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Organic Farming in Poland: Update July 2005

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1 Agriculture in Poland

Farmland occupies 51.7 percent of the total surface area of Poland (16.2

million hectares) and is mainly owned by the private sector (94.8 percent). This means that individual farming methods affect the state of the environment in more than half the country. According the last agricultural census in 2002 there were 1'617'300 private farms scattered throughout Poland, making all programmes in rural areas extremely difficult to implement. But the latest results of applications of farmers for the EU subsidy system have shown that only 1.4 million of farmers applied for direct payments (Single Area Payments).

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The most significant problems include:

- The wide discrepancy of development level between regions, in terms of production intensity, size of farms, infrastructure and unemployment;
- The fragmentation of farms, failure of small farms that cannot ensure a livelihood for the family, the growing unemployment (40 percent of the total number of unemployed live in rural areas).

Political and economical changes in Poland in the last decade resulted in a decrease in the use of artificial fertilisers and pesticides. After a big reduction in 1989, the use of fertilisers grew by 5.8 percent in last years and was at 88.5 kg NPK per hectare in 2002. Pesticide use increased more rapidly - by seven percent - to 0.62 kg per hectare (in 1989 1.6 kg per hectare was used).

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2 History and Development of Organic Agriculture

The organic agriculture movement started in the 1980's due to growing ecological public awareness. Early seminars given by the "revolutionary" scientists and German experts led to the establishment of the first organic farmer's association, called EKOLAND, in 1989. The association became a full member of IFOAM in 1990. In 2004 eight organisations were members of IFOAM.

In 1989 there were 27 certified organic farms. The rapid early growth slowed down once the certification system was changed. Now farms can only get the certificates after a conversion period of two years. After a positive annual inspection by inspectors from an independent inspection body, the Certification Committee made its decision to award certification. By 2003 1287 farms (with a total surface area of 30'241.8 hectares) and 23 food-processing plants held certificates.

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The highest number of farms (certified and in conversion) was inspected by Ekogwarancja PTRE (1042 farms), followed by AGROBIOTEST (744 farms), BIOEKSPERT (332 farms), COBICO (82 farms). The Polish Centre for Testing and Certification PCBC (78 farms), and the Unit for Certification of Organic Production PNG (36 farms). In 2003 the farms that produced for the EU market were also controlled by EU inspection bodies such as SKAL, BCS, Lacon, and Ecocert, but there is no exact data on the number and acreage of these farms (some of these farms were under double inspection).

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After May 1, 2004, when Poland joined the European Union, the Polish

certification system changed. Only six of the above mentioned certification bodies, accredited and nominated by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development and accepted by the European Commission have the right to control the farms against EU regulation 2092/91. Foreign certification bodies are operating in Poland, controlling the farms against other, private standards as for example Bio Suisse, National Organic Programme (USA) or Demeter.

When the Common Agricultural Policy and especially the agri-environmental programmes (a measure of the Rural Development Programme) came into force, the interest for conversion to organic farming increased. According to the first results regarding the implementation of the agri-environmental programmes in the autumn of 2004 about 3500 farmers applied for the control of their farms and for a subsidy.

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3 Statistical Development

The number of farms certified by EKOLAND increased until 1996 (table 1). Since the mid nineties the number of farms certifies by Ekoland was not growing anymore because of:

- a change in the certification system: only farms with a conversion period of two years can receive the certificate of EKOLAND and use the logo which makes it less attractive to convert for many farmers
- the start of the activity of the second farmers' organisation PTRE in the south-east of Poland.

Table 1: Number and acreage of organic farms certified by EKOLAND

Year	Number of farms	Hectares
1990	27	300
1991	49	550
1992	94	1 240
1993	174	2 170
1994	225	3 540
1996	236	6 855
1997	207	6 010
1998	181	5 546
1999	254	5 050
2000	183	6 380
2001	669	14 967

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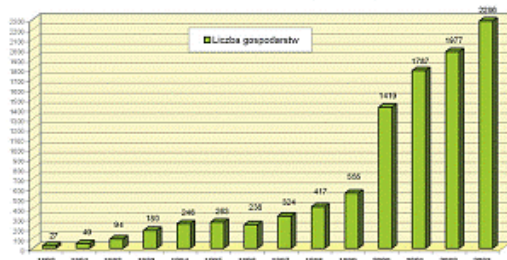
Source: EKOLAND archive

Since 1999 Główny Inspektorat Jakości Handlowej Artykułów Rolno-Spożywczych (GIJHARS), the Main Inspectorate of Market Quality of Agriculture Products and Foodstuffs, who is the supervising authority is responsible for data collection under the organic certification system.

