

Pork remains the most popular type of meat in the European Union. Its production exceeds 20 million tonnes per year and Poland is one of the leading pork producers in the EU. However, livestock farmers face many challenges and difficulties. On the one hand, the so-called pig cycle makes this type of production particularly risky because of the high price volatility. In addition, the African Swine Fever epidemic has had a major impact on the sector. On the other hand, the expectations of consumers are changing, and they are attaching more and more importance to the quality of the meat, its health parameters and the way in which it is produced. In addition, red meat consumption is expected to decline in the most developed countries in favour of poultry meat. Additional requirements for producers are also driven by EU agricultural policy and the European Green Deal, in particular the farm-to-fork strategy.

All these factors mean that the economic situation in the sector should be considered from both the demand and supply side. There is a need to look for solutions that benefit producers and at the same time take into account consumer expectations. In this project, particular attention is paid to integration, both between producers and the so-called vertical integration, consisting in the creation of links between individual entities in the production chain. Indeed, integration can be the optimal way to reduce risks in the sector and a tool to improve the efficiency and profitability of production. Three research questions were formulated in this project:

- 1) What is the impact of pork producers' involvement in various forms of integration on farm profitability and technical efficiency?
- 2) What are farmers' preferences for engaging in various forms of integration, and what are the factors that discourage farmers from integrating?
- 3) What are consumers' preferences regarding the consumption of pork, in particular pork produced in accordance with so-called good practices?

By answering the above research questions, it will be possible to determine whether farmers who participate in the various forms of integration have higher profitability and efficiency and more stable incomes. It will also be possible to better understand the factors that encourage or discourage farmers to integrate. Behavioural aspects, related to farmers' beliefs and attitudes, will also be addressed. In addition, consumer preferences regarding pork consumption will be analysed. In particular, the aim is to determine whether farmers would be eager to pay more for pork characterised by additional characteristics. This includes both animal welfare and factors that affect the health of potential consumers, such as the use of antibiotics in the production process.

The project will use the most up-to-date research methods to reliably establish causal relationships between integration and farm economic performance, as well as between the attitudes and beliefs of farmers and consumers and their economic choices. In the course of the project, data obtained from the farm accounting data network (FADN) will be used, as well as primary data from surveys conducted with a sample of approximately 150 farmers and 1,000 consumers. The results of the research will be presented at international scientific conferences and will be published in scientific journals in the field of agricultural and behavioural economics.