



POLSKA...  
tastes good!

# Promoting Polish Food in Berlin

This year's Grüne Woche (Green Week) international agri-food fair in Berlin was an excellent opportunity to promote Polish food, primarily top-quality regional products.



Talking agriculture:  
Stanislaw Kalemba (left) and Ilse Aigner

**The** Grüne Woche fair held every January is a world-famous event promoting food and farming. Many food producers take advantage of the opportunity to check how the market will react to their new products.

The fair is not just more than 1,600 exhibitors from almost 60 countries and more than 400,000 visitors, but also around 300 conferences and seminars, panel discussions and workshops. The importance of this event is best evidenced by the presence of 87 agriculture ministers from all over the world at the latest fair.

"Nations unite through eating," Germany's federal minister of food and agriculture Ilse Aigner said when she met Stanislaw Kalemba, the Polish minister of agriculture and rural development, at the Polish national stand. Kalemba said that, as far as agri-food products are concerned, Germany has been Poland's main trading partner for many years.

"Last year sales of agri-food products to Germany exceeded 3 billion euros," Kalemba said. "German consumers are the most interested in Polish poultry and dairy products, smoked fish, juice and other fruit products as well as baked goods and confectionery."

As in previous years, the Polish presentation was held under the motto "*Polska Schmeckt!*" (*Polska... Tastes Good*). A number of companies showcased products with the Try Fine Food label. These included the following: Dega (maker of salads, fish products, canned goods etc.), OSM Skierniewice (dairy), Fanex (ketchup, mustard, dressings etc.), Vinkon (fruit wine, juices and other fruit products), Lazar (cheese), Orzech (fruit and vegetable processing), Jana Dairy Cooperative in Środa Wielkopolska, Makarony Polskie (pasta), OSM Czarnków (dairy), Danmis (goat's milk products), Firma Bracia Urbanek (fruit and vegetable processing), OSM Kolo (dairy), Amber Brewery, MIK Irena Jańczukowicz-Kosewska, Starco (dairy), OSM Łowicz (dairy), OSM Garwolin (dairy), OSM Top Tomyśl (dairy), OSM Grodzisk Mazowiecki (dairy), Mościbrody (meat products), WSP Spolem (mayonnaise), Euro Trade, Wipasz (chicken meat), Maxtop (frozen foods), Miody Mazurskie (honey), Jacek Podgórnian (meat products), and ZPC Chylak (sweet baked goods).

The hit product of the Polish stand was caviar from Polish sturgeon. "To rebuild the population of this fish species, which lives naturally in the Baltic Sea, the most important thing is to imple-

ment the innovative research program being carried out as a Polish-German collaboration project," said Poland's deputy minister of agriculture, Kazimierz Plocke. "Few people know that Poland is a caviar producer. Each year we produce up to a few hundred tons of this delicacy, while the production of sturgeon in Poland is around 400 metric tons per year. In 2004, before Poland's EU accession, this fish was becoming extinct. The sturgeon now unites Poland, Germany and Lithuania as they fight together to rebuild stocks.

Guests at the fair were also delighted with the flavor of traditional foodstuffs presented at different Polish stands—unique regional products made for many years according to original recipes. They included baked goods, organic processed foods, cold cuts, fresh vegetable and fruit juice, honey, mayonnaise, dressings and sauces, salads, fish, all kinds of cheese, yogurt as well as wines and other alcoholic beverages.

This year's Green Week focused on presenting regional and local products. There were plenty of those at the stands of Polish exhibitors, including cold cuts, cheese, apples and baked goods from the Ministry of Agriculture's List of Traditional Products. Thirty-six Polish products are already registered as products protected by the European Commission.

The fair is not just a venue for promotion and for establishing business contacts. "It is also an important place for discussing the future of the Common Agricultural Policy," said Kalemba. "This is an opportunity for bilateral and multilateral meetings, concerning both detailed issues relating to agriculture and strategic directions of the agricultural policy."

As every year, the German Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection organized the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture, GFFA 2013, during Berlin's Green Week. This year the motto was "Responsible Investment in the Food and Agriculture Sectors: A Key Factor for Food Security and Rural Development."

A discussion by the agriculture ministers attending the forum focused on the role of private, public and joint projects in agriculture and on ways of ensuring the sector's sustainable development. They also talked about how to help agricultural producers, including small farmers, access funds.

A.R.

# Food Under Control

Food sold in Poland is monitored regularly by several different institutions which check to make sure that EU quality standards are followed.

