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**Family Farming in Poland and in the World
– Thematic Edition of *Wieś i Rolnictwo* [Countryside
and Agriculture] Quarterly Magazine¹**

For many years now, family farming has been a subject of interest for scientists, although attempts to research and describe this phenomenon have been met with numerous methodological, definitional and practical problems. A recurring thread of these publications to which other scientists are referring is the manner of defining the “family farm” term. Indeed, an accurate definition would be useful and allow precise research of this group of farms. Over the years, numerous attempts have been made to specify who we are talking about while using the following terms: “small farms”, “family farms”, “economically weak farms”. Problems concerning the types of indicators (farm area, its income, form of property, labour) which should be taken into account while constructing a definition of the family farm are still being discussed. In Poland, many authors have written about problems concerning the establishment of a definition for family farm (see. Sikorska 2003; Józwiak 2007; Zegar 2007; Halamska 2005, 2011; Dzun 2014 and others), although it seems that this question is still open both for us and in other parts of the world. Other topics also appear in the discussion – in a context of research concentrated on small family farms and changes occurring in the countryside and their influence on agriculture and farmers (see among others Wilkin

¹ Kwartalnik *Wieś i Rolnictwo* Nr 1.1 (166.1) 2015, available at: <http://kwartalnik.irwirpan.waw.pl/archive?year=2015>.

2010). Indeed, these topics include the influence of political changes connected with the transformation of the political system in Poland after 1989 on family farms, social implications of de-collectivisation and end of time of the peasants (Halamska 1998; 2005). Problems concerning family farms in Middle Europe were the subject of publications by, among others, Maurel (1994) and Pouliquen (2011). Another substantial problem which interests scientists is the position that small family farms should have in different types of programmes and politics oriented toward rural areas. This is also a problem which appears in further arrangements related to the implementation of changes in the Common Agricultural Policy (see among others Poczta et al. 2007; Chlebicka et al. 2009; Zawalińska 2009; Nurzyńska 2011).

Family farms issues have recently returned to the limelight and are the subject of constant discussion, as announced by the United Nations General Assembly in 2014 – the International Year of Family Farming. Its declared aim was, among other things, to improve the rank of small and family farming. This was supposed to happen by turning the world's attention to its significant role during struggles with famine and poverty, at which time small farming provided food security and proper feeding. Emphasis was also to be placed on its role in managing natural resources, environment protection and sustainable development, especially in rural areas. As an effect of this decision, many events were held throughout the world which had to document a particular role of family farming. Incidentally, it emerged that the phenomenon under discussion can be observed in many ways. Farmers' problems in different parts of the globe are sometimes similar, although depending on the place of celebration, different aspects were focussed on. In Asia, Africa and developing countries of America, the coexistence of family farming and poverty was emphasised – the agricultural population consists of the poorest people in those regions, and family farming represents a way for many families to survive. In the most developed countries, although the agricultural population is not one of the richest groups in the society, issues concerning the provision of food security for the world, and the possibilities of natural environment protection seemed to be more substantial. In countries of the former Soviet Bloc, issues concerning the rebuilding of family farms after a period of compulsory collectivisation have appeared. Here it is fitting to mention a particular document, which collects opinions from different parts of the world and reveals problems related to family farming across the globe. This is a special edition of *Więś i Rolnictwo* quarterly magazine from 2015

concerning problems of family farming². It is a publication edited by Prof. Maria Halamska, and offers a summary of one of the events held for the International Year of Family Farming in Poland, international conference: "Family farming in the 21st century: diverse reality". The conference was held on 26th September 2014 in Warsaw. It was organised by the Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development of the Polish Academy of Sciences and Institute of Sociology of the Jagiellonian University. The presented volume is a result of cooperation between scientific environments in many countries: in Poland, France and the USA, sociologists and economists have been presenting different views on family farming issues in the world. Articles collected in the volume include both theoretical analyses, concerning terminological issues and results of empirical research concerning family farms conducted in different parts of the world etc. There are nine articles and two extensive discussions on English-speaking and French-speaking publications³ concerning problems which are encountered by family farms in the world.

