

Impact of the financial assistance provided as part of the Rural Development Programme on the state of organic farming in Poland in the years 2014–2022

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Abstract

This article presents the state of Polish organic farming in the years 2014–2022 in the context of sector subsidies, among others from community funds. The aim of the study is to show the relationship between development and subsidies for organic farming, as well as the rates of change over the analysed period, with a practical goal of providing conclusions that could increase the interest of farmers in organic production.

The basic issue that needs to be addressed is both the dropping number of such farms and decreasing area of organically farmed usable agricultural land (UAL), with the number of organic farms, UAL areas in each region, changes in types of production, and the structure of UAL areas being the subject of analysis. The article also explores the support provided for organic farming from national and community funds, before concluding with subsidy amounts proposed for the years 2023–2027.

The desk research method was applied, with sources, among others, including data, reports, information available online (on websites) as well as national and foreign legal instruments.

Analysis of the data shows that the development of organic farming is contingent on the amounts of subsidies and the suitable manufacturing potential of farms. Opposing the shrinkage of this sector also depends on legal and organisational solutions that guarantee satisfactory income from organic production.

Keywords: Strategic Plan for Common Agricultural Policy (SP CAP), organic payments, Rural Development Programme (RDP), organic agriculture, Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

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Introduction

Organic production is a system of farm management and food production using natural substances and processes, combining best environmental and climate action practices, a high level of biodiversity, the preservation of natural resources, and the application of high animal welfare standards and high production standards. Organic production plays a notable social role by delivering organic products, as well as contributing to environmental protection and development of rural areas¹. In addition to this social role, it also has functions that are environmental (among others by promoting sustainable agricultural production) and economic (among others through financial support for farms that use organic production methods).

The promotion of healthy food and its manufacturing is generating increased consumer interest in organic products. Among other things, organic production does not use pesticides, synthetic fertilisers, genetically modified organisms, growth regulators and artificial feed additives. For this reason, organic food is more expensive than food produced using conventional methods, a fact that some consumers view as a major obstacle².

The results of the study of organic farms show that barriers for the growth of organic agriculture and its profitability include, among others, the considerable scattering of farms, small scale of commodity production, relatively low harvests, and high costs in comparison with conventional production, as well as poor market infrastructure

1. Cf. Regulation (EU) 2018/848 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007, OJ EU L 150 of 14.06.2018, as amended, Preamble, point 1.
2. Cf. J. Barłowska, A. Wolanciuk, J. Idec, *Rolnictwo ekologiczne w Polsce na tle Unii Europejskiej i świata*, "Przegląd Hodowlany" 2017, nr 2, pp. 1–4; K. Brodzińska, *Rozwój rolnictwa ekologicznego w Polsce na tle uwarunkowań przyrodniczych i systemu wsparcia finansowego*, "Zeszyty Naukowe SGGW w Warszawie. Problemy Rolnictwa Światowego" 2010, t. 10(25), z. 2, pp. 12–21; A. Kowalska, *Rolnictwo ekologiczne jako czynnik rozwoju zrównoważonej konsumpcji*, "Journal of Agribusiness and Rural Development" 2015, nr 3(37), DOI:10.17306/JARD.2015.49, pp. 467–476; K. Puppel, M. Łukasiewicz, T. Sakowski et al., *Rolnictwo ekologiczne w Polsce na tle krajów członkowskich Unii Europejskiej i świata*, "Przegląd Hodowlany" 2018, nr 6, pp. 1–5; M. Szalast-Piwińska, *Rolnictwo ekologiczne w Polsce w latach 2014–2020 w ujęciu przestrzennym* [in:] *Przemiany w rolnictwie – współczesne wyzwania ekonomiczne, społeczne i środowiskowe. Monografia z okazji Jubileuszu 70-lecia prof. dr. hab. H. Runowskiego*, red. B. Gołębowska, A. Grontkowska, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo SGGW, 2023, pp. 159–176. M. Żeleziak, *Dlaczego rolnictwo ekologiczne?*, "Rocznik Świętokrzyski. Seria B – Nauki Przyrodnicze" 2009, nr 30, pp. 155–166.

and difficulties with the processing, distribution and the sale of organic products resulting from the limited purchasing power of consumers³.

From 2014 to 2021, the applicable regulations of domestic and community law related to organic farming included Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007⁴, Commission Regulation (EC) No 889/2008⁵ and Commission Regulation (EC) No 1235/2008⁶, Regulation (EU) 2018/848 of the European Parliament and the Council⁷ (the date of application of which was amended by Regulation (EU) of the European Parliament and the Council No 2020/1693)⁸, the Organic Agriculture Act⁹ and executive regulations of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development¹⁰.

Subsequent changes in domestic and foreign legislation concerning this sector of agriculture, which took place in the years 2021–2023, included Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and the Council¹¹, the Organic Farming and

3. Cf. D. Komorowska, *Perspektywy rozwoju rolnictwa ekologicznego w Polsce*, “Zeszyty Naukowe SGGW w Warszawie – Problemy Rolnictwa Światowego” 2006, nr 15, p. 43; K. Kociszewski, *Bariery i czynniki sprzyjające funkcjonowaniu gospodarstw ekologicznych w świetle wyników ogólnopolskich badań ankietowych*, “Roczniki Naukowe Stowarzyszenia Ekonomistów Rolnictwa i Agrobiznesu” 2014, t. 16, z. 2, p. 133; J. Groszyk, *Rolnictwo ekologiczne w Polsce w kontekście strategii unijnych*, “INFOS. BAS. Biuro Analiz Sejmowych” 2022, nr 4(296), p. 3.
4. Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 of 28 June 2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products, and repealing Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91, OJ EU L 189 of 20.07.2007, as amended.
5. Commission Regulation (EC) No 889/2008 of 5 September 2008 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products with regard to organic production, labelling and control, OJ EU L 250 of 18.09.2008, item 1, as amended.
6. Commission Regulation (EC) No 1235/2008 of 8 December 2008 laying down detailed rules for implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 regarding arrangements for importing organic products from third countries, OJ EU L 334 of 12.12.2008, as amended.
7. Regulation (EU) 2018/848 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 on organic production and labelling of organic products, and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007, OJ EU L 150 of 14.06.2018, as amended.
8. Regulation (EU) 2018/848 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 November 2020 amending Regulation (EU) 2018/848 on organic production and labelling of organic products, regarding its date of application and certain other dates referred to in that Regulation, OJ EU L 381/1 of 13.11.2020.
9. Ustawa z 25 czerwca 2009 r. o rolnictwie ekologicznym, t.j. Dz. U. 2020 poz. 1324.
10. Cf. Rozporządzenie Ministra Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi z 2 marca 2010 r. w sprawie jednostek organizacyjnych oceniających i potwierdzających zgodność środków do produkcji ekologicznej z wymaganiami określonymi w przepisach dotyczących rolnictwa ekologicznego oraz prowadzących wykaz tych środków, Dz. U. nr 54 poz. 326 ze zm.; Rozporządzenie Ministra Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi z 18 marca 2010 r. w sprawie niektórych warunków produkcji ekologicznej, Dz. U. nr 56 poz. 348; Rozporządzenie Ministra Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi z 4 sierpnia 2014 r. w sprawie wzoru formularza wykazu producentów, którzy spełnili wymagania dotyczące produkcji w rolnictwie ekologicznym, oraz sposobu jego przekazywania, Dz. U. 2014 poz. 1086.
11. Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the common agricultural policy (CAP Strategic Plans) and financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1305/2013 and (EU) No 1307/2013, OJ EU L 435/1 of 06.12.2021.

