

## THE BEGINNINGS AND DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY SERVICES IN POLAND

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### ABSTRACT

The main objective of this article is to present the development of agricultural advisory services in Poland from its beginnings on the Polish lands, until the entry of our country into the European Union (1 May 2004). The data was obtained from a review of literature, published mainly in Polish, hence, not known in English publications and originates from the author's research carried out in the framework of research grant. The study used a descriptive method and documents the history of agricultural extension dating back to the mid-19th century. In the interwar period (1918–1939), advisory services were carried out by the newly established agricultural chambers, and after World War II, after their liquidation, by state system of agricultural advisory services, which was subject to many changes in the organizational structure and objectives pursued. In the first period of transition of agriculture to a free market economy, the author emphasized the big role of the Polish/American Extension Project for the reorganization of Polish advisory and improvement of skills of our advisers.

**Key words:** social agronomy, agricultural chambers, advisory services, Polish/American Extension Project

### INTRODUCTION

Poland was the only country of the former socialist camp in Central and Eastern Europe which retained private farms and had state-owned agricultural advisory services established after the liquidation of chambers of agriculture at the outset of the centrally planned economy (1946/1947). The share of natural person's holdings in the use of agricultural land (UAA), according to the CSO, was as follows: 1950 – 89.6%, 1980 – 74.5%, 2002 – 87.4%. State owned farms (18.1% in 1989) were privatized and they use now 1.8% of UAA. The rest of land is using by private companies ltd. – 3.6% and agricultural cooperatives – 3.8% (5.7% in 1989). Agriculture in Poland was and still is an economic sector of high importance and has a crucial impact not only on the socio-economic situation of the rural areas, but also on the environment, the structure of the landscape and the biological diversity of those areas. The number of agricultural holdings in Poland at the end of analyzed period, i.e. in 2002, was 1.9 million and the area structure is characterized by great diversity. There is a group of large farms in the west part and a lot of smaller holdings in the south-eastern part of the country. The average area of the utilized agricultural area (UAA) per farm was 7.41 ha in 2002.

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## OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

The main objective of this article is to present the development of agricultural advisory services in Poland from its beginnings on the Polish lands, until the entry of our country into the European Union. The study used a descriptive method. The basic sources of historical data are scientific articles and books or textbooks published in Polish in this field by the following authors: Dębowski [1977], Maziarz [1981, 1984], Kuźma [1986], Przychodzeń [1991], Wawrzyniak [1991, 2003], Michałowski and Szafranski [1993], Kujawiński [2009], Sikorska-Wolak et al. [2014] and others.

Research questions which I would like to address are: Since when have we been dealing with agricultural advisors and agricultural advisory services in Poland; Who was responsible for agricultural extension and advisory services; What were the goals of agricultural advisory services in the past; Who helped Poland in reorganization and improvement of agricultural advisory services in the first period of economic transmission.

### The beginnings of agricultural services in the Polish lands

The beginning of institutional grounds for agricultural extension in Poland dates back to the mid-19th century in the period when our country was under partitions: Russian, Austrian and Prussian<sup>1</sup>. At that time, it was the development of capitalistic relations in agriculture and related enfranchisement process which emphasized the issue of peasant farms. Released from serfdom, Polish peasants were facing problems completely new for them, relating not only to personal freedom, but also to economic self-reliance. The enfranchisement of the peasants was initiated in the Prussian Partition in the period of 1818–1850. In the Austrian Partition it took place on the basis of the edict of 1848, and in the Russian Partition in 1864 [Wawrzyniak 1991].