In a text opening a volume entitled "Criteria for defining of family farms in selected countries", Mirosław Drygas reviewed the manner of defining family farms in different countries which are at different levels of social and economic development where small farmers farm in substantially different climatic, economic and cultural realities. The author is concentrated, above all, on definitions used to create national agricultural policies, and discussion of other definitions used in Australia and New Zealand, as well as South America, India, countries of Eastern Africa, and finally – Poland. The author notes that there does not exist one, precise, commonly accepted and used definition of family farm in the world. Indeed, this makes research difficult, as it does the estimation of the occurrence of this phenomenon on a global scale.

A more detailed description of problems and diversification of family farming in the world can be found in a text entitled: "Family farming in the development process. Conclusions and recommendations", by scientists

² *Wieś i Rolnictwo*, vol. 1.1 (166.1) 2015, <http://kwartalnik.irwirpan.waw.pl/97/kwartalnik-nr-11-1661-2015>.

³ These are texts by S. Michalska, included in a book edited by M. Sourriseau entitled "Agricultures familiales et les mondes a venir" and R. Śpiewak, included in a book by J. van der Ploeg entitled "The New Peasantries. Struggles for Autonomy and Sustainability".

of French CIRAD⁴: Jean-Michel Sourisseau, Philippe Bonnal, Jacques Marzin, Bruno Losch, Pierre-Marie Bosc. The authors use the results presented in the report⁵, which had to specify the contribution of family farming in the provision of food security in the world. The authors criticise the current model of family farming development in developed countries. They also indicate reasons why it cannot be used currently in developing countries, and refer to controversies related to family farming. Indeed, family farming is sometimes criticised for its archaism, as well as the fact that it does not assure adequate income for the rural population and cannot satisfy the food demands of the planet.

In a text by Patrick H. Mooney i Keiko Tanak entitled “The family farms in United States: social relations, scale and region”, focus was placed on problems and realities of the functioning of family farms in the United States. Family farms constitute an icon of American culture and are an important element of the agrarian tradition. In addition, at this point it is difficult to form an unambiguous definition of what family farms really are. In the text, we can find a review of definitions used by various institutions in the United States and the differentiation resulting from them in relation to the number and characteristics of family farms in the USA. However, the authors of the text concentrated not only on the economical, but also the social aspects of family farms’ functioning, with emphasis placed on their role and meaning for maintaining the vitality of local societies, natural environment protection, maintaining biodiversity and food safety in the USA. The text’s authors also formulated claims regarding policy concerning rural areas in the USA, as well as claims pertaining to family farms protection.

Walenty Pocza, Ewelina Szuba-Barańska, Patrycja Beba and Wawrzyniec Czubak concentrated on family farms in Europe. In their text, entitled “Family farms in the EU – their structural and economic diversity and opportunities of growth”, the authors had to conduct a review of the definitions of family farm available from the reference books; they also had to detail the definition that was being adopted for the research. Following this, and based on statistical data from the EU (above all Eurostat and FADN), they

⁴ Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement.

⁵ <http://www.cirad.fr/publications-ressources/edition/etudes-et-documents/les-agricultures-familiales-du-monde>.

separated and made comparisons between scale of occurrence, and significance of family farms for the economies in different EU member countries. The authors notice that significant diversification of the role of family farming can be observed both in old and new member countries of the EU – there are countries like Poland where the role of family farming is essential, and those where it remains marginal. A very significant group of farms, and one that constitutes over 60% of all farms functioning in the EU is marginal farms, which do not generate lasting incomes from agricultural activity. However, they have their place in the European Model of Agriculture (EMR), which includes, among others lesser family farms, unit potential, high participation of family workload, working on a part-time basis, low production scale, and low specialisation level (see. Kowalczyk and Sobiecki 2011).

The diversification of family farms which can be observed in Europe has its roots in diversified agrarian history. A particularly interesting example can be found in the agrarian history of Central Europe, where manumission and agricultural reforms took hold late. Collectivisation of agriculture was another epochal event which, similar to de-collectivisation in the 1990s, had significantly changed both the approach to farming, and the mentality of the farmers. In an extremely interesting article, Marie-Claude Maurel wrote about the trajectories of development, from collectivised agriculture, to the reconstruction of private property and the reappearance of family farms. Indeed, in his text “From disappearance to recovery: family farming in Central Europe”, he analysed examples from the Czech Republic, Hungary and Lithuania, and showed different paths which can lead to exit from collectivistic agriculture in different countries.