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Figure 1: Number of farms (certified and in-conversion) in Poland 1990 to 2003.

The number of farms (certified and in the conversion) in Poland in 1990-2003.



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Table 2: Number of controlled organic farms (including farms in conversion) in 2004

Certified by	Number of controlled farms	Number of processing plants	Hectares
EKOGRWARANCJA PTRE	1521	27	32'576.3
AGROBIOTEST	1095	20	23'493.3
BIOEKSPERT	504	3	11'386.8
COBICO	319		3'964.2
PCBC	205	4	8'685.9
PNG	116	1	2'623.7
Total	3'760	55	82'730.2

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Source: Główny Inspektorat Jakości Handlowej Artykułów Rolno-Spożywczych (GIJHARS), Main Inspectorate of Market Quality of Agriculture Products and Foodstuffs, 2005, <http://www.ijhar-s.gov.pl>

Info: Organic Data Collection



For Information about the activities of the Main Inspector of Market Quality of Agriculture Products and Foodstuffs related to organic farming statistics check the paper "Developing the data collection system for organic farming in Poland" by Marta Wroblewska and Ewa Szymborska; published in Recke et al 2004: Development of a European Information System for Organic Markets - Improving the Scope and Quality of Statistical Data. Proceedings of the 1st EISfOM European Seminar held in Berlin, Germany. Page 82-84, Frick, 2005, Available at <http://orprints.org/2935/>






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4 Organic Agriculture Organisations

The farmers' organisations, inspecting and certifying institutions and the different state institutions are key institutions for organic agriculture in Poland (see Table 3).

Table 3: Institutional structure





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Farmers' organisations	
	<p>Producer Association EKOLAND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of organic farming and environmental protection. • Development of standards for organic farming. • Active in the whole country.
	<p>Association BIOGLEBA in Przemysł</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ordination of production
	<p>Association Radzanowskie Towarzystwo Ekologiczne in Radzanów n/b Radom Co-ordination of production</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint use of machines • Sharing of experiences
Inspection bodies and certification organisations	
	<p><u>Agrobiotest Ltd.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspection and certification
	<p><u>Bioekspert Ltd.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspection and certification
	<p>Association Polskie Towarzystwo Rolnictwa Ekologicznego (PTRE) in Lublin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspection and certification
	<p>Polish Centre for Testing and Certification, Office for Testing and Certification, Department in Piła</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspection and certification
	<p><u>Unit for Certification of Organic Production PNG in Zajaczków</u></p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspection and certification
	<p>COBICO in Kraków</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspection and certification
Ministries	
	<p>Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of law and subsidy systems
	<p>Council for Organic Farming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice of the Minister
	<p>Ministry of Environment, Nature Resources and Forestry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consulting in the fields of law and ecological education
State Inspection Institutions	
	<p>Main Inspectorate of Market Quality of Agriculture Products and Foodstuffs (GIJHAR-S)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervising authority for certification system in organic farming
	<p>Polish Accreditation Centre (PCA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation authority for the certification bodies
	<p>Station for Soil Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operation of the farm subsidies
	<p>Agency of Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operation of subsidy payments per hectare of organic farming in AEP
	<p>State Trade Inspection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control of labelling and quality of products on the market

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Source: Metera 2004

Furthermore, there is the Polish Ecological Club - Polski Klub Ekologiczny, PKE, a consumer organisation promoting organic agriculture and organic food in the society.



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5 Regional Distributions of Organic Farms

In the past, farms were mainly located near Thorn, where the regional Extension Service in Przysiek organised the first courses in organic farming. There are now many good organic farmers organised in a strong group of producers, connected with a water mill called "EKO", the pasta processing plant "Bio" and the fruit and vegetables processing plant "Bio Food".

