

A still life photograph showcasing Polish dairy products. In the foreground, a large block of butter is partially unwrapped from its silver paper packaging. Behind it, a round wheel of white cheese with small dark specks sits on a wooden board. To the left, a wedge of blue cheese is visible. In the background, a glass of white milk stands next to a slice of orange. The scene is brightly lit, creating a warm and appetizing atmosphere.

POLSKA...

tastes good!

A Glass of Milk

The growing amount of milk drunk in Poland in recent years is largely due to the success of a program whose local name is “A Glass of Milk” and to the promotion of milk among children. From the launch of the European Union’s School Milk Program, Polish children at schools and preschools have consumed more than 1.3 billion glasses of milk.

The aim of the program is to develop good nutrition habits among children and teenagers by promoting milk and dairy products. Milk and dairy products are an irreplaceable source of protein and easily absorbed calcium—an invaluable mineral essential for young bones and teeth to grow strong. They are also a source of many other microelements (potassium, phosphorus, sodium) and vitamins A, D, E and B.

The health benefits of milk and dairy products make for fit and healthy young bodies, which is why it is important to promote good nutrition habits among children and teenagers. Understanding the nutritious role of milk in our daily diet will not only teach children to consume these wholesome products but also, when they grow up, it should lessen the risk of diseases such as osteoporosis.

Ever since Poland joined the EU, the School Milk Program has been growing in popularity, especially after Poland (following the example of other EU countries, to mention Sweden, Finland, Britain and Hungary) assigned extra funding to reduce the price of milk and dairy products for pupils at preschools, primary and junior high schools.

The program encourages children to drink plain milk and flavored milk with different fat content and eat different kinds of cheese and yogurt. In the 2011/2012 school year schoolchildren most often had plain milk (about 82 percent of the total milk and dairy products consumed at schools), followed by flavored milk (about 16 percent) and yogurt and cheese (about 2 percent).

Thanks to the program, 2.4 million Polish children at about 14,500 educational institutions can drink milk and eat dairy products for free or at a reduced price.

The Agricultural Market Agency (ARR) has been implementing the Common Agricultural Policy program called “Subsidy for supplying milk and dairy products to schoolchildren” since May 2004. Under the program, the ARR distributes subsidies for milk and dairy products for schools from the EU budget. Like other EU countries, Poland has assigned funding from the national budget for this purpose too, as well as providing support from the Milk Promotion Fund in order to reduce milk and dairy product prices paid by pupils, to increase the number of schoolchildren who consume milk in the program. The national subsidy in the 2012/2013 school year will be zł.118 million.



Today “A Glass of Milk” is financed from three sources. The first is EU funds, which are earmarked for supplying milk and dairy products to all types of eligible schools, i.e. preschools, primary and junior high schools (not university-level schools) in the school year (September to June). Domestic funds (the national subsidy) come next and are used for supplying milk and dairy products to primary schools from October to May, three school days per week. The third source is the Milk Promotion Fund, which finances the supply of milk and dairy products to preschools and junior high schools during the school year within the limits set down in the fund’s financial plan.

As of the 2007/2008 school year Poland has been an EU leader in implementing the School Milk Program. The amount of milk and dairy products supplied to schools and the amount of funding that Poland receives from the EU is greater than in the countries of the “old” EU where the program has been in place for more than 20 years, such as France, Britain, Germany, Sweden and Finland.

A.R.

Dairy Exports on the Rise

Poles are eating more dairy products these days. The country's dairy product exports are also growing.

Today the average Pole consumes 190-191 liters of dairy products (in milk terms) annually. This is about 10 liters more than three years ago, but still less than the European Union average, which is about 260 liters.

However, the gap separating Poland from other EU countries in terms of dairy product consumption is expected to decrease in the coming years. International market research company Euromonitor estimates that in 2015 sales of cheese, for example, will be more than 20 percent higher in Poland than last year, and sales of drinking yogurts will increase by nearly 50 percent. The value of the Polish dairy market will also increase, according to Euromonitor. In 2011, consumers in Poland spent zł.14.3 billion on dairy products, zł.600 million more than a year earlier. Four years from now, the value of the dairy market is expected to be nearly zł.17 billion.

Exports are also contributing to increased revenues in the Polish dairy industry, alongside the expanding domestic market. Since Poland entered the European Union in 2004, the value of Poland's dairy industry exports has increased almost fourfold. Polish dairy products were mainly exported to other European Union countries, but due to increased demand in Asia, the Middle East and Africa, Poland has significantly increased its sales of powdered milk to Algeria, and the same was true of its whey exports to China, Indonesia and Malaysia.

2011 was a record year in terms of the value of dairy product exports, when they totaled 1.36 billion euros, around 15 percent more than in 2010. There is every indication that this year will also be good for Polish dairy exports. In the period between January and September this year, exports increased in the case of nearly all dairy products except butter and yogurt-and-fermented-beverages, whose sales abroad were 12 and 8 percent lower respectively than in the same period of 2011.