Organic Production Act¹² and an executive regulation of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development¹³. The Organic Farming and Organic Production Act defines the tasks and competences of bodies and organisational units with regard to organic production, marking organic products, inspections undertaken to enforce compliance with food and feed law, as well as rules concerning the health and welfare of animals, and crop protection measures¹⁴.

The literature on the subject notes that one of the conditions for the development of organic farming is satisfactory financial support and the level of income of organic farms¹⁵. According to Marian Podstawka, agriculture is a sector of the economy in which (in addition to climate and soil conditions) the financial support policy forms an essential factor¹⁶. Henryk Runowski stressed that organic agriculture is on the rise in countries where income from organic production is higher than income from conventional production (as is the case in Austria and Germany). On the other hand, where such income is lower than or comparable to income from conventional production, interest in organic agriculture is seen to subside¹⁷. As demonstrated by Maria Golinowska and Hanna Adamska, “the disparity in the amount of subsidies for organic agriculture in Poland is considerable and depends on the structure of organic land use and the area under organic farming”¹⁸. This view is confirmed by an analysis of data from Agricultural and Food Quality Inspection (JIHARS) and the Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture (ARiMR).

12. Notice of the Speaker of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland: Obwieszczenie Marszałka Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z 25 maja 2023 r. w sprawie ogłoszenia jednolitego tekstu ustawy o rolnictwie ekologicznym i produkcji ekologicznej, Dz. U. 2023 poz. 1235.
13. Rozporządzenie Ministra Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi z 17 kwietnia 2023 r. w sprawie szczegółowych warunków i szczegółowego trybu przyznawania i wypłaty płatności ekologicznych w ramach Planu Strategicznego dla Wspólnej Polityki Rolnej na lata 2023–2027, Dz. U. 2023 poz. 791.
14. Ustawa z 23 czerwca 2022 r. o rolnictwie ekologicznym i produkcji ekologicznej, t.j. Dz. U. 2023 poz. 1235, art.1.
15. K. Brodzińska, *Rolnictwo ekologiczne – tendencje i kierunki zmian*, “Zeszyty Naukowe Szkoły Głównej Gospodarstwa Wiejskiego w Warszawie. Problemy Rolnictwa Światowego” 2014, t. 14(29), z. 3, DOI:10.22630/PRS.2014.14.3.44, p. 35.
16. M. Podstawka, *Program Rozwoju Obszarów Wiejskich w perspektywie 2007–2013*, “Roczniki Naukowe Stowarzyszenia Ekonomistów Rolnictwa i Agrobiznesu” 2009, nr 11(4), p. 257.
17. H. Runowski, *Rolnictwo ekologiczne. Rozwój czy regres?*, “Roczniki Nauk Rolniczych. Seria G: Ekonomia Rolnictwa” 2009, nr 96(4), p. 192.
18. M. Golinowska, H. Adamska, *Wsparcie rolnictwa ekologicznego w Polsce po 2004 roku*, “Journal of Agribusiness and Rural Development” 2014, nr 1(31), p. 31.

Purpose and methodology

The purpose of the article is to demonstrate the relationship between Polish organic farming in the years 2014–2022 and a system of subsidies for that sector (as part of the Rural Development Programme, among others), with the discussion covering the degree to which co-financing organic agriculture contributed to increased popularity of such production. The basic issue that needs to be solved is the regular drop in the number of organic farms and usable agricultural land areas in Poland between 2014 and 2022 despite increasing the amounts paid to this sector of agriculture, with the practical goal being to provide conclusions that could increase the interest of farmers in organic production and ensure that it is profitable and worthwhile.

The study presents national and community legal provisions, as well as data, concerning organic producers undertaking agricultural production activities¹⁹ in a dynamic approach, and maps the research results for 2022 against the 2014 results. The number of organic farms, UAL areas farmed organically, changes in the type of production and the structure of UAL areas were analysed.

The starting point for analysing data concerning financial support for organic agriculture in Poland is a discussion on how the first subsidies were awarded in 1998. The study also describes the financing of organic agriculture under the 2007–2013 RDP (continued obligations) and the 2014–2020 RDP, as well as in the 2021/2022 transition period. The article is supplemented with a presentation of mechanisms for supporting this sector of agriculture in the 2023–2027 PS CAP.

The desk research method was applied, with the sources of information including studies, reports and data for the years 2014–2022, including documents from Agricultural and Food Quality Inspection, the Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture, the Local Database of the Central Statistical Office (BDL GUS), the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MRiRW), and subject literature.

19. Further on, the article uses the terms “organic agricultural farms” and “organic farms”.

Research results

Organic agricultural farms

Research results point to a decrease in the number of organic agricultural farms in the years 2014–2022. In 2014, the number of organic agricultural farms in Poland was 24,829, a figure almost 15% higher than in 2022 (Table 1).

