

The impact of the CAP on the development of rural entrepreneurship in Poland

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The evolution of rural entrepreneurship is intrinsic to multifunctional rural development, a way for the Polish countryside to become a more attractive place to live and work. The study is primarily aimed at outlining the framework of analysis for policy aspects of entrepreneurship development and identifying factors affecting rural entrepreneurship, particularly after Poland's accession to the European Union. Findings from the survey carried out by Institute of Agricultural Economics and Food Economics allowed analysing the main trends of non-agricultural activities in rural areas. The key role in supporting rural entrepreneurship belongs to local governments and their activities in the field of infrastructural investment as well as efforts to support rural communities through training courses and advisory services concerning the bureaucratic requirements for starting and running a business, the possibility to raise the necessary start up and development capital.

Key words: entrepreneurship, rural development, infrastructure, common agricultural policy, Poland

INTRODUCTION

The European Union Member States have been replacing sectoral policies with structural policy where the state aims at the fostering economic development of the country through comprehensive actions which go beyond the competence of a single ministry department. Therefore, the objectives of the development strategy include investment in both tangible and intangible assets in the economy, even though the latter, e. g., the intellectual and social capital of the nation, are difficult to be measured and their valuation continues to be discussed by academics as well as by political and economic organisations such as the EU, OECD or the UN (Drucker, 1985).

Intangible assets represent a renewable source of creating a new value, and their quality determines an efficient management of tangible assets. Therefore, structural policy making places great emphasis on education, building entrepreneurial attitudes as well as on the formation of civil society, which increase intellectual and social assets of the nation. The philosophy of the European Union support for various economic sectors of the Member States basically relies on the use of intangible assets, or (in this case) the entrepreneurship of citizens. The Common Agricultural Policy measures can be described as interactive structural policy instruments (Bowes, 2002) – specific measures are targeted at clearly defined beneficiary groups and at the same time require involvement, i. e. submitting an application and active participation in project implementation (also in financial terms). Such an approach makes it possible to reach not only the target group, but specifically those within the group who are actually interested in assistance, which will be reflected in submitted applications.

Whether the opportunity offered by structural funds is exploited contributes to reducing or increasing the regional disparities in Poland. The true beneficiaries are those who can find ways to finance their own ideas, seek for alternative economic activities and make efforts to improve their economic situation. Active local governments, advisory centres, entrepreneurs or households take advantage of the new possibilities related to structural funds, and absorption capacity represents a new factor of regional competitiveness. This factor is very important since it concerns capital for investment which may not only significantly affect the quality of infrastructural and institutional environment for enterprises and the living standards of the local population, but also determine the level of economic development of particular regions in the future.

In 2005, rural population in Poland was 14.7 million, with farming families' members accounting for some 51%. Employment in family farming can be estimated at nearly 2 million, primarily farm owners and members of their families; only ca. 30 thousand were permanent hired workers. Thus, in 2005 persons employed on family farms (of over 1 ha of agricultural land) accounted for 15% of total employment. At the same time, registered rural unemployment in Poland was estimated at 1.2 million in 2005. Furthermore, the number of persons considered redundant in agricultural holdings continues to be significant. This group determines hidden unemployment in agriculture which can be assessed at some 500 thousand. Therefore, the conclusion may be that employment opportunities in agricultural holdings play a minor role in reducing the imbalance in the rural labour market in Poland (Karwat-Woźniak et al., 2006). For years, the population living on family farms has been becoming

increasingly polarised in terms of the social and working situation, and the share of pre-working age persons, pensioners and women engaged in agricultural production has been declining. The reduction in agricultural employment has been largely connected with changes in the land structure and the modernisation of agricultural activities, but in the future the farming population will be decreasing faster than the improvement in the agrarian structure and production methods. The pace of change in agriculture and the rate of decline in the number of persons working on family farms will also depend on the increasing migration processes in Poland.

Due to the imbalance in the rural labour market and limited contribution of family farming to alleviating unemployment, the development of rural entrepreneurship represents an opportunity for the diversification of income sources and the creation of new jobs for the rural population.

OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

The study is primarily aimed at outlining the framework of analysis for policy aspects of entrepreneurship development and identifying factors affecting rural entrepreneurship, particularly after Poland's accession to the European Union.

