sup>.

According to the 1928 census, there were 6,204,684 people living in the Greek state, of which 1,221,849 were refugees. In other words, one out of five people in Greece in the 1920s was a refugee. In 1928, out of about 700,000 farmers across the country, 260,000 (almost 40%) were new owners, either refugees or locals (table 3). Venizelos himself, in his message to the press on New Year's Eve 1930, stressed that he aimed above all at the development of agriculture, "which, as it improves and increases its production, will be - this the government firmly believes - the unshakable foundation of the country's prosperity"<sup>17</sup>. After the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 and for the implementation of the refugee rehabilitation plan, a special sub-committee of the League of Nations (L.O.N.) was set up. The L.O.N.'s special service for refugees in cooperation with the Economic Committee and the Greek government, drew up a plan for the settlement of refugees. This plan was approved on September 29, 1923, in Geneva by the L.O.N. and the Greek government in the form of a protocol. The protocol provided for the establishment of an autonomous organization, the Refugee Rehabilitation Committee (R.R.C.), which would undertake the task of settling and rehabilitating refugees<sup>18</sup>.

Looking at the data in table 1 below it is concluded that the Greek population in Macedonia was almost 50% with the remaining almost half being Muslims. After the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne and the mandatory exchange of populations in 1923 according to table 2 the number of Muslims living in Greece decreased drastically and at the same time the population of Greeks increased spectacularly.

Table 1

<b>The population in Macedonia in 1912</b>		
Greeks	513.000	42,6%
Muslims	475.000	39,4%
Slavic speakers	119.000	9,9%
Jews	98.000	8,1%

Due to the large number of refugees, the state expropriated land for the refugees to be rehabilitated. During the period 1923-1925 the number of expropriations was 20 times more than in 1917 and a hundred times more than in 1920. Following the Treaty land redistribution reached 85% of arable land

<sup>16</sup> Efstathios Pelagidis. *The rehabilitation of refugees in Western Macedonia 1923-1930*. (Thessaloniki: Kyriakidis), 15-16.

<sup>17</sup> Raymondos Albanos, "Political implications of land reforms and the new role of the state in the interwar period", *Bulletin of the Center for Asia Minor Studies* 19 (2015), 194.

<sup>18</sup> Helen Kontogeorgi, "Rural refugee", 48.

in Macedonia and 68% in Thessaly. In the total arable land of the country this percentage amounted to 40%<sup>19</sup>.

Table 2

<b>The population of Macedonia two years after the disaster in Asia Minor</b>		
Greeks	1.341.000	88,8%
Muslims	2.000	0,1%
Slavic speakers	77.000	5,1%
Jews	91.000	6%

Source: Albanos, R., (2015) Bulletin of the Center for Asia Minor Studies, volume 19, pp.191-213. Center for Asia Minor Studies

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Table 3

<b>Expropriations of large agricultural properties</b>	
<i>Period</i>	<i>Number of expropriations</i>
1917-1920	64
1921-1922	12
1923-1925	1.203

Source: Institute of Educational Policy (I.E.P.) (2014), Themes of Modern Greek History, Athens: Diofantos, p.44.

The four-year term 1928-1932 of Eleftherios Venizelos as a prime minister was a period of reorganization of the country's interior and normalization of the country's relations with neighboring and allied countries. Venizelos believed that maintaining good relations with all the Great Powers would allow Greece to ensure its independence, to safeguard its security, to normalize its relations with neighboring countries, but also to concentrate in the country's development<sup>21</sup>. According to Image 1 both the population and state of Greece expanded spectacularly after the Balkan Wars and after the Treaty of Serves in 1920. On the other hand, the state of Greece decreased after the Treaty of Lousanne but the population due to the mandatory

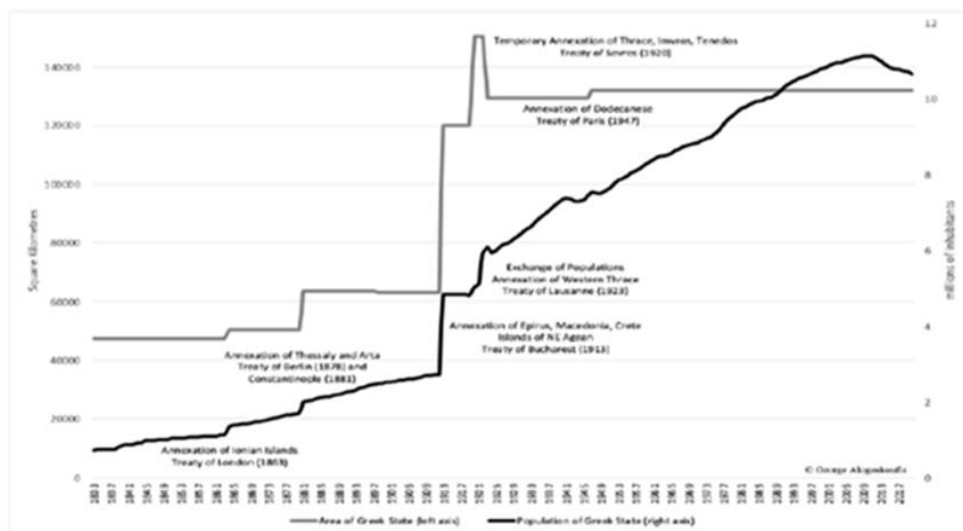
<sup>19</sup> Institute of Educational Policy (I.E.P.). *Themes of Modern Greek History*. (Athens: Diofantos 2014), 44.

<sup>20</sup> Institute of Educational Policy (I.E.P.). *Themes of Modern Greek History*. (Athens: Diofantos 2014), 44.

<sup>21</sup> Evanthis Hatzivasiliou, "The last phase of Venizelos' political career, 1924-1936", in *The years of Venizelos. Internal and External Policy, Economy, Education, Culture* (Athens: Kaleidoscope Publications, 210), 57-59.

population exchange in 1923 which was signed between Greece and Turkey increased (table 4).

