

# THE IMPACT OF RDP 2007–2013 ON INTEGRATION OF POLISH AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS BASED ON THE ACTION “AGRICULTURAL PRODUCER GROUPS”

Wawrzyniec Czubak✉, Bartłomiej Bajan

Uniwersytet Przyrodniczy w Poznaniu

**Abstract.** Due to the considerable fragmentation of farms in order to improve competitiveness of the Polish agricultural sector it is crucial to enhance cooperation of farmers within producer groups. The paper analyses changes in farm integration processes in view of the implementation of the agricultural policy. It presents growth dynamics for the number of agricultural producer groups and their spatial distribution in Poland. The aim of this study was to determine the impact of the introduced financial support mechanisms on association of farmers in producer groups.

**Key words:** Rural Development Programme for 2007–2013, agricultural producer groups, horizontal integration in agriculture

## INTRODUCTION

Poor cooperation of agricultural producers is a major problem in agriculture (Chlebicka, 2011; Stoma, 2013). It is particularly essential in Poland at the fragmentation of farms, where economically weak farms operating independently face strong pressure of other entities in their market (Wigier, 1997). Experience of many other countries shows that formation of producer groups is a highly significant factor improving market position of agricultural producers (Tomczak, 2009; Wigier, 1997). Hasiński (2013) based on long-term analyses indicated that at present the primary obstacle for the formation of groups and

integration of farms is connected with the mentality of farmers and concerns over the ethical actions of members of such groups<sup>1</sup>. Producers are reluctant to enter into long-term obligations and initiatives for common operations (Kotala, 2003). In the opinion of Wiatrak (2006), the limited interest and a lack of trust in producers' associations are caused by a lack of sufficient awareness in this respect as well as negative experiences from the 1980's. Reluctance to enter joint initiatives is also connected with the belief of agricultural producers in a greater efficiency of private farms. Under free market conditions farmers most frequently perceive mutual economic relations in the aspect of competition and not the potential for increasing market advantage thanks to cooperation.

A chance to overcome barriers for cooperation of farms is to provide adequate institutional and legal surroundings as well as financial support for vertical and horizontal integration (Czapiewska, 2013). In Poland associations of farms are formed on the power of the Act of 15 September 2000 on groups of agricultural producers and their associations (Ustawa, 2000), which specifies the principles and manner of registrations of such groups, as well as conditions for granting official development assistance for the member agricultural

<sup>1</sup> The problem of beliefs and psychological barriers in the case of farmers was also indicated by Sobczak and Wielechowski (2013), Chałupka (1998) and Kotala (2003).

✉ dr hab. Wawrzyniec Czubak, Katedra Ekonomii i Polityki Gospodarczej w Agrobiznesie, Uniwersytet Przyrodniczy w Poznaniu, ul. Wojska Polskiego 28, 60-637 Poznań, Poland, e-mail: czubak@up.poznan.pl

producers. These issues are also regulated by the Ordinance of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of 13 November 2012 amending the Ordinance on the register of products and groups of products, for which groups of agricultural producers may be established, minimum annual volume of commercial production and the minimum number of members in a group of agricultural producers (Rozporządzenie..., 2012).

Following Poland’s accession to the European Union in 2004 agricultural producers forming associations were eligible for financial aid for the establishment and running administrative and investment activity of groups within the framework of the action “Agricultural producer groups”, implemented within the Rural Development Programme 2004–2006. This form of assistance was continued within the framework of the Rural Development Programme 2007–2013 (PROW 2007–2013), while it is also executed in the successive programme period. Opportunities provided by the support of EU funds may improve competitiveness of agricultural producers and change their participation in the market from passive into active (Stoma, 2013).

The aim of this study is to assess the effect of Action 142 “Agricultural producer groups” within the framework of Rural Development Programme 2007–2013 on integration processes for Polish agricultural producers. These processes are microeconomic in character and consist in the economic and organisational association of farms through establishment of a specific economic entity from various smaller units. Thus a criterion for this assessment will be connected with the dynamics of formation of agricultural producer groups in Poland and their spatial distribution. This study is based on data coming from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, as well as information contained in legal acts, both EU and Polish.

