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CONDITIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL FARMING IN THE PROVINCE OF MAZOVIA

Key words: social farming, care farm, multifunctional rural development

ABSTRACT. This study aims to identify the conditions for the development of social farming in the province of Mazovia, and to present the opportunities and barriers to the establishment of care farms in Poland. The study involved the method of desk-based literature review and the method of descriptive statistics. The paper provides an analysis of various forms of social farming functioning in the European Union and discusses the possible directions of care farming development depending on the degree of involvement of various institutions. In addition, the study focuses on the most important conditions for the development of care farms in the province of Mazovia, which include the dichotomy of socio-economic development, the spatial polarization of demographic processes and the ageing population. In 2013, the ageing index (the number of persons aged 65+ per 1,000 children aged 0-14) for the province of Mazovia was 993, however, it is expected that in 2035 it will be 1,758, and in 2050 it will reach 2,382. In 2050, the proportion of people aged 65+ in the population of Poland will reach 32.7%. Consequently, the demand for certain services e.g. in the field of health care and social care will be increasing. Unfavourable demographic processes like depopulation and undesirable processes affecting the age structure will mainly affect districts located in the peripheral areas of the province. Even though, currently there are not any care farms operating in Mazovia, there seems to be a great interest in this form of economic activity.

INTRODUCTION

Social farming is an innovative approach based on unused labour resources hidden in rural areas. It is addressed, in particular, to rural women, who have been taking care of their families for generations. It is now broadly agreed that social farming comprises all activities based on the use of agricultural resources (both of plant and animal origin) to promote and introduce various practices and activities in the field of care, social re-integration, training and social and professional rehabilitation of disadvantaged people and training people with special needs [Parzonko, Siczko 2015, p. 44]. This innovative approach combines two areas, i.e. multifunctional agriculture and social services.

In the EU, there is no universally agreed definition of the concept of social farming, and various terms are used, such as: 'farming for health', 'care farming', 'green care' or 'green therapies'. These activities enable people in difficult situations to come into contact with agricultural activities and nature, and thereby contribute to their individual health

and well-being, facilitate social inclusion, learning, boost their self-esteem and foster participation in social life [Di Iacovo, O'Connor 2009].

Social farming seeks synergy resulting from the promotion of multifunctional rural development combined with the implementation of social and health care tasks, which means that social agriculture finds its theoretical legitimacy in both social sciences and medical sciences. The interdisciplinary nature of social agriculture (noting the cooperation between science, medicine and social sciences with other interested stakeholders like institutions and organizations, some researchers use the term 'transdisciplinary' referring to social agriculture) [Di Iacovo et al. 2016] means that it can be seen as a process of social innovation, in which grassroot initiatives building on local experience support the process of socio-economic and political change [Neumeier 2012, Pol, Ville 2009, Di Iacovo et al. 2014]. It also fits into the concept of social economy, which combines social and economic goals [Parzonko 2018, p. 313].

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The aim of this study is to present the most important (according to the author) conditions for the development of social farming in the province of Mazovia, and identify the opportunities and barriers to the development of care farms in Poland. The research hypothesis states that in the province of Mazovia there is a need for the development of social farming implemented in the form of care farms. The study is largely theoretical, so the basic research methods to achieve the assumed goal involved the literature review and the method of descriptive statistics. The basic empirical material comprised data from the Office for National Statistics in Poland (GUS) and literature materials.

SOCIAL FARMING IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Social agriculture is a new area attracting the interest of many stakeholders such as farmers and agricultural organisations, institutions responsible for social and health care, as well as government and self-government institutions at a local, regional, national and European level. It has been developing since the end of the 20th century in rural Europe. It takes various organizational forms. There are three variants of the organization of social farming depending on the degree of involvement of various institutions and organizations:

1. Variant 1, involving private farms managed by private entrepreneurs, for whom social farming is a form of diversification of income and is parallel to normal agricultural production intended for the market (the Netherlands, Belgium and the United Kingdom).
2. Variant 2, involving the cooperation of enterprises, social cooperatives, associations, foundations and public institutions (Italy, Spain).
3. Variant 3, in which social farming, although implemented on farms, is the task of public authorities or health care entities (Germany, France, Slovenia and Ireland) [EUR-Lex 2013, Kinsella 2014, p. 6].

