

A close-up photograph of a variety of fresh vegetables arranged on a wooden surface. The assortment includes several light-colored potatoes, a large bright orange bell pepper, a yellow lemon, a green zucchini, several red cherry tomatoes, a whole carrot with its fibrous roots, and some green leafy herbs like dill. The lighting is bright, highlighting the natural colors and textures of the produce.

POLSKA...  
tastes good!

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# Polish Agri-Food Exports in 2013: Another Good Year

Polish agri-food products are increasingly popular abroad. This is confirmed by statistics on Poland's agri-food product exports for the first three quarters of 2013. Meanwhile, the role of agricultural raw materials in exports is decreasing, while that of highly processed goods is growing—an unquestionable indication that the food processing industry is developing.

Polish farm produce and foodstuffs attract international buyers with their quality and competitive prices. Providing quality food requires responsibility and attention at all stages of the food chain, starting from the production of ingredients, through processing, all the way to consumer purchases of food. Farmers need to be aware of the need to improve the quality of their produce, modernize their farms, implement integrated or organic production systems that are beneficial for consumers and the environment. Food processing companies need to implement advanced technologies, use quality ingredients and introduce quality management systems that guarantee consumers access to quality food.

A parallel segment that is developing thanks to substantial interest from Polish consumers is that of traditional foodstuffs, made from original recipes with a production tradition going back many generations.

Polish food is winning new markets thanks to cooperation between agricultural producers and processing companies, but at the same time consolidation in this group offers the biggest reserves in terms of maintaining and expanding foreign trade in agri-food products. Concentrating food production and processing ensures greater financial capacity for acquiring new technologies and maintaining the high quality of end products as well as seeking new trading partners and taking on the challenges of organic production.

That agri-food products have been growing in importance in Poland's foreign trade for many years is confirmed by their 12.5-percent share in total exports and their rapid pace of growth compared with other sectors.

From January to September 2013 agri-food exports were worth 14.4 billion euros, which is 12.3 percent more than in the same period of the previous year and 3.6 times the value for the whole of 2003.

Rapid export growth is reported in sales within the European Union, where 78 percent of Polish agri-food products make their way (11.2 billion euros in the first three quarters of 2013). Exports within the EU in 2013 grew by 13.5

percent, and to the "EU15" by 13.9 percent. Agri-food exports to non-EU markets grew as well.

Germany, traditionally the biggest importer of Polish food and produce, bought 3.2 billion euros worth of goods from Poland last year, up from 2.8 billion euros a year earlier. This translated into 18 percent growth compared with the same period of 2012 and a 22.5 percent share in agri-food exports.

Among the main items exported to Germany, the most rapid pace of growth year-on-year was reported for rapeseed (exports worth 180 million euros, double the previous value), smoked fish (308 million euros, 40-percent growth), beef (88 million euros, more than 30-percent growth), wheat (84 million euros, 20-percent growth), cigarettes (121 million euros, 20-percent growth), chocolate and chocolate goods (94 million euros, about 20-percent growth). Other major products sold to Germany included fruit juice (204 million euros), poultry meat (184 million euros), bread and other baked goods (141 million euros), frozen fruit (105 million euros), and dairy products (98 million euros).

Poland's second-largest partner in agri-food exports is Britain, with exports for the first three quarters of 2013 worth 1.1 billion euros, which translates into 12.3-percent year-on-year growth and a 7.5-percent share in agri-food exports. Among the main goods sold to the British market, ↪

Sales of chocolate and confectionery are still growing



⇒ the highest export growth rate was reported for fruit juice (exports worth 59 million euros, 55-percent growth), bread and other baked goods (45 million euros and 50-percent growth), pork and giblets, brined and salted (72 million euros and 23-percent growth). Other food exports to Britain included chocolate and chocolate goods worth 189 million euros, poultry meat worth 104 million euros, and fresh and refrigerated vegetables worth 33 million euros.