Table 1. Organic agricultural farms in Poland in the years 2014–2022

Region	Total number of agricultural farms in a given year (in absolute numbers)									Change rate between 2014 and 2022 (%)
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	
Dolnośląskie	1,046	849	813	741	713	690	688	724	761	-27.2
Kujawsko-Pomorskie	401	363	470	419	395	387	385	407	420	4.7
Lubelskie	1,975	1,825	1,980	1,904	1,948	1,951	1,907	1,938	1,926	-2.5
Lubuskie	1,370	1,202	1,148	948	877	860	926	1,082	1,139	-16.9
Łódzkie	508	478	497	477	491	509	519	527	538	5.9
Małopolskie	1,378	1,128	1,093	934	770	721	664	665	634	-53.9
Mazowieckie	2,374	2,147	2,426	2,215	2,284	2,241	2,179	2,312	2,393	0.8
Opolskie	75	67	68	57	61	63	62	72	74	-1.3
Podkarpackie	1,475	1,261	1,252	1,194	1,131	1,040	969	935	886	-39.9
Podlaskie	3,432	3,273	3,437	3,211	2,989	2,864	2,906	3,370	4,047	17.9
Pomorskie	847	737	679	609	540	525	521	564	586	-30.8
Śląskie	230	201	180	162	148	129	121	136	139	-39.6
Świętokrzyskie	992	853	834	740	680	637	590	596	571	-42.4
Warmińsko-Mazurskie	4,234	4,041	4,142	3,745	3,393	3,239	3,241	3,467	3,654	-13.7
Wielkopolskie	966	809	843	736	727	727	748	780	848	-12.2
Zachodniopomorskie	3,526	3,043	2,573	2,165	2,060	2,054	2,149	2,411	2,577	-26.9
Poland	24,829	22,277	22,435	20,257	19,207	18,637	18,575	19,986	21,193	-14.6

Source: Own study based on BDL GUS for the years 2014–2022.

In the years 2014–2022, the largest number of organic agricultural farms was found in the Warmińsko-Mazurskie, Zachodniopomorskie and Podlaskie regions (4,234, 3,526 and 3,432 respectively in 2014, and 3,654, 2,577 and 4,047 respectively in 2022), while the lowest number was noted in the Opolskie, Śląskie and Kujawsko-Pomorskie regions (75, 230 and 401 respectively in 2014, and 74, 139 and 420 in 2022).

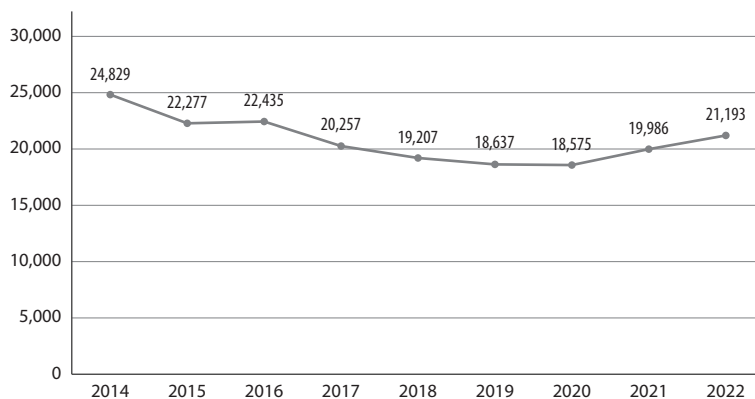
Analysis of data for the years 2014–2022 shows that the number of organic agricultural farms showed a decreasing trend. In 2022 (compared to 2014), the number of organic agricultural farms decreased in twelve regions (including by 53.9% in Małopolskie and by 42.4% in Świętokrzyskie), with the downward trend being particularly noticeable in 2018/2019 and visible across all regions. In 2019 (compared to 2014), a more than 40 percent slump in the number of agricultural farms was observed in the Małopolskie (47.7%), Śląskie (43.9%) and Zachodniopomorskie (41.7%) regions. As noted by Grażyna Nachtman, the decrease in the number of organic farms could have been the consequence of the dwindling interest of farmers in organic production and its low economic effectiveness as a result of meagre production potential, the small size of farms and the poor quality of the soil²⁰. The reduction in the number of agricultural farms could also have been affected, among others, by changes in the direct payments system (for example when subsidies for farms with a size of over 50 hectares became degressive), the end of the five-year payment cycle, lack of successors to take over farms once the former owners retired, and abandoning organic production in farms focused mainly on subsidies rather than production²¹.

The change rate (year to year) shows that, following a regular drop in the number of agricultural farms over successive years, it was not until 2021/2022 that a slight improvement was noted, in 2021 by 7.6% (compared to 2020) and in 2022 by 6% (compared to 2021). In 2022 (compared to 2014), the number of organic farms increased only in four regions: Podlaskie (by 17.9%), Łódzkie (by 5.9%), Kujawsko-Pomorskie (by 4.7%) and Mazowieckie (by 0.8%) – Figure 1.

20. G. Nachtman, *Rolnictwo ekologiczne w Polsce wobec działań na rzecz jego rozwoju*, “Wiadomości Statystyczne” 2021, t. 66, z. 7, DOI 10.5604/01.3001.0015.0352, p. 28–29.

21. D. Dominiak-Woźniak, A. Hałasiewicz, R. Śpiewak et al., *Stymulowanie produkcji żywności ekologicznej. Instrumenty efektywnego wsparcia instytucjonalnego, prawnego i finansowego na rzecz rozwoju rolnictwa ekologicznego, w szczególności na rzecz grup i organizacji producentów ekologicznej żywności*, Warszawa, Instytut Rozwoju Wsi i Rolnictwa Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2019, p. 19.

Figure 1. Change rate of the number of organic agricultural farms in Poland in the years 2014–2022



Source: Own study based on BDL GUS for the years 2014–2022.

Size of usable agricultural land under organic farming

In the years 2014–2022, the share of organically farmed UAL in Poland in the total area of usable agricultural land was minor and amounted to around 3.4%²². In the period under consideration, a decrease in the total area of organically farmed UAL in Poland by 15.6% was noted (Table 2).

22. Data for 2020. In Poland: about 14,682,000 hectares of total usable agricultural land and about 509,000 hectares of organic usable agricultural land. Główny Urząd Statystyczny, *Powszechny Spis Rolny 2020. Raport z wyników*, Warszawa 2021, p. 21; IJHARS, *Raport o stanie rolnictwa ekologicznego w Polsce w latach 2019–2020*, Warszawa 2021, p. 26.

