

Promoting Polish Poultry

Poland has become a European powerhouse in the poultry sector over the past few years. Poultry consumption in Poland is growing, boosted by promotional efforts, as are exports.

The poultry industry is one of the fastest growing segments of Poland's agri-food sector, with average annual growth at 7 percent in the last six years. Poultry production in Poland is growing because consumption of this kind of meat is rising on the domestic market. Poultry is still cheaper than other kinds of meat in Poland, which has resulted in increased consumption and production.

According to the Warsaw-based Institute of Agricultural and Food Economics (IAFE), the average Pole eats approximately 27 kilograms of poultry annually, about 5 kg more than 10 years ago. This marks a substantial increase, especially as consumption of other types of meat has dropped: consumption of beef plummeted from about 5 kg in 2004 to 1.5 kg in 2013, and consumption of pork fell from about 39 kg in 2004 to 36.5 kg in 2013.

A turning point for the Polish poultry market was when the country joined the European Union in 2004. The opening of new markets for Polish producers, accompanied by investment in the modernization of domestic poultry plants, has given a rapid boost to the position of the Polish poultry industry. Production increased from 800,000 tons in 2004 to 1.8 million tons last year.

Exports contribute to the development of the poultry industry. Polish poultry is shipped mainly to other European Union countries. The biggest customers are Germany, the Czech Republic, Britain, France and Slovakia, which put together account for more than half of Poland's total poultry exports, or more than 300,000 tons. Among non-EU buyers of Polish poultry two markets dominate: China and Benin. Countries such as Ukraine, Russia and the Republic of Congo are also increasingly prominent among Polish poultry buyers.

The Polish poultry sector has demonstrated that it can grow even during a crisis period. At the same time, the sector is com-

petitive in terms of price, as a result of which Poland is grabbing a steadily growing share of the EU market. According to forecasts by the European Commission, poultry consumption in the EU will grow at an average rate of 0.9 percent a year until the end of the decade.

Campaigns designed to promote poultry meat have also played a role in the development of the Polish poultry market. Examples include the "Poultry Treats for Every Palate" campaign, which aims to encourage the consumption of poultry meat products; and the "With Chicken over the Centuries" campaign. These projects were financed by the Fund for the Promotion of Poultry Meat. The fund, endowed with payments from poultry meat producers, has an annual budget of more than zł.7 million.

Efforts to promote poultry meat have also been undertaken by the National Poultry Council, an organization that helped launch the Quality Assurance for Food Products (QAFP) program in the poultry sector. The aim of the program is to bring new quality to the production of poultry meat. High standards are ensured at every stage of production, from the selection of the best hatchlings, through their natural breeding without the use of antibiotics, hormones and growth promoters, to attractive display in the stores.

After an initiative by the Association of Meat Industry Producers and Employers, in January 2011 the "Culinary meat from chicken and turkey breast as well as goose meat and parts of young Polish goose" Quality Assurance for Food Products (QAFP) system gained the status of a national food quality system, following a decision by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

The introduction of the QAFP system was a good opportunity to dispel many myths about how poultry is produced. This purpose was served by an information campaign called "New quality in the poultry industry." This campaign was also conducted abroad. Last year in Cologne, the largest city of the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia, two major events were held to promote Polish goose meat produced under the QAFP quality system.

Another example of efforts to promote poultry was a festival organized by the National Federation of Poultry Breeders and Egg Producers in May during the "Spring of Flowers" International Horticultural Exhibition in Łosów, Opole province. The festival was part of the "Chicken at home and school, and not only in broth" project financed wholly by the Fund for the Promotion of Poultry Meat. Visitors to the stand of the National Federation of Poultry Breeders and Egg Producers could enjoy delicious chicken dishes and meet with a nutrition expert to learn more about the benefits of poultry meat.

Meanwhile, the Fund for the Promotion of Meat recently financed culinary workshops for journalists and bloggers in Warsaw. The workshops, held under the auspices of the Polish Meat Association, aimed to raise awareness of the benefits of poultry meat in the media.

