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RDP 2014-2020 AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR SUPPORTING INNOVATIONS IN AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AREAS IN POLAND ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE MEASURE "COOPERATION" (M16)

Key words: RDP 2014-2020, agriculture, rural areas, innovativeness, innovations

ABSTRACT. The aim of the study was to determine the level of support for innovation in agriculture and rural areas by RDP 2014-2020 on the example of the measure "Cooperation" (M16). Data from the Agency for Restructuring and Modernization of Agriculture (2021) were used. Based on the analysis of all projects implemented in Poland, the size of the allocation of funds was determined broken down into subsequent calls. The spatial differentiation at the regional and local level was indicated, and detailed directions of spending the funds were specified. In total, 334 projects were submitted in the 3 analyzed calls for proposals, of which 48.2% received financial support. The total amount of co-financing was PLN 448.19 million. The allocation of funds was spatially uneven, which is visible both at the regional and local levels. Taking into account the place of implementation of projects, the greatest amount of aid was spent in the Mazowieckie, Łódzkie and Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodeships. In north-eastern and north-western Poland, most poviats did not support the development of innovation in agriculture and rural areas under measure M16. Most projects implemented under RDP 2014-2020 concerned poultry and cattle, then apples, pigs, herbs, beekeeping, hemp, support for supply chains, cereals and potatoes. Projects supporting the development of technological innovations dominated.

INTRODUCTION

Rural areas in Poland, in order to stimulate their development and solve the existing socio-economic problems, have been supported in recent years by many instruments financed from public funds. At the same time, the necessity to search for new solutions in the field of efficient functioning of the rural economy and shaping better living conditions for local communities is emphasized [Wójcik 2011]. Introducing innovations in rural

areas is to ensure development, both in economic and social terms, which is reflected in supporting innovation in rural areas by the European Union (EU) policy, including the Common Agricultural Policy. Innovativeness is a derivative term in relation to the notion of innovation. There are many definitions of the concept of innovation in the literature [Struś, Kalinowski 2015, Gonet 2015, Czapiewska 2018], and a detailed analysis of the definitions of the concept of innovation functioning in the literature goes beyond the scope of this study. Generally, it can be said that innovation is the introduction to use of new products, processes or methods of operation [Allen 1966 after Gonet 2015] and innovative approaches in contacts with the environment [OECD 2008]. Innovations can bring both economic [Struś, Kalinowski 2015], and non-economic effects [Czapiewska 2018]. Diversity in defining innovations depends on the specificity of the field they concern, where innovation can be understood as a process or result of a specific activity. This is also reflected in the identification of various types of innovation, i.e. technological, organizational, economic, social and environmental [Czapiewska 2018]; product, process, organizational and marketing [OECD 2008, Brańka 2016] or product innovations and in the business process [GUS 2020b]. Innovativeness, in turn, is most often defined as the readiness and ability of individuals and organizations to seek, implement and disseminate innovation. [Pomykalski 2001, Bal-Woźniak 2004, Czapiewska 2018].

Innovativeness and the implementation of innovations in rural areas are generally linked to the development process [Rosa, Zarębski 2018, Madureira, Torre 2019], including the development of peripheral rural areas [Navarro et al. 2018], increased productivity [Struś, Kalinowski 2015], rural competitiveness, diversification of the rural economy [Esparcia 2014, Brańka 2016], consumer satisfaction and added benefits [Czapiewska 2018, Šulyová et al. 2021]. It can be concluded that innovation concerns many areas, i.e. agriculture, non-agricultural economic activity, offered products and services [Knicke et al. 2009, Brańka 2016] e.g. in agritourism or the living conditions of rural communities. It is worth noting that innovations may be of particular importance in the development of rural areas in post-socialist countries, where they can be the driving force behind changes in local economies struggling with the problem of depopulation, the decline of agriculture, and over-exploitation of natural resources [Hrivnák et al. 2020].

In relation to innovation, there is a concept of an innovation system. This system includes interrelated entities of the public and private sector, generating knowledge and the environment in which they operate, including also state policy. Success in creating innovations depends precisely on the degree of cooperation between various entities [Esparcia 2014], including, in particular, enterprises and scientific entities [Brojak-Trzaskowska 2007]. This also applies to the innovativeness of rural areas, which results from the interaction of the public sector, entrepreneurs, consumers and farmers [Struś, Kalinowski 2015]. The research indicates the territorial dimension of the innovation system, where the actors and their activity, the existing networks of connections, the

resources involved result from the specificity of the territory [Hermans et al. 2002, Esparcia 2014], which justifies undertaking research on introducing various types of innovations on a given spatial scale (local, regional). The role of innovations is steadily increasing, they are important in the objectives of EU policy, including those targeting rural areas [Navarro et al. 2016] and supported by EU funds [Przywojska, Wyrwas 2016, Czapiewska 2018]. The subject of the work is to support the innovativeness of rural areas in Poland, which will be shown on the example of measure M16 (Measure "Cooperation") of the Rural Development Program 2014-2020 (RDP 2014-2020). It is commonly believed that Polish agriculture, as well as enterprises representing other sectors [GUS 2020a] are characterized by a low level of innovation in the applied solutions, which justifies supporting the development of innovation with public funds.

