



POLSKA...
tastes good!

Fresh Produce Galore

The Agriculture Ministry plans to set up a nationwide network of modern marketplaces for farmers to sell their produce. Under the program, more than 300 new marketplaces may be launched over the next two or three years.

The marketplaces are expected to help improve the quality of life in rural areas. The ministry wants the construction, conversion and modernization of the marketplaces to be partially funded from money available under the European Union's Rural Development Program for 2007-2013. The plan to develop a network of marketplaces in local areas is aimed at making it easier for farmers to sell their produce, the ministry says.

"We want to set aside around 70 million euros for this purpose while local governments could contribute around 30 million euros," says Marek Sawicki, the agriculture minister. "We have asked the European Commission to approve this project. I hope money will begin to reach beneficiaries by the end of this year."

The total value of subsidies to be granted under the program for the con-



struction and modernization of marketplaces in a single district will not exceed zł.1 million. Only projects carried out in villages and towns with populations of up to 50,000 are eligible for funding. Under the program, funding will first be provided to marketplaces that are already in operation. The ministry estimates that around 200 marketplaces will be modernized and around 100 new ones will be built from scratch as part of the program.

The new marketplaces are expected to differ from most other marketplaces

nationwide in that the vendors will be farmers and small food processing businesses. The ministry says the goal is to give consumers a wider choice of retail venues and an opportunity to buy fresh, traditional, local and regional products. The marketplaces will be open once or twice a week, depending on the need and the local government's decision, the ministry says. Vendors need to be provided with comfortable working conditions, with roofing above the stalls and convenient access, officials say. This means the need to develop new infrastructure. The ministry says it wants all the marketplaces to meet uniform standards in terms of space and sanitary and veterinary requirements.

In September last year, the ministry announced a bidding process for those interested in designing stands for the new marketplaces. A typical stand is expected to enable the display of all products offered by a single vendor. The right conditions need to be created for the sale of meat, meat products, fish and dairy products, especially in terms of hygiene and veterinary requirements. Additionally, the space must be arranged in such a way so as to ensure equal access to all groups of vendors.

A.R.

An event not to be missed:



TRY FINE FOOD PICNIC

Saturday, June 18
11 a.m. - 5 p.m.



Warsaw Agricultural University (SGGW) Gardens,
166 Nowoursynowska St.

THE EVENT INCLUDES:

- **tasting of fine Polish foods**
- **culinary shows**
- **contests**
- **farm machinery show**
- **exhibition of animals**
- **artistic performances**
- **attractions for children (Milk Island)**



Growing Appetite for Quality Cold Cuts

Demand on the Polish market is growing for high-quality cold cuts and sausages from the premium segment. Brand-name processed meats from Poland are also finding more and more buyers in other countries.

Cold cuts and sausages are an important component of our diets because the meat in them contains high-quality and easily digestible nutrients, valuable proteins, minerals, fats and B vitamins, and also vitamins A and D. The role of protein from meat is invaluable, since proteins are essential for the proper development of the human body. They are a building material and the most important nutrient. Fat, on the other hand, protects the body from heat loss, helps absorb vitamins and is necessary for hormones to work properly. In meat, the greatest amount of fat is found in pork while the leanest meat is veal. The most important minerals supplied by meat are zinc, copper and iron.

Processed meat products, mainly ham and sausages, were very popular in Poland as far back as pre-Slavic times. Sausage (*kielbasa*) was served at home to nobles, townspeople and peasants alike. Seasoned in many different ways, sausages were eaten for breakfast and before dinner. In the old days the main methods of “producing” cold cuts was drying, by hanging the meat from the ceiling to mature, and smoking—in natural smoke, of course. Meat filling was stuffed into natural casings like intestines and stomachs; of course no chemicals were used, just a great variety of spices.

The average Pole eats 65 kg of meat and processed meat products per year, or about 20 percent less than the average European Union citizen. Over a quarter of processed meats eaten in Polish homes today are premium cold cuts and sausages. The demand for these is growing as the population’s affluence increases.

Among the high-quality products, we can distinguish luxury and traditional cold cuts and sausages, the top level in this market segment. Estimates from the Polish Meat Association say that the share of traditional cold cuts and sausages in Poland’s processed meat market is about 3-4 percent at present, similar to the share of luxury meat products. Demand would be much greater if it were not for the fact that luxury and traditional products are several dozen percent more expensive than those made on an industrial scale, due to high production costs. In this segment, 1 kg of meat usually yields no more than 0.5-0.7 kg of end product; in the case of cheap popular products, 1 kg of meat can even yield more than 2 kg of processed product.

Today the sale of traditional and luxury cold cuts and sausages is limited to the biggest urban centers. Such products are usually sold in small luxury stores specializing in traditional products, located in shopping malls, for example. Interest in luxury meat products is much smaller in provincial areas and is more seasonal, with demand growing near Christmas or Easter. This makes large meat processing plants focus on mass production and treat the production of traditional products mainly as an attractive complement to their range.