The country with the fastest growing sector of social farming is the Netherlands. In the years 1998-2009, the number of social farms in Holland increased from 75 to almost 1,100

[Hassink et al. 2014]. This type of agriculture is perceived as an innovative rural model of social care in contrast to the institutional or medical model. Most social farms in the Netherlands are family businesses. In the 1990s, the main target groups supported by care farms were people with intellectual disabilities or mental health problems. Recently, they have embraced seniors, people recovering from drug problems and alcohol abuse, the long-term unemployed and children. For approximately 50% of care farms, annual revenue directly related to care activities exceed agricultural revenue. It is worth noting that almost 70% of care farms in 2003 also engaged in other non-agricultural activities, where the most popular included farm recreation and processing and the sale of agricultural products [Social Farming 2018a].

In Italy, social farming services for rural and urban populations make an important contribution to the Italian social system [Social Farming 2018b]. The Italian approach implies close cooperation between business entities, local communities and public institutions to co-create innovative social services in rural and suburban areas. This is called the Mediterranean model. An example is the Valley of the Era (Pisa, Tuscany, Italy), which represents the most advanced case of social farming in Italy, in terms of structure and management, and is now a model for many other local initiatives. At present, the Union of Municipalities of the Valley of Era (13 municipalities) is coordinating local social farming initiatives undertaken by farms, social cooperatives, professional agencies, local government, the University of Pisa, the local public health authority, agricultural associations and others [García-Llorente et al. 2016].

Also, in other European countries, the idea of social farming is becoming more and more popular. An example would be the United Kingdom, where in recent years the number of care farms has increased rapidly from 180 in 2012 to around 250 in 2017 [Rotheram et al. 2017].

In Poland, the pioneer organisation, first to explore the field, was the Agricultural Advisory Centre in Brwinów Branch in Krakow and the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Agricultural Advisory Centre, which initiated the project entitled “Green Care – Care Farms in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodship” financed from the Regional Operational Programme of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodship for 2014-2020. In the first edition of this programme (2016-2018), 15 care farms were established [Wojcieszak, Wojcieszak 2018, p. 30].

Care farms fit in the senior policy, which aims to improve the quality of life and social inclusion of the elderly, often lonely or sick residents who need support. The development of the idea of care farms can contribute to a positive solution to many economic and demographic problems in rural areas [Sikorska et al. 2018, p. 37-38].

Unfortunately, in Poland, current legislative framework restricts the possibilities of combining agricultural activity with the provision of care services. Care farms can be registered as socio-economic entities (as foundations, associations, social cooperatives or non-profit companies) or as an economic activity. This is one of the barriers that may hinder the process of delivering these types of projects. Also, financing such facilities may be a problem. Sadly, for most seniors, mainly due to low pensions, the fee for this type of care may exceed the financial resources. Therefore, there is a need for care farms whose services would be funded in full or in part by the state, local government, grants, the rural development programme or sponsors [Monitor Polski 2014].

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL FARMING DEVELOPMENT IN MAZOVIA

The specificity of the Masovia region results from the fact that it is home to the capital city of Poland and, compared to other provinces, covers a relatively large geographical area. In 2018, the Mazowieckie Voivodship covered an area of 35,558 km², which accounted for 11.4% of the country's area. Beyond Warsaw's urban agglomeration, the region has an agricultural character. Agricultural land covers about 65% of the voivodship's area [US 2018]. Farms in Mazovia are largely either small or medium farms. The average size of agricultural land belonging to a farm is 8.68 ha and is lower than the national average – 10.81 ha [ARiMR 2019]. The development of Mazovia is an example of the development of a strongly polarised region. The city of Warsaw, together with its immediate surroundings, is home to over half of the population of the Mazowieckie Voivodship, 2/3 of residents have a higher education and 3/4 are larger business entities. At the other extreme, there are peripheral, underprivileged or at least disproportionately weak areas in terms of human capital, production capacity and other productive forces. This becomes especially evident through the dichotomy of socio-economic development. The Warsaw urban agglomeration plays a dominant socio-economic role and the role of an important European transport hub. However, part of the province has economic development rates below the national average. According to the OECD classification, Mazovia was recognized as the most internally diverse region in Europe, second only to London. The area houses 105 poorest municipalities out of 500 in Poland. Contrasts between the fast growing metropolitan area of Warsaw and peripheral districts stagnating or plunging into crisis are deepening [Śleszyński 2017]. For example, there is territorial diversity in the recorded unemployment rate, which, at the end of June this year, accounted for 4.5% and was lower than the country average – 5.3%. Districts with the highest unemployment rate included Szydłowiecki (22.4%), Przysuski (17.6%) and Radomski (16.6%), while the lowest rates were recorded in the capital city of Warsaw (1.4%), Western Warsaw (1.7%) and Grójecki district (1.9%) [GUS 2019].