Measure M16 of the RDP 2014-2020, which is the subject of a detailed analysis in this work, is dedicated to strengthening innovation. Its purpose is to increase the innovation of solutions used in Polish agriculture and in rural areas [MRiRW 2022]. However, other measures under RDP 2014-2020 supporting innovation should be indicated, i.e. measure M01 (strengthening the links between agriculture and forestry and research activities), measure M02 (strengthening the mechanism of knowledge and innovation transfer through consultancy) and technical assistance (costs of brokers, operational activities at the voivodeship level) [CDR Brwinów 2021].

The essence of the M16 "Cooperation" activity is the involvement of many partners, including those representing science, in developing the practical application of innovation, strengthening the links between the development of the agri-food sector and research and innovation. The measure concerns the support for the establishment and operation of operational groups for innovation (EPI), which as part of their activities will implement projects consisting in the development and implementation of innovative solutions into practice [MRiRW 2022]. As a result, agricultural producers will ultimately benefit the most from the implementation of the measure, increasing their competitiveness, profitability and market participation in the long term. The areas of innovation concern directly or indirectly all actors in the food chain.

The essence of the operation of the operational group (Figure 1) consists in the cooperation of farmers, forest owners, scientific entities, entrepreneurs and advisory entities who develop innovative solutions in the field of new products, practices, processes, technologies, organization and marketing methods in the agricultural, food and forestry sectors [MRiRW 2022, Journal of Laws 2020, item 80]. The operational group for innovation is created for the implementation of a specific project with the participation of EU funds.

According to measure M16 "Cooperation" RDP2014-2020, innovation includes the development and implementation of new or significantly improved products [in accordance with Annex I to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union C202/329 [2016],

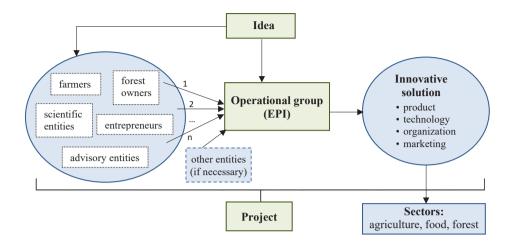


Figure 1. The essence of the measure "Cooperation" (M16) under the RDP 2014-2020 in Poland Source: own study

technologies, organization and marketing methods related to their production, processing or marketing, as well as the creation of or the development of short supply chains or local markets [Journal of Laws 2020, item 80]. This means that as a result, various types of innovations will arise, e.g. product (including products with innovative features), technological, marketing or organizational innovations. The co-financing limit for one operational group during the RDP 2014-2020 implementation period was PLN 11 million, and the co-financing per operation could not exceed PLN 5.5 million [Journal of Laws 2020, item 80].

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The aim of the study was to determine the level of support for innovation in agriculture and rural areas by RDP 2014-2020 on the example of the measure "Cooperation" (M16). As part of the formulated goal, the following research tasks were set: (1) to determine of the amount of funds allocation broken down into calls for proposals/editions; (2) to indicate of the regional and local spatial differentiation of the allocation of funds; (3) to define the directions of spending funds.

The data of the Agency for Restructuring and Modernization of Agriculture as of 10/06/2021 were used [ARiMR 2021], covering all projects submitted under Measure M16 RDP 2014-2020 (including the implemented ones). The amount of the allocation of funds means the total amount of aid requested by all beneficiaries according to the data

from the reports. The analyzes of spatial differentiation took into account the specificity of beneficiaries (operational groups) – all submitted applications (projects) were analyzed taking into account the seat of the operating group (usually the group leader), while the implemented projects (i.e. completed and in progress) were analyzed by location implementation of the operation (the total amount of aid was divided into poviats and voivodeships proportionally depending on the communes in which the operation was carried out). The directions of spending funds were determined on the basis of a detailed analysis of all completed and ongoing projects under measure M16, taking into account the scope of the project defined on the basis of its title.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study covers three (I, II, III) completed calls for proposals under Measure M16¹ (according to the availability of complete data as of 10/06/2021). In total, 334 projects were submitted in 3 calls for proposals (Table 1), of which 161 projects (48.2%) were implemented. The total amount of co-financing according to submitted applications was PLN 1,034.01 million, while according to implemented projects PLN 448.19 million. The activity of beneficiaries varied in individual calls and was the highest in the last call, which translated into the largest number of applications and implemented projects (Figures 2 and 3) and the overall amount of funding. In the 3rd edition, the amount of aid granted was the largest and the largest among all editions (81%). This may indicate that operational groups are gaining knowledge and experience in effective application for financial resources, and thus prepare better and better project applications.

