

It has been over 25 years since the fall of the Eastern Bloc and adoption of a new socio-economic and political system by consecutive countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). It has resulted in transformations in all sectors of the economy as well as in social and cultural life of these countries' inhabitants. During the last quarter of a century there has been a fundamental transformation of the agricultural sector in the region of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), which requires diagnosis and evaluation. This is the primary objective of the project. The cognitive purpose is to diagnose current social and economic processes in the agricultural sector of examined countries and identify expected changes based upon expert knowledge and studies of strategic documents and literature. As a result, it will be possible to conduct evaluations and comparisons, developing models of transformation in terms of the most important elements characterizing agricultural economy and to identify probable development scenarios and expectations regarding agricultural sector in the perspective of 2030. The applicative objective is to provide practical knowledge, which is expected to be implemented by regional and national institutions shaping the development policy in the field of agriculture and establishing a platform for collaboration integrating scientists conducting research on spatial structure of agriculture from Central and Eastern European countries.

One may claim that scientific literature discussing contemporary image of agriculture in our region is a very rich source of information that allows for comprehensive analysis of subject matter proposed in this project. However, it should be clearly emphasized that these publications are generally detailed and usually relate only to selected research issues. The proposed research and scientific publication (in English and Polish language versions) is intended to fill this gap. The project enables involvement of geographers representing research centers from various countries of Central and Eastern Europe into a multidisciplinary scientific discussion dedicated to the role of agriculture (meeting food demands, adapting to changing environmental conditions, creating jobs, shaping landscape, etc.) and its nearest future. Text compilations, scientific conferences and other forms of disseminating research results will be also important for practitioners formulating agricultural policy. Identified examples of good practices are planned to be disseminated.

The research scope will encompass the Central and Eastern European countries. Selecting this part of Europe arises from its specificity, historical and geopolitical past and the crucial role, in which our country plays. Among the examined countries are: Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia and Croatia. The topics within study will contain the most important elements regarding spatial structure of agriculture, i.e.: agricultural land use, agrarian structure, agricultural population, technical facilities in agriculture, structure of agricultural production, types of farms, structure of agricultural environment. The planned research also intends to utilize the knowledge and experience of foreign scientists-experts (Hungary, Czech Republic, Romania) invited to cooperate in the project.

The rationale behind research procedure assumes conducting several stages and steps, allowing to complete all the objectives appointed. The first stage will consist in gathering scientific literature and other source materials, selecting and refining methods and research tools along with unifying and processing statistical data. The second task assumes analysis of the state of agricultural economy in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The third stage will consist of identification and evaluation of socio-economic processes and phenomena in the natural environment affecting the agricultural sector of Central and Eastern Europe and separately in individual countries within the region. The fourth stage will involve developing models of transformation in agricultural economy of the region and formulating development scenarios for regional agriculture in the perspective of 2030. The final stage is intended to summarize conducted research and provide various forms of disseminating project results. The project will apply a variety of techniques in the field of analyzing existing materials, statistics and spatial analysis as well as social research methods.