Image 1. Expansions of the Area and Population of the Greek State 1833-2020



Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority

Source: Alogoskoufis, G., (2021). Historical Cycles of the Economy of Modern Greece from 1821 to the Present Greece. Hellenic Observatory Discussion Papers on Greece and Southeast Europe, Paper No. 158, April 2021, p.8

Table 4

Refugee flows 1912-1924		
Period	Number of refugees	Type of departure
1912-1920	435.000	Displacement
1920-1922	900.000	Displacement
1923	1.150.000	Displacement
1924	214.000	Displacement (75.000) Exchange (139.000)

Source: 212/17-18 Archive of Eleutherius Venizelos

### 3. Methodology

The methodology used in this research is qualitative. Qualitative research collects data that originates from interviews, observations, participatory observations, stories, interactions, case studies, personal experiences, life stories, file analyzes, visual material, and endoscopies (refs). Qualitative research has two key unique characteristics. The first is that the researcher is how research is conducted, and the second is that its main purpose is to explore some aspects of the social system it studies.

Qualitative research includes field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and diary entries. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. Researchers study things in their natural context, trying to give meaning or interpret phenomena

in terms of the meanings that people give to them<sup>22</sup>. In the context of qualitative research, the researcher seeks to investigate the peculiarity of the phenomenon that interests him and not to remain in a fragmentary, abstract and static study. In addition, he/she seeks a genuine, authentic, dynamic, approach to the phenomenon that interests him/her and not to remain in one of his/her studies through some laboratory experiments.

One type of qualitative research is the Analysis of texts - archival material (analysis of documentation) in the context of Historical research. Historical research with the systematic and objective evaluation of data seeks to draw conclusions about events of the past. Direct sources - archives, manuscripts, statutes, publications, collections - but also indirect - works of third parties - can shed light on events of the past and interpret political decisions and social phenomena.

In particular, the present research uses Grounded Theory as a methodological tool. Grounded Theory appeared in 1967 when Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss introduced it with their book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. It is a systematic research method according to which the generated theory is inductively derived from the study of empirical data and is not based on previous perceptions or ideas of the researcher. Its basic principle is that the researcher is not encouraged to do any initial bibliographic research but to suspend his/her personal theoretical stereotypes for the theory to emerge solely from empirical data. In other words, it is a purely inductive research approach. As its name suggests, this research method results in the formation of a theory which is based on empirical data which it interprets<sup>23</sup>. Grounded theory belongs to the qualitative methods of social research and consists of data analysis, methods of producing quality material, the use of theory and finally the presentation of results<sup>24</sup> and is mainly used in research issues that are either not yet explored or are under investigation. Knowledge is therefore built as the researcher discovers logical relationships in the results of his/her observations to correlate them with the research data. However, this does not mean the absence or lack of any theoretical framework. On the contrary, the Grounded Theory provides the researcher with theoretical flexibility and adaptation of the theory based on the collection and analysis of qualitative data.

Strauss and Corbin in the introduction to their book (1998) refer to a quote from Galileo "...we, like Galileo, believe that we have an efficient method of discovery". The interpretation is there for all to see by applying

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<sup>22</sup> Philia Isari, Marios Pourkos, *Qualitative research methodology. Applications in Psychology and Education* (Athens: Association of Greek Academic Libraries -SEAB, 2015), 11-13.

<sup>23</sup> Alex Brailas, *Introduction to Grounded Theory. Application guide with atlas.ti* (Athens: Panteion University, 2015), 41-42.

<sup>24</sup> Theodoros Iosifidis, Manos Spyridakis, *Qualitative Social Research Methodological Approaches and Data Analysis* (Athens: Review, 2006), 211-212.



certain methods of finding. Discovery is by no means synonymous with the idea that 'theory' can be 'discovered'. Grounded Theory – boasting a body of consistent qualitative research – surely aims at interpretation and illumination. The mere use of 'discovery', however, reveals expectations closer to the normative and the definitive – to a correspondence view of knowledge<sup>25</sup>.

Iosifidis<sup>26</sup> distinguished some basic features of the Grounded Theory. Initially, as already mentioned, a structured theoretical framework is missing. But this basic principle is practically impossible to apply because the researcher cannot get rid of his/her previous theoretical positions or views. A second feature is that the theory is constructed as categories are being created and enriched, reformulated, redesigned in parallel with the emergence of new research data. Finally, the resulting theory concerns the interpretation of specific social contexts, cases and processes.

In the first phase of the process, categories are created which include the qualitative data that the researcher has collected and in the second phase, the different characteristics of each category are identified. The third and most important phase of the methodology is the coding process. By coding in Grounded Theory, we mean assigning and rendering meaning to keywords, with phrases, sentences that have a special meaning for the research. The coding is completed in three stages. The first stage is open coding. This is the process by which the researcher is called upon to discover the ideas hidden in the text under study. What is required at this point is to discover the thoughts, ideas and meanings contained. During open coding the researcher must look carefully at the data and compare it looking for similarities and differences. Facts, objects, actions, interactions that the researcher discovers and are conceptually related to each other are placed in categories<sup>27</sup>. The researcher then names the categories to be able to group the same events, acts or objects under a common category. At the end of this procedure, the researcher groups the categories and analyzes their properties.

In the second phase of the process the subcategories are created. Subcategories are specializations of categories, have properties and dimensions like categories and contain information such as when, where, why, who, how a phenomenon works and with what consequences. The researcher makes a list of all the codes and identifies them according to their dimensions. The purpose of this phase is to reassemble the data as it arose in the first phase of

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<sup>25</sup> Gary Thomas, David James, "Re-inventing grounded theory: some questions about theory, ground and discovery", *British Educational Research Journal*, 32, 6 (2006), 767–795.

<sup>26</sup> Theodoros Iosifidis, *Qualitative Research Methods in the Social Sciences* (Athens: Kritiki, 2008), 155.

<sup>27</sup> Anselm Strauss, Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (U.S.A.: Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data, 1998), 102.

open coding and provide a more accurate and complete explanatory scheme for the phenomena<sup>28</sup>.

The third phase of the methodology is the paradigm. In this phase, the researcher tries to answer the questions where, when, with what results, how it arises, why, etc., wanting to discover the relations between the categories but also to put in a context the phenomenon he studies. For this reason, the researcher connects the structure with the process to facilitate this phase. Structure and process are inextricably linked and for the researcher to understand the nature of the events, he must have understood both parts. The structure provides the context in which situations are created regarding the events of the phenomenon that occurs. The process indicates the action / reaction of individuals, organizations, and communities in response to specific problems and issues<sup>29</sup>.