## PRINCIPLES FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The formalised process for the establishment of agricultural producer groups was initiated even before Poland’s accession to the EU. Support for the development of cooperation in agriculture was provided thanks to the legal regulations concerning the establishment of agricultural producer groups passed in 2000 (the Act of 15 September 2000 on agricultural producer groups and their associations and amendments to other acts – Ustawa..., 2000). Thanks to the specification of principles for the

organisation of agricultural producers, operation of producer groups and terms and conditions for granting financial assistance from public funds the aim of the formalised process to establish farmer associations was to support and promote cooperation (Lipińska, 2008; Stoma, 2013). In the opinion of Lipińska (2008), the second stage of the financial support policy for the establishment and operations of agricultural producer groups was initiated on 1 May 2004, when Poland, as a member of the EU market, started to receive aid supporting rural development within the framework of CAP mechanisms. For the years 2004–2006 the regulations for financial assistance were specified in the Ordinance of the Council of Ministers of 19 October 2004 on specific conditions and manner of granting financial aid to support agricultural producer groups, covered by the Rural Development Programme (RDP) (Rozporządzenie..., 2004). In the following programme period aid for agricultural producer groups from CAP funds was regulated by the provisions of the Council Regulation (EC) no. 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) (Dziennik Ustaw UE L 277 of 2005 r. with later amendments – Rozporządzenie..., 2004) and the Ordinance of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of 20 April 2007 on specific conditions and manner to grant financial assistance within the framework of Action “Agricultural producer groups” covered by the Rural Development Programme for 2007–2013 (Rozporządzenie..., 2007). The allocated support was a continuation of previously implemented CAP actions in the period of 2004–2006. Assistance was granted in the form of flat-rate aid as annual instalments during the first five years (successive 12-month periods of economic activity of the group). Assistance was calculated based on the annual net income from sales of products or groups of products produced on farms of group members (Krzyżanowska and Trajer, 2011), as presented in Table 1.

Financial aid could not exceed the following amounts for a given year of group operations: 100 thousand EUR in the first and second year, 80 thousand EUR in the third year, 60 thousand EUR in the fourth year and 50 thousand EUR in the fifth year. Agricultural producer groups could receive financial assistance only once during the period of their operations. The maximum possible amount of aid for a group within the five-year period was 390 thousand EUR.

**Table 1.** Financial support under RDP 2007–2013 in the following years of economic activity of agricultural producer groups  
**Tabela 1.** Pomoc finansowa w ramach PROW 2007–2013 w kolejnych latach działalności grupy producentów rolnych

Year of operation Rok działalności	Aid based on sales up to PLN equivalent of 1 million EUR Pomoc od wartości sprzedaży do równowartości w PLN 1 mln euro (%)	Aid based on sales over PLN equivalent of 1 million EUR Pomoc od wartości sprzedaży powyżej równowartości w PLN 1 mln euro (%)	Maximum annual aid (thous. EUR) Maksymalna roczna kwota pomocy (tys. euro)
1st – Pierwszy	5.0	2.5	100
2nd – Drugi	5.0	2.5	100
3rd – Trzeci	4.0	2.0	80
4th – Czwarty	3.0	1.5	60
5th – Piąty	2.0	1.5	50
Maximum aid the group may receive within 5 years Maksymalna kwota pomocy, jaką grupa może uzyskać w ciągu 5 lat	–	–	390

Source: Boguta (2011), p. 186.

Źródło: Boguta (2011), s. 186.