The new situation in agriculture gave rise to grass roots formation of various associations and agricultural organizations related to the introduction of elements of knowledge and agricultural progress, focused on civil and national goals which was the reason why they were frequently liquidated by the invading states. The first agricultural company in the Russian Partition was the Economic-Agricultural Association in Warsaw (1810–1818) which started a socio-professional movement in the country. The League of Poland operated since 1848 within the Prussian Partition, aiming at strengthening of farms held in Polish hands, which was subsequently transformed into the Central Economic Association in 1861, being a precursor of the contemporary agricultural circles<sup>2</sup> (in Polish – kółka rolnicze). The Economic Association in Lviv and the Agricultural Association in Cracow were created in the Austrian Partition in 1845. It was their initiatives which resulted in the creation of the agricultural schools in Dublany near Lviv (now Ukraine) and Czernichow near Cracow, which played a key role in formation of agricultural education on the Polish territories. Drawing on German, English, French and Danish experiences, these associations, although created within separate Partitions, were aiming at the propagation of knowledge and progress in agriculture by means of, e.g. agricultural exhibitions (farm animals and machines), publishing activity (journals, calendars, leaflets, magazines); they initiated formation of experimental stations. In 1836, the first experimental fields were established on Polish territories in the Agricultural Institute in Mary-

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<sup>1</sup> Poland lost its independence at the end of the 18th century as a result of three subsequent partitions (1772, 1793 and 1795). Russia took over 82% of Poland's territory owned in 1772 and 5.5 million of its inhabitants, Austria – 11% and ca. 4.2 million inhabitants, and Prussia – 7% and ca. 2.6 million inhabitants. In 1807, Poland obtained a small fraction of independence in the form of the created Principality of Warsaw, transformed in 1815 into non-sovereign Congress Poland. Poland regained its independence after 123 years, i.e. in 1918.

<sup>2</sup> Agricultural circles – voluntary socio-economic organizations of farmers, working to increase and improve agricultural production. The first agricultural circle was created in 1862 in Pomerania in 1882 in the Austrian and Russian Partitions. They developed in the interwar period. In communism time treated by the authorities, as a tool of the socialist reconstruction of the village. Many of them still offering services in the field of agricultural mechanization.

mont near Warsaw (presently the Warsaw University of Life Sciences – SGGW), which was the second field of this type in Europe, after Rothamsted in England (1834) [Maziarz 1975, Wawrzyniak 1991].

Bronikowski [1934], recorded that the first paid speaker in Poland, who delivered between 100 and 150 lectures annually and visited 80 agricultural farms, was active from 1883. The position of a Farm inspector appeared in 1911, and the instructor dedicated to addressing rural women's issues appeared in 1918. The number of instructors employed at the associations increased rapidly no sooner than after 1900, i.e. 1908 – 5, 1909 – 12, 1910 – 21, 1911 – 27, 1912 – 32, 1913 – 34, 1914 – 50.

### **Agricultural extension in the system of social agronomy in the interwar period 1918–1939**

The concept of social agronomy was created by a Russian agricultural scientist Czajanow (in English – Tschajanow), 1888–1937, author of the book “The social agronomy”. Social agronomy in his definition means working with “autonomous farmers who run a farm according to their own insights and will. Nobody can dispose over their farm without their consent, nobody has the right to issue orders to them” [Rist et al. 2009].

According to definition of Polish scientist and Prime Minister, Grabski [1928], social agronomy is “a social activity, based on a private initiative, or on associations or institutions, or on local government and the state, consisting in dissemination of agronomic knowledge and on its application by the broadest social classes (from priests to peasants, inclusively)”. A similar definition can be found in the works of Miklaszewski [1933], Bronikowski [1934] and Wojtysiak [1937]. The creators of social agronomy<sup>3</sup> in Poland also included: S. Biedrzycki, S. Moszczeński, J. Mikułowski-Pomorski, Z. Ludkiewicz and B. Składziński [Pawlikowski 1975, Wawrzyniak 1991, Sikorska-Wolak et al. 2014].

Two directions of education derived from this function in the countryside: agricultural advisory services and extramural agricultural education, are currently known as on the job training in agriculture. According to Przychodzeń [1991], the theory of extramural dissemination of knowledge and progress in agriculture (agricultural popularization) is to be treated as a convergence of three parallel and mutually complementary systems of knowledge: the didactics of occupational training in agriculture, agricultural advisory services and innovatics. The subject of interest in agricultural innovatics include innovations and innovation processes occurring in agriculture and the environment of rural areas and their surroundings<sup>4</sup>.