The third-largest market for Polish agri-food products is Russia. Exports to Russia in 2013 exceeded 900 million euros, which meant an increase of 20 percent compared with the same period of the previous year. The biggest item on the list of exports to Russia is fruit, mainly apples (25 percent of exports), fresh and frozen vegetables and meat. Compared with 2012, the biggest growth was recorded in the export of pork (exports worth 68 million euros, more than twice the previous figure), cheese (72 million euros, more than 50-percent growth), apples (228 million euros and 40-percent growth), bread and other baked goods (27 million euros, almost 30-percent growth), frozen vegetables (30 million euros, almost 20-percent growth).

Poland is actively seeking new markets for its agri-food products not only among its neighbors and other EU countries, but also in the Far and Middle East. The diversification of the country's export markets is essential for maintaining a steady supply of buyers for Polish products on the rapidly changing global market for produce and food.

The first three quarters of 2013 saw a rapid growth of exports to China. Poland's agri-food exports to that country almost tripled, reaching 112 million euros, mainly thanks to pork exports increasing more than six times and dairy exports (mainly milk powder and whey) and sales of edible giblets (not including poultry giblets) almost tripling.



Bread and other baked goods are major Polish exports to the EU...

Exports to Libya grew by 67 percent to 23 million euros. Sales of chocolate and chocolate goods to this market tripled, cheese sales grew by 66 percent, and a large amount of barley was exported there for the first time as well.

Agri-food exports to Saudi Arabia grew by 47 percent to about 105 million euros. This was possible thanks to doubled wheat exports and 71-percent growth in the export of chocolate and goods containing cocoa.

The United Arab Emirates is another country for which Poland reports significant growth in agri-food exports. From January to September 2013 these were worth almost 60 million euros, which means 40-percent growth compared with



the previous year. Sales of chocolate and goods containing cocoa grew 68 percent and cigarette exports increased by 37 percent.

Exports to Uzbekistan grew 77 percent, chiefly due to beef sales growing fivefold. Poland exported 38 million euros worth of agri-food products to Uzbekistan between January and September 2013.

Agri-food exports to Japan continued to expand as well, chiefly driven by pork, which accounted for 80 percent of Poland's food exports to that country.

For many years Poland's agri-food exports have been dominated by meat and meat products, dairy products, baked goods, confectionery and chocolate, fresh and frozen fruit, fruit juice, fresh and frozen vegetables, cigarettes and smoked fish. Poland sells these goods to its long-standing, traditional buyers as well as new markets won in recent years.

In the first three quarters of 2013, Poland exported 1.26 million metric tons of meat and meat products worth a total 2.8 billion euros (up from 1.15 million tons worth 2.58 billion euros in the same period of 2012). Beef exports were worth 688 million euros, pork exports 647 million euros, and poultry meat exports 768 million euros. Fresh and processed fruit exports were worth 1.37 billion euros (up from 1.23 billion euros in the same period of 2012). Apple exports were worth 373 million euros, fruit juice (mainly apple juice) exports 446 million euros, and frozen fruit exports 318 million euros. Fresh and processed vegetable exports were worth 898 million euros (up from 819 million euros in the same period of 2012). Frozen vegetable exports totaled 186 million euros, while the main fresh vegetable exports were onions, mushrooms, cabbages, cauliflowers and carrots. Dairy product exports were worth 1.19 billion euros (up from 1.02 billion



...as are smoked fish

euros in the same period of 2012). Cheese exports were worth 505 million euros. Baked goods, chocolate and chocolate goods exports were worth 1.38 billion euros (up from 1.25 billion euros in the same period of 2012).

A substantial increase was recorded in rapeseed oil exports—from 92 million euros in the first three quarters of 2012 to 192 million euros in the same period of 2013; grain exports—from 289 million euros to 495 million euros; and smoked fish—from 288 million euros to 393 million euros.

Overall, Poland recorded a 4.1-billion-euro surplus in the trade of agri-food products in the first three quarters of 2013, 41 percent more than in the same period of 2012. ■





# Apples – A Polish

Apples are one of the most important products of Polish fruit farming. They account for almost three-quarters of the total volume of fruit produced in Poland.