Nowadays organic farms tend to be located in the central part of Poland because of the shorter distances to big markets in cities like Warsaw, Crakow, Gdansk, Lodz and Silesia Region.

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■ **Figure 1: Regional distribution of certified organic farms in Poland 1999** (left figure: numbers of EKOLAND, right figure: LUB-EKO-farms)



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Source: Ministry for Agriculture and Rural Development, 1999

Most of the organic farms do not specialise in a specific type of production but are on the contrary mixed farms. They keep animals and produce grains, potatoes and vegetables in crop rotation. For the animals, they have grassland.

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6 Land Use, Animal Husbandry

The average size of an organic farm in Poland is about 20 hectares, whereas the average size of all farms is seven hectares. Table 4 shows the land use data (derived from the Main Inspection of Purchasing and Processing of Agricultural Products). As much as two thirds of the organically managed area is used for arable crops.

■ **Table 4: Land use in organic farms (including farms in conversion) 2003**

Land use	Land area (ha)	Percent of total organic land
Arable crops	33'357.8	43.6
Grassland	38'860.7	51
Vegetables	829.8	1.2
Berries & Orchards	3'203.8	4.2

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Source: Main Inspectorate of Market Quality of Agriculture Products and Foodstuffs, 2005

No data on animal husbandry is available up to now.

7 Standards, Certification and State Regulations

7.1 Organic Farming Standards

7.2 Certification Programme

7.3 Labelling

7.1 Organic Farming Standards

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The first "Standards for organic farming of EKOLAND" were developed in 1994 and the "Standards for organic farming of PTRE" in 1995, on the basis of IFOAM basic standards for organic agriculture.

The EKOLAND and PTRE standards have been revised since 1998 in accordance with the Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91. Since May 1, 2004 EU regulation 2092/91 is enforced by the Polish law on organic farming (law of 20 April 2004, Journal of Law No 93, pos.898).

7.2 Certification Programme

Until 2001 the Certification Committee of EKOLAND made its decision to award certification to a farm after a two-year conversion period and successful annual checks by inspectors of the independent inspection body. The situation has changed since 2002 due to the implementation of the law on organic farming and after May 1, 2004 when EU regulation 2092/91 came into force. In the case of Agrobiotest and Bioekspert the decision on certification is made by the persons responsible for certification in the

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structure of these companies.

Currently the following independent bodies accredited according to the norm PN/EN 45011 and notified by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development inspection bodies carry out the inspections:

- Agrobiotest Ltd.,
- Bioekspert Ltd.,
- Ekogwarancja PTRE Ltd.,
- Polish Centre for Testing and Certification
- Unit for Certification of Organic Production PNG, Ltd.
- COBICO, Ltd.

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The supervisory authority for the certification system in Poland is the Main Inspectorate of Market Quality of Agriculture Products and Foodstuffs.

7.3 Labelling

The growing consumer interest and the presence of organic products in shops aroused the interest of the Ministry of Agriculture (responsible for the implementation of the food law, Law Act on health conditions for food and nutrition, Law Journal Nr 29, 1971). In order to prevent the misleading of consumers with "ecological" labelling, the Minister of Agriculture issued a regulation on the labelling of food products in 1992, amended in 1994 (Law Journal Nr 86, Decree of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Economy July 15th, 1994, 3.1. and 3.2.).

The implementation of this legal act was undertaken in 1995 by the State Trade Inspection. About 50 percent of controlled products labelled "healthy food", "from ecologically clean regions", "without pesticides" were not accepted by the inspectors. Despite the law, however, it remains unclear who can issue the certificate and upon what criteria it is based.

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The first law on organic farming, which came into force on 3 November 2001 (Law Journal Nr 38, pos. 452) required the indication "produkt rolnictwa ekologicznego" - product of organic farming on the label of the product.

Since May 1, 2004 the label according to EU regulation 2092/91 should contain the following information:

- name and identification number of the certifying body
- the indication "rolnictwo ekologiczne - system kontroli WE" - organic farming - control system of the EC.