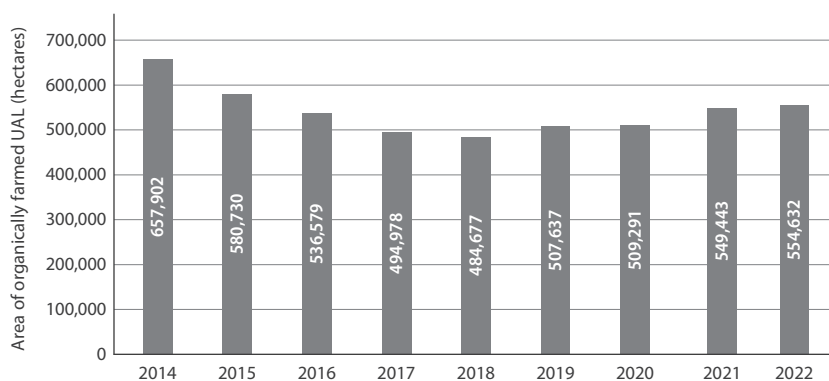
Table 2. The size of organically farmed usable agricultural land in Poland in the years 2014–2022

Region	Size of organically farmed usable agricultural land in a given year (hectares)										Change rate between 2014 and 2022 (%)
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2022	
Dolnośląskie	37,005	31,261	29,200	27,542	27,357	28,898	30,481	30,653	32,679	32,679	-11.7
Kujawsko-Pomorskie	11,573	10,645	9,263	8,331	7,655	7,733	7,092	8,820	9,034	9,034	-21.9
Lubelskie	38,467	34,052	31,343	29,001	28,428	28,829	28,357	28,018	28,115	28,115	-26.9
Lubuskie	53,300	46,343	43,235	37,923	37,174	40,835	43,126	50,449	51,680	51,680	-3.0
Łódzkie	11,229	10,158	9,986	9,260	8,905	9,290	9,954	10,317	11,010	11,010	-1.9
Małopolskie	15,529	12,976	12,364	10,691	8,844	9,747	8,361	7,924	7,506	7,506	-51.6
Mazowieckie	60,354	53,790	49,517	44,348	42,049	43,489	41,218	47,451	41,021	41,021	-32.0
Opolskie	3,306	3,042	3,216	2,790	3,554	3,271	3,324	2,668	2,623	2,623	-20.6
Podkarpackie	23,510	16,656	15,486	15,349	13,630	13,757	12,726	13,309	12,076	12,076	-48.6
Podlaskie	64,897	56,528	55,168	53,551	51,608	51,642	52,415	60,741	66,680	66,680	2.7
Pomorskie	29,282	24,866	23,328	22,419	19,974	20,814	20,792	23,110	22,390	22,390	-23.5
Śląskie	7,788	6,638	5,324	3,726	2,951	3,557	3,460	3,702	3,920	3,920	-49.6
Świętokrzyskie	13,038	11,598	10,739	9,970	9,087	8,894	8,341	8,570	8,776	8,776	-32.6
Warmińsko-Mazurskie	117,097	112,768	108,667	107,067	104,574	107,507	108,808	114,399	105,240	105,240	-10.1
Wielkopolskie	42,071	34,523	29,171	25,389	25,994	27,734	29,330	29,945	34,070	34,070	-19.0
Zachodniopomorskie	129,456	114,887	100,570	87,620	92,892	101,638	101,507	109,368	117,812	117,812	-8.9
Poland	657,902	580,730	536,579	494,978	484,677	507,637	509,291	549,443	554,632	554,632	-15.6

Source: Own study based on IJHARS, Raporty o stanie rolnictwa ekologicznego w Polsce w latach: 2013–2014; 2015–2016; 2017–2018; 2019–2020; 2021–2022.

In the years 2014–2022, the largest area of organically farmed UAL was noted in the Zachodniopomorskie, Warmińsko-Mazurskie and Podlaskie regions, while the smallest was found in Opolskie, Śląskie and Łódzkie. In 2022, when compared to 2014, a decrease in organically farmed UAL areas by more than one half (51.6%) was observed in the Małopolskie region and by almost half in the Śląskie (49.6%) and Podkarpacie (48.6%) region. Only in the Podlaskie region did the area of organically farmed UAL increase (by 2.7%) in the period under consideration. The change rate in the subsequent years shows that from 2014, a decrease in the total area of organically farmed UAL was noted, a trend that persisted until 2020. The largest drop in the area of organic UAL, by about 26.3% (compared to 2014), took place in 2018 (cf. Figure 2).

Figure 2. Changes in the total area of organically farmed usable agricultural land in Poland in the years 2014–2020



Source: Own study based on IJHARS, *Raporty o stanie rolnictwa ekologicznego w Polsce w latach: 2013–2014; 2015–2016; 2017–2018; 2019–2020; 2021–2022.*

The structure of areas of usable agricultural land in organic farms

In the years 2014–2022, medium-size organic farms with an area between 10 and 20 hectares and between 20 and 50 hectares predominated, with the group of farms with an area of up to 5 hectares also fairly large. The largest farms, with an area of 100 hectares and more, formed the smallest group (Table 3).

Table 3. Organic farms in Poland according to the UAL area in the years 2014–2022

Area	Number of organic farms in a given year									
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	
up to 5 hectares	3,624	3,176	4,535	4,073	4,029	3,823	3,709	3,819	4,950	
5–10 hectares	5,785	5,024	4,570	3,999	3,475	3,247	3,230	3,510	3,465	
10–20 hectares	7,006	6,350	5,917	5,288	4,942	4,712	4,610	5,043	5,095	
20–50 hectares	5,028	4,736	4,653	4,439	4,336	4,268	4,385	4,688	4,811	
50–100 hectares	2,228	2,016	1,878	1,754	1,719	1,797	1,830	2,055	1,982	
over 100 hectares	1,158	975	816	704	706	790	811	871	884	
Total	24,829	22,277	22,369	20,257	19,207	18,637	18,575	19,986	21,187	
	Share (%)									
up to 5 hectares	14.5	14.3	20.3	20.1	21.0	20.5	20.0	19.1	23.4	
5–10 hectares	23.3	22.5	20.4	19.7	18.1	17.4	17.4	17.6	16.4	
10–20 hectares	28.2	28.5	26.5	26.1	25.7	25.3	24.8	25.2	24.0	
20–50 hectares	20.3	21.3	20.8	21.9	22.6	22.9	23.6	23.5	22.7	
50–100 hectares	9.0	9.0	8.4	8.7	8.9	9.6	9.8	10.3	9.4	
over 100 hectares	4.7	4.4	3.6	3.5	3.7	4.3	4.4	4.4	4.2	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	

