

DRIVING AND LIMITING FACTORS IN THE FARM MANAGEMENT BY YOUNG FARMERS IN THE CONTEXT OF SURVEY RESEARCH

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Abstract. The purpose of the study was to identify driving and limiting factors of farm management in a region of fragmented agriculture. The paper presents the results of the research conducted in the South-Eastern Poland (Macroregion of Małopolska and Pogórze). The survey was conducted in 2014 in the farms managed by young farmers, i.e. the beneficiaries of the measure “Setting up of young farmers” from the RDP 2007–2013, with the use of a survey method with a questionnaire interview. The research was empirical, and its main goal was to present a case study of the farm management by young farmers in terms of specific management barriers. The results of the studies pointed to the fragmented agrarian structure as the one of the biggest barriers of the effective farm management. The young farmers pointed that fragmented agrarian structure significantly impedes the purchase or lease of agricultural land, and the farm development in the same way. The survey pointed to the factors that contribute to the young farmers: the entrepreneurial attitude, activity and creativity, training, the management knowledge and better access to the Common Agricultural Policy instruments.

Key words: young farmers, farm management, management functions, management barriers

INTRODUCTION

Young farmers contribute to increasing competitiveness. They increase production effectiveness, as well as introduce innovative solutions, or create innovations

on their farms. They are a group of special support in the European Union since 1984. In spite of many positive aspects, young farmers face a number of problems in managing an agricultural farm, especially in regions with difficult natural conditions and unfavourable agrarian structure. The research concerning factors affecting management of an agricultural farm is conducted by, among others, Przygodzka, Ziętara and Klepacki, whereas the research on the impact of human capital on the development of agricultural farms is conducted by, among others, Brodziński and Tomczak. According to these authors, factors affecting management and development of agricultural farms can be divided into internal and external. Internal factors are related to the way of managing farm resources (soil, work, capital) (Przygodzka, 2006; Klepacki, 2006; Poczta and Bartkowiak, 2012). External factors refer to market conditions (demand, price), i.e. relations occurring in the agribusiness system. The impact of the agricultural policy and farm support mechanisms is also important. External factors are also associated with natural conditions (Ziętara, 2005; Tomczak, 2006). The paper presents the factors that influence the effects of farm organization run by the so-called young farmers.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The main purpose of the research was to identify factors affecting management of an agricultural farm managed

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by young farmers, in comparison with the problems resulting from the location of an agricultural farm in the region of fragmented agriculture in the South-Eastern Poland. There were driving (fostering) and limiting factors identified.

The research¹ was carried out in the region of fragmented agriculture in Poland, namely in the provinces with the smallest average area of agricultural farms, i.e. Małopolskie, Świętokrzyskie, Śląskie and Podkarpackie. These provinces are within the boundaries of the Macroregion of Małopolska and Podgórze.

The analysis included 66 agricultural farms: 20 from Małopolskie, 11 from Podkarpackie, 20 from Śląskie and 15 from Świętokrzyskie Province. The farms selection was purposeful: only farms managed by the so-called young farmers, i.e. a person up to 40 years-old.

The research was conducted using the method of an in-depth interview. The questions were related to the selected aspects of managing an agricultural farm under the conditions of fragmented agriculture, and concerning barriers of effective management.

IDENTIFICATION OF AREAS WITH FRAGMENTED LAND STRUCTURE IN POLAND

Agriculture in Poland is very diverse. It differs from agriculture of other countries of the European Union, in terms of economic, as well as social aspects (Pocza and Kołodziejczak, 2008). It is characterised by a large farm fragmentation of agrarian structure and agricultural diversity, resulting, among others, from natural conditions. The average farm in 2015 was about 11 ha (ARiMR, n.d.). Important diversity of agricultural farms in different provinces is noticeable (Table 1).