## DYNAMICS OF ESTABLISHMENT OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCER GROUPS IN POLAND

Initially, after the Act providing grounds for farmers’ association into groups had been passed, producers were not particularly interested in their establishment (Table 2). In 2001 only eight agricultural producer groups were founded (according to the data of the National Rural Network). A marked increase in the growth dynamics of groups in Poland could be observed starting from 2006, in which 50 entities were registered, i.e. almost 50% more than in 2005. This was connected with the initiation from 15 December 2004 of applications for financial assistance for agricultural producer groups within the framework of the Rural Development Programme 2004–2006. Thanks to the continuation of financial aid for agricultural producer groups within the Rural Development Programme for 2007–2013 the considerable dynamics of group establishment was maintained until 2013, in which as many as 486 economic entities were registered, over 100% more than in 2012. However, already in 2014 a decrease was observed in the total number of agricultural producer groups, caused by the elimination of 54 entities from the register at the simultaneous foundation of only 14 new groups. This may have been caused directly by the

completion of the application procedure for assistance for agricultural producer groups within the framework of the Rural Development Programme for 2007–2013. Financing could only be allocated to entities registered at the provincial marshal registry by 31 December 2013. Thus the process of establishment of agricultural producer groups in Poland was greatly influenced by the EU aid, as it was observed in the results of implementation of the first post-accession programmes (Stoma, 2013). The number of established agricultural producer groups seems to be closely correlated with the dates of execution of individual actions supporting horizontal integration – starting from the increase in the number of registered groups from 2006 and ending with the decline in 2014.

According to the data of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of 15 July 2015, in Poland there are 1325 agricultural producer groups, associating 27 433 farms<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Over 40% of them (11 120) were producers of dried tobacco leaves, associated within 12 producer groups, of which four are located in the Lubelskie voivodeship (3940 producers), three in the Małopolskie voivodeship (830 producers) and one each in the Świętokrzyskie (2708 producers), Podkarpackie (2493 producers), Dolnośląskie (551 producers), Podlaskie (410 producers) and Kujawsko-pomorskie (188 producers).

**Table 2.** The number and dynamics of establishment of agricultural producer groups in Poland in the years 2001–2014  
**Tabela 2.** Liczba i dynamika powstawania grup producentów rolnych w Polsce w latach 2001–2014

Year Rok	Agricultural producer groups at the end of year Grupy producentów rolnych na koniec roku		Number of groups registered in provincial marshal registries during the year Liczba grup wpisanych do rejestrów marszałków województw w ciągu roku	Numbers of groups removed from provincial marshal registries during the year Liczba grup wykreślonych z rejestrów marszałków województw w ciągu roku
	number liczba	dynamics in % (previous year = 100%) dynamika w % (rok poprzedni = 100%)		
2001	8		8	0
2002	28	350.0	20	0
2003	67	239.3	40	1
2004	94	140.3	31	4
2005	117	124.5	34	11
2006	159	135.9	50	8
2007	251	157.9	104	12
2008	395	157.4	158	14
2009	510	129.1	136	21
2010	634	124.3	157	33
2011	830	130.9	227	31
2012	1 016	122.4	242	56
2013	1 391	136.9	486	111
2014	1 351	97.1	14	54

Source: own elaboration on the basis of the National Rural Network database.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie danych Krajowej Sieci Obszarów Wiejskich.

The process of group establishment varies depending on the region; over 30% were established in the Wielkopolskie voivodeship. In the three voivodeships with the largest numbers of groups, i.e. Wielkopolskie, Dolnośląskie and Kujawsko-pomorskie, almost 50% all entities were registered. The other extreme is the Świętokrzyskie and Małopolskie voivodeships, which jointly account for as little as 2.5% all agricultural producer groups (Table 3).