Specification	Edition I	Edition II	Edition III	Total
Amount of aid requested [PLN million]	320.34	277.72	435.95	1034.01
Aid amount implemented [PLN million]	32.51	58.69	356.99	448.19
Aid amount implemented [%]	10.15	21.13	81.89	43.34
Number of applications submitted	90	90	154	334
Projects implemented [%]	13.33	26.67	81.17	48.2

Table 1. Implementation of measure M16 "Cooperation" RDP 2014-2020 in Poland

Source: Own study based on ARMA data [ARiMR 2021]

¹ Submission of applications in the analyzed calls: 1st call (30/06-31/07/2017), 2nd call (16/11/2018-14/01/2019) and 3rd call (13/01-12/03/2020). As part of the action, the 4th and 5th calls for proposals (2021/2022) were also organized, which included only the creation of short supply chains.

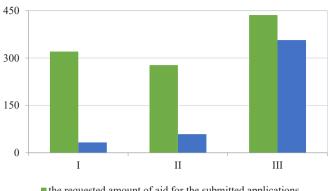


Figure 2. The amount of aid under the measure M16 Cooperation RDP 2014-2020 according to calls for proposals in Poland (PLN million)

Source: own study based on ARMA data [ARiMR 2021]

the requested amount of aid for the submitted applications
amount of aid for completed and ongoing projects

The voivodeships differed from each other depending on the number of submitted projects and the number of implemented projects (Figure 3). Definitely the greatest number of applications were submitted in total in the Mazowieckie (68), Wielkopolskie (39), Łódzkie (34) and Lubelskie (33) voivodeships, and the least in the Opolskie (4) and Świętokrzyskie (7) voivodeships. The success rate of submitted projects was different in the regions, the highest in the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship (where 86% of submitted projects received co-financing), and the lowest in the Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship – the percentage of projects qualified for implementation was equal to 22%. In general, when comparing the 1st and 3rd editions, it can be stated that in the regions (except for the Opolskie Voivodeship) more and more projects were obtained in subsequent editions. In the case of the 3rd call for proposals, it turned out that in 5 voivodeships: Świętokrzyskie, Lubuskie, Opolskie, Dolnośląskie and Kujawsko-Pomorskie all submitted projects were directed for implementation and received funding.

Taking into account all projects submitted by the beneficiaries, it can be concluded that in the first edition, applications were requested for PLN 320.35 million (which constituted 31% of the total for the analyzed editions), in the second edition, applications for PLN 277.73 million (27%) were In the third edition, the submitted projects totaled PLN 435.94 million (42%). The structure of the requested co-financing was different in individual regions of Poland, taking into account subsequent calls for proposals (Figure 4). The largest amount of aid requested in total for the three editions concerned the following voivodeships: Mazowieckie, Wielkopolskie, Łódzkie and Lubelskie. The leaders of individual editions, (i.e. regions where applications for a total of over PLN 50 million were applied for), were Mazowieckie and Wielkopolskie voivodeships in the 1st and 3rd edition, and the Mazowieckie Voivodeship in the 2nd edition. Taking into account

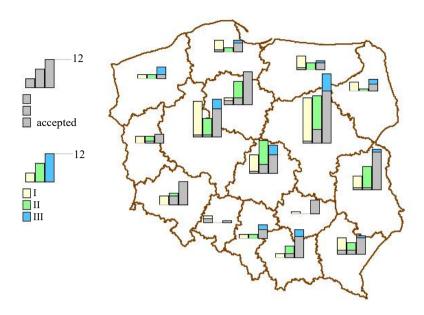


Figure 3. Regional differentiation of the number of submitted and implemented projects under measure M16 Cooperation RDP 2014-2020 by calls for proposals Source: Own study based on ARMA data [ARiMR 2021]

the fact that usually the headquarters of the operational group was in the place where its leader was registered, it can be concluded that these results indicate the existence of potential entities ready and willing to be involved in undertaking innovative activities in agriculture and rural areas and their high activity in this regard. The average value of the project, taking into account all submitted applications, was different in the regions, with the highest in the Wielkopolskie, Łódzkie and Świętokrzyskie voivodeships, and the lowest in the Zachodniopomorskie (also characterized by the lowest amount of aid applied for), Śląskie, Podlaskie and Małopolskie voivodeships.