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8 Organic Farming Law & EU regulation 2092/91

In 1996 a Working Group for Organic Farming was founded in order to

advise the Ministry of Agriculture consists of experts from the Ministries of Agriculture and Environment, from the inspection bodies, producer associations, the state advisory service, universities and private institutions. Within this Working Group for Organic Farming a small group of four persons started working on a proposal for a law governing organic farming in early 1998 together with the of the Ministry of Agriculture. The proposal of the Polish law on organic agriculture prepared by the Department for Agriculture Development was decided on March 16, 2001 and it came into force on November 3, 2001. The proposal was brought into line with the new regulation of the European Council on animal production (Council Regulation (EC) 1804/1999) which is part of Council Regulation (EEC) 2092/91.

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Since May 1, 2004 a new law (legal act of April 20, 2004, Journal of Law No 93, pos. 898) was enforced in order to implement EU regulation 2092/91. The law is nominating the institutions with different responsibilities for the certification system (Art. 3):

- Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development - notification for the operation of the certification bodies, accredited according the norm PN-EN 45011
- Main Inspector of Market Quality of Agriculture Products and Foodstuffs - supervision,
- Notified certification bodies - control and issuing or withdrawing of certificates.

Following Art. 11., the Minister of Agriculture nominated the Institute of Plant Protection (IOR) in Poznan to register the plant protection products permitted for use in organic farming and the Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation (IUNG) in Pulawy to register the fertilizers and soil conditioners permitted to use in organic farming.

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According the Art. 12.1. the State Plant Health and Seed Inspection Service is responsible for the lists of seeds and vegetative reproductive material for the use in organic farming. This Inspectorate is issuing also the permits for use of seeds and vegetative reproductive material not produced in the accordance with the EU regulation 2092/91.

9 State Support and Policy Initiatives / Subsidies

Since 1993 the Ministry of Agriculture has funded soil and water analyses. The Working Group for Organic Agriculture proposed a system of subsidies for organic agriculture to the Minister of Agriculture in 1998.

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In accordance with an Agriculture Minister directive, in 1998 organic farm inspections were funded by the State. On the basis of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Food Economy Decree of May 11, 1998 for providing agriculture grants and specifying their mode of allocation (Law Journal Nr 71), the subvention was available to two inspection bodies. Despite the first state subventions - reimbursement of the costs of soil analysis since 1993 and of the inspection costs in 1998 - the number of

certified farms increased very slowly in the past three years.

As a result, the Working Group proposed to the Minister of Agriculture to change the subsidy system. Based on a review of subvention systems in different EU countries, the Working Group proposed direct subsidies to farmers in the second year of conversion and in the first year of the certification. The regulation on direct subsidies for organic farms was signed by the Minister of Agriculture in March 1999. They were paid from 1999. Since 1.Mai 2004 there is a different subsidy system for the acreage of organic farms, which is part of the agri-environmental programmes, a measure of Rural Development Plan (Regulation of the Council of Ministers of July 20, 2004, Journal of Law Nr 174, pos.1809, Appendix 4).

Table 5: Table 5: Aid for Organic Farms and for Farms Converting to Organic Farming 2006

	Crop	Subvention for 1 hectare in Polish Zloty / Euro	
		In conversion	Organic farms
1	Vegetables	980 / 254	940 / 244*)
2	Arable land	680 / 177	600 / 156*)
3	Orchards and berries	1800 / 468	1540 / 400*)
4	Meadows and pastures	330 / 86	260 / 68*)

Source: Journal of Law (Dziennik Ustaw) Nr 174 poz.1809. (Appendix 4),
 Exchange rate of 20.01.2006 - 1 Euro=3.85 PLN

*) subsidy for farms of
 up to 100 hectares: 100% of the sum for 1 hectare,
 over 100 hectares: to 300 hectarse: 50% of the sum for 1 ha
 over 300 hectares: 10% of the sum for 1 hectare.

Table 6: Subsidy for the Inspection of Organic Farms (according to Regulation of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of April 15, 2004, Journal of Law Nr 72, pos. 655).