The acreage of apple orchards in Poland has increased rapidly in recent years, and the same goes for apple production. At the start of the previous decade, orchards occupied about 165,000 hectares; now this has risen to almost 195,000 hectares. Old orchards are being replaced with new, more intensive ones, with varieties that are popular among consumers.

Preliminary data from the Central Statistical Office (GUS) as of the end of September 2013 show that last year's harvest in Poland yielded 2.92 million metric tons of apples, up from 2.88 million tons in 2012. In the past, such high output would seriously disrupt the apple market and usually ended in a drastic drop in the prices offered to growers. In recent years things have been different thanks to growing exports of apples and apple juice.

Estimates by the Institute of Agricultural and Food Economics released in November 2013 suggested that the export volume of Polish apples would exceed 1 million tons in 2013 for the first time, reaching a record of about 1.25 million tons. The value of exports was expected to hit a record of 475 million euros.

Apple juice concentrate continues to be a major item on the list of Polish agri-food exports. Poland exported 245,000 tons of the product in 2012, worth about 364 million euros. The volume expected to be reported for 2013 is even higher: 280,000 tons, worth 392 million euros.

Russia has been the biggest buyer of Polish dessert apples for years, with 442,200 tons shipped there in the 2011/2012 trading year. The estimate for 2012/2013 is more than 730,000 tons of apples sold to Russia.

Another important and traditional buyer is Belarus, where Poland exported over 135,000 tons of apples in the 2012/2013 trading year, followed by Ukraine (about 55,000 tons) and Kazakhstan (about 48,000 tons).

The 2012/2013 trading year saw a substantial increase in Polish apple exports to European Union countries, to more than 220,000 tons, compared with 82,100 tons in 2011/2012 and 49,700 tons in 2010/2011. However, this major increase in exports to EU markets is mainly the effect of a seasonal drop in apple production in Western Europe and might not be a stable trend. The biggest EU importers of Polish apples include Germany, Lithuania, Romania, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Estonia and Slovakia.

The increase in dessert apple exports is the result of changes in the horticultural sector combined with changes in distribution. The past few years have seen rapid development of logistics infrastructure for horticultural products (especially warehouse/storage facilities), most often financed under EU aid programs.

Apples are a product that enjoys the benefits of advanced storage technologies (ultra-low oxygen – ULO – refrigeration systems or ones with a controlled atmosphere). They can be kept fresh and maintain their high quality for six months and even longer. Modern cold stores

# Export Hit

built by farmers or fruit and vegetable producer groups, thanks to different forms of EU support, enable suppliers to extend the time during which they can offer their fruit. Consequently, the period of availability of Polish apples is longer than in the case of fruit in countries with less well developed logistics.

The growing apple exports and logistics infrastructure development would have been impossible without the commitment of fruit producers and traders. A growing number of businesses involved in exporting Polish agri-food products, including apples, are owned by fruit and vegetable producer groups and organizations. Regulations on the organization of agricultural markets (one of the components of the first pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy) for the fruit and vegetable segment aim to promote cooperation among fruit and vegetable producers as part of producer groups and organizations. These operate with the producers' interests in mind, and their tasks include putting their members' products on the market.

Such organizations remain under the producers' control, even though they constitute an extra link between producers and the market. Their purpose is to adjust the supply of fruit and vegetables to market needs in terms of both quantity and quality. They gather information about the market's expectations and present this to producers, who then know what to produce and how much. They also conduct effective marketing for the produce supplied by their members.

One important element of such cooperation as part of producer groups and organizations is concentration of the supply of fruit and vegetables. By offering large amounts of uniform produce, these entities are attractive trading partners for buyers such as large retail chains, processing plants and importers.

A major impulse for Polish fruit and vegetable producers came from EU assistance granted to producer groups set up in 2005-2013. This support encouraged many fruit farmers to work together, as confirmed by the number of producer groups that sprang up around Grójec, Warka and Sandomierz—areas of special concentration of apple production.