The last phase of the methodology is selective coding. This is the process by which categories are analyzed, and the researcher interacts with the data. The main category represents the main topic of the research and contains all the outcome of the analysis briefly giving explanations for the content of the research and could gather all the other categories in an explanatory format and to represent their important difference. The categories must be combined so that the researcher has a complete picture and has the answers to his / her research questions. According to Strauss and Corbin, the selection criteria and characteristics of the central category are as follows<sup>30</sup>:

- for the category to be central, the other categories must be related to it,
- the category must appear frequently in data and in almost all cases,
- the way in which the categories relate to each other leading to the wording of the central category should be logical and systematic and
- the title or name to be used in the description of the category must be abstract, so that a more general theory can be developed.

Writing research proposals and what really happens to the phenomenon under study is used when we have some sense of the phenomenon but are unable to explain what exactly it is<sup>31</sup>. Studying the data and re-reading the observations stimulates thinking and helps the researcher answer the question 'what seems to be happening'. In this way begins the emergence of history which outlines the phenomenon and offers an understanding through the

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<sup>28</sup> Afrodite Stavropoulou, *The family-teacher partnership: how each side makes sense of the concept of partnership*, (Unpublished master's thesis, Department of Education Sciences and Early Childhood Education, Patra, 2012), 50.

<sup>29</sup> Afrodite Stavropoulou, *The family-teacher partnership*, 51.

<sup>30</sup> Anselm Strauss, Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research Techniques*, 147.

<sup>31</sup> Anselm Strauss, Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research Techniques*, 148.

interpretation of research. The name of the central category comes to us immediately after which it must correspond to the essence of the process.

Completing the underdeveloped categories is done by reviewing the data and looking for data that may have been overlooked. There may also be data that the frequency of their occurrence is not high, and, in this case, they are left out because they do not contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon.

Finally, we proceed to the validation of the theory. The theory in the case of Grounded Theory emerges from the data. In the integration phase it represents an abstract performance of the data flow. It is therefore important to determine two things to validate, how well the subtraction fits with the data flow and whether we omitted something important from the theoretical scheme<sup>32</sup>.

While applying the method, the phases of data collection and analysis evolve in parallel and are interconnected. The researcher needs to go back and forth in the stages of the research, as his understanding of the phenomenon under study increases. The analysis of the data will be done based on the principles of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis looks for topics and patterns to categorize research data using codes. The aim of the thematic analysis is to arrive at an understanding of a social phenomenon by studying the perceptions and ideas of the people involved in it<sup>33</sup>.

At each stage of the research process researchers make comparisons starting with data and ending with comparisons between their categories. They then compare their final category or categories to the existing bibliography. Because they do not know in advance where grounded theory might lead them, they must do a systematic search of the bibliography as they complete their study. Glaser and Strauss realized that the process of increasing the researcher's conceptual categories gave grounded theory much of its power. They proposed a new type of sampling, "theoretical sampling," to enrich these categories with new data. Glaser and Strauss aimed for what they call "theoretical saturation" of emergent conceptual categories. Researchers achieve theoretical saturation when they seek more data during theoretical sampling but do not find new properties or characteristics of their categories. Theoretical sampling and theoretical saturation depend on the continuation of the iterative process and the checking of the constructed categories in relation to the data<sup>34</sup>.

#### 4. Discussion - Results

The process of analysis, seen as an abductive process, presupposes the dynamic and creative role of the researcher. The researcher develops an

<sup>32</sup> Anselm Strauss, Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research*, 156.

<sup>33</sup> George Tsiolis, "Qualitative data analysis: dilemmas, possibilities, processes", in *Research Methodology in Social Sciences and Education. Contribution to epistemological theory and research practice*. (Athens: Pedio, 2015), 483.

<sup>34</sup> Kathy Charmaza, Robert Thornberg, "The pursuit of quality in grounded theory", *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 18, no. 3(2021), 305-327.

interactive relationship with his data and the analysis (coding) is a creative process, which is mediated by the theoretical preconceptions of the researcher. The researcher approaches his data against the background of his theoretical preconceptions not to classify his data based on them, but to identify the "new", the "unexpected", the one that cannot fit into the known theoretical schemes or rules, and which ultimately leads to the formation of knowledge<sup>35</sup>.

In the present research the Grounded Theory and its phases were applied as mentioned below:

- Phase 1-creating categories

In the present research, the categories in the first phase of the methodology were determined based on the chronology, given the political reality of the period being studied. Eleftherios Venizelos was the Prime Minister of Greece for a total of twelve years at various times. In more detail, the categories were formed as follows:

- 1st category: 1910-1915
- 2nd category: 1917-1920
- 3rd category: 1924
- 4th category: 1928-1932
- 5th category: 1933

The main characteristics of the first category are the Revision of the Constitution in 1911, the military conflicts of the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, the governmental educational reform, the outbreak of World War I, and the National Division.

Characteristics of the second category are Greece's participation in World War I (1917) and the Asia Minor campaign (1919-1922). The continuous involvement of the country in war conflicts for five years shook the country's economy, which led the later Prime Minister to important decisions for the country. The collapse of the front two years later caused an unprecedented wave of refugees to Greece.

In the third category, the dominant political event is the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, which was accompanied by a separate Convention between Greece and Turkey for the compulsory exchange of populations. The country welcomed almost 1,500,000 refugees. Refugees' rehabilitation was at the center of government decisions. The country's agricultural economy was greatly promoted and the agricultural sector experienced significant growth<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> George Tsiolis, "Qualitative data analysis, 474-475.

<sup>36</sup> Raymondos, Albanos, "Political Implications of Agrarian Reform and the new role of the state in the interwar period", *Bulletin of the Center for Asia Minor Studies, volume 19, Center for Asia Minor Studies, 192-195.*

Characteristic points of the fourth category are the Constitution of 1927 and the establishment of the Unreigned Democracy, the continuation of the work of the rehabilitation of refugees, the establishment of the Bank of Greece and the establishment of the Agricultural Bank, the educational reform of 1929, the global financial crisis of 1929. In essence, the growth and change brought by the interwar period in European countries were felt in Greece in the period 1927-1932<sup>37</sup>.