The next four texts in the volume concern the situation and problems of small farms in Poland. Moreover, their placement in the background of prior deliberations and theories make it possible to see a wider context and a new perspective on research results interpretation. An interesting text to refer to here is “The specificity of family farming in Poland: the weight of both past and present”. It concerns the specificity of family farming in Poland, and was written by Maria Halamska, who describes what was happening with one non collectivised farm in the Soviet Bloc which was subjected to actions and influences of a centrally controlled economy. Necessity to farm in artificial conditions and adjust to political and economic realities had an influence on farmers’ mentality. Halamska also contemplated what influence instruments of the EU Common Agricultural Policy currently have on the

transformations and functioning of small farms in Poland. She noted that the last twenty-five years saw much faster changes than the whole forty-year period before 1989, and that those changes are leading to large diversification of family farms and to the appearance of a new group of farms terms, by the author, quasi-peasant farms.

One of the features that distinguishes Polish farmers from others is their reluctant attitude to organised actions, and specifically actions that have a co-operative character. In terms of this phenomenon and the reasons behind it, it is fitting to refer to a paper written by Piotr Nowak and Krzysztof Gorlach: "Farmers and the cooperative movement in Poland: an old or a new social phenomenon?" The authors presented a short history of cooperativeness in Poland, emphasising that while it had been developing in rural areas during the Partitions, and then during the interwar period, after the 2nd world war this movement was used by communist governments to control grass-root actions and initiatives. As this resulted from presented empirical research results gathered by the authors, it gave rise to reluctance and scepticism towards cooperativeness among older farmers. These feeling were caused by their experiences during the communistic period, while the youngest farmers have a more positive attitude towards this movement. With this said however, younger farmers have little knowledge of cooperativeness. Readiness to cooperate and act jointly is only slight, as it results from presented research, what results from low levels of trust – a characteristic of Polish society.

Here it is important to refer to another two texts concerning problems of small farms in Poland which are dominating the segment of agrarian culture. In the text "Social and economic aspects of the functioning of small agricultural holdings in Poland", Janusz Źmija and Monika Szafrńska presented a scale of the discussed phenomenon, its regional diversity, and certain social aspects of the functioning of small family farming. They noticed that small farms, although having little productive functions because of their area, do have certain advantages. These advantages arise from functions that are social and environmental in nature, such as protection against poverty, care of the youngest and the oldest inhabitants of the village, shaping the rural background, and the creation of social and cultural capital.

Ryszard Kamiński, in a text entitled "The vocational reorientation of farmers and their family members" told of research which indicates that a large number of people currently employed in small farms will soon have to find additional or alternative sources of income. The text describes

the phenomenon of farmers' occupational reorientation, which may take place in two ways: by reaching multiple activities, or completely changing profession. The phenomenon of occupational reorientation refers not only to the economic sphere, but also the psychological and social. Indeed, this is connected with internal relations in farming family. Research results presented by the author indicated that farmers remain optimists when it comes to the future of their farms as they are not eager to actively search for alternative solutions.

Texts presented in the discussed edition of *Wieś i Rolnictwo* quarterly magazine represent an unusually interesting voice in the discussion on the future of family farming in the world, Europe and Poland. Almost all of these discussions are related to a diversity of texts, literature reviews and deliberations on definitions. Indeed, this indicates that the clarification and creation of a uniform, universal definition of the small farm is not easy, but might not be necessary. Although the studies originate from all over the world, they are presented in one volume. As such, the reader may notice that, despite difficulties concerning clarification of the described concept, an exchange of knowledge and drawing of conclusions are possible, as indicated by research conducted on the basis of understood definitions. Thanks to the involvement of more than twenty authors, the discussed publication constitutes an important voice in discussion regarding the future of small farms in the world and is also a substantive souvenir after the end of the International Year of Family Farming.

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