Janusz Rodziewicz, president of the Association of Polish Butchers and Producers of Processed Meat, says the current demand for traditional and regional products is linked to a desire (especially in the older generation) to return to the “flavors of one’s youth.” “On the other hand,” he told the website portalspozywczy.pl, “the choice is made particularly by young, educated people,

very often parents of small children who want to give them food of the best quality and flavor.”

Polish meat products are also well known in other countries. Traditionally, the highest sales are in large expatriate centers in the United States and Britain.

However, it’s not just expatriate Poles who enjoy these tasty products. Increased exports of processed meat to Britain following the latest emigration wave stimulated interest in Polish cold cuts and sausages among British gourmets.

The premium processed meat on offer includes products with the *Poznaj Dobrą Żywność* (Try Fine Food) label, which is a guarantee of high and stable quality, raw materials from known sources and processing technologies ensuring safety and excellent flavor. For example, the *Poznaj Dobrą Żywność* label has been granted to many varieties of ham, sausage and pork loin products from Zakłady Mięsne Grupy Sokołów SA, Grupa Polski Koncern Mięsny Duda SA and Zakład Mięsny “Mościbrody” in Mościbrody. Producers of *kielbasa krakowska sucha* (dried Cracow sausage), a highly valued sausage in Poland, whose product received the *Poznaj*

Dobrą Żywność label include Stół Polski Sp. z o.o.

Zakład Produkcyjny w Ciechanowcu from the PKM Duda group, Zakłady Mięsne “PAMSO” SA in Pabianice, and Zakłady Mięsne “SKIBA” Andrzej Skiba from Chojnice.

A dozen or so labels have also been awarded to a producer of premium processed poultry-meat goods: Kutnowskie Zakłady Drobiarskie “EXDROB” SA in Kutno. This business’s award-winning products include *szynka wiejska z gęsi* (goose-meat countryside ham), *kielbasa z gęsi podsuszana* (goose-meat dried sausage), *połędwica łososiowa z indyka* (turkey-meat cold-smoked loin salmon style). Płockie Zakłady Drobiarskie SADROB SA’s award-winning products include *indyk w galarecie* (jellied turkey loaf), *kindziuk z indyka* (turkey-meat kindziuk sausage), and *szynka senatorska z indyka* (turkey-meat senator sausage).

Poznaj Dobrą Żywność, a Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development program launched in 2004, is currently one of almost 400 programs aimed at promoting quality food products in European Union countries. The program aims to provide consumers with reliable information that a product meets more stringent—extra or specific—quality requirements than usual, confirmed by independent inspection bodies and organizations. Products taking part in the *Poznaj Dobrą Żywność* program receive the special label as proof that they fulfill additional requirements in terms of the quality of raw materials and production and/or processing methods.

The *Poznaj Dobrą Żywność* label is granted to products with a solid market position, identifiable by consumers, produced and present on the market for at least a year, whose production follows proper procedures of identification along the entire food production chain, including procedures for withdrawing a product that fails to meet the requirements. Since the start of the program, more than 1,000 Polish products from over 100 producers have received the *Poznaj Dobrą Żywność* label. Today 474 products made by 75 companies are entitled to use it.

A.R.



Traditional and Regional Products

Kiełbasa Lisiecka



Produced in the Małopolska region, *kiełbasa lisiecka* (sausage from Liszki) is the most popular Polish sausage next to the traditional kabanos and krakowska sausages. As of last October, this product has enjoyed the status of a protected specialty from Poland, after the European Commission entered it in the European register of protected geographical indications and designations.

The special feature of *kiełbasa lisiecka* is that 85 percent of the meat used in its production is pork ham. Producers have their own additional post-slaughter classification of meat to describe the usefulness of different cuts of meat for production. Most of the meat in *kiełbasa lisiecka* is roughly cut (3-5 cm cubes), which is why you can clearly see pieces of meat surrounded by more finely chopped stuffing in a slice of this sausage.

The flavor of *kiełbasa lisiecka* is provided by seasoned pork with the light taste of pepper, the aroma of garlic and the distinct presence of salt. When *kiełbasa lisiecka* is smoked, which

takes place in traditional smoking chambers, the smoke and heat comes from the burning wood of deciduous trees—alder and beech or fruit trees. This gives *kiełbasa lisiecka* its distinctive smell and flavor.

The tradition of making *kiełbasa lisiecka* dates back to the 1930s. The product developed from the chunky sausages for which Cracow meat processing businesses are famous. *Kiełbasa lisiecka* became a separate product thanks to the unique recipe used by butchers from around Liszki and Czernichów, which was a closely guarded secret in the old days. During World War II production became difficult but never stopped. Butchers also

continued to make the sausage after the war, even though this was illegal and sometimes punished. *Kiełbasa lisiecka* is produced today mostly by people who kept up the tradition when times were tough and still stick to the traditional recipes. In a Cracow food guide published in 1966, food critics expressed admiration for *kiełbasa lisiecka* and described it as unique thanks to its ingredients and the recipe that fills it with large and tender chunks of meat with a wonderful flavor.