- Phase 2- creating subcategories

In the second phase of the methodology, common subcategories were selected for all 5 categories, as they have already been identified. More specifically, the following subcategories were defined with the corresponding codes:

- 1st subcategory: economy. Code: EC
- 2nd subcategory: education. Code: EDC
- 3rd subcategory: rural area: RUR

- Phase 3-paradigm

In the third phase of the methodology, the degree to which the collected material answers the research questions was studied.

Therefore, the register of the situations and events associated with the categories and their subcategories will create an integrated framework that will lead to an understanding of the historical reality and in essence will advance the research and its goals. The third phase was studied and developed in direct connection with the registration of the subcategories.

In this final phase of methodology, the agricultural economy was defined as the central category. The selection was made based on the criteria mentioned above. More specifically, the economy, the education and the rural area are subjects that govern the decisions of all the governments of Venizelos (1911-1933) and therefore the general term includes the categories, subcategories and answers the two research questions that have been raised.

*4.1. The first period: 1910-1915.* In 1911, the government proceeded with the revision of the Constitution. The whole of the legislation related to the social and educational policy of the state reflects the philosophy of the government concerning the creation of a State-of-Law. The legislation, considering the Greek reality and the absence of the state until then, provided for all social classes and especially for the weaker ones. In this specific historical period, there is no intense industrial activity in Greece, there is no significant food industry. It is worth noting that in the Turkish-occupied Thessaloniki already from the beginning of the 20th century, labor organizations appeared, of which the most important was the Federation (1909). In 1917, the Federation contributed substantially to the establishment of the Workers' Center of Thessaloniki and together with other socialist organizations founded in 1918 the Socialist Workers' Party of Greece (SEKE), which was the forerunner of

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<sup>37</sup> Efstathios Pelagidis, *The rehabilitation of refugees in Western Macedonia 1923-1930*. (Thessaloniki: Kyriakidis), 18-19.

the Communist Party of Greece (KKE). It is also important to mention that in the same year the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE) was founded. A consequence of this finding is that in the period 1911-1915 there is no organized working class in Greece with a crystallized corresponding ideology in relation to the countries of the West in the same period, nor a strong agricultural movement with an established ideology to influence political decisions (<https://gsee.gr/istoria/>). These reforms were not imposed by any specific ideological movement or by any special social group. Besides, during this period, there are still no strongly class-based social groups in Greece, which could exert pressure. More specifically, the rural reform was part of the more general national upliftment, as it was proclaimed after the movement in Goudi (1909) and was the result of the efforts of Eleftherios Venizelos as early as 1917 with the revolutionary government in Thessaloniki<sup>38</sup>.

After 1910 the agricultural issue was a major concern for the governments and the decisions taken changed and socially reshaped the agricultural area in Greece. The discussions on the agricultural issue, mainly in Thessaly, did not only concern the requests and mobilizations of the farmers or the strategy of the landowners. The political debate in this period is determined by assessments of what was the best way to achieve economic development, given that the stagnation of Thessalian agriculture had already disproved the expectations that the annexation of Thessaly would solve the wheat supply problem of the Greek state. Increasingly it was believed that landownership in the homesteads was an obstacle to the increase in production and economic development<sup>39</sup>.

The debate about mandatory expropriation began at the 51st session on March 16, 1911. The government repealed the 1899 Law "On the Eviction of Obnoxious Tenants" and prohibited the eviction of colliers from estates. Also, in the revision of the Constitution regulations were imposed, such as article 17 which provided the possibility of expropriation of properties not only for reasons of "public need" but also for reasons of "public benefit", which opened the way for the expropriation of farms<sup>40</sup>. However, important military, economic and social issues of the period 1912-1922 did not allow the Greek governments to put the Thessalian issue at the center of the state interest: Balkan wars, First World War, Asia Minor disaster, refugee rehabilitation. Besides, the Liberals-Venizelos' party- had not formulated a

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<sup>38</sup> Nikos Tsiros, *The legislation of Eleftherios Venizelos during the period 1911-1920 in the context of his reform policy and the socio-political facts of the time* (Athens: Papazisi publications, 2013), 113

<sup>39</sup> Nikos Potamianos, "The Radical Right and the Agrarian Question in the Early Twentieth Century. The case of Christovasilis and the "Ellinismos" company", *Mnimon* 26 (2004), 135.

<sup>40</sup> Vassilis Patronis, *Greek economic history*, 110-11

crystallized program regarding the restoration of the estates and the management of the Thessalian manors but maintained the policy of expropriation and compensation. It is indicative that between the years 1907-1914, the State bought and resold 1/6 of all home steads to landless cultivators and refugees<sup>41</sup>. Furthermore, the addition to Article 11 of the Constitution where "a cooperative cannot be dissolved due to violation of the provisions of the laws, if not by a court decision" removed from the administration the right to approve the formation or revoke the approval of an association. In this way, an end was put to the arbitrariness of the Government that endangered the effective implementation of the right "to assemble and associate", as it had already been guaranteed by the Constitution of 1864<sup>42</sup>.

It should be mentioned at this point that the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Trade was founded in 1910 during the Dragoumis government. However, it was renamed as Ministry of Finance in 1911. Also, as presented in the archive no 065-7 an important agreement was signed between the Greek state and a civilian to improve the cultivation and development of the domestic tobacco trade on April 29, 1911. It is about the establishment of the joint-stock company "Hellenic Company for the improvement of the quality of Greek tobaccos and for the development of their production and marketing", which would have the right for thirty years to buy tobaccos on specific terms from producers, to provide loans to tobacco producers, to store in warehouses that are obliged to manufacture in specific areas of the country the produced tobacco and to pay the state a predetermined percentage of its net profits (National Research Foundation "Eleftherios K. Venizelos", Eleftherios Venizelos Archive, Folder (065~7)).

