

The food and agricultural sector in the Polish economy is one of the most important one and it continues dynamic development. The confirmation for such situation is the fact that the value of the Polish food and agricultural export in 2014 increased up to the record-breaking level of 21.35 billion EUR (import amounted to 14.79 billion EUR). It is worth to highlight that the excess in food trade is reduced to a great extent by the deficit of the Polish foreign trade. Its value (in absolute amounts) has exceeded three times the total value of the deficit in trade. **The raw material section - agricultural farms bring some kind of limitation of further development of this sector of the economy. It turns out that in general, they are characterised by a small scale of production, which limits effectiveness of production and profitability of these units. It should be highlighted that Poland is one of the main EU countries as regards the number of small (minor) farms, which with liberalisation of agricultural policy of EU decreases their competitiveness (the costs of generating raw material become higher than in the other EU countries).** The number of agricultural farms amounted to 1429.0 thousand, out of which farms with the area of up to 5 hectares constituted 53.7% of all farms, whereas the ones up to 20 hectares amounted to 90.6% of all farms. However, on the other side the EU moves away from the concept of industrial development of agriculture to the benefit of “sustainable” agriculture. In this case some positive features of “minor” (small agricultural farms) are noticed.

However, there are no studies in the literature of this subject (national and international). There is no explicitly specified definition of “minor” agricultural farms in Poland, as well as the criteria of their differentiation. Moreover, there are no verification works stating “if the functions ascribed to minor agricultural farms are certainly realised by them.” There are no explicit responses to questions: 1) Are social and environmental benefits assigned to these farms so high that supporting their viability will be “profitable” for the whole society? 2) Are various types of solutions (financial support) directed at “minor” agricultural farms economically efficient?

The objective of the research project is to answer the question: **Are “minor” agricultural farms a “strong” element in the Polish food and agricultural sector as regards the context of realised Common Agricultural Policy of EU (including the concept of sustainable development) and should they be appropriately supported or just on the contrary - we should limit their activities (or at least do not support them from the public funds)?** The cognitive objective of the project entails the preview of the terms of “minor” (small) agricultural farms and defining the factors of their differentiation. The methodological objective of the research project is **to prepare the theoretical models of development** of “minor” agricultural farms, while taking into account economic, environmental and social results.

Own synthetic method will be prepared in the project on the basis of the data collected from 120 research facilities with the use of the literature on this topic, which will take into account economic, natural and social factors in order to evaluate effectiveness of using the union funds by these farms. Building various variants of theoretical models of development of “minor” agricultural farms will serve to get a reply to the aforementioned questions.