The spatial distribution of the allocation of funds in the case of the project implementation site was different than taking into account the place of registration of the leader (Figure 5), which may depend, on the one hand, on the composition of the operational group members and their territorial affiliation, and, on the other hand, on the assumed place of implementation of the operation under project. Looking at the place of implementation of operations under completed and ongoing projects, it can be seen that the least funds were spent in the Zachodniopomorskie (PLN 1.95 million), Świętokrzyskie (PLN 3.98 million) and Podlaskie (PLN 5.62 million) voivodeships, in which, as the only regions, projects were implemented only under the 3rd edition. In total, most aid funds were directed to the Mazowieckie (PLN 50.39 million), Łódzkie (PLN 39.56 million) and

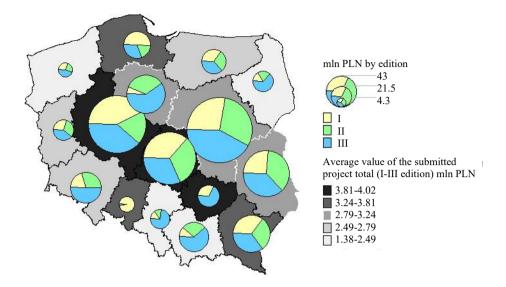


Figure 4. Average project value and the requested amount of aid by projects submitted under measure M16 Cooperation RDP 2014-2020 by calls for proposals – regional approach (PLN million)

Source: own study based on ARMA data [ARiMR 2021]

Kujawsko-Pomorskie (PLN 34.02 million) voivodeships, which constituted 16.0%, 12.6% and 10.8% of the sum of all funds spent in the three analyzed editions. As a result of the 1st call for proposals, not a single project supporting the development of innovation in agriculture and rural areas was implemented in as many as 7 voivodeships. In the next call (II), the funds did not go to 4 regions, while as a result of the third call, all voivodeships in Poland spent funds to support innovation in the rural areas. Based on the analysis of all projects, it can be indicated that the share of funds from the 3rd call for proposals definitely dominated in the regions. The exception is the Opolskie voivodeship, where 87% of the total funds were allocated to the 1st call for proposals, and the Podkarpackie voivodeship, where funds were equally distributed from all three calls.

At the local level, uneven spending of funds to support innovation in Poland is also visible (Figure 6). The average allocation of funds in the poviat as a result of the implementation of measure M16 was 1,869.51 thousand. PLN. In total, projects were implemented in the area of 167 poviats. There is a clear spatial differentiation in the allocation of funds. Firstly, in the north-eastern and north-western part of the country, in general, in most poviats, the development of innovation in rural areas under the M16 measure was not supported. On the other hand, there are some clusters of poviats, also around large cities in the Mazowieckie, Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Łódzkie and Wielkopolskie

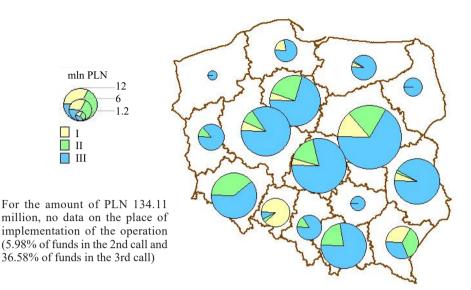


Figure 5. Regional differentiation of the amount of aid (place of implementation of the operation) for projects implemented under measure M16 Cooperation RDP 2014-2020 by calls for proposals (PLN million)

Source: own study based on ARMA data [ARiMR 2021]

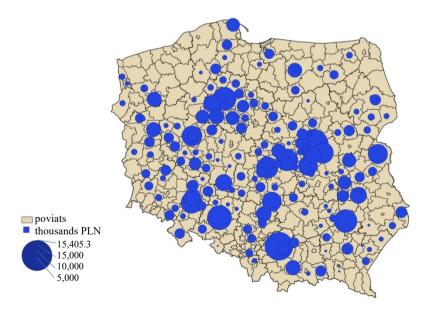


Figure 6. Expenditure of funds under measure M16 Cooperation RDP 2014-2020 (place of implementation of the operation in editions I-III) by poviats (PLN thousand) Source: Own study based on ARMA data [ARiMR 2021]