The most difficult situation is present in regions in the south-eastern Poland, in the provinces: Małopolskie, Podkarpackie, Śląskie and Świętokrzyskie. These provinces form the so-called Macroregion Małopolska and Podgórze, being one of four EU Macroregions specified on the basis of the sum of standard gross margins (SGM) and prepared for the purposes of the Polish FADN. From the data presented in table 1, it seems that over the recent years average values have been increasing. Certainly,

these are positive processes, however, they are evolutionary, namely gradual and slow. Based on the analysis, GUS (2013) concludes that “the agrarian structure in Poland is still characterized by a worse competitive distribution of land resources, and a large part of these resources is used by small farms, without any specialization”.

Considering the Macroregion of Małopolska and Podgórze, namely the macroregion with the largest share of small farms, it may be concluded that the average area of a farm does not exceed 6 ha. According to the data of the GUS (2014), approximately 3% of farms in the macroregion manage area greater than 15 ha. The fragmentation of the area structure of farms is accompanied by their weak linkages with the market and high percentage of small farms, the so-called family or subsistence farms (producing only for own purposes). However, only every fifth person working in agriculture in these provinces was earning income exclusively or mainly from agricultural activities (GUS, 2014).

Degradation of the area structure which can be noticed in the south-eastern Poland, according to Musiał and Wojewodziec (2013), may lead to serious problems. “The checker of land” contributes to growing share of fallows, decreasing effectiveness of land integration and even further fragmentation of land by its division. Furthermore, it causes impeded access to lease, especially for young farmers, who want to increase their farms. These unfavourable factors are translated into economic and social aspects (Miś, 2011). The findings of the research conducted by Domagalska-Grędyś (2008) indicate lower effectiveness of farms in the Macroregion of Małopolska and Podgórze than these lying in other macroregions. The stock of milk cows and pigs in this region is approximately 70% and 59% of the average stock in the country. Wheat yield and cow lactation yield are smaller – by 13 and 12% from the average for the country, respectively. The value of production is also lower in relation to the value for the country (by 17%). Non-agricultural income plays a significant role in this macroregion. This is proven by a lower ratio of share of family farms in the value of agricultural production in the region in relation to other regions (Domagalska-Grędyś, 2008).

Considering natural conditions and production-economic results in agriculture of the Macroregion Małopolska and Podgórze, allows to identify many barriers preventing farmers from effective management, implementing innovations and increasing effectiveness

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Table 1. Changes in the average size of agricultural land of a farm in Polish provinces in 2007–2014 (ha)

Tabela 1. Zmiany średniej wielkości powierzchni gruntów rolnych w gospodarstwie rolnym w poszczególnych województwach Polski w latach 2007–2014 (ha)

Voivodeship Województwo	Years – Lata							
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Dolnośląskie	15.08	15.35	15.52	15.72	16.01	16.05	16.01	16.22
Kujawsko-pomorskie	14.65	14.79	14.94	15.01	15.04	15.04	15.14	15.03
Lubelskie	7.28	7.34	7.40	7.40	7.46	7.45	7.50	7.54
Lubuskie	19.34	19.67	20.11	20.32	20.82	20.78	20.75	20.92
Łódzkie	7.03	7.34	7.41	7.42	7.49	7.52	7.57	7.61
Małopolskie	3.71	3.75	3.80	3.83	3.86	3.88	3.92	3.95
Mazowieckie	8.36	8.37	8.44	8.44	8.52	8.50	8.51	8.55
Opolskie	16.86	17.46	17.71	17.83	18.00	17.99	18.12	18.22
Podkarpackie	4.38	4.41	4.46	4.47	4.54	4.56	4.60	4.63
Podlaskie	11.87	11.96	12.05	12.11	12.22	12.20	12.23	12.24
Pomorskie	18.30	18.48	18.82	18.84	19.00	18.94	18.95	19.00
Śląskie	6.53	6.55	6.71	6.83	7.01	7.14	7.24	7.37
Świętokrzyskie	5.31	5.33	5.39	5.42	5.49	5.49	5.53	5.57
Warmińsko-Mazurskie	22.68	22.81	22.95	22.95	23.07	22.88	22.90	22.92
Wielkopolskie	13.37	13.36	13.46	13.43	13.47	13.41	13.46	13.51
Zachodniopomorskie	29.18	29.68	30.15	30.30	30.70	30.67	30.20	30.29
Average for Poland Średnia dla Polski	9.91	10.02	10.15	10.23	10.36	10.38	10.42	10.48

Source: ARiMR data (n.d.).