In the interwar period, social agronomy was built on three pillars, i.e. science and agricultural education, agricultural institutions and organizations and agricultural producers. The first pillar was represented by academic education services of scientific-research institutions, as well as primary and secondary agricultural schools. Over this period, one independent agricultural university was established (Warsaw University of Life Sciences – SGGW) and four agricultural faculties (Cracow, Poznań, Lviv and Vilnius) with approx. 2 thousand graduates annually [Maziarz 1984].

Among the agricultural institutions and organizations, agricultural chambers employing advisors occupied a special place. The first three agricultural chambers were created in the period of 1918–1920 in Pomerania, Wielkopolska, and Silesia. Their activity was modeled on the experience of Western European countries, mainly Germany. The governmental regulation of 1928 provided a possibility of organizing agricultural chambers in the newly created provinces. These were single-level, county organizations, which had the right to collect compulsory premiums from all the farmers as well as to conduct business operations. The development of the agricultural groups (8.5 thousand) falls onto the same period, with the same tendency being observed in the country housewives groups, as well as in rural cooperatives and trade associations.

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<sup>3</sup> It corresponds to the contemporary system of the dissemination of knowledge and agricultural progress (in Polish literature) or to the top-down transfer of technology (in western literature).

<sup>4</sup> Therefore, agricultural advisory services have been enriched by the so-called sociological aspects of diffusion and the adaptation of agricultural innovations formulated by Rogers [1983], in his theory of innovation.

The following are worth mentioning among extension personnel: general agricultural instructors, subject matter specialists, instructors responsible for farms operated by women and instructors responsible for rural youth affairs [Maziarz 1975]. The number of instructors was not large, but it increased from 200 (1919) to 2,000 in 1930 and to 3,000 in 1939 [Pawlikowski 1975].

### **Shaping of agricultural extension in the centrally planned economy in Poland (1945–1989)<sup>5</sup>**

At the turn of 1946/1947, agricultural chambers were liquidated (to be restored in 1996) and their tasks were transferred to the Peasant Self-Help Cooperative, the activities of which were restricted to the development of rural trade and agricultural trade. A turning point of rural policy (1948), consisting in accepting the concept of the collectivization of farms and the creation of agricultural production cooperatives resulted in reorganization of the extension service system and impediment of its development. The agricultural service found itself separated into two organizational divisions, namely at the level of management boards for agriculture and forestry on a county level and at the state machinery centers (in Polish – POM) on a county and district level.

The new agricultural policy drawn up in 1957 recognized the importance of extension in the processes of social and economic transformation of rural areas and agriculture. While state agricultural farms (in Polish – PGR, approx. 15–20% of arable lands) and agricultural production cooperatives (in Polish – RSP, 5–7%) were employed more and more professional personnel and they themselves were improving efficiency of production, more than 2 million minor individual farmers were unable to overcome emerging difficulties without the assistance of professional extension service.

Legal recognition of extension service operations and the determination of their tasks took place in 1958. A rapid increase in the number of agricultural instructors appeared: from 2,558 persons in 1959 to 3,893 in 1960 (ca. 75% with secondary school and 7% – higher education diplomas) [Stelmach 1963]. This was also a result of an increase in the number and importance of agricultural groups frequently at farmers' own initiatives (1,700 in 1956 and 2,000 in 1959). The increase in employment of advisors resulted in a decrease in the number of individual farms per 1 agricultural instructor from 1,795 (1958) to 923 farms (1960). Such a large number of farms still hindered the implementation of an individual extension service [Wawrzyniak 2003].

In the years 1960–1967 the number of agricultural instructors, so-called agronomists appointed at the Meeting of the Agricultural Groups in 1959 increased to 5,364 individuals, meaning that there was one advisor, employed by the County Agricultural Group Associations in every district (the smallest administrative unit), who usually resided in the county capital. In order to bring agronomists closer to farmers and inhabitants of rural area, the construction of apartments in districts was commenced; in the first stage – apartments for agronomists, in the 2nd stage – for agronomists and zootechnicians, and in the 3rd stage – for agronomists, zootechnicians, and veterinarians.