	Hectares of the farm	Sum in Polish Zloty / Euro
1	Up to 5 ha of agriculture area	600 / 140
2	Over 5 ha up to 10 ha of agriculture area	750 / 174
3	Over 10 ha up to 20 ha of agriculture area	800 / 186
4	Over 20 ha up to 50 ha of agriculture area	900 / 209
5	Over 50 ha up to 100 ha of agriculture area	1000 / 233
6	Over 100 ha of agriculture area	1100 / 25

10 Implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has long been criticised by farmers, politicians, consumers, economists and environmentalists for various

reasons: its price policy, bureaucracy, budget spending, trade difficulties, unjust distribution of financial aid for farmers, and the harm it brings to the environment. In spite of its reform in 1992, the CAP continued to support big producers and led to a concentration of production in high production potential areas and to a depopulation of areas with less favourable conditions.

In the EU 15 about 80 percent of the budget continued to go to 20 percent of the producers, there are estimates that in Poland 60 percent of the budget will go to 10 percent of the biggest farmers, in fact rather agribusiness, than peasants. Therefore the decision of the Luxembourg summit in 2003 to change the direction from the production dependent direct subsidies to area payments and cross-compliance and give more support to rural development was a good one. At this point, a positive assessment should be made concerning the decision taken at the Copenhagen Summit in December 2002 pertaining to the introduction of decoupled area payments in Acceding Countries from 2004.

Environmental organisations point out that the high input agricultural production favoured by CAP is harmful to the environment, while traditional methods of farming - truly beneficial to the environment - are used on very small areas.

11 The Market

The market share of certified organic food products in the domestic market is still very small. On the one hand a proportion of certified products are sold as conventional products and on the other the shopkeepers are looking for a stable supply of organic products such as fresh vegetables and fruits, dairy products and bread.

Organic products were first offered in the Warsaw shops as early as 1989. Nowadays about 300 shops all over the country sell a wide assortment of both Polish and imported, fresh and processed organic products. Export of organic products from Poland is at a very low level. A few exporters sell fruit for processing (frozen black and red currants, strawberries, wild fruits, canned cucumbers and cereal coffee). Lack of organisation of the small farms is the one of the biggest barriers to the development of the export sector. After joining the European Union the foreign trade with organic products has no trade barriers anymore, which is observed in the shops by a better offer of imported organic products, but still there is no data about the sales of Polish products on the EU Single Market.

12 Training

Training and education of the farmers is organised by numerous institutions and organisations, such as:

- Centres for Extension Service in Agriculture, working in all voivodships (administrative regions),

- Organisations of organic producers,
- Trade companies,
- Foundations and other ecological non-governmental organisations,
- Private consulting companies.

A few agriculture secondary schools and universities include organic agriculture in their curricula:

- University of Warmia and Mazury (Uniwersytet Warmii i Mazur) in Olsztyn,
- Agricultural University (Akademia Rolnicza) in Kraków,
- Agricultural University (Akademia Rolnicza) in Lublin,
- Agricultural University (Akademia Rolnicza) in Poznań,
- Agricultural University (Akademia Rolnicza) in Wrocław,
- Agricultural and Technical University in Bydgoszcz
- Warsaw Agricultural University (SGGW) in Warsaw.

At the Unit of Organic Agriculture at Warsaw Agricultural University the following subjects are taught: ecology and environment protection, ecological methods of food production, ecological aspects of food and nutrition, landscape and human ecology. These subjects are connected with organic food and farming and the relation between agriculture and environment.

13 Advisory Service

The advisory centres of the State Extension Service of Agriculture, located in the 49 old voivodships (administrative regions) that existed before 1998, have had an important role in the development of organic farming. Many local advisers attended the courses taught by Polish and foreign experts, organised in Poland and in other countries, with the support of:

- Demeter Bund, Germany
- Heinrich Böll Foundation, Germany
- Foundation Leben und Umwelt, Germany
- Institut Grüner Zweig, Germany,
- Ernte Austria,
- Avalon Foundation, The Netherlands,
- Schweizer Verein für West-Ost Zusammenarbeit in der biologischen Landwirtschaft, Switzerland,
- and many others.