Research findings presented in the paper are based on various source data available, the main empirical material being findings from survey conducted by the Department of Social and Regional Policy of the Institute of Agricultural and Food Economics – National Research Institute (IAFE-NRI) in 2006. The survey covered 76 deliberately selected villages whose socio-economic characteristics were representative of rural areas across Poland. Also, information provided by the Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture (ARMA), which performs the role of a paying agency and an implementing authority for financial resources from the structural funds, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) have been used to analyse the impact of agricultural policy on entrepreneurship development in rural areas of Poland.

RESULTS

Poland's joining the European Union structures resulted in new instruments for promoting rural entrepreneurship, co-financed by the Community budget. At the core, support programmes oriented towards the rural population rely on the activity of people. On the one hand, the state specifies the scope of a structural policy instrument and defines the target group, but on the other hand assistance is only granted to those who strive for available funds. It is another dimension of rural entrepreneurship which can be seen as the ability to use support measures within the framework of national structural policy placing emphasis on taking up and pursuing non-agricultural economic activities. Drucker (Chmieleński, 2006) described entrepreneurship as the ability to exploit opportunities and to adapt to changing conditions. Its intensity depends not only on individual characteristics, but also on the communities, mentality and social models. Such an approach involves the recognition of information as a resource and development factor of entrepreneurship. Exploiting opportunities will depend on the level of knowledge

of the existing possibilities for developing economic activity among the population of rural areas. This awareness is largely determined by local authorities as well as by information and advisory institutions serving the rural population. In addition to direct measures for promoting rural enterprises (e. g., education and training), local governments and district authorities influence entrepreneurship by investment in technical infrastructure, one of the main growth factors of the local economy. The state, apart from structural policy instruments related to EU policies, influences the development of entrepreneurship through fiscal policy as well as administrative and legal regulations for taking up economic activity. The objective is to provide optimal conditions for the creative potential of the rural population to be reflected in the economic performance. Therefore, entrepreneurship development is more than building a support system for entrepreneurs; it is a strategy of transformation. It implies creating entrepreneurial communities, changing the culture of rural places and people so that they embrace the potential of entrepreneurship. It also includes fostering the public policy that invests in entrepreneurship development and is embraced by public and civic organizations and leaders (Rural..., 1997).

All activities by the central and local administration supporting entrepreneurship and economic activity of the population represent an arrangement of interacting elements. This results in a **multiplier effect on entrepreneurship** – investment in building and fostering entrepreneurship of each element of the arrangement contributes to increased entrepreneurship of other parts (Chmieleński, 2006). Such changes are bottom-up, from the basic element of the arrangement (i. e. an individual) to more complex components such as local communities to the state and the EU, contrary to financial flows oriented towards supporting entrepreneurship. In some cases, an emission of entrepreneurship of a small group or even an individual may contribute to a change of entrepreneurship in the entire arrangement. The outcome of an emission of entrepreneurship may be an innovative activity disturbing the existing equilibrium and creating a new quality in the economy.

Infrastructure and rural entrepreneurship

Differences between rural and urban social expectations have been reduced, making rural people less willing to accept second-rate services. Modern communication services have made rural population much more aware of the factors affecting the quality of life (Cramer et al., 2001). Rural business development is an answer to these changes, improving the availability of services and goods in rural areas. One of the main factors significantly affecting the formation of new economic entities as well as the general development of rural areas is local investment in technological and social infrastructure. It includes norms, rules, organisational structures and operational mechanisms which form the basis for local development. Years of industrial development policy implementation (from 1950s till 1980s) in Poland caused selective infrastructural investments, especially in urban areas, retarding rural territories even in the field of the basic infrastructure.

The survey demonstrated that underdevelopment of infrastructure is confirmed by the expectations of rural communities demanding that local and district authorities invest more financial resources in road construction and repair. But the investment projects that might provide conditions for new economic

activities were only implemented in one-fifth of the villages. At the same time, it is plain to see that the rural population considers the local authorities to have the greatest impact on local economic growth and the financial and decision-making responsibility for stimulating local entrepreneurship. It would involve extended powers and increased financial means for the operations of local units of public administration. The proposal to extend the responsibilities of local authorities with regard to the level and direction of investment is also justified by the fact that the local government, being fully aware of infrastructural handicaps in the area, may be most successful in reducing the disparities between villages in the area in terms of infrastructure, thus contributing to a more equal activation of the entire district.