In 1968, reorganization of agricultural services took place, which resulted in an organizational structure consisting of the following links [Maziarz 1981, Wawrzyniak 1991]:

- at the district level (the smallest administrative unit): agronomists and zootechnicians were employed, as well as their assistants and an agricultural clerk;

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<sup>5</sup> As a result of the Jalta agreement (1945) Poland lost the eastern borderlands and partially received a territorial compensation in the west from Germany. The Soviet Union received authority over Poland. In this way began the process of creating a new economic and social system – socialism and centrally planned economy in which the decisions about production, rationing of goods and their prices has taken the state power. According to the Act from 3 January 1946, private enterprises were nationalized, including the landed estates on the basis of which were created state-owned farms and agricultural cooperatives. Private property remained private houses, flats and peasant farms. The development of agriculture has been progress in the yields of plants and animals and the stagnation in the size of private farms which were not the basis for socialism economic system.

- at the county level: deputy managers of departments of agriculture and forestry of County Offices and two specialized extension inspectors: for plant production and for animal production;
- at the province level: deputy managers of agriculture and forestry departments of Province Offices; and inspectors – advisors, experts of the Regional Agricultural Research Centers (in Polish – rejonowe rolnicze zakłady doświadczalne – RRZD).

This improved organizational model of agricultural services was criticized immediately after its formation. The criticism was directed at the fact of retaining separate positions of an agronomist and a zootechnician, who are inherently in conflict with the properties of a sustainable agricultural farm.

The introduction of the new administrative division of the country in 1973 (i.a. the area of districts was increased and they were given new competences) constituted a premise for the introduction of subsequent changes with regard to the organization of agricultural services: the separate positions of an agronomist and a zootechnician ceased to exist, and a universal advisor – agricultural inspector was introduced in their place. The new organizational structure, according to the Regulation, included: an agricultural services manager (usually the previous agronomist), general instructors for a given district, specialized instructors and field – general agricultural instructors. All of them answered to the head of the district. General instructors for a given district covered a minimum of three positions: instructor for rural households, for melioration and grassland, for livestock facility construction, as well as for land management and geodesy. The head of the district could also employ instructors – experts in orcharding, gardening, pig production, cattle production, etc. depending on the needs and capacity of the district.

The introduced organizational changes brought along another step to turning agricultural services into actual advisors for farmers. The research results indicate changes in the style of work of agricultural services. A gradual transfer was observed, from mass advisory, to individual (specialized) and group advisory, due to the processes of specialization and cooperation taking place in Polish agriculture. During this period, exemplary and implementation farms were created.

On the basis of 19 RRZD employing 1,900 employees, 18 Provincial Agricultural Progress Centers (in Polish – wojewódzkie ośrodki postępu rolniczego – WOPR) were established in 1975, with branches in the new provinces, as a result of the new administrative division of the country, and by the end of 1980 their number increased to 49, i.e. one Agricultural Progress Center in each province. The number of employed advisors involved in implementation, popularization and training activities in WOPRs amounted to 5,235 people in 1980/1981 (2.3 million farms) [Wawrzyniak 2003].

The factors differentiating WOPR from RRZD include: reduction in the area of operation of advisors, which caused a growth in the capacity to recognize the extension needs of farmers and to more effectively adapt the research results to practice, decreasing the way from learning to practice through removing one administrative link, i.e. counties, renaming county specialized consulting inspectors (administrative positions) to expert field advisors, strengthening the regions with specialists in economics and farm organization (since 1974) and with out-of-school agricultural education (since 1979), and an increase in the number of general agricultural advisors as well as implementation and exemplary farms as local centers of agricultural progress.