Źródło: dane ARiMR (b.d.).

of agricultural production. The specific character of this region indicates the necessity to diversify agricultural activities and, on the other hand, the need of focusing aid under the instruments of the Common Agricultural Policy.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Young farmers (aged up to 35) account for approximately 7.5% of all farmers in the European Union (Eurostat, 2010). The largest number of young farmers is recorded in countries such as: Poland (14.8%), Czech Republic (11.8%), Austria (10.6%), France (8.7%) and Finland (8.6%), and the smallest in Portugal (2.6%),

Cyprus (2.6%) and the Netherlands (3.6%). The first place of Poland in terms of the number of farmers who begin agricultural activities results from a general large number of farmers and a significant agrarian fragmentation in the country. The largest number of farmers in the post-production life stage is recorded in such countries as: Portugal (46.5%), Romania (37.9%), Bulgaria (37.3%), Italy (37.2%) and Lithuania (34.7%) (Eurostat, 2010).

Below is the analysis of several factors that significantly affect the level of the farm management. These were: age, education, impact of knowledge on the decision-making process, management functions, as well as barriers in management.

Table 2. Selected characteristics of the surveyed farms (N = 6)

Tabela 2. Wybrane charakterystyki badanych gospodarstw rolnych (N = 6)

Voivodeship Województwo	Number of surveyed farms Liczba badanych gospodarstw rolnych	Average age of the farmer Średni wiek rolnika	Average work experience (years) Średnie doświadczenie w pracy (lata)	Average area of studied farm (ha) Średnia powierzchnia badanego gospodarstwa rolnego (ha)
Małopolskie	20	20.2	9.8	16.7
Podkarpackie	11	26.8	10.2	22.8
Śląskie	20	28.0	12.0	20.5
Świętokrzyskie	15	30.2	11.7	22.6
Total – Razem	66	26.3	11.0	20.6

Source: own elaboration based on researches.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie badań.

The average respondent's age was 26. Despite young age, the farmers have already great experience in working on a farm, usually of their parents (average 10 years). Owing to the fragmentation of the agrarian structure in the analysed area, farms managed by the respondents were not large. Usually young farmers manage several or a dozen hectares (Table 2).

The surveyed sample was dominated by individuals with agricultural education: secondary (63%), or

academic (16%) (Fig. 1). Farmers without agricultural education usually supplement it during agricultural courses.

Education is one of the main development factors. General and professional knowledge and awareness is important, as well as the ability to use knowledge. As a result, farmers operate easier in the economic and social environment (Klepacki, 2005). The level of farmers education is increasing every year. It is

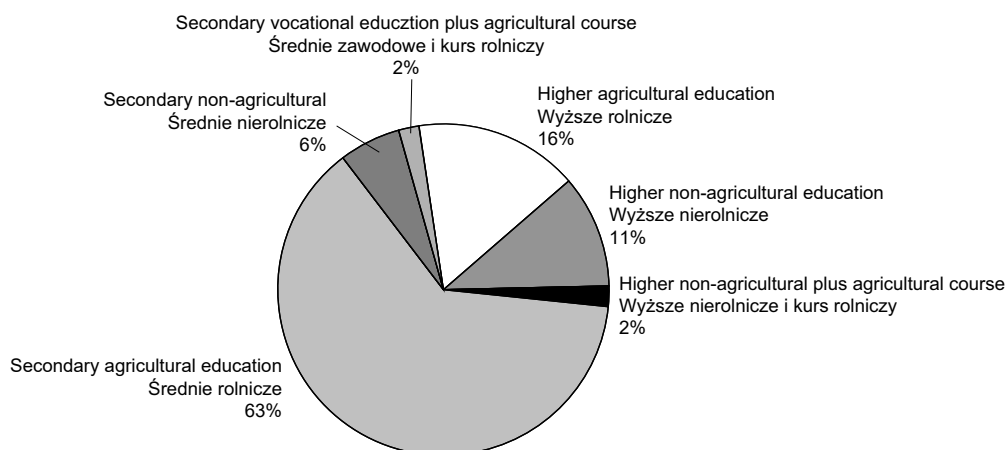


Fig. 1. Structure of respondents education (N = 66)

Source: own elaboration based on research.