Two primary causes for the regional diversification in the number of agricultural producer groups, indicated by Hasiński (2013), include psychological and economic market factors. This thesis connected with the effect of economic and production factors, i.e. technologically

advanced agriculture, agrarian structure and specialisation of farms, as well as psychological factors, e.g. reluctance, concerns and stereotyping, was also confirmed by Stoma (2013). Combined psychological and economic and production factors results in the diversification of the potential for integration and cooperation. According to that author, the tradition of good agronomic practices and efficient cooperation in farming resulted in the Wielkopolska and Kujawy regions in the development of commercial farms with specialised production profiles, which provided an impulse for the newly founded producer groups. In turn, in south-eastern Poland slow integration processes result from the regional mentality, which does not promote cooperative efforts

**Table 3.** The number of agricultural producer groups and their members in Poland (as of July 15<sup>th</sup> 2015)  
**Tabela 3.** Liczba grup producentów rolnych i ich członkowie w Polsce (stan na dzień 15 lipca 2015 r.)

Voivodeship Województwo	Agricultural producer groups Grupy producentów rolnych		Members Członkowie	
	number liczba	%	number liczba	%
Dolnośląskie	130	9.8	1 617	5.9
Kujawsko-pomorskie	119	9.0	1 852	6.8
Lubelskie	33	2.5	832	3.0
Lubuskie	69	5.2	4 274	15.6
Łódzkie	36	2.7	259	0.9
Małopolskie	19	1.4	1 050	3.8
Mazowieckie	76	5.7	750	2.7
Opolskie	87	6.6	931	3.4
Podkarpackie	43	3.2	3 351	12.2
Podlaskie	43	3.2	2 335	8.5
Pomorskie	72	5.4	860	3.1
Śląskie	26	2.0	174	0.6
Świętokrzyskie	15	1.1	2 836	10.3
Warmińsko-mazurskie	81	6.1	578	2.1
Wielkopolskie	412	31.1	5 225	19.0
Zachodniopomorskie	64	4.8	509	1.9
Total – Ogółem	1 325	100.0	27 433	100.0

Source: own elaboration on the basis of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development database.  
 Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie danych Ministerstwa Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi.

(Hasiński, 2013). Another reason for the regional variation in integration is connected with the considerable fragmentation of farms, regardless of the historic or economic causes. The present regional diversification in integration processes was formed much earlier. It may be assumed that economic conditions and mental factors for the behaviour of agricultural producers will continue to determine the distribution of agricultural producer groups. The rate and distribution of the established groups has been the effect – and will continue to be the resultant – of the spread of the concept of integration based on diffusion of positive examples and innovations, as well as support for the agricultural policy mechanisms. An example of the effect of agricultural

policy is provided by the marked increase in the number of producer groups following Poland’s accession to the EU and as a result of the implementation of EU support programmes targeting the development of such activity (Krzyżanowska and Trajer, 2014; Stoma, 2013). Nevertheless, in the scientific community a discussion continues on the potential and scope of state impact on the national economy. In view of integration processes Lemanowicz (2005) expressed an opinion that agriculture has to be subjected to market verification of the volume, structure and quality of its production. Still in the process of economic development the market mechanism is increasingly undermining the position of agricultural producers. Integration activities are becoming

**Table 4.** Implementation of Action “Agricultural producer groups” RDP 2007–2013 by sectors (as for March 31<sup>st</sup> 2015; amounts in PLN)

**Tabela 4.** Realizacja działania „Grupy producentów rolnych” PROW 2007–2013 w układzie branżowym (stan na 31.03.2015 r., kwoty w zł)