According to studies by the Institute of Agricultural and Food Economics, the strongest growth in exports was recorded in the case of liquid milk and cream, ripening and spread cheeses, whey and casein (24-28 percent). Powdered milk exports also increased (by 17 percent) and ice-cream exports went up by 14 percent. Total exports of dairy products in terms of raw milk equivalents increased by 6 percent to 1,299 million liters, and their value grew by 5 percent to 837 million euros.

Studies by the Institute of Agricultural and Food Economics show that the breakdown of exports by commodity has changed. First of all, the role of butter decreased in terms of value (from 11.5 to 7.1 percent), and the share of whey rose from 9.2 to 12.2 percent as a result of significant changes in transaction prices. The price of whey, a product popular among foreign importers, increased by 11 percent, and the price of butter fell by 27 percent and the profitability of exports decreased.

In the first half of 2012, cheese remained the most important item among Poland's dairy product exports, accounting for 37.2 percent of their total value. This is not surprising because Poland is a powerhouse on the global market for cheese. More cheese is produced only in the United States, Germany, France, the Netherlands and Italy. Statistics from the Foreign Agricultural Markets Monitoring Unit (FAMMU) and the Foundation of Assistance Programs for Agriculture (FAPA) show that in the first six months of this year 83,400 metric tons of cheese products were shipped abroad, 15.7 percent more than in the same period last year. A 13-percent increase was recorded in the value of these exports, to 259.4 million euros.

The most important type of exported cheese is ripening cheese. Its exports in the first half of 2012 accounted for 54 percent of the total value (nearly 140.45 million euros) and 59 percent of the total volume (49,500 tons) of all cheeses that were exported from Poland between January and the end of June this year. This meant a 21-percent increase in value, with an 8-percent drop in volume compared with the same period of 2011.

The main recipients of Polish cheese and curd are other EU countries (70 percent in terms of value—180.9 million euros). Few changes took place in the first half of this year among the key export markets for cheese. The value of cheese sold to the Czech

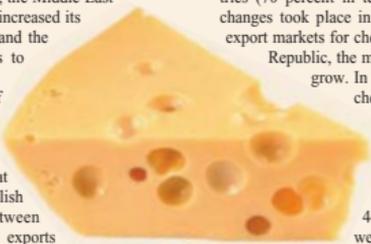
Republic, the main recipient of Polish cheese, continued to grow. In the first six months of 2012, 13,500 tons of cheese and curd were shipped to the Czech

Republic for 41.8 million euros. A significantly higher increase was recorded in the sale of cheese to Germany, the number two market in the structure of Polish cheese exports (the volume increased by 44.8 percent to 10,600 tons, and the value went up by 40 percent to 30.6 million euros).

In another positive trend, considerable increases are still being observed in exports to countries outside the EU Single Market. These particularly include a 94.5-percent increase in the value of exports to Russia (to 28.6 million euros), which in the first half of the year was the third largest export market for Polish cheese. Exports to Ukraine doubled in terms of both value (to 7.9 million euros) and volume (up to 2,100 tons).

Imports of dairy products in the period January-September amounted to 485 million liters in raw milk equivalent terms and were 18 percent lower than in the same period a year earlier. The sharpest decline in the volume of imports was recorded in the case of yogurt and fermented beverages (by 29 percent), butter (26 percent), and powdered milk (24 percent). Imports of ice cream and casein increased strongly (by more than 40 percent). Expenditure on imports declined by 7.5 percent to 292 million euros. As a result, the positive balance of foreign trade in the dairy sector improved by 13 percent to 545 million euros, with a 30-percent increase in the quantitative surplus of exports over imports to 814 million liters in terms of raw milk equivalents.

A.R.



Regional and Traditional Products

Andruty Kaliskie

Andruty kaliskie (Kalisz wafers)—sweet and crisp cream-colored wafers—have become a symbol of the town of Kalisz in the Wielkopolska region. In 2009 the name *andruty kaliskie* became a Protected Geographical Indication.



The wafers, baked in a special round mold (called an *andrutnik*, *andruciarka* or simply an “iron”), made from fine wheat flour, sugar and oil, have been sold for over 150 years in Kalisz and its environs. They owe their special reputation to having been sold on Sundays and holidays at the municipal park in Kalisz. They were always the favorite treat of families taking a stroll in the park. The *andruty* baking tradition has survived to our times.

The product’s link to the local region is based on its reputation as a product

whose production in the area can be documented back to the mid-19th century. Kalisz, a town that boasts Poland’s oldest public registers, was a mixture of nations and cultures ever since the Middle Ages. There is substantial evidence that *andruty kaliskie* were born as an intercultural product, testifying to the intermingling of culinary habits and customs of the different ethnic and religious groups inhabiting Kalisz for centuries.

The *andruty kaliskie* tradition occupies an important place in the town’s history even though the circumstances of

their birth are shrouded in mystery. Even the etymology of the word *andruty* is unknown, we only know it already existed in the 18th century. According to well-known Polish ethnographer Zygmunt Gloger, the wafers were served for dessert in the 18th century. More detailed information about them did not appear until the mid-19th century.