Moreover, there is large territorial polarization of demographic phenomena in Mazovia. A significant increase in the population is recorded in the suburban areas of larger cities (primarily with district rights). The bipolar spatial distribution of demographic processes is mainly a result of changes related to urbanisation. On the one hand, there is population concentration in the largest urban centres and so-called suburbanization, i.e., a migration of the urban population to neighbouring rural areas, and on the other hand – a depopulation of peripheral rural areas, located far from large cities. In districts with a large outflow of residents, some areas are so depopulated that it leads to their decline. In contrast, large cities like Warsaw and their suburban areas are overpopulated which causes transportation problems. An increase in the population of the Mazowieckie Voivodship is mainly a result of inter-voivodship migration, the balance of which has been positive for several years. People migrate to Warsaw and neighbouring districts, mainly seeking employment. An analysis of data from 2010-2017 shows that the biggest population growth was recorded in districts around Warsaw, namely: Piaseczyński (by 11.66%), Wołomiński (by 10.50%), Grodziski (by 8.77%), Legionowski (by 8.23%), West Warsaw (by 8.03%), Pruszkowski (by 5.84%), Miński (by 3.95%) and Otwocki (by 2.88%).

Table 1. Median age of the population – forecast until 2050

Year	Median		
	total	men	women
2013	39.1	37.4	40.9
2020	41.9	40.3	43.6
2035	48.6	43.7	50.4
2050	52.5	50.1	54.8

Source: [GUS 2014]

Every year, the population of Mazowieckie Voivodship slightly ages. The median age of the population, calculated in 2017, was 40.2 years; (38.7 years for men and 41.8 for women). In 2016, these figures were: 39.9, 38.3 and 41.5, respectively, and in 2010 – 38.1, 36.4 and 40.1. The population living in cities is older – in 2017, a city resident's median age was 40.9, while for rural residents – 38.8 years [US 2018]. The median value between 30-34 means that the population is demographically old. Poland entered this stage of demographic development in the early 1980s. At the end of the 1990s – mainly due to a rapidly falling number

of births, another border was crossed – Poland became a demographically, very old society (median 35+). Table 1 presents a forecast of the population's median age up to 2050.

The measure of ageing is the relationship between the youngest generation aged 0-14, and the generation of persons aged 65+. The ageing index is expressed as the number of seniors aged 65+ for every 1,000 children aged 0-14. In 2013, this indicator for the Mazowieckie Voivodship amounted to 993, however, it is expected to reach 1,758 in 2035, and 2,382 in 2050 [GUS 2014]. In 2050, persons aged 65+ are expected to account for 32.7% of the population in Poland. The growing percentage of older people will have an impact on both the system of social benefits and allowances provided by the state and the market of goods and services purchased to meet various needs of this group of people. It is expected that, in the future, there will be an even greater demand for some services – e.g. in the field of health and social care. Unfavourable demographic processes – population decline and undesirable processes occurring in the age structure – will certainly be recorded in districts located in the peripheral areas of the voivodship.