Source: Own study based on IJHARS, *Raporty o stanie rolnictwa ekologicznego w Polsce w latach: 2013–2014; 2015–2016; 2017–2018; 2019–2020; 2021–2022.*

In the years 2014–2022, organic farms with an area between 10 and 20 hectares and between 20 and 50 hectares accounted in total for almost 50% of all organic farms (48.5% in 2014 and 46.7% in 2022). On the other hand, the group of largest farms, with an area of over 100 hectares, constituted about 4% of all organic farms, with their number gradually dwindling over this period. This trend requires separate analysis and investigation for probable causes. Organic production (due to its extensive character) requires larger UAL areas, which impacts its profitability and the suitable level of income of farms²³. Finally, among the smallest farms (up to 5 hectares), an increase of 1,326 farms (36.6%) was noted in 2022 (compared to 2014), which was most likely the result of introducing degressive organic production payment rates in the years 2014–2020, and is as follows:

- 1) 100% of the basic rate for farms with an area between 0.10 and 50 hectares,
- 2) 75% of the basic rate for farms with an area between 50 and 100 hectares,

23. Cf. G. Nachtman, op. cit., p. 29.

3) 60% of the basic rate for farms with an area of over 100 hectares.

This mechanism was used in all packages and variants with reference to the total area of land in the farm eligible for organic production payments.

Types of production in organic farms

In the years 2014–2022, the decisive majority of organic agricultural farms, from around 81% in 2014 to around 93% in 2022, engaged exclusively in crop production, (Table 4).

Table 4. Types of production in organic farms in the years 2014–2022

Type of production	Share in the total number of farms (%)								
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Solely crop production	80.7	81.2	83.2	88.9	88.4	78.8	78.2	91.3	92.7
Crop and animal production	19.3	18.8	16.8	11.1	11.6	21.2	21.8	8.7	7.3
Simultaneous organic and conventional production	39.4	41.0	49.2	50.7	54.4	17.9	18.5	45.8	37.0

Source: Own study based on IJHARS, *Raporty o stanie rolnictwa ekologicznego w Polsce w latach: 2013–2014; 2015–2016; 2017–2018; 2019–2020; 2021–2022.*

In the analysed period, a decreasing share of organic farms conducting both crop and animal production was noted, from 19.3% in 2014 to 7.3% to 2022. In the years 2019–2020 alone was there an increase in the share of this group in the total number of farms, to around 21%. On the other hand, the rate of change in the years 2021/2022 resulted in a drop by around 15% in this group. Nevertheless, the group of farms that engaged in both simultaneous organic and conventional production in the discussed period remained steady at about 40% (around 39% in 2014 and 37% in 2022). Only in the years 2017–2018 did more than half of organic farms engage in both organic and non-organic production (around 51% in 2017 and 55% in 2018). As demonstrated in the subject literature, these figures were caused, among others, by diversification of agricultural production in organic farms in order to ensure higher income for the farms²⁴.

24. Cf. G. Nachtman, op. cit., p. 40.

The history of financing organic farming in Poland

In Poland, the first subsidies for organic agriculture were paid in 1998 and were from the state budget allocated as payments for inspections of organic farms by certification bodies²⁵, and in later years for organic crops and costs of inspection. In 1999, the total amount of subsidies paid was PLN 674,300, followed by about PLN 3.8 million in 2000²⁶.

Since 2004, financial support for organic agriculture is provided among others from EU and national funds. At that time, organic agricultural farms began to receive additional payments to cover the costs of inspections (paid by Agricultural Chemistry Stations) and subsidies for certain types of crops (paid by the Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture). Payments to cover the costs of inspections were disbursed pursuant to a regulation of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development²⁷ after an authorised certification body approved a payment application. In 2004, total payments to cover the costs of inspections amounted to about PLN 2.8 million for 3,654 farms.

In 2004, payments in the Organic Farming (code SO2) package were provided for in eight variants, with the package included in one of the agricultural and environmental undertakings of the Rural Development Plan (financed in 80% from the EU budget and in 20% from the national budget). The payments were granted to farmers who had started agricultural production in accordance with requirements concerning protection of the environment and genetic resources of livestock. The amount of payments ranged from PLN 260 per hectare (certified grasslands) to PLN 1,800 per hectare (special crops – non-certified horticultural and berry cultivation). In 2004, applications for payments under the Organic Farming package were submitted by 3,583 farmers²⁸.

25. J. Barłowska, A. Wolanciuk, J. Idec, op. cit., p. 1; M. Golinowska, H. Adamska, op. cit., p. 31; J. Kondratowicz-Pozorska, *Wpływ wsparcia z funduszy unijnych na rozwój rolnictwa ekologicznego w Polsce*, "Współczesne Finanse. Teoria i Praktyka" 2016, nr 1(1), DOI: 10.18276/wf.2016.1-02, p. 17.

26. Inspekcja Skupu i Przetwórstwa Artykułów Rolnych, *Rolnictwo ekologiczne w Polsce w latach 1999–2000*, Warszawa 2001, p. 11.

27. Rozporządzenie Ministra Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi z 15 kwietnia 2004 r. w sprawie stawek dotacji przedmiotowych dla różnych podmiotów wykonujących zadania na rzecz rolnictwa, Dz. U. nr 72 poz. 655.

28. Inspekcja Jakości Handlowej Artykułów Rolno-Spożywczych, *Rolnictwo ekologiczne w Polsce w 2004 roku*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 14–15.

