

The objective of the research undertaken within this project is to define the range of exploitation of wild-growing mushrooms by people living in the historical region of Mazovia using interdisciplinary ethnomycological research methods. The field research based on cooperation with local communities will enable the acquisition of new and direct information on the present list of collected mushroom species, the level of local knowledge about Central Poland's mycoflora, species' ecology and their actual protection. Assuming that people who tend to regularly collect mushrooms for their own use simultaneously participate in a specific kind of environmental monitoring of local mycobiotal changes, the objective of the conducted research is also to create a database that contains reports about these changes. The high sample size, 760 planned interviews with residents of 38 Mazovian villages, will enable me to authenticate the acquired information and statistically eliminate borderline and improbable results. A meaningful element of the research will be the search for rare and protected mushroom species used by local communities and the acquisition of information about the purpose, methods and extent of their use.

The basic research carried out within the project is ethnomycological research, based on ethnobiological methods, conducted in the historical region of Mazovia. European researchers have previously focused mainly on ethnobotanical studies, very often overlooking ethnomycological issues. The present project will be the first attempt to accomplish the complete ethnomycological documentation of a specified Polish region. Therefore this research will have a pioneering nature not only in relation to our country, but also on a European scale. As interdisciplinary research it will connect subject areas and methods related to mycology, forestry, ecology and ethnography. It will enable analysis of the studied processes in the context of the bilateral influence that occurs between local communities and mycobiota. In the context of forestry, the study will enable the acquisition of new information about the exploitation of mushrooms as an important part of non-wood forest products.

Local knowledge related to traditionally exploited elements of nature often have similar characteristics to scientific knowledge, as in the case of scientific research, information passed on from generation to generation goes together with continuous experimentation. The present knowledge about wild growing mushrooms used by Mazovian communities is the result of these actions. Wild mushroom usage is one of the most characteristic examples of traditional exploitation of natural products. Conducting research that focuses on collection of this knowledge by using a large sample will enable the acquisition of new and more accurate information about the distribution and importance of wild growing mushrooms in the Mazovia region. Another important issue is the unclear local nomenclature, which is often the cause of incorrect reports on distribution, usage or the ecology of particular mushroom species. Assignment of local names to proper taxonomic nomenclature will help in further analysis of local reports related to species composition of mycoflora. The present research may also be the source of information about unusual or as yet undocumented methods of mushroom use, which may result in further analysis and verification of the validity of these reports and a broadening of the current knowledge related to their usability potential. Information about collecting rare and protected species will be also helpful in defining their possible localities, verifying the level of local knowledge about restrictions connected with mushroom species protection and defining the importance and purpose of their harvest for local communities. Evaluation of knowledge about mushroom species in the Mazovia region will also enable the definition of possible risks resulting from wrong species identification or lack of knowledge about poisonous mushrooms. This could be applied to further educational actions aimed at non-commercial mushroom gatherers.