Research findings allow a conclusion that in addition to investment in social and technological infrastructure, entrepreneurship should be stimulated primarily by changes in legislation (both at the local and state level), i.e. the simplification of bureaucratic registration procedures for new companies, on the one hand, and the reduction of the tax burden, particularly labour costs, on the other hand. The widespread opinion on excessive costs of economic activity is also held by the rural communities. Fiscal regulations more favourable than in towns and cities may stimulate investment in rural areas since analyses suggest that more jobs in the countryside are created by company owners who live in cities but pursue economic activities in rural areas. As regards rural entrepreneurs, many of them rely on family labour and create few or no jobs for the local community.

Furthermore, it should be noted that it has been increasingly frequent for rural entrepreneurs to invest money previously earned abroad in setting up a company in their own village. Such a situation was found in slightly over 10% of the surveyed villages, but due to the ongoing liberalisation of labour market legislation in the EU countries and increased job migration, it may become more common in the future. Moreover, investing such resources in starting a business very often generates new jobs for the rural community and adds external capital, thus contributing to the activation of the local economy.

The interconnection between local infrastructure and enterprises can be considered as the basis of local development, as rural firms are mostly operating on the local market. Among the surveyed firms, almost 70% primarily operated in the village, neighbouring villages and the district. Slightly over 10% of companies served a larger area and only 7% operated at the province level. Nearly 8% of businesses declared operations at the national level and less than 5% at the international level. These numbers lead to at least two observations. First, entrepreneurship is not just part of economic development – it is the basis of long-term economic development. Second, entrepreneurship is highly place-based. Not only is entrepreneurship shaped by the spatial attribute, and not only does it transform the socio-economies of places, but more fundamentally, economic development is less likely to occur in the aggregate if space is not effectively organized into regional entrepreneurial systems (The New Rural..., 2006).

In addition to indirect measures such as infrastructural investment, local governments support rural entrepreneurship also through direct activities oriented towards promoting the entrepreneurial spirit in local communities by means of educa-

tional programmes aimed at improving the qualifications and knowledge level of the local population. The main activation instrument available to local authorities is free training. The authorities play a crucial role in this field: based on the knowledge of local problems and needs and appropriate financial resources they may effectively stimulate socio-economic changes and the economic awareness of the local population. Therefore, another determinant of the development of rural entrepreneurship is the educational offer and advisory services provided by the local government, tailored to the needs and interests of the community. The IAFE-NRI survey demonstrates that some local authorities make such efforts. Between 2000 and 2005, there was at least one training course organised in three out of four villages. The courses concerned the main issues related to agricultural production efficiency, the new sanitary and veterinary regulations in force after Poland's accession to the European Union, as well as practical assistance in applying for support funds under CAP measures. As regards the last group, the most common training courses provided information on how to apply for direct payments and practical assistance in completing applications. Training courses on entrepreneurial activities, i.e. starting and running a business (including rural tourism undertakings) accounted for less than 10% of all courses found in the surveyed villages. Such a fact points to the need to adjust the training offer to various problems faced by the rural population, frequently going beyond matters directly linked to agricultural production. The need to improve the knowledge on how to pursue non-agricultural activities was found in more than 80% of the surveyed villages and by almost 30% is considered as one of the main factors influencing the rural entrepreneurship development (Fig. 1). The most desirable training subject would be applying for financial resources available under support measures in order to improve the economic situation of agricultural holdings also by non-agricultural activities. The respondents also declared the need to obtain information on the possibility to apply for EU funds for the purpose of starting a company (observed in over 60% of the surveyed villages). Training courses on the improvement of agricultural production efficiency as well as veterinary and sanitary conditions on farms were usually or-