Under the watchful eye of chef Andrzej Polan, who has appeared in various television programs, the journalists learned how to cook a turkey burger with hummus and green vegetables, and they also tried their hand at other dishes including "chicken in butter with luscious mango, green cucumber and mint," "soft duck legs with a watermelon and avocado salad," goose liver pate and "Polish curry from a whole chicken with apricots." **A.R.**



Three Labels Campaign: Taste and Tradition

A government-backed campaign advises consumers in Poland about three European Union programs designed to promote and protect quality agricultural products and food.

Called *Trzy Znaki Smaku* (Three Labels of Taste), the campaign was launched last year by the Agricultural Market Agency with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The campaign seeks to spread awareness about three labels used in the EU to protect regional and traditional specialties. These are Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), and Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG). So far, 36 quality agricultural products and foodstuffs in Poland have received one of the three labels, with further products seeking and awaiting registration.

The *Trzy Znaki Smaku* campaign promotes quality food and encourages Polish consumers to buy foodstuffs produced in compliance with the EU system.

- Unlike mass-produced food, regional and traditional products are subject to restrictive production and inspection rules to ensure high quality.
- The production process must follow strict rules, and it is possible to trace the history of a given product.
- The products match contemporary, environmentally friendly lifestyles.
- Each specialty owes its distinctive features to the specific region in which it was made, and to traditional preparation methods.
- The exceptional features of such products are the outcome of a tradition shaped by generations.
- It is illegal to market products that imitate food protected under the EU system.

The Protected Designation of Origin label is intended for quality agricultural products and foodstuffs whose names refer to the specific geographical area in which they were produced, highlighting the connection between the location and the product. All ingredients in the labeled product need to originate from this area and the product itself has to be entirely manufactured in this area. The label can be given to agricultural products meant for human consumption, including produce and products obtained through animal breeding and fishery. Applications for one of the three labels can also be submitted for foodstuffs such as beer, bread, cakes and other baked goods.

Like the Protected Designation of Origin, the Protected Geographical Indication label is awarded to quality regional products and foodstuffs whose names refer to the specific geographical area in which they were produced, highlighting the connection between the location and the product. This label, however, means that at least one production phase takes place in the area to which the name refers.

Agricultural products and foodstuffs eligible for the Traditional Specialties Guaranteed label have traditional

names that refer to the distinctive qualities of such products or traditionally given to them. Food with this label needs to be made from traditional ingredients according to traditional recipes handed down from generation to generation, or using traditional methods. The Traditional Speciality Guaranteed label can be awarded to agricultural products meant for human consumption, foodstuffs and ready-made dishes.

The *Trzy Znaki Smaku* campaign is mainly targeted at consumers, food producers (farmers, processing businesses in the food and agricultural sector, associations of producers and others) and indirect buyers, including grocery retailers, wholesalers and distributors, hotel and restaurant owners and graduates of catering schools.

With a highly diversified target group such as this, a wide range of objectives has been identified for the *Trzy Znaki Smaku* campaign. One of the priorities is to make the public familiar with the three labels, encouraging growing consumption of such products.

The campaign also advises food producers and indirect buyers about the benefits of taking part in the EU programs.

The campaign goals are being pursued through press conferences, road shows, online newsletters, articles promoting the three EU programs on popular blogs and promotional activities in social media such as Facebook and YouTube. Part of the campaign are educational activities designed to establish and strengthen relations between producers and trade insiders who deal with regional and traditional products. The educational side of the campaign includes seminars, training, culinary workshops and the Regional Products Trail project whereby tourist maps are specifically designed to indicate where such products are available.

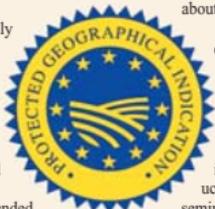
The *Trzy Znaki Smaku* campaign is also present at trade fairs and festivals, such as the Flavors Festival in Gruczo, the National Festival of Good Taste in Poznań, the European Taste Festival in Lublin, the Eurogastro Fair in Warsaw, the Polagra-Food Fair in Poznań, and the Horeca/Gastrofood Fair in Cracow. The campaign has its stands at these events and encourages certified producers of food with the three EU labels to take part in the project.