*Financing of organic agriculture
under the Rural Development Programme*

Funds for organic farming were provided for in the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and in the national budget under the Rural Development Programme for the years 2007–2013 (2007–2013 RDP), 2014–2020 and the 2021–2022 transition period (2014–2020 RDP). In the 2007–2013 RDP, support for organic farming could be obtained as part of Axis 1, Improving the Competitiveness of the Agricultural and Forestry Sector, under measures Participation of Farmers in Food Quality Schemes and Information and Promotion Activities, and Axis 2, Improving the Environment and Countryside under the Agri-environment Payments measure, package 2, Organic Farming (with 12 variants). Payment rates for organic farming ranged from PLN 260 per hectare (Variant 2.3, Permanent grassland for which the conversion period has ended) to PLN 1,800 per hectare (Variant 2.10, Horticultural and berry cultivation during the transition period – in the first three years of fulfilling the agro-environmental obligation)²⁹.

In the 2014–2020 RDP, the Organic Farming measure was implemented based, among others, on the 2015 statute³⁰ and a regulation of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development³¹, and included twelve packages with six variants. Support was granted to farmers who voluntarily undertook to apply or maintain organic agriculture practices and methods. The payments related to all types and stages of production, that is the cultivation of crops, rearing and breeding of animals, and processing. Under the 2014–2020 RDP, in 2015 the payment rates for organic farming ranged from PLN 428 per hectare (Package 6, Permanent grassland in the conversion period and Package 12, Permanent grassland after the conversion period) to PLN 1,882 per hectare (Package 4, Horticultural cultivation in the conversion period, Variant 4.1.1. Basic horticultural cultivation in the conversion period and 4.1.2. Berry cultivation in the conversion period). In 2021, payments provided for in these packages amounted to PLN 631 per hectare (Package 6, Permanent grassland in the conversion period and Package 12, Permanent grassland after the conversion period) to PLN 2,591 per

29. The payment rates for each package and its variants are defined in: Załącznik nr 5, Rozporządzenie Ministra Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi z 13 marca 2013 r. w sprawie szczegółowych warunków i trybu przyznawania pomocy finansowej w ramach działania „Program rolnośrodowiskowy” objętego Programem Rozwoju Obszarów Wiejskich na lata 2007–2013, Dz. U. 2013 poz. 361 ze zm.

30. Ustawa z 20 lutego 2015 r. o wspieraniu rozwoju obszarów wiejskich z udziałem środków Europejskiego Funduszu Rolnego na rzecz Rozwoju Obszarów Wiejskich w ramach Programu Rozwoju Obszarów Wiejskich na lata 2014–2020, t.j. Dz. U. 2023 poz. 2298.

31. Rozporządzenie Ministra Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi z 13 marca 2015 r. w sprawie szczegółowych warunków i trybu przyznawania pomocy finansowej w ramach działania „Rolnictwo ekologiczne” objętego Programem Rozwoju Obszarów Wiejskich na lata 2014–2020, Dz. U. 2015 poz. 370 ze zm.

hectare (Package 4, Horticultural cultivation in the conversion period, Variant 4.1.1. Basic horticultural cultivation in the conversion period)³². In 2021, the European Commission approved an extension for implementing the 2014–2020 RDP by two years (transition period)³³. In the case of undertakings made by farmers before 2021, support for the Organic Farming measure would be provided for five years, and in the case of undertakings made in 2021 or 2022, for three years.

Analysis of the payments made in the years 2014–2022 to organic farms as part of the 2007–2013 RDP (continued obligations) and the 2014–2020 RDP shows that the payment amounts rose by almost 48% (from around PLN 347 million in 2014 to around PLN 514 million in 2022 – Table 5).

Table 5. Applications, areas and payments made to organic farms as part of the 2007–2013 RDP and 2014–2020 RDP in the years 2014–2022

Year	Number of applications submitted	UAL area stated in the decision (hectares)	Payments made (PLN)	Payment per hectare (PLN)
2014	47,722	503,889.1	347,501,214.0	689.6
2015	39,291	338,573.3	265,486,542.6	784.1
2016	22,502	226,274.0	174,955,182.1	773.2
2017	34,759	115,586.8	86,676,120.9	749.9
2018	10,463	30,908.9	22,611,994.2	731.6
2019	16,200	396,027.9	342,123,558.2	863.9
2020	16,192	386,667.0	344,017,957.0	889.7
2021	17,974	426,480.3	478,947,508.1	1123.0
2022	19,372	454,214.8	514,010,330.7	1131.6
Change rate between 2014 and 2022 (%)	-59.4	-9.9	47.9	64.1

Source: Own study based on IJHARS, Raporty o stanie rolnictwa ekologicznego w Polsce w latach: 2013–2014; 2015–2016; 2017–2018; 2019–2020; 2021–2022.

32. The payment rates have been defined in: Załącznik nr 8 do Rozporządzenia Ministra Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi z 13 marca 2015 r. w sprawie szczegółowych warunków i trybu przyznawania pomocy finansowej w ramach działania „Rolnictwo ekologiczne” objętego Programem Rozwoju Obszarów Wiejskich na lata 2014–2020, Dz. U. 2015 poz. 370 and Załącznik do Rozporządzenia Ministra Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi z 8 marca 2021 r. zmieniającego rozporządzenie w sprawie szczegółowych warunków i trybu przyznawania pomocy finansowej w ramach działania „Rolnictwo ekologiczne” objętego Programem Rozwoju Obszarów Wiejskich na lata 2014–2020, Dz. U. 2021 poz. 434.

33. Komunikat Ministra Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi z 9 września 2021 r. o zatwierdzeniu przez Komisję Europejską zmian Programu Rozwoju Obszarów Wiejskich na lata 2014–2020, M.P. 2021 poz. 840.

Analysing the change dynamics in 2022 (compared to 2014) shows that even though the amount of payments made increased by almost 48%, and the amount of payments per hectare increased by more than 64%, a decrease in submitted applications by about 60% and the area covered by assistance by almost 10% was observed in the discussed period. Based on these figures, a conclusion can be drawn that the number of agricultural farms that submit applications for payment is declining, and their production is limited, which is further confirmed by the data in Table 1 and Table 2. Subject literature shows that the above trends have been affected, among others, by tighter payment criteria (concerning, for example, the density of tree plantings in orchards, quality of saplings, stocking density), degressive rates of payments for organic activities, and abandonment of organic production due to limited productivity and the economic situation of farms³⁴.