With legislative regulations, the Greek government aimed, among other things, to regulate relations between large landowners and farmers on the one hand, and to support agricultural production on the other. More specifically, laws were passed in 1911:

- "On the establishment of a veterinary microbiological laboratory in Athens", Law 3904
- "on the establishment of state stallions", Law 3905
- "on the establishment of veterinary districts and the appointment of public veterinarians", Law 3906
- "on procurement by the State and provision to the farmers of agricultural products", Law 3919
- "on the organization of the State Agricultural Service", Law 3920
- "on the prevention and combating of harmful insects and diseases of trees and other plants", Law 3980 and

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<sup>41</sup> Vassilis Patronis, *Greek economic history*, 163-164

<sup>42</sup> Nikos Tsiros, *The legislation of Eleftherios Venizelos*, 72

- Law 4036 of 1912 "on the execution of works to drain marshes and swamps, arrangement of rivers and streams, etc. and on the repeal of provisions of law 3599 of the year 1910" <sup>43</sup>.

According to file 410-32 of the Benaki Museum, the Minister of Trade, Agriculture and Industry in his Explanatory Report in February 1911 refers to the need to establish a veterinary microbiological laboratory. The laboratory proposes that the Minister be installed in the botanical garden and the products of the workshop will be sold at cost and given free to needy farmers. The Minister acknowledges that although animal husbandry is a very rich wealth-producing sector for the country, it has been neglected and is not governed by science as it should be. The first veterinary microbiological laboratory was established in 1914 (Benaki Museum, Eleftherios Venizelos Archive, Folder (410~32)).

In 1911, the Ministry of Trade, Agriculture and Industry introduced Veterinarians for the first time and this decision initially applied in ten regions and these positions were occupied by graduates of the University's Faculty of Agriculture. Also, the possibility of establishing lower practical agricultural schools for farmers was even foreseen<sup>44</sup>. It should be mentioned that in February 1911, the Minister of Trade, Agriculture and Industry, regarding the draft Law for the establishment of veterinary districts and the appointment of Veterinarians, states that the purpose of this Law is not only the protection of public health and domestic animals, but also the development and the improvement of animal husbandry. He even emphasizes that the cost of implementing the Law is minimal compared to the benefits that will result from its implementation (National Research Foundation "Eleftherios K. Venizelos", Eleftherios Venizelos Archive, File 410~29).

An important decision and basic principle of the legislation was the union of farmers in agricultural cooperatives to eliminate the disadvantages of small ownership. In 1914, agricultural cooperatives were founded<sup>45</sup>. Important information about the planning and programming of the Greek government regarding the agricultural economy of the country is also derived from the annual reports of the Ministries of Finance and Agriculture. More specifically, the Explanatory Report of the Minister of Agriculture, Trade and Industry and the Minister of Finance of 1911 for the amendment and

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<sup>43</sup> G. Piliouras, *Eleftherios Venizelos in the Athenian press. His first government terms (1910-1912)* (Athens: Papazisi publications, 2017), 185.

<sup>44</sup> Alexandros Koutsouris, "Agricultural applications during the Venizelic period". In *The Greek Agrarian Society and Economy during the Venizelian Period: Proceedings*. (Athens: Greek Letters, 2004), 441.

<sup>45</sup> Achilles Kontogeorgos, Panagiota Sergaki, *Principles of Management of Agricultural Cooperatives. Challenges and Prospects* (Athens: Association of Greek Academic Libraries - SEAB, 2016), 38.



completion of the Law of the Ministry of Agriculture, Commerce and Industry regarding the establishment of the Ministry of Agriculture, Trade and Industry is indicative. The Ministers requested, among other things, that the Fish Farms Service, which belongs to the Ministry of Finance, come under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture, Trade and Industry with the aim of establishing an independent service, which will aim to strengthen and promote fish farming in the country (Benaki Museum, Archive of Eleftherios Venizelos, Folder 410~30).

4.2. *The second period: 1917-1920.* During the interwar the agricultural sector in Greece but also in other European countries was the “sick man”. Up until 1917 many governments promised to develop the countryside and support its population without results. The agrarian reform of 1917 in Greece had as a result, the almost complete elimination of large, landed property. A consequence of this result was to distribute more land to the landless in relation to the rest of the Balkan or European states. In addition, the agrarian reform that began in 1917 allowed for the agrarian rehabilitation of approximately 600,000 refugees thus preventing social tensions, opened the way to the development of agrarian credit by almost eliminating the usurious system of the large landowners, and contributed significantly to the formation of cooperatives<sup>46</sup>. It is important to point out that because of the radical changes that occurred in the rural area, the active participation of the rural population in the social and economic life of the country was significant. As the rural population increased, crops important to the national economy such as tobacco and cotton were strengthened.

The new government of 1917 aimed to optimize the capabilities of the rural economy, using agronomists and bureaucrats who specialized in the management of farmer cooperatives<sup>47</sup>. As early as April 1910, the Ministry of "Agriculture, Trade and Industry" was established with a Law and was re-named the "Ministry of National Economy" with incumbent on:

- a. establishment, organization and administration of Agricultural Stations, Agricultural Gardens specialized in Livestock, Winemaking, Olive, Dairy and Aquaculture Stations and Agricultural Chemical Factories.
- b. Agricultural Education in general
- c. taking care of the Establishment of Agricultural Chambers
- d. the Agricultural Police and the Plant Diseases Police.
- e. the State Veterinary Service.
- f. the supervision and maintenance of trees and gardens, etc.

<sup>46</sup> Kostas Vergopoulos, *The Agrarian Question in Greece. The social integration of agriculture* (Athens: Exantas, 1975), 179.

<sup>47</sup> Dimitris Panagiotopoulos, Juan Carmona-Zabala, “The first peasant and his fellow travelers: state control over Greek agricultural institutions under Metaxas”. In *Rural History* 30 (2019), 151.

Although at the beginning only one Department was foreseen- "Agriculture" -with Law 241/1916 two Departments were added: "Agricultural Economy", "Forestry", "Veterinary and Veterinary Service" (<http://www.minagric.gr/index.php/el/the-ministry-2/history>).