In the years 1981–1982, governmental decisions were made on handing over part of the district agricultural services (8,500, i.e. 40% of the contemporary status) to WOPR. The outcome of the reorganization of district agricultural services was unfavorable, since this number was considerably higher than the number of advisors employed previously (5,500). A “reorganization of the extension organization” took place, the level of higher education among advisors was reduced from 80 to 30%, a process of strong fluctuation of extension personnel capable of dealing with the new work situation was recorded [Kania and Drygas 1995]. After having taking over the instructional service, the WOPRs turned from local government offices into state institutions directly responsible for agricultural extension, and indirectly for agriculture development. The WOPR founding authority was the province governor. Each WOPR had its own farm, very diverse in terms of area: from 150 to 6,500 ha [Wawrzyniak 1991].

### **Agricultural Advisory Services in the transition to a free market economy (1990–2004)**

At the beginning of the 1990s, after overthrowing Communism, in countries of Central and Eastern Europe the processes of implementing a market economy into agriculture and privatisation of state-owned farms also resulted in the governments of these countries establishing state-run agricultural extension systems financed from budget subsidies. After several years of their functioning these systems were, earlier than in Poland, included in the process of commercialisation of extension services which became paid services, or their privatisation, i.e. transferring them onto agricultural chambers, or by the formation of private legal entities. These processes were initiated in Lithuania in 1998, Latvia in 1993, and Estonia in 1996. In my opinion, they followed the pattern of processes implemented in Western European countries, e.g. England and Wales – ADAS since 1986, Holland – DLV since 1993, Scotland – SAC's Advisory Services since 1987 [Kania 2007, AKIS in the EU... 2014].

The agricultural advisory system in Poland was directed mainly at individual farms. The state owned farms and the cooperative farms employed their own agricultural engineers and used consulting and IT services directly from companies that sold them farming production inputs, and focused on their own farm products.

The political and economic changes initiated in Poland and in all of Eastern Europe in 1989 resulted in the market reform of our agriculture, also including extension. In 1990, the WOPRs transformed into the ODRS – Provincial Agricultural Advisory Centers, which began to operate in a new form from 1 January 1991, strongly supported by the Polish-American Agricultural Extension Project [Miller et al. 1995, Bahn and Evans 1999, Kania 2005].

The significant changes in extension service reorganization included:

- separation of production farms from the Provincial Agricultural Advisory Centers, which became budgetary units not involved in direct business operations;
- socialization of advisory by appointment of the Social Agricultural Advisory Councils at the level of the country, province, and counties;
- changes among the management staff of the Agricultural Advisory Centers; new directors began to be appointed by way of competitions;
- verification of the personnel and reduction in employment of advisors (approx. 50%);
- gradual provision of additional equipment for the Agricultural Advisory Centers: technical equipment, especially computers;
- the province governor was the founding authority;
- funding of advisory services from the state budget via the Minister of Agriculture to the province governor, next to the director of the Agricultural Advisory Center.

In the first period of reorganization and improvement of agricultural extension in Poland, the governments of Ireland and the US played a significant role, as well as foreign experts, who strongly encouraged maintenance and support of extension services on the part of the state. In 1990, under the aid of the Irish government, experts from TEAGASC and the University of Agriculture in Dublin educated Polish advisors with regard to the methodology of extension work and planning of extension programs. In the years 1991–1995, Poland benefited from support of the USDA government under the Polish-American Extension Project. For 6 months, more than 100 advisors from 31 state agricultural universities worked together with Polish advisors in the Province Agricultural Advisory Centers. What did the Polish advisors learn from their American colleagues? The author's own research on reports and published articles indicate that the most significant achievements included [Miller 1995, Ragland 1995, Bahn 1997, Place et al. 2000, Andrews et al. 2001, Kania 2007]:

- creation of grass roots, individual extension plans based on the needs and expectations of farmers and inhabitants of rural areas, and not only execution of the top-down tasks of the Minister of Agriculture;
- more influence of advisors on farmers' behavior in order to make them introduce changes in the production organization and technology, to be more competitive on the market;

- convincing the heads of the Agricultural Advisory Centers of the need to cooperate with the Social Agricultural Advisory Councils, to make the farmers feel that they have an impact on the operation of the extension center;
- a feeling of satisfaction with the fact that the level of professional knowledge of the Polish advisors is not lower than that of American advisors, and that it is possible to catch up on the organization and methodology of extension work.