ROL-EKO is a private consulting firm that was founded in March 1989 by a group of scientists associated with the Warsaw University of Agriculture (SGGW) and by business people interested in the idea of organic agriculture.



14 Research

The following universities conduct research in organic agriculture:

- University of Warmia and Mazury (Uniwersytet Warmii i Mazur) in Olsztyn
- Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation in Pulawy

- Warsaw Agricultural University (SGGW) in Warsaw Agricultural University (Akademia Rolnicza) in Kraków
- Agricultural University (Akademia Rolnicza) in Lublin
- Agricultural University (Akademia Rolnicza) in Poznań
- Marine University (Wyzsza Szkoła Morska) in Gdynia
- Research Institute of Vegetable Crops in Skierniewice
- Agricultural and Technical University in Bydgoszcz
- Agricultural University in Wrocław

For the last 10 years the above mentioned Universities have conducted scientific research on the following issues:

- Influence of different farming systems (organic, conventional, integrated) on production and economic aspects of selected crops;
- Natural, agricultural and economic conditions of crop production in organic farming;
- Ecological methods of weed and pest control in organic farming;
- Evaluation of organization, economic and energy efficiency, greenhouse gases emission and nutrient balance in selected organic farms;
- Selection of the best cultivars of important crops (winter wheat, potatoes, sugar beets) relevant for the cultivation in organic farming;
- Technology of cultivation of vegetables for consumption and for seed production taking into account their biological value;
- Biodiversity and activity of microorganisms responsible for N and C transformation in soil;
- Crop production technology, nutrient value and technological quality of spelt wheat (*Triticum spelta*);
- Impact of organic production methods on:
 - quality of plant crops (nutritive, wholesome, storage and sensory value)
 - quality of milk and dairy cows' health
- Socio - economic aspects of organic farming
- Evaluation of ecological awareness of consumers buying organic food
- Organic food marketing
- Landscape quality and biodiversity in organic agriculture
- Legal and organisational aspects of organic farming.

1995 to 1999 the Logistic Centre of Organic Agriculture at the Warsaw Agricultural University (Centrum Logistyczne Rolnictwa Ekologicznego) was involved in the project "Model of development and functioning of organic agriculture". The results of the project were used for the strategy on the development of organic farming prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture.

15 Challenges and Outlook

The year 2000 was no doubt significant in the history of the development of organic farming, with the farmers receiving the highest historic level of direct subsidies. In 2001 the law on organic farming was accepted by the Parliament, and the year 2002 was the first year of the implementation of first the Polish law on organic farming and the accreditation of certification bodies by the Polish Accreditation Centre according the norm PN/EN 45011. Also by joining the EU and the implementation of EU regulation 2092/91 as well as a new subsidy system for organic farmers a lot has changed for the organic farming system. The promotion of a subsidy system by the Ministry of Agriculture attracted much more farmers who applied for

inspections and subsidies, but many of them are simply the owners of big grassland farms. It is too early to asses if the growth of the number of farms by 52% in 2004 will result in a better offer of organic products on the market, because the first products of these farms will be certified in two years at the earliest.

There are big expectations of a rapid growth in the number of organic farms. But the market will pronounce the final verdict. The farmers must stabilise their market position, as the subsidy is not intended to be a source of income, but rather help to cover extra costs connected to organic farming (e.g. inspection costs, time for special documentation). The market is promising: according to a consumer survey in 1998, 40 percent declare that they are ready to buy organic food, if it is available in their regular shop.

Although the European Commission called the EU Member States to work out the national Action Plans for Organic Farming, the Ministry of Agriculture proposed a draft for the consultation in January 2005.

The organic certification system is working, but some details are still missing: Regulation 2092/91 is available only in the internet, which is problem for farmers, who mostly have no internet access. There is still no official printed version as it is the rule for all legal acts in force. The responsible institutes have not yet ready lists of permitted plant protection products and fertilisers, resulting in the marketing of not allowed fertilisers as "certified for organic farming" and misleading the underinformed farmers.

Further growth in organic farming will take place when the support programmes include not only training and subsidies but also technical assistance in organic farm management and finding markets for organic food. Good co-operation between the government and producers' organisations can be a guarantee for success in the near future.

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