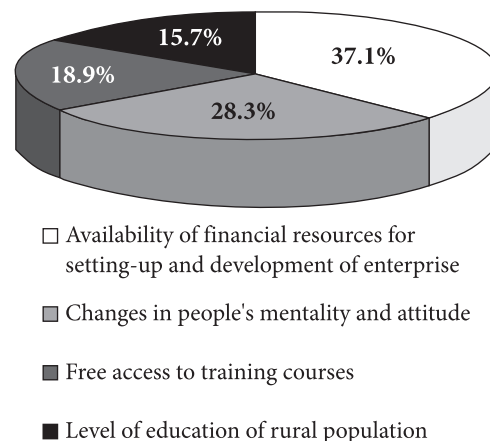


Fig. 1. The main determinants of entrepreneurship development in the opinion of rural population

Source: IAFE-NRI 2006 survey.

ganised by centres for agricultural advisory services, playing the key role in providing multidirectional assistance to rural communities. It should be emphasised that in many surveyed villages the residents benefited from advice offered by employees of local units of the Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture, particularly in matters related to CAP support measures for agriculture and rural areas.

CAP impact on rural entrepreneurship development

Poland's accession to the European Union resulted in new instruments for supporting rural entrepreneurship, co-financed by the Community budget. Within the framework of the Sectoral Operational Programme for the "Restructuring and Modernisation of the Food Sector and Rural Development 2004–2006" operating under the CAP, appropriations for the development of non-agricultural activities amounted to nearly €90 million under measure 2.4 "Diversification of agricultural activities and activities close to agriculture to provide multiple activities or alternative incomes." Assistance is oriented towards investment projects for farmers, members of farming families and legal persons to take up additional activities close to agriculture and responding to market needs, on the basis of the existing farm and regional resources. Projects eligible for co-financing under this measure include rural tourism, services for agriculture and the rural population, craft and handicraft, small-scale processing and sale of agricultural products as well as the production of energy producing materials from biomass (Ministry..., 2004).

Support under this measure attracted considerable interest across Poland since by 1 February 2007 more than 7 thousand applications were submitted for a total of nearly €137 million, i.e. over 50% more than the available appropriations. Such a high level of the demand for financial support under this measure testifies to the ability of the rural population to seek for external funding sources for starting and running new business. Within the framework of this measure, 4,290 co-financing contracts were signed for an overall amount of €81 million, more than 90% of the maximum public contribution under measure 2.4. Thus far, the Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of

Agriculture has paid the beneficiaries over one-third of the public resources available under this measure (Rural..., 2007).

In addition to measure 2.4 of the SOP for the "Restructuring..." aimed at the promotion of taking up additional activities close to agriculture, the measures (other than CAP instruments) "Promoting entrepreneurship" and "Micro-enterprises" of the Integrated Regional Operational Programme (*Zintegrowany Program Operacyjny Rozwoju Regionalnego* – ZPORR) included support for taking up economic activity also by persons wishing to discontinue farming and agricultural activities.

Furthermore, local governments could apply for resources for improving rural infrastructure under measure 2.3 "Village renewal and conservation and protection of cultural heritage". The appropriations for this measure, more than €90 million, were allocated to co-financing projects such as investment in the modernisation and equipment of cultural, recreational and sporting facilities; investment in historic buildings characteristic of traditional rural construction and adaptation for public use; the modernisation of public areas in villages; public infrastructure contributing to the development of rural tourism and activities related to regional promotion. Assistance under measure 2.3 attracted much interest from local governments and cultural institutions.

The development of rural infrastructure, reflected in the level of economic activity in rural areas, was also addressed by measure 2.6 "Development and improvement of agricultural infrastructure." Assisted projects are complementary to larger undertakings implemented within the framework of the ZPORR. Projects eligible for co-financing under this measure include the construction, repair and modernisation of the following facilities: internal roads, water supply systems, waste water disposal and treatment facilities, electricity networks and facilities. Although individual infrastructural projects implemented under this measure are relatively small (the maximum investment subsidy amounted to €50,000), the total public support of €47 million allows to build or modernise a significant number of small infrastructural facilities improving the quality of life and farming in agricultural holdings, as well as creating conditions

Table 1. Utilisation of support for diversification of agricultural activities and activities close to agriculture to provide multiple activities or alternative incomes