Poland, like the other EU member states, has a system of official inspections and other measures, encompassing all stages in the production, processing and distribution of food. Making sure that people in Poland buy food that is safe are: the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate (PIS), the Trade Inspection (IS), the Agricultural and Food Quality Inspection (IJHARS) and the Veterinary Inspection (IW).

These institutions check things such as whether fresh fruit and vegetables fulfill Polish and EU quality requirements. The aim of setting trade quality standards for fresh fruit and vegetables sold directly to consumers is to enable the elimination of poor-quality products from the market. Also, the presence of goods of diverse quality on the market—falling within different quality classes—is conducive to increased competitiveness and better prices for better products, which increases the profitability of production.

Based on a European Commission regulation from 2007, EU member states are obligated to carry out inspections of fresh fruit and vegetables at all stages of trading, checking imports from third countries, exports to third countries and trade within the EU. Each member state appoints the appropriate inspection services to carry out these tasks.

In Poland the tasks connected with checking the quality of fresh fruit and vegetables required by EU regulations, based on the law on the organization of the fruit and vegetable, hops, tobacco and dry feed markets, have been entrusted to IJHARS. This institution conducts inspections checking compliance with the trading standards for fresh fruit and vegetables on the internal market, at the point of export, at the point of import and it also runs a database about traders selling fresh fruit and vegetables on the market. IJHARS inspections check compliance with the requirements set down in detailed trading standards and in the general standard.

The bodies authorized to conduct inspections involving food safety regarding meat are the IW (inspecting the production and sale of meat with the exception of the retail trade) and the PIS (meat in the retail trade). Both institutions have the right to conduct official inspections aiming to prevent things like the sale of food – including meat – that is hazardous to consumer health. If problems are discovered, firm steps are taken to eliminate the problem or prevent dishonest entrepreneurs from continuing their operations, especially as regards repeat offenders. Moreover, Poland has a system of measures and penalties that can be applied when laws on food are violated. The penalties are effective, proportional and deterrent.

Polish food, including animal products, sold on the European Union market and in third countries meets all the requirements of the food law, which makes it completely safe.

Thanks to this and its great flavor, Polish food has won respect among consumers in the European Union and beyond. The results of many inspections carried out by inspectors from the European Commission's Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) and the fact that Polish food is increasingly appreciated and popular among consumers from other countries confirms that its safety and trade quality is maintained at a very high level.

There is a special focus in Poland on the development of organic farming as an environmentally friendly sector guaranteeing the highest level of wellbeing for animals as well as yielding products of high quality. The system of inspection, supervision and certification in organic farming in Poland is efficient, effective and guarantees consumer protection. This was unequivocally confirmed by the FVO audit conducted in September 2012 which gave positive marks to the way this system functions. Support for this sector is systematic and well organized, proceeding in accordance with the Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming in Poland for 2011-2014.

The principle of overseeing food "from the farm to the table" set down in European law is fully implemented in Poland.

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All food products on the market are checked thoroughly

## Regional and Traditional Products

## Polish Sausages with EU Logo

Sausage (*kielbasa*) has been a Polish delicacy for centuries. It used to be offered as the first food to guests sitting down to breakfast or dinner.

When Polish cuisine became more sophisticated in the 18th century, it was said that a good cook employed by the gentry should be able to cook *kielbasa* 12 different ways, and in an aristocratic home 24 ways. Something of that old love of *kielbasa* has survived in Polish people to this day. Polish sausage has become something of a trademark in international cuisine, next to dried forest mushrooms, excellent vodkas, game and *pierogi*.

Two well-known and appreciated varieties of Polish sausage, *kielbasa myśliwska* (hunter's sausage) and *kielbasa jalowcowa* (juniper sausage), were entered in the EU Traditional Specialties Guaranteed register in April 2011.



*Kielbasa jalowcowa* has a unique flavor and aroma. These qualities are due to the use of juniper berries in the production process. They are crushed just before being added to the meat and then the sausage's flavor is enhanced and its unusual aroma augmented by smoking in juniper smoke.

One important ingredient of *kielbasa jalowcowa* is pork; the meat has to have a relatively high content of intramuscular fat, called marbling, which gives the final product its desirable tenderness, juiciness and excellent flavor. This is a strongly smoked sausage shaped like a wreath, dark brown in color, slightly wrinkled, with a tender consistency. It is made from the meat of traditional Polish breeds of pig that are fed in a strictly specified way. The sausage owes its special taste and smell to the choice of herbs and spices added to the meat, with natural pepper and juniper berries dominating. The production technology is also traditional, already described in 18th-century Polish records. This sausage is smoked in warm and then cold smoke, using oak chips and juniper branches; after that it is dried for a few days.