In 1917, the government takes the big decision and establishes the Ministry of Agriculture and Public Lands, which in the same year is renamed the Ministry of Agriculture. The main purpose of the newly established Ministry was to implement the agrarian reform promised by the prime minister, but at the same time it was responsible for expropriations, the management of public estates, and the distribution of land to the landless. Also, the new Ministry decided to draw up the land register<sup>48</sup>.

The establishment of the Ministry of Agriculture played an important role in the development of the agricultural sector in the country. At this point, the agricultural organizations under public law that were established in the same period and helped the state in its necessary regulatory interventions to strengthen and protect agricultural production should also be mentioned, and they are the following: the Autonomous Raisin Organization, the Autonomous Greek Tobacco Organization, the Cotton Organization, the Central Wheat Protection Committee<sup>49</sup>. The Ministry of Agriculture was maintained until 2004 when it was renamed the Ministry of Rural Development and Food.

In 1919, a governmental agency was established, to reconstruct the villages of North Macedonia. According to the plan, 130 to 150 settlements were to be rebuilt, i.e. a total of 12,000 houses. The new settlements would be established, in suitable locations in terms of crops and climate. However, the program was interrupted by the gradual influx of 60,000 refugees from Russia in 1919 and 1920, which put a strain on the program, which led to the establishment of another agency, the Settlement Directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture, and the dispersion of technical responsibilities<sup>50</sup>.

It should be mentioned that in 1920 the company "Aristotelis K. Marris and Co. Hellenic Industrial Company of Olive Industries" or otherwise "ELAIS" was founded in Piraeus. It is a large industrial unit active both in the field of oils (linseed oil and seed oil) and in the refining of oils and fats.

*4.3. Third period: 1924.* At the beginning of 1924 Eleftherios Venizelos was almost unanimously elected President of the Parliament and a few

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<sup>48</sup> Socrates Petmezas, *Introduction to the history of the Greek agricultural economy of the interwar period* (Athens: Alexandria, 2012), 145.

<sup>49</sup> Nikolaos Martinos, "Agrarian policy in the interwar period: its limits and possibilities", in *The Greek rural society and economy during the Venizelian period* (Athens: Greek Letters, 2004), 248-250.

<sup>50</sup> Kyriaki Kavkoula, *The idea of the garden city in the Greek urban planning of the interwar period* (Unpublished PhD thesis, Department of Architects, Thessaloniki, 1990), 99.

days later he became again prime minister. Venizelos' purpose was to bring about social peace inside the country and to work for the smooth integration of the hundreds of thousands of refugees into Greek society. However, the circumstances forced him to resign at the beginning of February 1924.

An important event that characterizes this period is the founding of the Rural Party of Greece (R.P.G.). The first parties representing the countryside appeared in Europe at the end of the 19th century (Bulgarian People's Agrarian Union, 1899) and in the 1920s they were strengthened. The guiding ideological line of the agricultural parties was agrarianism and the promotion of the importance of agriculture and farmers. Farmers now constituted a distinct social class which contributed significantly to the overall progress of a country. The rural populations thus acquired class status and consequently sought to rally around a politicized movement and take state power into their own hands<sup>51</sup>.

The Rural Party of Greece was founded in Athens during the Second Panhellenic Rural Congress in March 1923 (table 5 & table 6). The priority of this newly formed party was the expropriation of large land properties and their redistribution to agricultural cooperatives. Studying the tables below one can conclude that the Rural Party of Greece over the years won more and more seats in the Parliament apart from 1928. It is noticeable that the rural area sought political representation during this period.

Table 5

<b>Electoral influence of the rural party of Greece (1923-1936)</b>			
<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of seats</i>	<i>Total number of seats</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
1923	4	398	1
1926	4	286	2,95%
1928	0	250	1,68%
1932	11	250	2,17%
1933	8	248	5,03%
1936	5	300	3,61%

Source: Ploumidis, *The Peasant Party of Greece*, 2020

The R.P.G. as a purely rural party and in order to succeed in the elections and ambitiously assume power, should collaborate with and ideologically approach the city population as well. This project was particularly difficult as in the urban area the employees, the professionals, the workers and in general the bio-wrestlers did not identify politically and ideologically with the demands of the farmers<sup>52</sup>. The Rural-Labor Party of Greece (R.L.P.G) was founded in 1926 and is a renaming of the "Democratic Union" party that was founded in 1922. The party participated in the elections of 1928 and 1933 on the common Venizelian ballot (table 6). This political party is not a purely

<sup>51</sup> Spiridon Ploumidis, *The Peasant Party of Greece (1923-36): Ideological identity and political positions*, <https://eclass.uoa.gr/modules/document/file.php/ARCH230/Agrotiko%20Komma%20Hellados.pdf>

<sup>52</sup> Dimitris Pournaras, *The history of the labor movement in Greece* (Athens: Academicon, 1931), 12-13.

rural party, at least not compared to the corresponding parties that appeared in the Balkans and Eastern Europe in the same period, but more of a conduit for the reformist socialism of which its founder was the exponent<sup>53</sup>.

Table 6

<b>The electoral power of the Rural Party and the Rural-Labor Party during the interwar period</b>					
<b>Rural Party</b>			<b>Rural-Labor Party</b>		
<i>Year</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Seats</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Seats</i>	<i>Overall</i>
1926	6,48%	17	2,95%	4	286
1928	6,71%	20	1,68%	0	250
1929	6,58%	-	1,66%	0	250
1932	5,89%	8	6,17%	11	250
1933	4,16%	13	2,01%	2	248
1936	-	4	1,02%	1	300

Source: Sarras, 2014

In 1930, the Rural Party of Greece, after the Congress of Thessaloniki on December 17, was dissolved due to internal frictions, disagreements regarding the leadership and ideological orientation of the party<sup>54</sup>.

After the defeat of the Greek army in 1922 and the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 the Greek government realized that the establishment of an agricultural population would increase the capacity of the refugee rehabilitation in towns. It was clear that an urban settlement would require a radical reorientation of the agricultural economy as well as creating the potential threat of large numbers of unemployed people in the urban centers<sup>55</sup>. Also, The Liberal government focused particularly on the region of Macedonia where the public works that took place aimed on creating plentiful arable land, which was seen at that time as the most essential tool for the country's economic growth. According to the Prime Minister, the effort to support agriculture would prevent the peasants from "leaving the fields and moving to the cities, where the parasitic occupations thrived"<sup>56</sup>.