According to information obtained from the Mazovia Agricultural Advisory Centre in Warsaw (MODR), there are currently no care farms operating in Mazowieckie Voivodship. However, there is a great interest in this form of activity. This is evidenced by the results of a survey conducted during trainings and educational meetings held by the Agricultural Advisory Centre in Brwinów as part of the nationwide project “Care Farms – Building a Cooperation Network”, implemented from October 2016 to May 2017. Its purpose was to promote, disseminate and support the idea of social farming and the establishment of care farms in particular. In a group of 62 farm owners from Mazowieckie Voivodship, 16 declared their intention to undertake this type of activity, and 36 considered such a possibility [Dąbrowski et al. 2019]. In 2017, the Mazovia Agricultural Advisory Centre in Warsaw (MODR) began to promote the idea of care farms in Mazovia. This is a relatively new issue and not easy to popularise. Great hopes rest on the owners of agritourism farms who have experience in running hospitality businesses and necessary facilities like buildings, gardens and a farm adapted to host visitors. Therefore, they could be pioneers in the area of care activities and serve as role models for others.

In 2018, on December 5, an agreement was signed regarding the project: “Care Farms in Rural Development in View of Demographic Challenges”. This project is implemented by a consortium consisting of: the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (leader), the

Agricultural Advisory Centre in Brwinów – a subsidiary in Krakow, Jagiellonian University and the University of Agriculture in Krakow and the National Centre for Research and Development, which transfers funds for the project. The project began on January 1, 2019, and is scheduled to be completed in December 2021. The main goal of the project is to develop a care farm model and prepare an implementation system in the form of a development strategy for care farms. It will take the shape of an innovative combination of multifunctional agriculture with the provision of social services at a local level [MRiRW 2018].

CONCLUSIONS

In rural areas, where the need to generate non-agricultural sources of income is recognized, so as to strengthen the processes of rural deagrarianisation and stop the unfavourable process of depopulation, social farming seems an interesting proposition.

The ageing of the population will continue in upcoming years, both in cities and rural areas. An increase in the number of elderly people, often forced to function independently, forces actions aimed at extending the scope of care by introducing new institutional solutions. Care farms, being an example of innovative solutions in the field of agricultural entrepreneurship, fit the new senior policy, which involves the social inclusion of the elderly. It is advisable to disseminate this form of activity in both rural and suburban areas of the Mazowieckie Voivodship. Care farms potentially provide support for people working in the urban agglomeration of Warsaw, who need to look after their elderly parents but also remain in full time employment.

A noticeable dichotomy in the development of the Mazowieckie Voivodship and especially the much slower pace of development of its peripheral areas is also a premise to encourage farm owners to take such initiatives. Care farms can become an important source of additional income.

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UWARUNKOWANIA ROZWOJU ROLNICTWA SPOŁECZNEGO NA MAZOWSZU

Słowa kluczowe: rolnictwo społeczne, gospodarstwo opiekuńcze, wielofunkcyjny rozwój wsi

ABSTRAKT

Celem opracowania jest identyfikacja uwarunkowań rozwoju rolnictwa społecznego na Mazowszu oraz przedstawienie szans i barier rozwoju gospodarstw opiekuńczych w Polsce. Wykorzystano metodę analizy literatury przedmiotu i metodę statystyki opisowej. Dokonano analizy funkcjonujących form rolnictwa społecznego w krajach Unii Europejskiej i zaprezentowano warianty możliwych kierunków rozwoju ze względu na stopień zaangażowania różnych instytucji i organizacji w organizację rolnictwa społecznego. Ponadto przedstawiono ważniejsze uwarunkowania rozwoju gospodarstw opiekuńczych w województwie mazowieckim, do których zaliczono: dychotomię rozwoju społeczno-gospodarczego Mazowsza, polaryzację przestrzenną procesów demograficznych oraz starzenie się społeczeństwa. W 2013 roku indeks starości dla województwa wyniósł 993, jednak oczekuje się, że w 2035 roku przyjmie wartość 1758, a w 2050 roku – 2382. W 2050 roku przewiduje się 32,7% udział populacji ludzi w wieku 65 lat i więcej w ogólnej populacji Polski. Należy się spodziewać, że w przyszłości będzie wzrastał popyt na niektóre usługi, np. w dziedzinie ochrony zdrowia i opieki społecznej. Niekorzystne procesy demograficzne – ubytek liczby ludności oraz niepożądane procesy zachodzące w jej strukturze wiekowej – wystąpią w powiatach położonych na peryferyjnych obszarach województwa. Na terenie województwa mazowieckiego gospodarstwa opiekuńcze jeszcze nie funkcjonują. Istnieje jednak duże zainteresowanie tą formą działalności.

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