The best-known producer of *kiełbasa lisiecka* is Stanisław Mądry from Nowa Wieś Szlachecka in Liszki commune. He has formed a consortium of local producers of *kiełbasa lisiecka* that handles production, promotion and protection of this product. His own *kiełbasa lisiecka* has won awards in many competitions. It is sold not just to stores in Poland but also 11 outlets in Berlin. The product has been popular at European trade events, including the world-famous Salone del Gusto regional products fair in Turin, Italy, organized by the Slow Food organization. *Kiełbasa lisiecka* was eaten by Britain's Prince Charles when he was in Cracow and it has been tasted by the president of Malaysia. Pope John Paul II is also said to have liked it.

The fame of *kiełbasa lisiecka* and its high price means that fake varieties appear on the market. The scale of this "sausage forgery" increased when the original became a regional product. Recently the State Trade Inspectorate (PIH) in Cracow warned consumers against dishonest producers of *kiełbasa lisiecka*. One company that put a poultry-meat version of the sausage on the market is being investigated by prosecutors; the poultry-meat product confuses consumers with its name, *kiełbasa lisiecka drobiowa* (meaning made from poultry meat), which is not a permitted name because *kiełbasa lisiecka* can only be made from pork. A.R.



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Bold Reforms Needed

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

The Common Agricultural Policy is among the oldest European Union policies. It was based on two premises: providing consumers with an adequate amount of food at affordable prices and ensuring a proper parity of income for farming families to prevent rural depopulation and consequently the need to import food.

Are these objectives equally important today? I have no doubt that they are. The EU has half a billion consumers, consumers who increasingly often demand top-quality food produced with proper respect for the natural environment. At the same time, demographers are telling us the world population will double over the next 30 years. This population growth will be accompanied by growing demand for food. Can Europe afford not to be a part of this growth in food production?

As we can see, the challenges of the present day are extremely serious. At the same time, requirements regarding the conditions of animal and plant production are growing constantly as well. Animal welfare, environmental protection and ecology are very important issues, but are also costly. They cause a decrease in the competitive edge of European farming at the same time as talks are being held within the WTO and among the Mercosur countries. These talks bring specific threats stemming from attempts to allow agricultural products onto the common market that are not produced under the same requirements as those applied to European farmers.

An additional threat to European agriculture is the disruption of conditions of competition by the current system of support for agriculture which in fact has resulted in 27 agricultural policies. The situation today is that some countries assign 85 percent of funding to directly supplement farmers' incomes and only 15 percent to development and modernization.

The problems briefly outlined above show the magnitude of the challenge involved in changing the Common Agricultural Policy after 2013. This is all the more important in that planning in agriculture is done years in advance, and in reality the new directions for the CAP will determine the conditions of development for a whole generation of farmers in the EU.

An analysis of the situation to date, coupled with the dangers related to the increasingly strong penetration of agricultural markets by speculative capital, means

that it is becoming crucial to develop new, effective mechanisms regulating the agricultural sector as a whole.

From the start of the discussion on changes to the EU's agricultural policy, Poland has favored a few fundamental directions of such changes. First of all, we should stop thinking in terms of individual countries and replace this with developing a framework for a competitive European agricultural sector. For this to happen, the new Common Agricultural Policy has to be simplified significantly. It has to become a policy comprehensible to all, clearly determining equal conditions of competition and limiting bureaucracy to an essential minimum. It is high time to abandon unjust, historical rights to payments. The system of direct support should become transparent and coherent. Its main task should be to compensate for costs related to the requirements of environmental protection and ecology.

Meanwhile, the other part of the funding, which I think should be 50 percent of the total amount, should be earmarked for the second pillar of the CAP, namely rural development and modernization.

Such a general framework for the functioning of European agriculture should generate more specific tasks. It is only once such a Common Agricultural Policy after 2013 is built that a financial framework can be added.

Taking into consideration the necessity to fulfill the requirements related to environmental protection, ecology and animal welfare, I think the budget for agriculture under the new Financial Perspective should not be lower than the current one.

In summary, I can say that our vision of reform comes down to a clear division of tasks within the two pillars. In the first pillar, this would involve support for farmers fulfilling the requirements of mutual compliance, with payments being based on measurable and objective criteria. The second pillar would involve support for active farmers who focus on development, modernization and innovation, and in effect on their ability to compete not only on the common market but also the global market.

I am convinced a decisive and bold reform of the Common Agricultural Policy will give European agriculture a competitive edge, a capacity for development and will ensure food security for the common market's half-billion consumers. ■