<sup>53</sup> Michael Sarras, *Agrarianism as a political tendency in the interwar Balkans. Formation of structures and social development in Greece and Bulgaria* (Unpublished doctoral research, Department of History and Archaeology, Ioannina, 2014), 88-89.

<sup>54</sup> Dimitris Pournaras, *The history of the labor movement*, 93.

<sup>55</sup> George Kritikos, "State policy and urban employment of refugees: The Greek case (1923–30)", *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 7:2 (2000), 195-196.

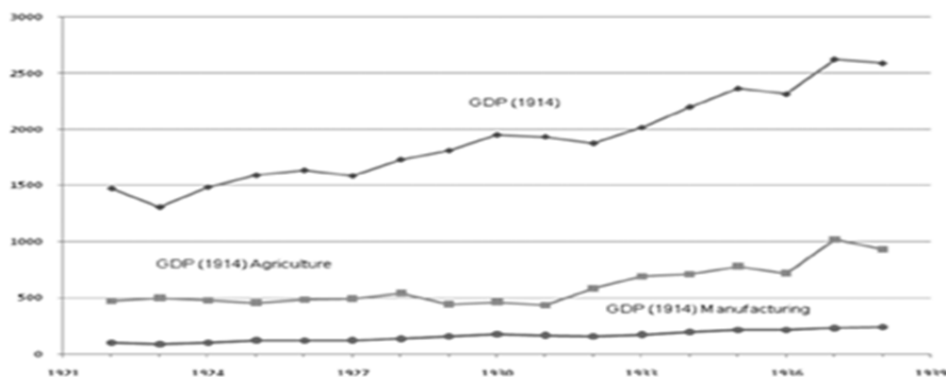
<sup>56</sup> Dimitris Angelis-Dimakis, Dimitris Douros, "Perceptions and Uses of the Land: Agrarian Rhetoric and Agricultural Policy in Greece under Metaxas' Regime (1936-1941)". In *Perspectivas- Journal of Political Science*, special issue 57 (2021), 60.

4.4. *Fourth period: 1928-1932.* The Great Depression of 1929 affected unevenly many capitalist countries, but the consequences were much worse in the USA, Austria, Germany and France, where negative growth rates in the real GDP ranged between 20% and 30% from 1929 to 1938. In Greece this economic crisis affected mainly the international demand for Greece’s chief agricultural products, mainly currants and tobacco (which represented almost 10% of the GDP and 70% of the value of the country’s exports). However, overall, one may say that this economic crisis did not affect the national economy as much as other European countries (image2). More specifically, the good performance of many manufacturing sectors was related to the government’s industrial policy and the low wages, because of the surplus labor force following the arrival of 1.23 million refugees in 1922<sup>57</sup>.

Image 2. GDP of the Greek Economy, total and sectoral, 1922-1938

It must be mentioned though that Greece was forced to abandon the gold-exchange standard in 1932, something that led to a significant further depreciation of the exchange rate<sup>58</sup>.

Image 1. Expansions of the Area and Population of the Greek State 1833-2020



Source: Alogoskoufis, G., (2021). Historical Cycles of the Economy of Modern Greece from 1821 to the Present Greece. Hellenic Observatory Discussion Papers on Greece and Southeast Europe, Paper No. 158, April 2021, p.8

According to the Protocol of September 1923, the Greek government should transfer to the R.R.C. lands of at least 5,000,000 acres. The R.R.C. in the report submitted to the League of Nations in May 1927 stated that it had already managed 7,500,000 acres. Considering that 47% of the refugee

<sup>57</sup> L. Tsoulfidis, M. Zoumoulakis, “Greek sovereign defaults in retrospect and prospect”. In *South-Eastern Europe Journal of Economics* 2 (2016), 151.

<sup>58</sup> George Alogoskoufis, *Historical Cycles of the Economy of Modern Greece from 1821 to the Present Greece* (Athens: Hellenic Observatory Discussion Papers on Greece and Southeast Europe Paper No. 158, 2021), 38.

population were farmers, it is easy to understand why priority was given to the rural rehabilitation of the refugees.<sup>59</sup>

At the same time, on 28/11/1925, the institution of Real Estate Credit Cooperatives was introduced. At this point it should be mentioned that in 1922 the Ministry of Agriculture established three Phytopathological Stations: in Lechonia of Pelion, in Eglylada of Achaia and in Heraklion of Crete<sup>60</sup>. An important event of the period for the rural area was the establishment of the Agricultural Bank in 1929. In 1928, according to the census, the population of Greece amounted to 6,204,684 inhabitants, of which 60% were classified as rural population<sup>61</sup>.

The Ministry of Agriculture progress report of May 1931 records all the public works that have been implemented: water supply and irrigation in Macedonia, draining of swamps in Thrace, Livestock Station in Komotini, flood control constructions, water supply, irrigation in Thessaly, Agricultural School Building in Florina, water supply in Ptolemaida, building and irrigation of a Model Agricultural Estate in Chania and also a Stallion Station. It is worth mentioning that according to file No 229-40 of the Eleftherios Venizelos Archive in the year 1929 an agricultural boarding school was built for the agricultural education of orphans. The Orphanage would also cover the costs of feeding the children. As stated in the document, the sender undertook the completion of the building at a cost of 11,800,000 drachmas (National Research Foundation "Eleftherios K. Venizelos", Eleftherios Venizelos Archive, File 229~40). The report of A. Pallis - member of the Council of the R.R.C. - as it was registered in item 212/17-18 of the Archive of Eleftherios Venizelos, which is managed by the Benaki Museum, presents detailed information regarding the disposal of the estates to the refugees.

In addition to the estates granted to the R.R.C. for the rural rehabilitation of the refugees, the E.A.P. also managed the income from financial resources to facilitate its work. From the study of the archive of Eleftherios Venizelos 212/17-18 it appears that the largest percentage of this money was allocated for the rural rehabilitation of the refugees. There was also concern about the development of animal husbandry. In the context of the agricultural rehabilitation of the refugees, both the R.R.C. and the government granted

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<sup>59</sup> Chrysoula Arabatzi, *Refugee Settlements in Western Macedonia*, (Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Macedonia, Department of Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies 2015), 31-32.