Advertising for the campaign involves the mass media, the internet and outdoor displays. Promotional activities will also be conducted at points of sale, restaurants, boarding houses and farms with accommodation for tourists.

The *Trzy Znaki Smaku* campaign is financed by the EU and the Polish government with an almost 3.9-million-euro budget approved by the European Commission.

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This article makes use of content available on the www.trzyznakismaku.pl website



Rural Tourism

Podhale Region

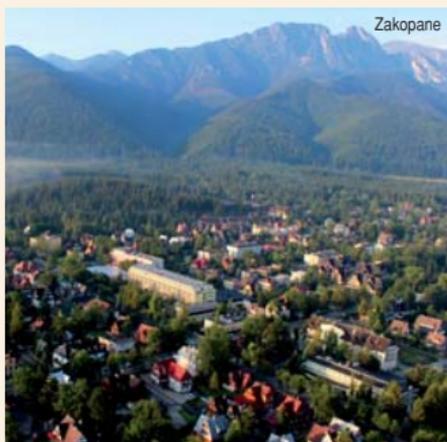


Morskie Oko lake in the Tatra mountains

The Podhale region at the foot of the Tatra mountains in southern Poland has beautiful landscapes and appealing folk customs that make it a perfect setting for rural tourism.

Podhale is a region that straddles the upper section of the Dunajec River. The first historical accounts of Podhale date back to the 13th century, when Duke Henry I the Bearded granted German settlers the right to live in the area. Agriculture and sheep herding has played an important role in Podhale for centuries, leading to the emergence of a distinctive rural highland culture. Podhale captured the public imagination in the 19th century when its natural attractions and climate started drawing visitors from other parts of Poland. Tourism began to develop in the area, especially in the town of Zakopane, which rose to prominence with new sanitariums and spas.

Podhale is an interesting region in terms of its local culture and customs, as local villagers are well known for preserving



Zakopane



the traditions of their shepherd predecessors and they continue to speak the distinctive local vernacular. Old customs also live on in traditional outfits that are worn on many occasions and in folk music and literature. Arts and crafts from Podhale are famous across Poland, with an easily identifiable style that can be seen in woodwork, furniture, household items and the region's hallmark glass painting.

The hills and plains of Podhale are dotted with quaint villages and small towns. Many of them are popular destinations visited by crowds every year, which is why some travelers choose to wander off the main tourist routes and stay at less renowned, but just as picturesque locations.

Zakopane is one of the country's most famous tourist resorts and draws thousands from Poland and abroad every year. They come to hike in the mountains and to practice winter sports, which coupled with the town's enormous popularity has earned it the nickname of "the winter capital of Poland." But while Zakopane is the main town of the Tatra area, the principal city of the Podhale region as a whole is Nowy Targ. This is worth a visit for its historic market square with a large town hall from the 19th century that houses the Museum of Podhale. Near Nowy Targ is the village of Ludźmierz, whose Shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a popular pilgrimage destination. Founded by the Cistercian monks in 1234, Ludźmierz is also one of the oldest villages in the area. Popular tourist destinations in



Podhale also include the village of Chochołów, with a history dating back to 1592. The main tourist appeal of Chochołów is its meticulously renovated highland cottages from the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Built of wooden beams with naturally rounded edges, the cottages are a classic example of the Podhale style in architecture.

One other popular village in Podhale is Łopuszna, first mentioned in historical accounts from the 14th century. The village's historic sites include nine old manor buildings with farm houses and an old highland-style cottage. The interiors of the buildings have been restored and are frequently used as venues for temporary art exhibitions. Łopuszna is also home to a beautiful wooden church with a steeple with a shingled roof from the early 16th century.

Tourism in Podhale relies heavily on culture, health resorts and active recreation, but the scenic landscapes and pristine nature make the region ideal for other forms of tourism, including rural tourism. According to experts, farms in Podhale that provide accommodation and other services to tourists should seek to turn the rich local rural culture and living tradition into a key selling point. It is worth noting that vacations spent at a working farm are not a new idea in Poland, as people came to stay in the homes of Podhale highlanders in the late 18th century. This form of tourism was further promoted by Tytus Chałubiński, a physician widely credited for discovering the Tatras and the Podhale region as tourist destinations.