The production of *andruty kaliskie* seems to have become well established around 1850 when middle-class customs developed and the town gained a solid financial position. Spending leisure time on Sundays strolling in the municipal park on the Prosna River with the whole family was a popular pastime. At about this time, *andruty* started being sold there to the public. This is confirmed by an oral tradition passed from generation to generation in families of bakers and consumers alike. This special Kalisz product also appears in the memories of residents immortalized in photos and written narratives.

The production of *andruty kaliskie* was simple; with the recipe and the proper “irons” the wafers could be made even in quite primitive conditions. They were made at bakeries, homes, manors and also in many stores where they were also sold, though the traditional place to sell them is still Kalisz’s park.

The most lasting proof of *andruty* baking are “irons” from the 19th century. These often survive with signs of improvements and repairs. They were initially made by blacksmiths, then also other tradesmen, for instance toolmakers. The molds consisted of two smooth circles joined by a hinge.

Andruty have a place in the collective memory as a symbol of the town just as recognizable as the coat of arms and the town hall. No wonder former Kalisz residents scattered all over the world so often ask to be sent the product whose flavor they associate not just with their hometown but also their childhood.

A.R.



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The Case for Equal Treatment

By Stanisław Kalemba,
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In my previous column, I outlined the areas which the Agriculture Ministry was working on and I also mentioned the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy after 2013.

The 2011/2012 agricultural year is now over. This year's harvest was good, but in many cases it meant extremely high costs for farmers whose winter crops had been damaged by frost. Those farmers would not have been able to join in harvest festivals had they not attended to their fields promptly to plow them up and sow crops again.

Harvest festivals are barely over and farmers are out in fields again working their way through the new, 2012/2013 agricultural year. They will be working very hard as they always do, but the outcome of their efforts is a big unknown. Despite all the technical and technological advances, agriculture remains the most weather-dependent sector of the economy. Climate change and intensifying natural disasters of different kinds demonstrate the power of nature and remind us of just how helpless we are when confronted with such events.

These are mostly local phenomena and their local character shows that, rather than entire countries, they mainly affect individual regions. This makes us realize that farmers too should be given equal treatment when it comes to EU support in regions with identical soil and climate conditions. The reality is, however, that farmers are treated differently depending on whether they live in the "old" or the "new" EU countries.

Meanwhile, some of Poland's farms have been thoroughly modernized over the past two decades. Polish farmers have been highly efficient in taking advantage of EU programs and they frequently outperform their counterparts in the "old" 15 EU countries, the Rural Development Program being a case in point. The same can be said of food processing businesses.

The outcome of all these efforts could be seen at the 28th Polagra Food International Trade Fair which was held in Poznań last October. It is worth noting that back in the 19th century, the Wielkopolska region, of which Poznań is the largest city, hosted one of the first agricultural fairs on Polish soil. The Polagra Food fair was accompanied by the Smaki Regionów (Regional Flavors) Fair. Poland boasts a long list of regional products, a legacy we can be proud of. The finest foods combined with original, regional recipes result in bread, cold meats, cheeses and confectionery that bring back memories of flavors from our childhood days. Nothing tastes better than regional specialties that used to be served in Polish

homes many years ago. Exhibitors at the fair seek out traditional, natural products in the most remote and forgotten corners of Poland in order to protect them and then bring our culinary heritage to consumers in Poland and abroad. The fair showcases family traditions rooted in the culinary art of the early Republic of Poland. These, in my opinion, are the beautiful differences which a united Europe should be about these days. Equal EU funds should still be used to support the preservation of the best tradition of food production and the culinary heritage which stem from the rich European history.

Other Polish food products looked excellent in the company of many international products, boasting quality and flavors that made them popular abroad. Some of these products were awarded the Try Good Food label, which means that consumers can now enjoy a new range of products with consistently high quality, guaranteed characteristics and always identical flavor. All of these advantages help Polish food gain popularity on many markets around the world. Poland exports its confectionery products to 100 countries, fruit juices and poultry meat to 80 countries, cheese and cottage cheese to 75 and pork, frozen fruits and vegetables and processed meat to 70 countries. Polish beef is also gaining popularity; it is imported by 60 countries at present.

The good reputation Polish food has shows in figures concerning foreign trade in food and agricultural products. The data indicates that the first half of this year saw a continuing increase in the value of Polish exports as well as a growing trade surplus at over 7.8 billion and 1.4 billion euros respectively. This, in turn, shows that the results for the whole of this year could be better than last year.

What is also worth mentioning is that in terms of value, almost a quarter of our agricultural production is exported. Poland is the EU's largest producer of apples and champignon mushrooms, the second largest producer of strawberries and potatoes, and the third largest of cereal crops, sugar beet and fruit in general.

The above examples demonstrate the stimulating effect which funds distributed equally as part of pillars one and two of the Common Agricultural Policy have on the development and competitiveness of agriculture. Much higher funds assigned to direct payments are no incentive for farmers to try modern and innovative solutions; this policy fails to stimulate development. As we work on the new Common Agricultural Policy, we should remember that it is our common goal to improve the competitiveness of European agriculture on global markets.