Business planning, as one of the most important tools of transition from centrally planned economy to a market economy, progressed from a “buzz word” among Polish Extension advisers in 1991 to more than 50 thousand business plans completed by the end of 1994 [Miller et al. 1995]. It should also be emphasized that, due to the assistance of the USDA, the training base at the province level of the Agricultural Advisory Centers was thoroughly modernized and enriched with modern technical equipment, previously owned by American advisors, donated to the Polish extension service<sup>6</sup>.

After the new administrative division of provinces which was introduced in Poland in 1999, organizational changes took place in agricultural extension as well. The number of provinces was reduced from 49 to 16. The Agricultural Advisory Centers were established in every province, with extension units in every county. By 2004, both CDR and ODRs were administrated by the Ministry of Agriculture.

During the era of economic transformation in Poland, agricultural advisory service played a key role in fostering the economic changes in rural areas. In the south-eastern part of the country, advisory work focuses mainly on small and diverse farms (in terms of production and economic), supporting farmers in non-agricultural activities generating additional income. In regions where commercial farms prevail, the advisory work focuses different technologies [Kania 2007].

## CONCLUSIONS

Agricultural advisory services have been present in Poland, in an organized form, from the mid-19th century. From that period until to 2004, many changes in the agricultural advisory system have been introduced in terms of institutional providers, organizational structure, goals and objectives.

It should clearly be emphasized that Poland was one of several countries of the former Eastern Bloc with a relatively well developed extension system and structures in place to disseminate agricultural progress. Poland’s agriculture sector was also somewhat different from those of the other Eastern Bloc countries because until 1990 more than 75% of arable land was privately owned. In fact, there were about 2 million private agricultural farms.

Changes in the organizational form of the state agricultural extension service were accompanied by a reorientation in programming. Since 1991, extension programs devoted to the issues of agricultural economics, agricultural marketing and information have become the priority. In the first period of reorganization and improvement of agricultural advisory services in Poland, the governments of Ireland and the US played a significant role as well as their extension experts who strongly supported Polish advisers in improvement advisory skills. In author’s opinion during the era of economic transformation in Poland, agricultural advisory service played a key role in fostering the economic changes in rural areas.

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<sup>6</sup> Brewer [2001], from Michigan State University wrote and I quote: “The Polish extension service was established in 1991 with the help of the USDA...” p. 101, which is obviously not true!

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## **POCZĄTKI I ROZWÓJ DORADZTWA ROLNICZEGO W POLSCE**

### **STRESZCZENIE**

Głównym celem artykułu jest zaprezentowanie rozwoju doradztwa rolniczego w Polsce, w okresie od jego początków na ziemiach polskich, aż do wejścia Polski do Unii Europejskiej (01.05.2004 r.). Dane źródłowe pozyskano z przeglądu literatury polskojęzycznej, nieznaną w literaturze anglojęzycznej, zaś dane empiryczne z badań własnych oraz realizowanego grantu badawczego. W analizie posłużono się metodą opisową, dokumentując historię organizacji doradztwa sięgającą połowy XIX wieku. W okresie międzywojennym, tj. w latach 1918–1939, doradztwo rolnicze realizowane było w Polsce przez nowo powstałe izby rolnicze, a po II wojnie światowej w wyniku ich likwidacji przez państwowy system doradztwa rolniczego, który był przedmiotem bardzo wielu zmian w strukturze organizacyjnej i realizowanych zadaniach. W pierwszym okresie transformacji rolnictwa do gospodarki rynkowej dużą rolę w reorganizacji doradztwa i podniesieniu umiejętności doradców odegrał m.in. Polsko-Amerykański Program Doradztwa Rolniczego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** agronomia społeczna, izby rolnicze, usługi doradcze, Polsko-Amerykański Program Doradztwa