Thanks to the support obtained from the EU, these groups acquired advanced systems and machinery for harvesting (mobile platforms for fruit picking, orchard carts), storage (warehouses and cold stores), sorting (machines that can sort fruit by color intensity), preparation for sale (machines for washing, packing and labeling) and transport (trucks). With such a comprehensive and modern logistics base, fruit and vegetable producer groups offering apples have gained a competitive edge over other apple suppliers at home and abroad. Polish apples have made their way to many new markets. On existing markets, Polish suppliers have strengthened their position.

Stable growth in apple exports in the coming years will ensure further development of producer groups and organizations. In the longer term, however, Polish apple growers will have to face up to new challenges, including quality improvement and growing labor costs in fruit farming. New regulations under the EU's Common Agricultural Policy for the 2014-2020 period provide for support that should help them deal with these challenges.



# Polish Goose Meat on

The production of goose meat is a specialty of Polish agriculture and has a tradition that goes back centuries. Goose meat is valued not only by Polish consumers but also internationally due to its flavor and nutritional value.

**G**oose breeding developed in Poland in the 19th century, starting from a local breed called Pomeranian Goose, which were of considerable size and weight and had tasty meat. Good natural conditions for breeding these birds (plentiful pastures, water and meadows) also helped goose farming to spread in rural areas. Not only wealthy farmers but also owners of small farms raised geese, buying whole flocks off birds, fattening them until winter and then selling or consuming them themselves.

Goose rearing was mostly seasonal, from late spring to early winter. The traditional annual goose butchering event took place before St. Martin's Day on Nov. 11. Hence Nov. 11 has been named National Goose Meat Day. For many

years, various promotional campaigns, large and small, have taken place in different regions across Poland, the aim being to promote the idea of healthy eating including goose meat.

Goose meat was turned into winter meat and fat reserves using various preservation methods. In Pomerania, the traditional ways of processing goose meat are used to this day. Typical products made from goose meat in the past included *gęsia okrasa* (goose fat) and smoked goose breast – *pólgęsek* (half-geese) – which was also made in other regions in Poland. Smoked goose breast was a delicacy in Europe that was imported from Poland.

Goose fat is considered a healthy animal fat because it contains about 42 percent of monounsaturated oleic acid and 20 percent of linoleic acid. Increased consumption of unsaturated fatty acids is recommended in diets designed to prevent cardiovascular diseases.

The White Koluda Goose (which originated from the Pomeranian Goose) is a breed known as an "oat goose" and a delicacy appreciated by consumers with sophisticated palates. The special flavor of oat geese in Poland today results from the



# European Tables

way they are raised. Young oat geese are a specialty of Polish agriculture and a trademark product of the poultry sector.

Polish oat geese are reared in accordance with European Commission guidelines and a set of local regulations on young oat geese. These regulations require farmers to use the genotype of the White Koluda Goose. In this breeding technology, from their second week, the geese are allowed to range free and are fed mainly grain, root crops and green fodder.

An important element of goose farming is how the birds are fed during fattening (the last three months before slaughter) – with unshelled oats, which lends the meat its unique flavor. Fulfilling these requirements means that the meat of Polish oat geese is organic. Polish oat geese are valued not only for their flavor and nutrition. Thanks to them being fed with oats containing zinc ions, the meat gains additional properties and is recommended in cases of Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, skin diseases and impotence.

Today Poland is the biggest producer of geese in Europe. In 2012, 6.2 million geese were sent to slaughter, which is about 2.5 percent of the total national industrial slaughter of

poultry. About 26,000 metric tons of meat was obtained, of which more than 70 percent was exported, mainly to Germany. The goose meat market in Poland is a niche market, though a promising one. In 2012, Poland exported more than 16,500 tons of goose meat and its products, worth almost 81.3 million euros. Those were mainly whole frozen carcasses and parts. Compared with 2011, the export volume grew 5.2 percent. From January to August 2013, exports exceeded 1,900 tons. However, exports are usually the highest in September and October.

The importance of goose breeding and rearing in Poland stems from the fact that a large part of the output, in the form of carcasses and parts, is destined for export markets.