Since 2015, when financial support for organic agriculture under the 2014–2020 RDP (later extended to the years 2021–2022) began, eight application campaigns have been carried out, with payments made to 33,163 beneficiaries in the amount of PLN 2,696.4 million, including PLN 2,135.4 million under the 2014–2020 RDP obligations to 22,783 beneficiaries and around PLN 561 million under the 2007–2013 RDP obligations to 17,898 beneficiaries. Support was granted to a total of around 32,500 farms, with a total area of around 751,800 hectares³⁵ (Table 6).

Table 6. Organic Farming, 2014–2020 RDP payments made, data accumulated as of 31 December 2022

Region	Total payments made (2007–2013 RDP and 2014–2020 RDP obligations)		Share in total amount (%)
	Number of different beneficiaries	Total amount (PLN)	
Dolnośląskie	1,237	133,269,329.4	4.9
Kujawsko-Pomorskie	536	50,342,763.6	1.9
Lubelskie	2,820	166,440,879.4	6.2
Lubuskie	1,940	233,100,539.5	8.6
Łódzkie	773	55,657,788.0	2.1
Małopolskie	1,333	40,034,280.9	1.5
Mazowieckie	3,462	233,569,676.7	8.7
Opolskie	114	14,053,074.7	0.5

34. A.M. Klepacka, *Wybrane założenia Europejskiego Zielonego Ładu a możliwości rozwoju gospodarstwa konwencjonalno-ekologicznego*, "Roczniki Naukowe Stowarzyszenia Ekonomistów Rolnictwa i Agrobiznesu. Annals PAAAE" 2023, nr 25(1), DOI: 10.5604/01.3001.0016.2308, p. 111; G. Nachtman, op. cit., p. 26.

35. Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture, *Sprawozdanie z działalności ARiMR za 2022 r.*, Warszawa 2023, p. 79.

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Region	Total payments made (2007–2013 RDP and 2014–2020 RDP obligations)		Share in total amount (%)
	Number of different beneficiaries	Total amount (PLN)	
Podkarpackie	1,547	60,267,776.2	2.2
Podlaskie	5,345	295,476,418.5	11.0
Pomorskie	1,083	121,300,154.7	4.5
Śląskie	249	17,855,139.3	0.7
Świętokrzyskie	1,093	47,890,980.6	1.8
Warmińsko-Mazurskie	6,112	534,098,640.5	19.8
Wielkopolskie	1,208	152,502,243.6	5.7
Zachodniopomorskie	4,466	540,497,533.3	20.0
Total	33,163	2,696,357,218.9	100.0

Source: Agencja Restrukturyzacji i Modernizacji Rolnictwa, *Sprawozdanie z działalności ARiMR za 2022 r.*, Warszawa 2023, p. 301.

Since the initiation of implementation of the 2014–2020 RDP, the largest amounts have been paid in the following regions: Zachodniopomorskie (PLN 540.5 million, accounting for 20% of the total amount), Warmińsko-Mazurskie (PLN 534.1 million, or 19.8% of the total amount) and Podlaskie (PLN 295.5 million, or 11% of the total amount). Therefore, beneficiaries in these three regions received more than half (50.8%) of the amount of payments made. On the other hand, the smallest amounts were paid in the following regions: Opolskie (PLN 14.1 million, or 0.5% of the total amount), Śląskie (PLN 17.8 million, or 0.7% of the total amount) and Małopolskie (PLN 40 million, or 1.5% of the total amount). Added together, the amounts paid in these three regions did not exceed 5% of the total amount.

Prospects for the financing of organic farming in the 2023–2027 SP CAP

According to the 2023–2027 Strategic Plan for Common Agricultural Policy³⁶, financial support has been provided to organic agriculture as part of intervention I.8.11, Organic Farming. The aim of the intervention (continuing the assistance granted to organic farming in the 2014–2020 RDP) is to support voluntary undertakings of farmers to switch to or maintain organic farming practices and methods. Assistance can be granted to farmers supervised by a certification body as part of

36. Ustawa z 8 lutego 2023 r. o Planie Strategicznym dla Wspólnej Polityki Rolnej na lata 2023–2027, Dz. U. 2023 poz. 412 1530.

the organic farming inspection system. Provisions have been introduced to ensure payments for crops farmed according to organic production methods and to farms keeping animals in the organic farming system, as well as partial coverage of costs of farm inspections carried out by the certification body. Payments can be received for the following crops: agricultural, vegetables, herbs, berries and feed (on arable lands), basic and extensive horticulture (as part of horticulture), permanent grasslands, and small farms cultivating organic crops (for various groups of crops). The financial assistance is supposed to compensate for costs of production and lost benefits. The end result is, among others, the development of organic farming and increased demand for organic products.

Before joining the Organic Farming intervention, a farmer is obliged to draft a five-year plan of organic activities (with the assistance of an agricultural advisor with agri-environmental or organic agriculture specialisation). The plan must list the packages to be implemented and information related, among others, to agrotechnical practices, production and the size of declared areas. While performing the obligation, the farmer should keep a record of organic activities with respect to the UAL included in the obligation.

New organic farming support will be introduced in the 2023–2027 scope in the form of payments for small farms cultivating organic crops on UAL with areas up to 10 hectares. Such farms may declare payments for small cultivation areas that do not constitute a separate agricultural plot of land. Support may be granted to adjacent areas used for various crops (agricultural, vegetables, herbs, basic horticulture, berries, extensive grasslands and feed), including crops on areas smaller than 0.1 hectares. The total area of adjacent crops may not be smaller than 0.1 hectares. A new solution is the introduction of a bonus for sustainable crop and animal production in the form of an extra payment for each hectare declared for organic payments. The condition for granting the bonus is a stocking density from 0.5 LU per hectare to 1,5 LU per hectare for each hectare of UAL in the farm, which is supposed to guarantee self-sufficiency in terms of feeds and fertilisers, with simplified rules for applying for financial support. In the payment application, it is enough to declare that a particular package will be implemented without the need to state whether the crops are cultivated during or after the conversion period. The payment rates for each organic farming package are listed in Table 7.

