

# AGRICULTURE IN POLAND BEFORE AND AFTER POLAND'S ACCESSION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION



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# AGRICULTURE IN POLAND BEFORE 2004 AND TODAY

Poland is ranked the 3rd in EU in terms of arable land, after France and Spain, but has poorer soil quality and a shorter vegetation period. After the fall of industry due to the 1990 transformation, many people from cities moved to the countryside. State owned farms failed, small farmers could not compete with imported products. Farm families have become multi-income.

## BEFORE 2004

**Rural population:** 38% of the total population, 58% of the rural population associated with agriculture

**Employment:** 20,2% of the total number of employees are associated with farming (2000)

**Part of GDP:** 3,3% (UE: 1,5%, Grece: 5,8%, Sweden: 0,4%) – PL: 11,8% in 1989, 6% in 1996

**Number of farms:** 2,138 milion in 1990, 1,882 milion in 2004

**Arable land:** approx. 17 million ha (approx. 54% of the total area of the country)

**Average size of farm:** 8,3 ha, twice smaller than the average size in EU, 55% of farms with 1-5 ha of farmland, 0,4% of farms with +50ha of farmland

**Low price of agricultural land**, esp.. in North/West

## TODAY

**Rural population:** 38% of the total population, 22% associated with agriculture

**Employment:** 10,2% of the total number of employees are associated with farming (2017)

**Part of GDP:** 2,6% (2016)

**Number of farms:** 1,425 milion in 2018

**Arable land:** approx.. 16,4 millions ha (2018)

**Average size of farm:** 10,4 ha (2018) , 74% of farms 1-5 ha (28% of farmland), 0,5% of farms of +500 ha = 7% of farmland (2018),

**High price of agricultural land:** especially in fruit production basins



# AGRICULTURE IN POLAND BEFORE 2004 AND TODAY

## BEFORE 2004

**Farm structure:** very fragmented, 25% consisting of one plot, 7% of 10 plots and more

**Traditional character of agricultural production:** multidirectional production, extensive methods

**Economic Size Unit\* of farms:** 96% <8 ESU

**Structure of family income in 2000 (farmers):** agriculture 36%, work outside agriculture 29%, social benefits 30%, non-agricultural activities 4% (1990: 55%,29%,12%,2%)

**Income of the rural population:** 19% farming only, 15% farming + other activity, +51% non-agricultural income

**Trade:** from 1992 to 2004 Poland was a net importer of agricultural products

## TODAY

**Farm structure:** still fragmented but some less through the concentration of fields

**Character of agricultural production:** very specialised and/or industrial production of crops and industrial breeding of animals are developing very quickly (high debt of farmers)

**Structure of family income:** agriculture 10%, work outside agriculture 49%, non-agricultural activities 7%, social benefits 33%

**Income of the rural population:** 11% farming only, +30% of farms produce only for their own needs

**Trade:** Agricultural product exports have increased more than four times since 2004.

1 ESU=1200 EUR of standard direct surplus



# CONCLUSIONS

## EFFECTS OF TRANSFORMATION AND EU ACCESSION

Those processes have produced both positive and negative effects:

**Positive effect: the improvement of the economic situation in rural areas:**

- the level of extreme poverty decreased from over 18% in 2000 to 7.3% in 2017,
- the income of rural residents per capita increased by 118% (urban residents by 94%)
- the fragmentation of farms has been reduced
- many harmful practices have been eliminated in Poland, such as burning grasses, storing manure directly on the ground or using fertilizers for frozen soil,
- the creation of fish ponds created water retention systems and has positive effect on biodiversity
- organic farming has developed quickly after 2004, with a pic in 2013 of 670.000 ha of crop area (4,7%) and almost 27.000 farms.



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### Negative effects:

- migration of young people from rural areas to cities or abroad,
- emergence of industrial farms, especially industrial breeding of poultry, pigs and cows (that develop very quickly!)
- collapse of many small farms,
- income stratification of rural populations: ab. 20% of farms are large producers who produce exclusively for the market; +50% of medium-sized farms that hardly try to make a living from commercial production, 15% don't produce anything just keep the land in good agricultural condition, 15% produce only for themselves.
- the increasing pressure on profit causes that traditional techniques are replaced by industrial cultivation and farming methods (organic farming is quasi not taught in schools of agriculture)
- In 2017, Polish farmers used 30% more mineral fertilizers annually than when they joined the EU.
- The amount of chemical plant protection products consumed increased by five times from 1991 to 2017.



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### Negative role of Polish political elites:

- Poland has allowed global corporations of agribusiness and agrochemistry to take over of seed centers and the sale of agricultural inputs,
- Polish agricultural policy supports intensive agriculture and underestimates the environmental and social benefits of smaller farms,
- The share of agri-environmental payments of the EU Common Agricultural Policy is one of the lowest in the EU, e.g. in 2014-2020 it is only 8.6%, almost 10 times less than e.g. in Austria; Poland was the only EU country that transferred 25% of those funds for the direct payments;
- Lack of high-quality soil protection: Poland has only 3.7% of high quality arable land that disappears as a result of urbanization and road construction.
- Lack of support for organic farming: the number of farms and the crop area is reduced by 6% per year since 2014.





The Baltic Sea –  
blooms of cyanobacteria