Rys. 1. Struktura wykształcenia respondentów (N = 66)

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie badań.

associated not only with the access to the Common Agricultural Policy instruments related to education, but also with the requirements of the competitive domestic and European market. Education and knowledge are the pre-requisites of development and increase in agricultural competitiveness. Wołoszyn (2004) formulates a thesis saying that “farms whose managers have higher level of education and knowledge as well as keep on updating this knowledge have higher development opportunities”. Also research carried out by Kołoszko-Chomentowska (2008) proved a positive correlation between the level of education and management results. Marcysiak and Marcysiak (2011) obtained similar conclusions: lower economic efficiency is achieved in farms managed by farmers with the basic and vocational education.

Considering the analysed sample of young farmers (Fig. 1) it can be assumed that these are individuals who are active, friendly to changes, entrepreneurial and creative. They are focused on changes and development, and see the need for supplementing their knowledge and gaining experience.

Majority of the respondents concluded that education was useful in agricultural farm management (83.3%). The remaining individuals concluded that agricultural education had not affected the level and effects of agricultural farm management. On the basis of the farmers’ opinion, with regard to the suitability of the obtained agricultural knowledge, the following observations can be presented:

- theoretical knowledge complements practical knowledge,
- agricultural education is useful for planning fertilizing and cultivation treatments, crop rotation, selecting plant protection method, plant production, mechanization, knowledge of technology of plant production and animal procedures and agricultural technique are important,
- education gives extra skills and is a formal confirmation which is useful in obtaining external funds for farm development,
- education allows having knowledge essential for farm management, it facilitates work organization (helps to solve organizational problems),
- education enables obtaining new knowledge differing from the one of our parents; knowledge facilitates the implementation of innovative solutions,

- education and knowledge facilitate keeping documentation related to subsidies and projects performed in a farm (project management),
- economic education helps to keep books, assess the market, calculate return on investment, thanks to which it is possible to reduce production costs,
- education is very important, but it must be supported by experience and verified in practical situations,
- knowledge acquired during studies gives confidence as to the relevance of undertaken activities.

Management of every organization associated with the implementation of the management functions, first propagated by Henri Fayol in 1916. In the modern management studies, these functions exist in a slightly different, modified form, reflecting the needs and character of contemporary organizations (Stabryła, 1983; Szymańska, 2007). Farm management consists of similar components and is aimed at implementing the best solution. Most often this solution enables obtaining the expected results with the possibly lowest expenses (Kielbasa, 2012). However, taking into account the special character of a farm, most frequently family farm, it is difficult to fully refer classic management functions to this type of activities (Spiak, 2009).

The management functions in the chosen farms were referred to:

- planning function – planning new activities, e.g. for the purpose of farm development, setting goals and methods of task performance, setting the main goal and partial goals,
- organizing function – organizing scheduled activities, acquiring resources, creating conditions for task execution,
- coordinating function – execution of the scheduled activities. In an agricultural farm this function is executed most often by the farmer: they perform planned actions or manage employees (most often hired hands),
- controlling function – comparing the planned goals and activities with the obtained effects, it makes it possible to assess the degree of achieving goals and executing the scheduled tasks.

Figure 2 presents the structure of farmers’ opinion about management functions that are the most difficult to execute on the farm.