Measure 2.4. Diversification of agricultural activities and activities close to agriculture to provide multiple activities or alternative incomes		
	Maximum contribution for 2004–2006 (EUR)	89,839,903
	number	7,168
Submitted applications	total amount (EUR)	136,896,976
	share of the maximum contribution	152.4%
	number	4,290
Contracts signed	total amount (EUR)	80,943,614
	share of the maximum contribution	90.1%
	number	3,020
Applications for payment	total amount (EUR)	51,098,615
	share of the maximum contribution	56.9%
	number	2,029
Effected payments	total amount (EUR)	34,364,047
	share of the maximum contribution	38.2%

The maximum contribution was calculated at the exchange rate 1 euro = 3.8305 PLN (the ECB exchange rate applicable on the penultimate working day (of the European Commission) of the month preceding the month for which the maximum community contribution is established).

Data source: MARD, SPOTkania, no. 5/2007 (78).

for the economic activation of rural areas. By 1 February 2007, there were 4,945 applications for project co-financing approved at the stage of formal verification. Applicants requested a total of more than €68 million, i. e. 144% of the overall public support under measure 2.6. A total of 3,341 co-financing contracts were signed for an overall amount of €41 million, i. e. over 86% of the maximum public contribution within the framework of measure 2.6 (Ministry..., 2004).

According to the reformed policy for rural areas, from 2007 support for rural development is financed within the framework of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The total appropriations for the PROW 2007–2013 amount to ca. €17.2 billion, of which the EU contribution (the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development) will represent more than €13.2 billion and national public funds will account for some €4 billion.

Entrepreneurship development and rural population

The new EU support instruments targeted at rural entrepreneurship represent a major opportunity for rural development, but also a challenge to the rural population. The knowledge of structural support measures and practical information on the applicable procedures are a new factor affecting rural entrepreneurship.

Two years after Poland's accession to the EU, the share of the surveyed villages where residents considered their knowledge of the EU to be adequate was less than one-fourth. In such villages, the main sources of information on the EU were indicated as centres for agricultural advisory services, the Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture and local information centres / advisory services. However, in a vast majority of the surveyed villages the knowledge of potential benefits of EU membership was insufficient. The reported reasons included the lack of a single institutional information source in each district and no training and information meetings organised in the village.

The insufficient awareness results in limited efforts to obtain support funds for starting and running a business. The share of the surveyed villages where residents benefited from EU measures for non-agricultural activities was only slightly more than one-fifth. Fewer than half of the respondents could say that the residents had been interested in applying for support for non-agricultural activities. The start-up capital for new undertakings was mostly raised from private resources, whereas the role of external institutional sources (such as bank credits or EU support measures) was limited.

Due to insufficient information on the EU and the new structural instruments supporting entrepreneurship, the rural population continues to have a cautious approach to the present and future possibilities to obtain funds for starting and running non-agricultural businesses in rural areas. Despite the fact that 45% of the respondents believed that EU accession resulted in increased opportunities for rural entrepreneurship in Poland, only in one-third of the surveyed villages residents were positive that non-agricultural economic activities in rural areas would become more widespread in the future. The rural population is aware of support measures for rural entrepreneurship, but they are considered to be inaccessible to average people due to complex procedures and red tape related to applying for co-financ-

ing. At the same time, it is common to believe that in the future only young, educated persons will be able to benefit from the funds for starting and running small businesses.

CONCLUSIONS

Non-agricultural economic activities play a prominent role in stimulating economic growth and alleviating social consequences of transition to the market economy as such income accounts for a significant share in the budgets of rural households. In order to flourish, new non-agricultural businesses must not imitate existing companies. An innovative and unique character of non-agricultural activities is the key to business success.

The formation of particular structures of non-agricultural economic activities depends not only on national factors, but mostly on local and regional forces. The local authorities' main role in developing the basis for entrepreneurship growth is to focus on investment in social and technological infrastructure, particularly in basic infrastructure such as rural roads.

As regards factors indirectly affecting the activation of rural areas, the key role is played by information and training activities by local governments and other local public institutions (such as agricultural advisory centres), as well as by non-governmental organisations, increasing the knowledge level of rural communities. Although local governments are the core element of this system in Poland, the activation of rural communities largely depends on information and advisory organisations, primarily centres for agricultural advisory services. After Poland's joining the EU structures, local units of the Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture, the paying agency for support instruments of the policy for agriculture and rural areas, gained in importance since they serve as the sources of information and practical advice for the rural population.