Other equally valuable goose products include down and feathers, which are exported mainly to Germany, Japan, the United States, Switzerland and Thailand.

Goose meat is a Polish export recognized on international markets. Polish geese as a trademark enjoy an especially strong position in Germany, where they are marketed as *Ganse aus Polen*. ■



# Regional and Traditional Products

## Kabanos Sausage

The origins of the name *kabanos* date back to the 19th century, when a young pig in Poland and Lithuania was called a *kaban* or *kabane*, and its tender, tasty meat was called *kabanina*. In the mid-19th century *kaban* hams, ribs and sausages were made at many farms for families' personal use. With time the name *kabanos* started being used for long, thin, dried and smoked sausages made from this meat.



Quality meat and a special selection of traditional spices, including pepper, nutmeg and caraway, determines the distinct character and high quality of the end product.

Important stages of *kabanos* production include traditional hot smoking, then roasting followed by several days of drying. This is what makes *kabanos* sausages juicy and tender and gives them their dark, cherry-red color and a glossy, dry and evenly wrinkled surface. Traditional production methods result in sausages that make a special cracking sound when snapped in half.

*Kabanos* sausages are found on the table on special occasions, but are also great as food on the go. Moreover, next to ham and bacon, they are a Polish export specialty.

The European Commission registered *kabanos* sausage as a traditional specialty guaranteed on Oct. 20, 2011.

The features that set *kabanos* sausage apart from other sausages is its original flavor and aroma. These are the result of using traditional production methods, original recipes and quality ingredients.

Another special feature of *kabanos* sausages is their uniform and unique shape—they are long, thin and dry.

The traditional main ingredient in *kabanos* sausage is pork, and this has to be suitably tender, juicy and tasty.

## Juniper Sausage—Kielbasa Jałowcowa

The original character of *jałowcowa* (juniper) sausage lies in its unique aroma and flavor, the effect of using juniper berries in the production process.

Crushing the berries just before production augments the sausage's meaty flavor and gives it that something extra, while cold smoking in juniper smoke enriches the flavor further and enhances the sausage's special aroma. The name *kielbasa jałowcowa* can be given to sausage made in a specific way and with traditionally defined and selected ingredients.

Typical traditional sausages in Poland were dark (most likely the effect of smoking), curled and often



several meters long. They were a tasty treat served at banquets organized by nobles but also in the homes of wealthy peasants. With time, new types of processed meats developed, along with new methods of production. Their diversity resulted from the various types and amounts of spices used in production.

Recipes, flavors and eating habits were handed down from generation to generation. The tradition of smoking in juniper smoke to preserve meat was known all over the country. We know this from many historical sources, including notes on how to make sausages written down by the anonymous administrator of a manor farm in the 1780s, today housed at the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw. We can also read about the popularity of smoking using juniper branches in Adam Mickiewicz's epic poem *Pan Tadeusz* of 1834, where the poet's description of breakfast at a noble home mentions that all the cold cuts were delicious, all homemade and smoked in the chimney in juniper smoke.

The deliciousness of this particular sausage is due to only the best pork being used. The meat is spiced with pepper and juniper berries and then cured using a traditional dry method involving a special curing mixture.

Quality ingredients and traditional production methods lend juniper sausage an extraordinary tenderness and juiciness. The main factor in achieving the qualities typical for this sausage is hot smoking followed by roasting, giving the sausage an even, dark brown color typical of a strongly smoked product.

Next, the sausage is subjected to cold smoking in smoke produced by burning beech wood chips and juniper branches. The final stage involves several days of drying. As a result of this production process, the surface of the sausage is evenly wrinkled.

The European Commission registered *kielbasa jalowcowa* as a traditional specialty guaranteed on April 19, 2011. ■

## Hunting Sausage—*Kielbasa Myśliwska*

This sausage's very name expresses its special character. With a long shelf life and small in size, it is a perfect food to take on hikes, longer journeys or stays in places where hot meals are not an option. *Kielbasa myśliwska* was an obvious choice for hunters.