Greatest hits of rural tourism

Podhale is part of Małopolska, a Polish province with a well-developed network of farms with accommodation for tourists. The most recommendable farms have been included in a "Greatest Hits of Rural Tourism" list compiled by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Tourism.

The Herbal Scents of the Małopolska Countryside



Twenty attractively located farms that specialize in growing and processing herbs are linked by a picturesque tourist trail with the appealing name of Małopolska Wieś Pachnąca Ziołami (The Herbal Scents of the Małopolska Countryside). Several of them are located in Podhale. The farm owners know everything about the properties of different herbs. Experts in growing and harvesting methods, they know how to dry the herbs and arrange them into bouquets or use them as spices and in traditional medicine. Herbs and spices grown in the farms' gardens include lovage, tarragon, peppermint, oregano, thyme, rosemary, sage, marjoram, sweet balm and many others. The farmers use vegetables and herbs from their home gardens as ingredients of healthy regional dishes to which they treat visitors. Many also offer herbal baths, aromatherapy, different kinds of massage and beauty treatments based on the relaxing and energizing properties of herbs. Located on the edge of villages near forests, the farms are run not only by avid herbalists and environmentalists, but also people who work to cultivate the local heritage.

One of the trail's farms in Podhale is Rzepka (Turnip) in Czarna Góra, near the touristy villages of Bukowina

Rzepka farm



Tatrzańska and Białka Tatrzańska. This farm is located in a mountain pass 850 meters above sea level, offering a panoramic view over the Tatra Mountains and the nearby Gorce Mountains. The farm's owners keep goats and horses and the lady of the house is a horse riding instructor who uses natural teaching methods. She likes to treat her guests to homemade dishes that make use of herbs and organic ingredients.

Białka river



Sixteen other rural tourism farms in Małopolska province have joined forces in a project called Małopolska Villages for Children. Facilities available at these farms ensure that children of different ages can enjoy a variety of activities in an attractive and safe environment. Each farm has an enclosed playground and kids can play with pets and farm animals. Learning through play, child visitors to the 16 farms find out about rural traditions and local culture, the wildlife of Małopolska province and the region's tales and legends. The owners also offer regional dishes using ingredients from organic crops.

Małopolska Villages for Children in Podhale include the Akiko Villa boarding house and farm in Harklowa near Nowy Targ, next to the picturesque Gorce Mountains National Park. The lady of the house was born and raised in Japan. With a forest close by, children can be taken on walks during which they watch birds and other animals and pick herbs, mushrooms and forest fruits. The Akiko Villa stands in a working farm with goats, sheep, chickens and trout.

Akiko Villa



Regional cuisine and dishes

Podhale takes a lot of pride in its cuisine which, despite its simplicity, offers delightful flavors. The cuisine is heavily influenced by the fact that the geological features of Podhale and its climate have made farming difficult. As a result, staple dishes from Podhale are traditionally made of whatever a farmer in the mountains was able to produce and keep for himself rather than sell at a meager profit. The local cuisine heavily relied on boiled potatoes, turnips and *bryjka* dumplings made from flour boiled in salted water. Flour used Podhale was usually made from barley, oats and corn.

One of the most distinctive highland dishes is the *kwaśnica* sour soup made of sauerkraut and meat, usually served with potatoes and bread. The soup is good when it has a sharp, tart taste and, if prepared by the book, it cannot contain vegetables such as carrots. Otherwise, it becomes the traditional Polish soup called *kapuśniak* and has little to do with genuine *kwaśnica*, but is sometimes wrongly served under this name. Other popular dishes in the area include *prażucha*, a thick kind of paste made from roasted barley flour, water and fried bacon and served with soured milk. The locals also enjoy *moskole*, which are pancakes made from mashed boiled potatoes, flour, water, salt and eggs. This dish took its name from Russian captives who brought it to Podhale during World War I. They fried the pancakes on sheets of metal placed over primitive hearths. Highlanders in Podhale fried *moskole* on the hob in their homes until the 1960s, but at present *moskole* are mainly available as a regional specialty in restaurants.