Branch Branża	Aid amount RDP 2007–2013 <sup>3</sup> Kwota pomocy PROW 2007–2013 <sup>3</sup>	Number of groups granted aid Liczba grup objętych pomocą	Number of members per branch Liczba członków w branży	Number of payments Liczba wypłat	Mean aid amount per 1 group Średnia kwota pomocy dla 1 grupy	Mean aid amount per 1 member Średnia kwota pomocy dla 1 członka	Mean aid amount from one payment Średnia kwota pomo- cy z jednej wypłaty
Sugar beets Buraki cukrowe	8 305 610	15	115	51	553 707	72 223	162 855
Cattle – Bydło	5 893 185	43	758	101	137 051	7 775	58 348
Poultry <sup>4</sup> – Drób <sup>4</sup>	184 379 955	238	1335	652	774 706	138 112	282 791
Eggs – Jaja ptasie	8 152 612	13	63	29	627 124	129 407	281 125
Milk <sup>5</sup> – Mleko <sup>5</sup>	49 193 624	96	4097	230	512 434	12 007	213 885
Oil crop seeds Nasiona roślin oleistych	34 443 520	67	752	228	514 082	45 803	151 068
Pigs Trzoda chlewna	116 525 207	241	3875	629	483 507	30 071	185 255
Cereal grain Ziarno zbóż	49 742 241	79	554	262	629 649	89 787	189 856
Cereal grain and oil crop seeds Ziarno zbóż i nasiona roślin oleistych	118 494 624	265	2401	827	447 150	49 352	143 282
Potatoes Ziemniaki	10 822 209	25	175	87	432 888	61 841	124 393
Others <sup>6</sup> Pozostałe <sup>6</sup>	9 946 785	27	2 390	83	368 399	4 162	119 841
Total Razem	595 899 572	1 109	16 515	3 179	537 331	36 082	187 449

Source: own elaboration on the basis of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development database.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie danych Ministerstwa Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi.

<sup>3</sup> The amount does not include funds paid in advance.

<sup>4</sup> The branch “poultry” comprises the following groups of products: live poultry, meat or edible gizzards – turkeys; live poultry, meat or edible gizzards – chickens; live poultry, meat or edible gizzards – geese; live poultry, meat or edible gizzards – ducks; live poultry, meat or edible gizzards – chickens, turkeys.

<sup>5</sup> The branch “milk” comprises the following groups of products: cow’s milk; sheep or goat milk.

<sup>6</sup> The branch “others” comprises the following groups of products: live horses, horse meat; live rabbits, meat or edible rabbit offal; fresh flowers – cut and potted; red or Arctic foxes, mink, polecats, live raccoon dogs, raw pelts; dried tobacco leaves; seeding material or seed potatoes; bee honey or other bee products; live sheep or goats, sheep or goat wool, sheep or goat meat, sheep or goat pelts; ornamental horticultural plants, nursery production – orchard and ornamental; organic farming products; plans for herb or pharmaceutical production; main crops grown as energy crops or for technical use; hops.

practically necessary and the state intervention and assistance may prove to be an effective tool supporting the position of agriculture in the modified market structure.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION “AGRICULTURAL PRODUCER GROUPS” IN RDP FOR 2007–2013**

Data of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development concerning the execution of the measure “Agricultural producer groups” (status for March 31<sup>st</sup> 2015) indicate that within the framework of the Rural Development Programme for 2007–2013 almost 3200 payments were made to the total amount of almost 596 million PLN (Table 4). Assistance was granted to over 1100 agricultural producer groups. Financial aid for one group was on average over 530 thousand PLN, while the mean annual payment was over 180 thousand PLN.

Both the amount and the number of payments differed considerably depending on the branch of production of a given producer group. Detailed data concerning financial aid payments depending on the product or a group of products, for which the agricultural producer group was established, are given in Table 4.

The greatest financial aid, over 184 million PLN, i.e. approx. 30% total amount of aid, was granted to poultry producers. It was received by 238 group, which gives on average over 774 thousand PLN subsidies per one group, the largest amount in all the branches. Poultry producers received the greatest support also per 1 group member and per 1 payment. The largest number, i.e. as many as 265 groups, were granted aid among entities producing both cereal grain and oil crop seeds. Jointly within the framework of RDP 2007–2013 they received over 118 million PLN of subsidies. One group in that branch on average received funds of over 447 thousand PLN. To a similar degree aid was also received by pig producers, granted funds of over 116 million PLN, which at 241 groups benefiting from aid in this branch gives average payments of a little below 0.5 million PLN per 1 group. Almost 50 million PLN were paid to 96 agricultural producer groups in the dairy industry, which gives the average aid amount per 1 group of over 512 thousand PLN. At the number of payments of 230 the average aid amount from one payment for the dairy branch was almost 214 thousand PLN. We also need to focus on the relatively low average aid amount for 1 group among cattle breeders. It was a little over 137

thousand PLN. In turn, the aid amount from one payment was only 58 thousand PLN. It indicates on average a low net income level of producers from that branch associated in 43 groups benefiting from aid.