There are many descriptions of meals during hunting trips in literature, including in Poland's national epic, *Pan Tadeusz*. A product taken regularly on such trips as a snack was sausage, the kind that was dried and smoked and therefore kept well for a relatively long time. Even though *kielbasa myśliwska's* name links it directly to hunting, over time it gained a broad spectrum of fans. To this day hunting sausage is one of the most popular and frequently consumed processed meats in Poland.

The main ingredient of *kielbasa myśliwska* is pork. To make the meat brittle, as this kind of sausage should be, a special aging mixture is added, made up of vinegar, water and rapeseed or sunflower oil. The age-old tradition of making hunting sausage, passed on from generation to generation, enabled the ideal proportion of spices to be determined; these include pepper, juniper berries, sugar and a curing mixture, all of which add to the flavor. Thanks to fresh garlic and a long drying process in the final stage of production, *kielbasa myśliwska* has a very long shelf life—this is one of its distinctive features.

The European Commission registered *kielbasa myśliwska* as a traditional specialty guaranteed on April 19, 2011. ■



## Rural Tourism

# Welcome to the Polish



Poland is one of the few countries in Europe that still harbor vast expanses of nature unspoiled by humans. This unique heritage adds to the value of Poland's rural areas, which stretch across about 90 percent of the country.

**The** Polish countryside is also where folk culture thrives amid natural beauty and scenic landscapes. If you feel like taking time off and relaxing in these bucolic surroundings, why not try the hospitality of Polish farmers? Spend some time in rural Poland to check out regional traditions and see what your hosts have in store for their guests.

Rural tourism farms in Poland offer a variety of services and activities for every tourist. This is an attractive form of active recreation, offering an opportunity to explore local customs and culture, see how families in villages live and what kind of work and chores they do. Staying at a working farm, you can watch

and touch farm animals, learn the ins and outs of agricultural production and enjoy fresh and healthy food.

### Plenty to choose from

Poland has almost 8,000 farms offering home-stay vacations to tourists, providing a total of over 80,000 accommodations. Southern Poland is the most popular region among tourists who seek this kind of vacation. Two provinces in the south account for almost 29 percent of all rural tourism farms in Poland.

Tourism services available at such farms cater to the needs and expectations of various kinds of visitors. Polish rural

# Countryside

tourism farms offering good standards are endorsed by the *Gospodarstwa Gościnne* (Hospitable Farms) Polish Rural Tourism Federation, which classifies them into several categories. Farms and services recommended by the organization are listed on Poland's largest website on rural tourism at [www.agroturystyka.pl](http://www.agroturystyka.pl).

Services provided at some rural tourism farms are tailored to suit specific kinds of visitors such as individual tourists, families, teenagers and young adults, people with disabilities, hunters, anglers, cyclists and so on. The Polish countryside with its diversified landscape ensures good conditions for sports such as horse riding and angling.

## Vacations at a farm

One of the categories in the Polish Rural Tourism Federation's database is Vacations at a Farm, a service addressed to visitors from urban areas who seek contact with nature and animals, are keen to try an environmentally-friendly lifestyle, want to eat healthy food and learn about what it is like to live in the countryside. Home-stay accommodation is provided at working farms, so that guests can also learn about rural tradition and customs.

The typical service package includes accommodation in rooms with bathrooms and traditional wooden furniture. One of the

main selling points are tasty, homemade meals prepared from healthy, traditional and often organic ingredients grown and produced locally by the hosts. Part of the allure is traditional Polish hospitality, which makes guests feel at home as they join the hosts at meal times and have a chat over the table. Vacations at a farm are largely about routine activities, enabling guests to take part in the chores, help out with the livestock, and go out to the fields and try their hand at haying, weeding and herb picking. While taking a vacation at a farm, you can learn how natural and organic food is made and what traditional methods are used to make butter, cheese, bread, fruit preserves and so on.

Families that stay at a farm get to spend quality time together as they work hand in hand and enjoy the homely atmosphere close to nature.