To most Poles, a typical dish of the Podhale region is the *oscypek* variety of smoked cheese. Usually sold as spindle-shaped blocks of different sizes and with the edges ornamented in Podhale style, this cheese is made from sheep's milk. Making *oscypek* cheese has been a traditional occupation of experienced shepherds on mountain pastures and recipes for the cheese are handed down from generation to generation.

Fresh sheep's milk is first poured into a wooden vat through a linen cloth to remove bits of grass and other impurities. Then, powdered rennet is added to the milk, causing it to coagulate and the resulting product is pressed in hot water and then molded. Later, it is placed in salted water for a day, after which *oscypek* blocks are left to mature and then smoked. Another popular kind of cheese from Podhale is *bandz*, made from cottage cheese produced from sheep's milk. First, the cheese is put into decorative molds and immersed in boiling water until its shape is fixed. Then, it is put in salted, cold water, after which it is smoked. After the milk coagulated by rennet is removed, the remaining fluid is used as a beverage that Carpathian highlanders call *zentyca*.

In addition to giving milk and wool, sheep in Podhale are used as a source of meat, usually eaten as mutton chops and roasts.

Typical sweet dishes from Podhale include *kolacz* pies, poppy-seed cakes, apple pies and sweet pies made from potatoes mixed with yeast dough. The locals and tourists also relish honey-based *kremarz* cakes layered with cream. Podhale delicacies are said to go down best with mulled wine and highland-style tea with plum vodka. A.R.



Kwaśnica soup



On the Oscypek Route in Podhale you can taste delicious sheep's cheese



Roasted mutton chops



Moskole pancakes



Kremarz cakes

Regional and Traditional Products

Bryndza podhalańska

Bryndza podhalańska (sheep's milk cheese from the southern Podhale region) was the first Polish regional product registered by the European Commission. The cheese is traditionally made in shepherd's huts during the summer sheep grazing season, a custom that dates back to the 16th century.

B*ryndza podhalańska* is a cheese made from sheep's milk or sheep's milk mixed with cow's milk. The cheese is spicy and salty in flavor—and sometimes slightly sharp and sour—and spreads easily on bread. The rich tradition behind the production of *Bryndza podhalańska* is evidenced by numerous mentions in literature, landowners' decrees and royal writs.

The oldest mention of *bryndza* comes from the first half of the 16th century. The name *bryndza*, from the Romanian

brinze, came to Poland along with Wallachian shepherds grazing their sheep in mountain pastures. The cheese was made by the wandering Wallachian tribes.

Making sheep's milk cheese was of key importance in sheep farming in the Podhale region over the centuries. Shepherds taking their sheep to mountain pastures to graze would spend several months away from home. During this time they subsisted almost exclusively on sheep's milk and products derived from it. The knowledge and skills related to making *bryndza podhalańska* were passed on from generation to generation. Today this is an art known only to producers from the region. The production of this unique cheese is made possible by a combination of natural factors, special skills and sticking to the traditional recipe. The traditional production method guarantees that the final product is of the highest quality and has the required flavor, which is the result of it being made in a specific geographical area. The Podhale region has rich and diverse vegetation, with many species unique to the meadows and pastures there. The area where *bryndza podhalańska* is made is one of the cleanest regions not only in Poland but in the whole of Europe. This area stretches between four national parks: Gorczański National Park in the north, Tatrzański National Park, Babiogórski National Park in the west, and Magurski National Park in the east. A fifth one, Pieniński National Park, just like the Tatrzański park, lies in the very heart of the *bryndza*-making region.

The cheese owes its special flavor to the raw ingredients that go into it. *Bryndza podhalańska* is made from milk from Polish mountain sheep, a breed that is closely linked to the history and tradition of the Podhale region and its inhabitants. Sometimes cow's milk is added. This comes from Polish Red cows, a breed that is native to Poland. Apart from traditional production methods, the cheese also owes its unique properties to natural factors. The unique flora of the Tatra Mountains and Podhale on which the local sheep graze has a huge impact on the final quality of the sheep's milk used to make *bryndza*.