A significant issue is still connected with the distribution of financial aid for agricultural producer groups in terms of individual voivodeships (Table 5). The number of entities benefiting from aid in individual voivodeships within the framework of the Rural Development Programme 2007–2013 is closely correlated with the number of groups registered in individual voivodeships (Table 3). The correlation coefficient between these parameters was 0.99. On the national scale 85% operating groups used financial aid within the framework of RDP. The lowest percentage of producer groups receiving aid was found in the Małopolskie voivodeship at 60%. Regional distribution of the number of groups was manifested in the amount of granted aid. Correlation coefficient for the value of aid in terms of the total number of groups and those benefiting from aid was in both cases very high – 0.99. Nevertheless, regional differences were less evident. Almost 1/3 all beneficiaries, as this was the concentration of beneficiaries in the Wielkopolskie voivodeship, received unproportionally less support – entities from that region received 1/4 all funds granted within the framework of this measure.

Regional variation in the assistance for agricultural producer groups from Action “Agricultural producer groups” RDP 2007–2013 to a certain degree resulted from the regional diversification in the agrarian structure. Aid granted within the framework of assistance per one group was smallest in south-eastern Poland, i.e. in the Małopolskie, Podkarpackie and Lubelskie voivodeships, while it was greatest in the Lubuskie and Zachodniopomorskie voivodeships. Between the voivodeships located at the opposite sides, i.e. the Małopolskie and Lubuskie, the difference in the level of aid per 1 beneficiary (on average) was almost 4-fold. Considering that in the voivodeships of south-eastern Poland there were very few groups and few of them received aid, it may be stated that support for integration processes was not received to the greatest extent in those regions, in which fragmentation is the greatest, i.e. the need to strengthen the market position of farms is also the greatest. This is illustrated by the fact that jointly in the Świętokrzyskie, Podkarpackie, Lubelskie and Małopolskie voivodeships aid was received by 76 groups, who were granted 7% national amount in Action 142 RDP, while in the Wielkopolskie voivodeship

**Table 5.** Regional differentiation in implementation of the measure “Agricultural producer groups” RDP 2007–2013 (for March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015; amounts in PLN)

**Tabela 5.** Regionalne zróżnicowanie realizacji działania „Grupy producentów rolnych” PROW 2007–2013 (stan na 31.03.2015 r., kwoty w zł)

Voivodeship Województwo	Agricultural producer groups using aid within the framework of RDP 2007–2013 Grupy producentów rolnych korzystające ze wsparcia w ramach PROW 2007–2013		Aid granted within the framework of RDP 2007–2013 Pomoc udzielona w ramach wsparcia PROW 2007–2013	
	number liczba	%	amount kwota	%
Dolnośląskie	118	10.6	64 991 373	10.9
Kujawsko-pomorskie	109	9.8	56 247 263	9.4
Lubelskie	21	1.9	8 736 231	1.5
Lubuskie	56	5.0	44 243 037	7.4
Łódzkie	26	2.3	16 235 850	2.7
Małopolskie	11	1.0	2 318 031	0.4
Mazowieckie	54	4.9	26 557 169	4.5
Opolskie	90	8.1	58 083 327	9.7
Podkarpackie	33	3.0	11 891 148	2.0
Podlaskie	37	3.3	25 291 196	4.2
Pomorskie	49	4.4	24 773 912	4.2
Śląskie	24	2.2	16 626 257	2.8
Świętokrzyskie	11	1.0	7 222 481	1.2
Warmińsko-mazurskie	74	6.7	45 051 412	7.6
Wielkopolskie	350	31.5	152 531 976	25.6
Zachodniopomorskie	49	4.4	35 098 907	5.9
Total – Ogółem	1 112	100.0	595 899 572	100.0