The social perception of structural measures co-financed by the European Union is positive, but such support continues to be seen as inaccessible to average citizens for bureaucratic reasons. In this connection, start-up capital is usually raised from one's own resources (savings) of entrepreneurs and their families and private loans rather than from bank credits and support measures. The lack of financial means is indicated as the main barrier to rural entrepreneurship.

The major threats to rural entrepreneurship include the complicated registration procedures, an excessive tax burden on enterprises and limited borrowing facilities for starting and running small and medium-sized enterprises. Therefore, the role of state in promoting the development of non-agricultural activities in rural areas includes not only support through programmes co-financed by Common Agriculture Policy instruments but also through a favourable tax policy as well as improvement of the legislation quality.

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KAIMO VERSLUMO VYSTYMASIS LENKIJoje

S a n t r a u k a

Gyventojų ūkinio aktyvumo skatinimas veikia kaimo vietovės daugiafunkcinę plėtrą, todėl Lenkijos kaimas įgauna perspektyvą tapti patrauklesne gyvenamąja ir darbo vieta. Straipsnyje nagrinėjamos kai kurios ūkinės veiklos plėtojimo kaimo vietovėje sąlygos, ypač išryškėjusios Lenkijai tapus ES nare. Darbas remiasi Žemės ir maisto ūkio instituto nuolatinės reprezentacinės atrankos tyrimais, vykdomais 76 kaimuose, kurie savo socialiniais ekonominiais požymiais būdingi visos šalies kaimo vietovėms. Brandžiausias kaimo verslininkystės plėtojimo pro-

blemos būtų šios: sudėtingos ūkinės veiklos apiforminimo procedūros, apmokestinimo per didelį lygį, taip pat sunkumai, susiję su išorinių finansavimo šaltinių lėšų gavimu smulkiam ir vidutiniam verslui pradėti ir plėtoti. Tyrimai parodė, kad iš rodiklių, netiesiogiai rodančių kaimo vietovės aktyvizaciją, reikšmingiausi yra gminų (teritorinės savivaldos vienetų) bei kitų vietos organų, taip pat nevyriausybinų organizacijų informacinės bei mokymo programos, kurios turi įtaką gyventojų žinių lygiui ir investicijų į socialinę techninę infrastruktūrą, visų pirma į pagrindinę, t. y. kaimo kelius, dydžiui.

Raktažodžiai: infrastruktūra, kaimo vietovės plėtra, Lenkija, verslininkystė, žemės ūkio politika

Павел Хмелиньски

РАЗВИТИЕ СЕЛЬСКОГО ПРЕДПРИНИМАТЕЛЬСТВА В ПОЛЬШЕ

Р е з ю м е

Стимулирование хозяйственной активности населения способствует многофункциональному развитию сельской местности, благодаря которому польская деревня получает шанс стать более привлекательной для жизни и работы. В статье рассмотрены некоторые условия развития хозяйственной деятельности в сельской местности, в особенности после вступления Польши в Евросоюз. Работа базируется на исследованиях постоянной репрезентативной выборки, осуществленных Институтом экономики сельского и пищевого хозяйства в 76 деревнях, социально-экономические признаки которых характерны для сельской местности страны в целом. К наиболее актуальным проблемам развития сельского предпринимательства следует отнести прежде всего сложные процедуры оформления хозяйственной деятельности, чрезмерный уровень налогообложения, а также трудности, связанные с получением для открытия и развития малого и среднего бизнеса средств из внешних источников финансирования. Исследования выявили, что из показателей, косвенно влияющих на активизацию сельской местности, самыми значимыми являются информационные и обучающие программы гмин (гмина – административно-территориальная единица в Польше) и других местных органов, а также неправительственных организаций, влияющие на уровень знаний жителей и на размер инвестиций в социально-техническую инфраструктуру, прежде всего основную, т. е. сельские дороги.

Ключевые слова: инфраструктура, Польша, предпринимательство, развитие сельской местности, сельскохозяйственная политика