This all results in an extraordinary cheese that has long been a favorite with fans of regional and traditional cuisine at home and abroad.

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Oozing Quality

By **Marek Sawicki, PhD**
Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development

This year's most important anniversaries are now behind us. We are happy with what we have achieved, but now is the time to focus on the future. With the new Rural Development Plan for 2014-2020 submitted for evaluation, we have presented new proposals regarding direct payments. Using our 10 years of experience, we have for the first time proposed a cohesive concept for two financial mechanisms that stem from the Common Agricultural Policy.

Our main proposal is to establish a permanent link between the market and as many farms as possible. This will ensure financial stability for the farms and offer them steady conditions for further development. Each member state can pick its own priorities in conformity with the general concept.

Poland is still working to catch up with the most developed countries. We have very good conditions to foster sustainable agriculture founded on small, family-run farms—conditions that are enshrined in the constitution. Poland's other major asset is the high number of young farmers, which, at 14 percent of all farmers, is the highest percentage in the EU and almost twice the EU average. These young people are increasingly well-prepared for work. Many have a university-level education and they are keen to work in agriculture and expand their farms.

Aware of the above and of the need to increase food production in the coming years, we have proposed different support options. Now the time has come for broad consultation. Each variant is sure to have both advocates and opponents, but we will nevertheless need to choose the best solution to make sure that Polish agriculture can become more competitive. For that reason, we want more than half of the funds available under the 2014-2020 Rural Development Plan to be invested in developing agriculture. Furthermore, 25 percent of funds reassigned for direct payments should be made available to active agricultural producers. If funds available as part of the two pillars of the Common Agricultural Policy are correlated, they are likely to be spent more effectively. Proposed incentives to speed up changes in agriculture should help this process. Some of them are targeted at young farmers and others at those who want to quit agriculture and pursue other types of business.

Working on the new rules, we also aimed to come up with proposals to enable solutions that are as simple as possible and founded on objective and verifiable procedures. This is vital when it comes to beneficiaries and also crucial to cut adminis-

trative costs and reduce the risk of mistakes in the system. None of that was, sadly, achieved at the EU level while the Common Agricultural Policy was being reformed recently.

Agriculture, the food processing industry and rural areas have received around zł.180 billion so far. Anyone can see how these funds have changed Polish farms, food processing plants and living standards in rural areas and the changes are confirmed in reports released in conjunction with Poland's 10th anniversary as an EU member state. We have a similar amount available until 2020, including EU support and national funds. The money needs to be spent effectively in order to ensure further development, as the next EU budget may no longer be so generous to Poland.

Polish agriculture has very high potential and not all of its reserves have been used up yet. The most important thing is that as Poland develops, it preserves traditional rural landscapes and protects the environment. The sustainable development of this sector drives other branches of the economy. The excellent quality of Polish food and agricultural products has resulted in a trade surplus of 5.7 billion euros. A large part of our agricultural production is exported to almost all markets around the world. The main buyers are, of course, EU member states, Germany in particular. But export markets are gradually being diversified and Polish food is making its way to countries outside the EU, especially those in Asia, the Middle East and the Far East. Traditional food, whose variety of distinctive flavors is coupled with the highest quality, is a much sought-after commodity by consumers around the world and importers have been increasingly aware of that. This is only natural, seeing how growing numbers of consumers are ready to pay a higher price for food so long as it is made from natural ingredients prepared in a traditional way. Such products perfectly fit the increasingly popular trend for "slow food."

It is a real shame that from time to time, we have to cope with unfair competition on some markets, where accusations are thrown at Polish food without the facts being checked first. Investigations show unequivocally that we have nothing to do with such malpractice. Accusations such as those could be a sign of the insecurity of some producers, whose food fails to match the quality and flavors of Polish food. Meanwhile, the quality of Polish products speaks for itself, which you can find out for yourself by coming to try the food here in Poland. Let me take this opportunity to encourage you to do just that.