Table 7. Payment rates in the 2023–2027 Strategic Plan of Common Agricultural Policy (SP CAP)

Organic agriculture packages	Payment rates	
	for land in the conversion period (in PLN per hectare)	for land after the completed conversion period (in PLN per hectare)
Package 1. Agricultural crops	1,697	1,571
Package 2. Vegetable crops	3,021	2,391
Package 3. Herbaceous crops	1,856	1,856
Package 4. Basic horticultural crops	3,105	1,961
Package 5. Berry crops	2,495	2,213
Package 6. Extensive horticultural crops	1,326	1,326
Package 7. Feed crops on arable lands	1,638	1,504
Package 8. Permanent grasslands	1,043	1,043
Package 9. Small farms cultivating organic crops	1,640	1,640
Package 10. Bonus for sustainable plant and animal production	573	573

Source: Rozporządzenie Ministra Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi z 17 kwietnia 2023 r. w sprawie szczegółowych warunków i szczegółowego trybu przyznawania i wypłaty płatności ekologicznych w ramach Planu Strategicznego dla Wspólnej Polityki Rolnej na lata 2023–2027, Dz. U. 2023 poz. 791, załącznik 8.

Payment for crops in each package has been differentiated depending on whether the payment occurs during or after the conversion period. For crops during the conversion period, the payment rates in some of the packages are slightly higher than the rates for organic crops (after completed conversion) and range from PLN 1,043 per hectare (Package 8, Permanent grasslands) to PLN 3,105 per hectare (Package 4, Basic horticultural crops). Farmers are entitled to support for no longer than the three first years of fulfilling the 5-year obligation, which includes three years of cultivation during the conversion period.

For most crops, payment rates are slightly lower (or unchanged) once the conversion period has been completed, ranging from PLN 1,043 per hectare (Package 8, Permanent grasslands) to PLN 2,391 per hectare (Package 2, Vegetable crops). For small farms cultivating organic crops (Package 9), support has been provided in the amount of PLN 1,640 per hectare, regardless of the crop group and the during/after conversion status. The bonus for sustainable crops and animal production (Package 10) is PLN 573 per hectare both during and after the conversion period.

All crops declared for financial support as part of the “Organic Farming” intervention are subject to the supervision of certification bodies. Degressive payments are applied in the intervention, as follows:

- 1) 100% of the basic rate for farms with areas from 0.10 to 50 hectares,
- 2) 75% of the basic rate for farms with areas from 50 to 100 hectares,
- 3) 60% of the basic rate for farms with areas over 100 hectares.

Obligations undertaken in previous years as part of the 2014–2020 RDP remain in effect in the years 2023–2024, but no new obligations can be undertaken as part of this measure. Farmers covered by the 2014–2020 RDP financial support system may now declare new land areas for support only as part of the Organic Farming intervention. In such cases, support will be provided from two sources for two different areas of land³⁷.

Payment rates for farmers fulfilling organic farming obligations in the 2014–2020 RDP (5-year obligations undertaken until 2020 and 3-year obligations undertaken in 2021 and 2022) were increased in all packages and variants while introducing the additional Package 13, Bonus for Conducting Sustainable Plant and Animal Production. Table 8 shows the organic payment rates in the 2014–2020 RDP.

Table 8. 2014–2020 RDP payment rates since 2023

Organic farming packages	Payment rates (in PLN)
Package 1. Agricultural crops during the conversion period	1,697
Package 2. Vegetable crops during the conversion period	3,021
Package 3. Herbaceous crops during the conversion period	1,856
Package 4.	
4.1.1. Basic horticultural crops during the conversion period	3,105
4.1.2. Berry crops during the conversion period	2,495
4.2. Extensive horticultural crops during the conversion period	1,326
Package 5. Feed crops on arable lands during the conversion period	1,638
Package 6. Permanent grasslands during the conversion period	1,043
Package 7. Agricultural crops after the conversion period	1,571
Package 8. Vegetable crops after the conversion period	2,391
Package 9. Herbaceous crops after the conversion period	1,856

37. Cf. Ministerstwo Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi, *Interwencja Rolnictwo ekologiczne PS WPR 2023–2027*, Warszawa 2023, p.10.

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Organic farming packages		Payment rates (in PLN)
Package 10.	10.1.1. Basic horticultural crops after the conversion period	1,961
Horticultural crops after the conversion period	10.1.2. Berry crops after the conversion period	2,213
	10.2. Extensive horticultural crops after the conversion period	1,326
Package 11. Feed crops on arable lands after the conversion period		1,504
Package 12. Permanent grasslands after the conversion period		1,043
Package 13. Bonus for sustainable plant and animal production		573

Source: Rozporządzenie Ministra Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi z 10 marca 2023 r. zmieniające rozporządzenie w sprawie szczegółowych warunków i trybu przyznawania pomocy finansowej w ramach działania „Rolnictwo ekologiczne” objętego Programem Rozwoju Obszarów Wiejskich na lata 2014–2020, Dz. U. 2023 poz. 481, załącznik 5.

Summary

Financial support for organic farming should result in its development. An analysis of data concerning the state of organic farming in Poland in the years 2014–2022, however, has demonstrated an ongoing decline in the sector. The change rates (year to year) show that in the discussed period, the number of organic farms decreased in all regions (in some of them by more than half), as did the area of organic UAL, which accounts for a mere 3.4% of all UAL in Poland.

In most regions, amounts paid for organic farming since the implementation of the 2014–2020 RDP began did not exceed 5% of the total amount. Increasing payment rates in the 2023–2027 Strategic Plan for Common Agricultural Policy, introducing equal rates for farmers who are still fulfilling their obligations under the 2014–2020 RDP, and simplifying the rules of submitting payment applications appeared to be an insufficient incentive for farmers to undertake multi-year obligations.

This tendency is in contrast to the strategic objectives of the 2023–2027 Common Agricultural Policy, which includes, among others, caring for the environment, protection of food quality and health, improving the position of farmers in the food chain, and providing them with a decent income. The causes of this state of affairs must be sought in economic factors (listed in the subject literature), especially the low profitability of production and meagre income of farms. As a consequence, organic production is abandoned in favour of conventional production once the obligation period is completed.

In this context, it appears necessary to adopt a strategy and systemic agricultural policy solutions concerning the production and sale of organic products, which should

be accompanied by advisory, training, information and promotional activities targeted at specific groups of beneficiaries. In order for organic farming to prosper, it is essential to promote good practices in organic agricultural farms, develop brands of organic products and seek distribution channels and incentives for consumers looking for healthy foodstuffs at a suitable price. The above activities and ensuring suitable income to farms may boost the interest of farmers in organic production.

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