<sup>60</sup> Annie Khitzanidou, "A letter from Eleftherios Venizelos regarding the establishment of the Benaki Phytopathological Institute". In *The Greek Agrarian Society and Economy during the Venizelian Period* (Athens: Greek Letters, 2004), 392.

<sup>61</sup> Manolis Loukakis, *Public finance and bankruptcy: the Greek case 1932* (Unpublished thesis, National Technical University of Athens, Athens, 2010), 34.

animals to the farmers for them to become self-sufficient and to stimulate this sector of the country's agricultural economy.

Additionally, according to the file 126~39 of the Eleftherios Venizelos Foundation, in the period 1926-1936, 35 Agricultural Chambers were founded and operated in the country throughout the Greek territory with more than 500 members. Also, according to file 124~141, the government of Eleftherios Venizelos disposed of 135 million drachmas for the implementation of the Agricultural Program and more specifically "For installations and other expenses of agricultural stations, institutions, etc."

Table 7

<b>Industrial employment in Piraeus in 1930</b>		
<i>Domain</i>	<i>Number of industries</i>	<i>Number of workers</i>
A. Quarry	37	343
B. Food Ind.	484	3.580
B1. Flour mills	16	771
B2. Bakeries	221	977
B3. Pasta and biscuits	24	391
B4. Confectionery	87	504
B5. Oil mills	6	78
B6. Canned vegetables	1	76
B7. Distilleries	46	284
B8. Other	-	499
C. Chemical Ind.	75	2.480
D. Mineral processing	78	947
E. Construction Ind.	240	1.450
F. Electricity	16	696
G. Metal Ind.	35	370

Source: Liadakis, 2014

Since the beginning of the 20th century, Greece was facing a serious food sufficiency problem which, although Macedonia was integrated into the national body in 1913, was not resolved. Ten years later, with the entry of hundreds of thousands of refugees into Greece, the wheat shortage problem worsened. In 1923 this deficit reached 70% of domestic consumption. The Greek government drafted a bill which became law 3598 "on the protection of domestic wheat production". The following government (elections of August 19, 1928) took additional strong measures to protect domestic wheat production. In 1929, the government described wheat farming as "a supreme good, lifesaving for Greece and its people, from many points of view" and ensured the improvement of wheat production. In addition, the government of the period 1928-1932 faced the global economic crisis of 1929 and its socio-economic consequences.

The agricultural orientation of the domestic economy can also be seen in the above table. Studying the data of the census of industrial units of 1930 in the city of Piraeus (Table 7), it is concluded that out of 1,366 industrial

units in total, approximately 65% were related to products of the primary sector.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

The thorough study of the archives has shown that political decisions of the Greek governments during the first half of the 20th century promoted solutions to various aspects of the agrarian question, finding that is supported by the literature. Considering the socio-political, economic and military events that marked the first decades of the 20th century, one realizes that during this period many important steps were taken to improve the state and its infrastructure. For the agricultural sector, substantial developments took place such as the agricultural reform, the establishment and strengthening of agricultural cooperatives and many more which drastically changed the landscape of the rural area in Greece<sup>62</sup>.

Considering the texts of the decisions of the Greek governments as well as the projects implemented in the period 1910-1920 by the Ministries, Greece aimed at the modernization of the agricultural sector and the strengthening of farmers and breeders by emphasizing the importance of the primary sector in the economic development of the country. The agrarian question also was an issue that concerned previous Greek governments also, but without them finding ways to solve or even deal with it. The repeal of the 1899 law "On the eviction of troublesome tenants", removed from farmers the fear and threat of eviction. Landowners had until then retained the right to evict their tenant farmers in cases where the latter did not meet the -often strict and unbearable obligations that had been set. With the repeal of this law, the impoverishment, poverty and humiliation of the rural population was prevented. Furthermore, Article 17 of the Constitution (1911) provided for the possibility of expropriation of property not only for reasons of "public necessity" but also for reasons of "public benefit". This meant that the way was opened for land expropriations and rural rehabilitation of landless farmers.

It must be noticed that Eleftherios Venizelos' skills played a major role to the transformation of Greece during this period. His diplomatic skills and the ability to persuade and negotiate but also his political vision, his conception of the nature of politics itself, are the elements that distinguished Venizelos from other politicians at this era<sup>63</sup>.

The effect of this decision was the improvement of the living conditions of the country's farmers, the increase in agricultural production while at

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<sup>62</sup>Kostas Papageorgiou, "The Venizelian period and today: agricultural cooperatives". In *The Greek Agrarian Society and Economy during the Venizelian Period* (Athens: Greek Letters, 2004), 459-460.

<sup>63</sup>M. Mazower, "The Messiah and the Bourgeoisie: Venizelos and Politics in Greece, 1909-1912". In *The Historical Journal* 35, No. 4 (1992), 898.



the same time providing an incentive for future farmers. It should be mentioned at this point that the first government of Eleftherios Venizelos also took care to regulate the relations between farmers and breeders, considering mainly the benefit of the collectives and the interest of the peasant families.

The appointment of Veterinarians is yet another example that demonstrates the interest of the Greek governments in strengthening all sectors of the rural economy of Greece. Animal husbandry has traditionally been the main occupation of Greek farmers and the employment of scientists able to inform, help and support the farmers with specialized knowledge, has strengthened this sector of the agricultural economy. With the Legal Veterinarians, Diseases of domestic animals not only were effectively treated, but the quality and quantity of livestock products improved.

At the same time, the Veterinarians introduced by the Constitution of 1911 provided the necessary advice to Greek farmers to improve their production, had a supporting role and provided their scientific knowledge to improve the quality and quantity of products.

In conclusion, it becomes clear that the purpose of the decisions of the Greek governments (1910-1930) was to promote the systematic operation of agricultural holdings and related industries, to establish agricultural enterprises and to approach agriculture in Greece in a scientific way, which was missing until then. Research, studies and scientific training of personnel in state agriculture service departments gave a new impetus to the agricultural economy, improving the living conditions of farmers and strengthening the state's budget.

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