From Figure 2 it is seen that planning causes most problems to farmers. It is very difficult to set goals and long-term plans in the rapidly changing reality and on

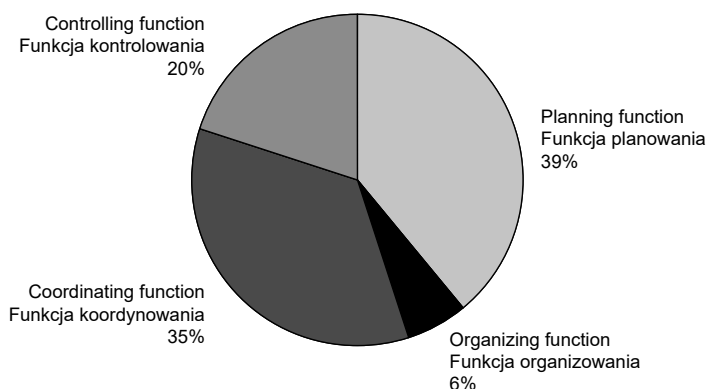


Fig. 2. Division of the management functions according to the degree of difficulty of their implementation, in the opinion of respondents (N = 66)
Source: own elaboration based on research.

Rys. 2. Podział funkcji zarządzania według stopnia trudności ich realizacji w opinii respondentów (N = 66)

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie badań.

Table 3. Identification of the farm management barriers on the base of the studies

Tabela 3. Identyfikacja barier w zarządzaniu gospodarstwem rolnym w badanej próbie

External barriers Bariery zewnętrzne	Internal barriers Bariery wewnętrzne
Problem with the farm enlargement and agrarian unfavorable situation in the region Problem z powiększeniem gospodarstwa rolnego i niekorzystna sytuacja agrarna w regionie	Financial problems stemming from a farm low efficiency and profitability of agricultural production Problemy finansowe gospodarstwa rolnego wynikające z niskiej efektywności i dochodowości produkcji rolnej
Fluctuations in crop prices, making tactical and strategic planning impossible Wahania cen płodów rolnych, co uniemożliwia planowanie taktyczne i strategiczne	Lack of funds to finance investments, development and the plan implementation Brak środków na sfinansowanie inwestycji rozwojowych i na realizację wielu planów
Problems with the sale of agricultural raw materials and low prices Problemy ze zbytem płodów rolnych i niskie ceny	Lack of adequate equipment, and machinery the need to borrow equipment from the family, which sometimes causes conflicts Brak odpowiedniego sprzętu, maszyn i urządzeń konieczność wypożyczenia sprzętu od rodziny, co czasem rodzi konflikty
Bureaucracy and incompetence of officials discouraging to apply for funds for farm development Rozbudowana biurokracja i niekompetencja urzędników, zniechęcające do ubiegania się o środki na rozwój gospodarstwa	Piling work due to the lack of appropriate machinery and equipment and the resulting problems in performing work in time Spiętrzenie prac z powodu braku odpowiednich maszyn i urządzeń oraz wynikający stąd problem z wykonaniem prac w terminie
Changes of legislation Ciągłe zmiany przepisów prawnych	High instalment loans, which makes savings impossible Wysokie raty kredytów, które uniemożliwiają odłożenie oszczędności
Weather conditions and natural disasters Warunki atmosferyczne i klęski żywiołowe	Family farm pressure on the management and impeachment ideas of young farmer Naciski rodziny na sposób zarządzania gospodarstwem i kwestionowanie przez rodzinę pomysłów młodego rolnika
The lack of special support programs for small farmers Brak specjalnych programów wsparcia dla małych gospodarstw rolnych	Lack of knowledge about the preparation of the necessary documentation Brak wiedzy na temat sporządzania koniecznej dokumentacji
The lack of direct sale regulation Brak uregulowania sprzedaży bezpośredniej	Neighbourhood strifes Kłótnie sąsiedzkie

Source: own elaboration based on researches.

Źródło: opracowanie własne na podstawie badań.

unstable markets. The second option in terms of difficulty is coordination, namely performing the planned activities. Very often farmers must execute, on their own, many activities at the same time, have many skills and often work additionally beyond a farm or run other non-agricultural activities. Due to the excess of duties, not all activities can be well implemented in time.

Next, the farmers specified a list of barriers they face most often in the farm management process. These barriers can be divided into internal and external documents (Table 3).