The target market for *kielbasa myśliwska*, was much wider historically than the hunting fraternity. The sausage's long shelf life due to drying and smoking and its small size (short, thin sticks) made it the perfect food to take on hikes, journeys and long-term stays in places where food was hard to come by. The special flavor of this sausage is created by carefully selected herbs and spices (pepper, juniper, garlic and sugar). The product has an exceptionally long shelf life.

In the olden days in Poland, hunting and shooting was always the pastime of the aristocracy and gentry, and game was only served at palaces, manors and the homes of wealthy townspeople. A hunter's equipment always included and still includes a hunting bag in which the hunter carried dry provisions to keep him going throughout a day spent in the woods. *Kielbasa myśliwska* was a regular component, a great snack during the day.

Both these types of sausage are made from traditional Polish pig breeds: puławska (Puławy), złotnicka (Złotniki), wielka biała polska (Polish Large White) and polska biała zwisłoucha (Polish White Lop-eared) or their cross-breeds, fed up to a mass of 120 kg. The end product can have up to 50% of the pork replaced with beef.

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# Polish Food is Safe Food



by **Stanisław Kalemba**,  
Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development

Poland's hard work so far has ensured record sales of agricultural and food products abroad. Data for 2012 shows that sales totaled almost 17.5 billion euros, with a trade surplus of 4.1 billion euros. No other sector performed as well in foreign trade.

**A**griculture and the food processing industry are worth investing in, as investment translates into new jobs and real budget revenues. We also need to remember that according to demographers, world population growth in the coming years will necessitate a 70-percent increase in global food production by 2050 and so it is advisable for Polish farmers, food processing companies and exporters to actively join in the process. We have very good food which is highly popular with consumers across the EU and its popularity outside the EU is growing as well.

Apparently, not everybody seems to be happy about this. This year began with some alarming news about Polish food and the quality of it. First, the Danish agriculture minister posted a disapproving comment online about the quality of Polish food. I reacted sharply to the unfounded remarks. The statement was deleted from the website, but comments in the media continued for some time. Before they died down, new allegations came from Slovakia that Polish-made chocolate bars contained powdered milk contaminated with a rodent repellent. Then, claims were made in Ireland and Britain about beefburgers allegedly contaminated with horsemeat from Poland.

I am convinced that such attacks on Polish food are mainly the result of other countries trying to protect domestic producers and fears over consumers being increasingly interested in Polish food. Preliminary data for last year confirms that exports of Polish agricultural and food products were on the rise yet again. We broke a new record by selling products worth around 17.5 billion euros, with a record trade surplus of more than 4.1 billion euros. These figures have more than tripled since Poland joined the EU in 2004.

The growing fear of Polish food seems only natural, then. But our food is its own best advocate with its delicious flavors, scents and high quality.

The allegations I have mentioned above concern criminal offenses and not food quality as such. Whoever cheats in terms of the content of food is an offender and not a producer, and will be dealt with by the law. As soon as such information appeared, Polish inspection authorities took appropriate measures in terms of checking and investigating. In the case of the contaminated powdered milk, Poland immediately informed the EU authorities and took the appropriate steps. This was an ordinary crime, a fraud perpetrated by dishonest producers.

I need to point out that we were the ones to detect the irregularities and alert our partners about the situation via the EU rapid alert system. I should also emphasize the fact that neither this nor the other cases placed consumers at risk, unlike scandals that we have seen in the past several years in other EU member states as a result of which people died. The Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) has recorded problems with food found in every country.

We operate on a single market and are bound by identical regulations on food quality inspection. I cannot, however, allow the quality of our food to be vilified in the absence of hard evidence.

Nevertheless, we are constantly keeping track of changing requirements and we constantly analyze the work of our authorities in this field. We are also working on new ways to ensure that such services become even more efficient.

Polish food is safe food. It is high class and Polish flavors, scents and culinary quality often outshine those of many other products, as evidenced by the constantly growing popularity of Polish food among 500 million consumers in the EU as well as in other regions, such as the Far East. I am confident that anyone who has tried Polish food once will buy it again and ignore unfounded accusations.

In January, I witnessed consumers' appreciation of Polish food once again during the Grüne Woche trade fair in Berlin, where crowds of visitors flocked to the Polish stands.