## Families get together

A vacation in the countryside is ideal for the whole family to relax in beautiful scenery, away from the city hustle and bustle. It lets you stop to savor every day, marvel at the beauty of nature, and try local delicacies. Tired parents get well-deserved time off while their kids can see life in the country with their own eyes and play with friendly animals. Close contact with nature and activity in the open is also good for a child's immune system.

Other than comfortable accommodation, Polish rural tourism farms have a range of extra attractions. Many farmers offer child-friendly cuisine to let kids relish drop scones, puffy pancakes, cakes and beverages made from boiled fruit. Usually there is a forest or a lake nearby, ideal for a family expedition. Located far from busy roads, rural farms are safe places to stay at and frequently include large recreational areas. The experience of nature, the scent of freshly mowed grass, and the sense of freedom leave you exhilarated and with some wonderful memories. →



## ⇒ Saddle up!

Horse riding combines physical activity with the opportunity to explore open spaces and interact with animals. Riding a horse, you let your senses relax. This is good physical exercise that improves your motor coordination and has a beneficial effect on your figure as you relax and stretch your muscles. Horse riding is recommended for people with a variety of health issues.

The diversified landscape of rural Poland is ideal for horse riding enthusiasts. Crossing a picturesque area on a horse is a thrilling experience when you think of jumping over natural obstacles or a wild ride along a lake. A horse can take you across a glorious plain and a beautiful mountain pass. At the Polish seaside, horse rides by the water's edge often take place at sunset so riders can watch the dazzling colors of the sky as the sun plunges into the sea.

Rural tourism farms offer rides on horseback and in horse-drawn carts; many also run horse-riding schools. Horses are used in hippotherapy, an effective form of physical and sensory therapy. Children who develop an interest in horse riding learn how to be responsible, sensitive and disciplined.

## Go fishing

Angling lets you relax and can also be a sport. It has been known as a pastime for thousands of years and even ancient Roman poet Ovid wrote about different fish species in his poem *Halieutica* (On Fishing), describing their habits and places where they could be caught. As a hobby, angling takes some knowledge and training, but it is well worth the effort for all the tranquility and thrills you find as you wait for the fish to take the bait.

Angling is a great way to take some time off and just take it easy. When you are a keen angler, it is a good idea to combine your hobby with vacations in the countryside. An attractive neighborhood, beautiful scenery, bathing sites, rivers and fishing ponds are all a guarantee of a vacation to remember. Rural tourism farms in Poland often rent angling equipment and boats. You can also ask your host about nearby fishing spots and angling permits.

Not every fish has to end up on your table. In fact, what many anglers do is "catch and release." But a fresh fish definitely tastes the best and nothing can beat the flavor of a dish made



from a fish you caught yourself. Angler-friendly farms usually have rooms or stands to get the fish ready for cooking and guests can also use the local kitchen to prepare a delicious and healthy dish. The hosts like to share recipes from their home archives, so try and remember one to surprise your friends with some new flavors when you are back home.

## Mushroom picking

Mushrooms are one of the most distinctive ingredients in Polish cuisine and—stewed, pickled or dried—they give a unique flavor to a lot of Polish dishes. The most important traditional meal in Poland, the Christmas Eve dinner, features a variety of dishes with mushrooms. The best time to go mushroom picking are weekends in summer and autumn, letting you relax in the peace and quiet of a forest.



Over 1,000 mushroom species found in Polish forests are edible. Since most woodlands in Poland are public, you can freely explore them and enjoy what the forest has in store for you.

## Culinary tourism

Culinary tourism, including a variation called wine tourism (enotourism), are becoming increasingly popular in Poland with new culinary trails and "flavor festivals." At rural tourism farms, you can try local specialties, such as food and beverages listed as regional and traditional products protected by law. Visits to places where regional specialties are made include tours of vineyards, wine-making farms and wine cellars.