Only three of farmers claimed they were not facing any barriers (problems) in farm management. Others indicated the lack of funds that were hindering savings, blocking development and plan execution. The largest external barriers are instability of markets, low prices of crops and inflated bureaucracy. These are factors mentioned by almost all respondents. These factors largely prevent development and hinder management. Unpredictable markets make the implementation of plans (strategic planning) impossible in the long term. In such situations only operational planning works, planning related to temporary and reactive activities, requiring continuous monitoring of the environment and acquisition of up-to-date information.

SUMMARY

The farm management requires knowledge, and experience as well as proper conditions ensuring possibility of farm development. Management success is determined by internal and external factors. Internal factors are, first of all: entrepreneurship of the farm manager, the level of education and knowledge and experience. In addition, tangible resources and funds are important in a farm. External factors, which affect farm management to the greatest degree, include prices of crops and demand, as well as the possibility of obtaining financial support for young farmers. Also legal regulations and bureaucracy are very important. The conducted research allows to identify the following conclusions:

1. Fragmented agrarian structure is one of the largest barriers in effective farm management. Young farmers want to implement innovations, modernize agricultural farms and increase their effectiveness, but they are limited by the farm area and land prices. Furthermore, these barriers negatively affect the planning function, especially in the long-term strategies. Reducing the negative

effect of the land fragmentation requires the implementation of new solutions (innovation) and emphasising the aid instruments for small farms.

2. There are many farm factors affecting young farm management and they can be divided into: a) encouraging factors (driving forces): young age of farm managers, entrepreneurship, activity, creativity, education and additional training, gaining knowledge regarding the farm management, experience, obtaining funds (grants for the young farmer), b) restricting factors (limiting forces): fragmented agrarian structure and little possibility to purchase or lease agricultural land, small scale of production, market instability, bureaucracy and farm control systems.

3. Education is one of the most important factors in the human capital development, which in turn implies the development process. Young farmers are often well-educated and they possess knowledge of management and innovation. It may be assumed that it is a major factor of changes and introducing new solutions in the farm management.

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CZYNNIKI SPRZYJAJĄCE ZARZĄDZANIU GOSPODARSTWEM ROLNYM PRZEZ MŁODYCH ROLNIKÓW I OGRANICZAJĄCE TE DZIAŁANIA – W KONTEKŚCIE BADAŃ ANKIETOWYCH

Streszczenie. Młodzi rolnicy rozpoczynający działalność rolniczą napotykać wiele barier związanych z zarządzaniem. Wynikają one z uwarunkowań wewnętrznych, jak i zewnętrznych. Celem badań była identyfikacja czynników sprzyjających procesowi zarządzania gospodarstwem rolnym i ograniczających te działania w regionie rozdrobnionego rolnictwa. W pracy przedstawiono wyniki badań własnych, prowadzonych w regionie Polski południowej (makroregion Małopolska i Pogórze). Badania były prowadzone w 2014 roku w gospodarstwach tzw. młodych rolników, czyli beneficjentów działania „Ułatwienie startu młodemu rolnikom” z PROW 2007–2013, metodą ankiety z kwestionariuszem wywiadu. Badania miały charakter empiryczny, a ich celem było studium przypadku zarządzania gospodarstwem przez młodych rolników oraz identyfikacja barier w zarządzaniu. Uzyskane wyniki badań terenowych wskazują na rozdrobnioną strukturę agrarną jako jedną z największych barier w skutecznym zarządzaniu gospodarstwem rolnym. Młodzi rolnicy wskazali, że utrudnia ona zakup czy dzierżawę ziemi rolniczej, a tym samym hamuje rozwój gospodarstwa. Badania ujawniły też czynniki sprzyjające rozwojowi gospodarstw rolnych zarządzanych przez młodych rolników. Były to przede wszystkim: przedsiębiorczość, aktywność i kreatywność, dokształcanie na kursach i szkoleniach, wiedza w zakresie zarządzania, a także większy dostęp do środków pomocowych w ramach instrumentów Wspólnej Polityki Rolnej.

Słowa kluczowe: młodzi rolnicy, zarządzanie, funkcje zarządzania, bariery zarządzania

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