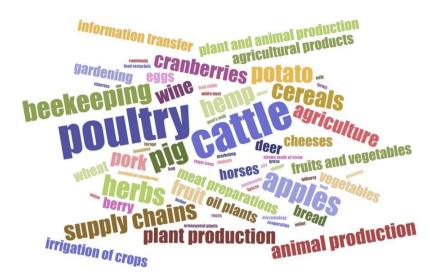


Figure 7. Directions of expenditure of aid funds in projects from the 1st-3rd edition of measure M16 Cooperation RDP 2014-2020 * n = 159, 2 projects from the 3rd edition not assigned to any category Source: own study based on ARMA data [ARiMR 2021]

voivodeships, where the most funds were spent on innovation.

When analyzing the directions of spending funds, it can be concluded that innovations concerning very different areas / issues were supported, as evidenced by the identification of many different directions of spending funds (Figure 7). Most projects concerned poultry (19), cattle (17), apples and pigs (6 each), herbs and beekeeping (5) and hemp, supply chains, cereals, potatoes (4 projects each). The implemented projects most often included support for technological innovations, which accounted for 60% of all projects.

CONCLUSIONS

Activity of beneficiaries in applying for RDP 2014-2020 funds to support innovation in agriculture and rural areas in Poland under measure M16 "Cooperation" was initially small, but it increased over time. This could be due to the fact that the entities interested in cooperation needed time to recognize the essence of the M16 measure and to create an operational group and develop an innovative solution. This was reflected in the increasing number of projects qualified for implementation in individual calls for proposals and a large variety of issues that innovations concerned. The activity of entities involved in the creation of operational groups varied regionally and locally, which may be related to the nature of agriculture, the needs to introduce innovative solutions and institutional resources that could and wanted to be involved in acquiring funds for the development of innovation.

When analyzing the importance of RDP 2014-2020 as an instrument to support innovation in agriculture and rural areas in Poland, one should take into account the formulated support rules, including those relating to the creation of an operational group. It is very important that the analyzed measure M16 "Cooperation" by definition connects and engages various entities interested in solving an existing problem (introducing innovation), including research units. The cooperation of various entities, representing both the sphere of science and practice, initiated in this way, may constitute a certain added value in the context of creating an innovation system and bring various benefits for the development of rural areas in the future. Also, the orientation of the scientific and research community to the needs of the rural economy may be an important factor stimulating the growth of innovativeness of the Polish rural areas.

The results of research on the use of RDP 2014-2020 as a source of financing innovation may be valuable information when designing new financial instruments for supporting rural development in Poland.

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PROW 2014-2020 JAKO INSTRUMENT WSPARCIA INNOWACJI W ROLNICTWIE I NA OBSZARACH WIEJSKICH W POLSCE – PRZYKŁAD DZIAŁANIA "WSPÓŁPRACA" (M16)

Słowa kluczowe: PROW 2014-2020, rolnictwo, obszary wiejskie, innowacyjność, innowacje

ABSTRAKT

Celem pracy było określenie poziomu wsparcia innowacji w rolnictwie i na obszarach wiejskich przez PROW 2014-2020 na przykładzie działania "Współpraca" (M16). Wykorzystano dane pozyskane z Agencji Restrukturyzacji i Modernizacji Rolnictwa (2021). Na podstawie analizy wszystkich projektów zrealizowanych w Polsce określono wielkość alokacji środków w podziale na nabory, wskazano zróżnicowanie przestrzenne ma poziomie regionalnym i lokalnym oraz określono szczegółowe kierunki wydatkowania środków. Łacznie w analizowanych 3 naborach złożono 334 projekty, z tego wsparcie finansowe otrzymało 48,2% z nich. Ogólna kwota dofinansowania wynosiła 448,19 mln zł. Alokacja środków była przestrzennie nierównomierna, co było widoczne zarówno na poziomie regionalnym, jak i lokalnym. Biorąc pod uwagę miejsce realizacji projektów, najwięcej środków pomocowych wydatkowano w województwach mazowieckim, łódzkim i kujawsko-pomorskim. W Polsce północno-wschodniej i północno-zachodniej w większości powiatów nie wspierano rozwoju innowacji w rolnictwie i na obszarach wiejskich w ramach działania M16. Najwięcej projektów zrealizowanych w ramach PROW 2014-2020 dotyczyło drobiu i bydła, następnie jabłek, trzody chlewnej, ziół, pszczelarstwa, konopi, wsparcia łańcuchów dostaw, zbóż i ziemniaków. Dominowały projekty wspierające rozwój innowacji technologicznych.

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