Information about tourism services in rural Poland is available at the annual Agrotourism trade fair in the southern city of Kielce. The event is attended by almost 150 exhibitors from Poland and abroad, drawing around 20,000 visitors every year. Agrotourism presents Polish providers of rural tourism services with an opportunity to meet, share expertise, exchange contact information and start partnerships with service providers from abroad. In addition to presentations by exhibitors, the event comprises conferences, training sessions and workshops. The next Agrotourism fair will be held April 11-13, 2014, at the Targi Kielce (Kielce Fair) venue.

# An Apple a Day



By Stanisław Kalemba,  
Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development

**P**olish agri-food products continue to attract customers abroad. In the first nine months of 2013, Poland exported 14.4 billion euros worth of farm produce and foodstuffs, 12.3 percent more than in the same period of 2012. Since imports totaled 10.3 billion euros (3.8 percent up on the same period of 2012), the foreign trade surplus reached 4.1 billion euros, rising by an impressive 41 percent from the first nine months of 2012. Judging by this data and forecasts, by the end of last year the surplus may reach 4.8 billion or even 5 billion euros, with exports at anywhere between 18.5 billion and 19 billion euros. This means that 2013 probably marked another record year for Polish farm produce and foodstuff exporters.

We are proud of the achievements of Polish agriculture. This is a success for which farmers, researchers and food processing businesses have worked hard for generations. When it comes to exports, flagship Polish products include apples, which are a symbol of Polish agriculture and fruit growing.

Over the past several years, Poland has been selling around 720,000-830,000 tons of table apples abroad annually. In the 2012/2013 season, Polish apple exports were especially strong, at 1.2 million tons.

Poland is the largest producer of apples in Europe, a feat that had its beginnings many years ago. December 2013 marked 100 years since the birth of Prof. Szczepan Pieniżek, a fruit growing expert who laid the foundations for modern pomology in Poland. In the early 1950s, Pieniżek helped found the Institute of Pomology and Floriculture in Skiemiewiec near Warsaw, where research continues to support apple growing in Poland. I should also mention the Society for the Promotion of Dwarf Fruit Orchards and its contribution to modernizing Polish orchards. Poland owes its spectacular success in apple production and exports to dedicated people like those.

It's good to see that table apples are gaining importance and now account for around 60 percent of all apples produced in Poland. In terms of table-apple exports, Poland topped global statistics in the 2012/2013 season, beating China, Italy and the United States. We are also the second largest producer of apple juice concentrate, after China.

These figures make it only natural that apples are seen as a symbol of Polish agriculture.

The battle over the EU budget is over, while intense work and consultations are under way on the new Rural Development Plan for 2014-2020. We need to work out the best measures to make the most of the available funds. It is important that the funds are spent well to ensure progress and innovation, and that they allow Polish agriculture and food processing to continue to develop rapidly. All the while, we need to remember that a large part of Poland's agricultural production is exported to various countries worldwide. Consequently, it is vital to never quit searching for new markets and maintain and strengthen our presence on the markets that we have.

January marks the beginning of a succession of trade fairs and exhibitions focusing on agriculture and the food industry. As usual, the first of them is the prestigious Grüne Woche (Green Week) in Berlin. Poland will be there, of course, because Germany is an important market for Poland and our largest partner in the trade of food and agricultural products. Polish agriculture has huge potential and there are still reserves that remain to be used to allow a further expansion in agricultural exports. We will show our wares at this year's Grüne Woche event and they are likely to be as popular with visitors as in previous years.

One of the world's largest trade fairs focusing on agriculture and food, Grüne Woche facilitates bilateral talks and meetings. This is an opportunity that is worth taking, because many issues in European agriculture need to be addressed. For example, we have to remember that the new EU budget will bring major changes to the markets for milk and sugar. Besides Europe lacks good ideas on how to prevent damage by adverse weather. Everyone essentially agrees that the weather in Europe is becoming increasingly turbulent. As this problem concerns most EU member states, it would be reasonable to get together and consider possible solutions as regards agricultural insurance. At the same time, we have to remember that the demographic changes that await the world will cause a sharp increase in the demand for food. This is something that farmers and food producers across Europe should be prepared for.

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