



MINECROP

WP2 - Raising awareness of sustainable crop farming techniques

DESK RESEARCH

Poland

National situation regarding sustainable agriculture + legal framework

The national situation with regard to sustainable development is difficult to define clearly. A number of regulations have been applied which are supposed to have a positive impact on the implementation of sustainable development and care for the environment. The underlying issue, however, is the general dissatisfaction of farmers with the lack of adequate education on the subject. Farmers often feel lost in the midst of regulations that are first introduced and only later interpreted and explained in practical terms.

The policy criticised by farmers of using controls and penalties instead of education is illustrated, for example, by the practice regarding the introduction of the Water Law and the Council of Ministers Regulation of 5 June 2018 on the adoption of the 'Programme of measures to reduce water pollution by nitrates from agricultural sources and to prevent further pollution'. In theory, this programme includes, among other things, educational measures (advisory and training support) for those engaged in agricultural activities. In practice, however, firstly, institutions were set up to inspect farmers and rules were defined for the award of administrative penalties for failures against non-compliances found, and only later did information activities targeting farmers on the new regulations introduced begin.



A pillar implemented on the basis of programmes prepared by the Member States is the rural development policy, which aims to promote "sustainable, economically and environmentally efficient agriculture and to stimulate integrated rural development". Three key rural development policies have been adopted: increasing the competitiveness of agriculture, ensuring sustainable management of natural resources and climate action, and creating and maintaining jobs. These are translated into six priorities: fostering knowledge transfer in agriculture and forestry and in rural areas, improving the competitiveness of all types of farming and increasing farm profitability, promoting food chain organisation and risk management in agriculture, restoring, protecting and enhancing ecosystems dependent on agriculture and forestry, supporting resource efficiency and the transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy in the agricultural, food and forestry sectors, and fostering social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas.



Climate neutrality – plans for the future in the country

According to the European Environment Agency, Poland is one of the largest emitters of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the European Union. In 2020, CO₂ emissions amounted to nearly 305 million tonnes, accounting for approximately 9% of total EU emissions. The main sectors responsible for this are energy, transport, industry and construction. Poland has committed to achieving climate neutrality by 2050. Poland has also pledged to reduce emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.

A key sector that requires transformation is the energy sector. The power sector is responsible for about 80% of the total reduction by 2030 and for 55% of the total reduction by 2050. Poland is one of the largest producers of energy from coal, but aims to phase out this resource. Support programmes for renewable energy sources such as wind, solar and biomass are being promoted.

Another key sector is transport. Poland is targeting the development of public transport, investment in infrastructure for electric vehicles and the promotion of alternative modes of transport. In order to achieve climate neutrality in 2050, Poland should reduce CO₂ emissions in passenger road transport to 6.8 Mt CO₂ and in freight transport to 6.4 Mt CO₂. In Poland, according to data from the National Balancing and Emissions Management Centre (KOBIZE), agriculture is responsible for approximately 8% of greenhouse gas emissions.

With regard to agriculture, Poland plans to achieve neutrality by optimising the inputs used in agriculture. There are also plans to minimise cultivation by ceasing to plough. Another way is to use plants with long-lived root systems on soils and to increase biodiversity in the field, but also within the whole farm. Changes are also to be made to design farms to fit the terrain. Another commitment is to reduce fertiliser use by 20 per cent.



Crop situation regarding ecology

Organic farming provides a supply of healthy food and allows for increased soil fertility and biodiversity while, to some extent, reducing the carbon footprint of food production. It also has a significant impact on human health. In 2022, there are 22,882 organic producers and the organic agricultural area has increased to 554,631.7 ha. In 2020, the share of the area devoted to organic production in Poland accounted for only 3.5% of the total agricultural land (with the EU average being 8.5%) and the share of organic farms in the total number of farms was only 1.4% (Eurostat 2022).

According to experts, the education and training of farmers in terms of organic production should be considered insufficient. There are not enough classes with such a profile in agricultural schools. There are also not enough agricultural advisors available to farmers interested in converting to organic production.

The use of renewable energy sources is becoming increasingly widespread, also in the agricultural sector. The use of new technologies, using renewable energy sources such as microgas plants, biomass boilers, wind turbines or solar collectors, enables farms, not only organic ones, to produce energy themselves and use it for their own needs, bringing both financial returns and environmental benefits. Surveys on farmers' interest in renewable energy devices indicate that such solutions have potential. The willingness to use them is confirmed by more than 99% of those surveyed.

Agricultural measures targeting the ecological, environmentally friendly aspect are being used by farmers. Some farmers see them as a real benefit for themselves and the environment, while others comply with them because of the possibility of receiving higher direct payments. The main pro-environmental measures are the use of catch crops and catch crops, leaving space between fields, leaving mid-field refuges, using fertilisation according to legal standards, using natural fertilisers, selecting appropriate plant species, using simplified cultivation where possible.