Source: own elaboration on the basis of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development database.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie danych Ministerstwa Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi.

beneficiaries included 350 groups and they received 26% budget within this Action. Large differences are also manifested in terms of the total number of farms of over 1 ha (GUS, 2014). In absolute terms in three voivodeships: Świętokrzyskie, Lubelskie and Małopolskie, jointly agricultural producer groups comprised 4718 farms (Table 3), i.e. slightly more than the total number of group members in the Lubuskie voivodeship. However, in the relative terms in three above-mentioned voivodeships the number of members of agricultural producer groups accounted for 1.2% all farms (slightly less than 400 thousand), while

in the Lubuskie voivodeship groups included 21% farms (4274 members per 20 634 farms). At the same time the average size of a group did not differ considerably. In the compared regions the average number of members was 70 and 62, respectively. This results from the fact that the established groups associate a similar number of entities, thus processes of production concentration in agriculture will be determined mainly by the number of established groups. In the period 2007–2013 the greatest increase in this respect was found in the regions with a relatively better structural situation.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Within the framework of Action “Agricultural producer groups” RDP 2007–2013 producers associated in the groups were allocated funds (to 31 March 2015) at 0.6 billion PLN for 1112 groups. Financial aid supporting association of agricultural producers in groups evidently contributed to an acceleration of integration processes among Polish farmers. Support within the framework of EU programmes was very important for agricultural producers in Poland (Wigier, 1997), as confirmed by the correlation of dynamics of establishment of groups in the initiation or completion of implementation of individual assistance actions in successive EU programme periods. Thus the process of establishment of agricultural producer groups in Poland a considerable effect was observed for the agricultural policy actions realised using CAP funds. In this context we may positively evaluate Action 142 Rural Development Programme for 2007–2013. Results of studies confirm the justification for support of agricultural producer groups and indicate the need to continue the programme. The greatest beneficiaries of the Action included poultry and pig producers, as well as producers of cereal grain and oil crop seeds. Over 55% aid was granted to only four voivodeships (Wielkopolskie, Dolnośląskie, Opolskie, Kujawsko-pomorskie). However, there are voivodeships with the largest number of agricultural producer groups, which indicates similar regional interest in financial assistance. Nevertheless, the greatest increase in the number of agricultural producer groups was found in the regions with a relatively better structural situation. Assuming the objective of the programme, in which horizontal integration aims at the improvement of production competitiveness in agriculture, increased interest and implementation of the agricultural policy actions should take place in regions with markedly worse agrarian structure. Still in the period 2007–2013 the greatest increase in the number of producer groups was observed in regions with a better agrarian structure.

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## WPŁYW PROW 2007–2013 NA PROCESY INTEGRACYJNE POLSKICH PRODUCENTÓW ROLNYCH NA PRZYKŁADZIE DZIAŁANIA „GRUPY PRODUCENTÓW ROLNYCH”

**Streszczenie.** Z powodu dużego rozdrobnienia gospodarstw rolnych dla poprawy konkurencyjności polskiego sektora rolnego bardzo istotna jest umiejętność kooperacji oraz współpracy rolników w ramach grup producenckich. W artykule przeprowadzono ocenę procesów integracyjnych gospodarstw rolnych, które zachodziły w warunkach wdrażania działań polityki rolnej. Przedstawiono dynamikę wzrostu liczby grup producentów rolnych oraz ich przestrzenne rozmieszczenie w Polsce. Celem badań było określenie wpływu wprowadzenia mechanizmów wsparcia finansowego na zrzeszanie się rolników w grupy producenckie.

**Słowa kluczowe:** PROW 2007–2013, grupy producentów rolnych, integracja pozioma w rolnictwie

Accepted for print – Zaakceptowano do druku: 09.05.2016