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Inovatyvios kaimo verslumo formos: socialinės žemdirbystės ūkiai

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Abstract

The term 'social farming' comprises all activities which use agricultural resources in order to provide various services in the field of care, social reintegration, training, social and vocational rehabilitation of the disadvantaged and training of people with particular needs.

This paper is an attempt to present the most important preconditions for social farming in Poland with particular emphasis put on population projections. It has been assumed that the phenomenon of population ageing may play a key role in the development of social farming.

The paper explores the new opportunities emerging for rural entrepreneurship and presents care farms as the example of an innovative solution in this area.

KEYWORDS: social farming, old age, rural entrepreneurship, care farm.

Introduction

Rural entrepreneurship enhances economic diversification and creates new sources of income in rural areas. Rural entrepreneurs primarily rely on their own, already existing resources (Sułkowski, 2003). The most desirable direction for the development of rural entrepreneurship should be outlined by local socio-economic resources and natural assets. At the same time it is crucial that rural entrepreneurship relies on innovative solutions as innovation is a challenge not only for rural areas but also the national economy.

Demographic projections are generally unfavorable. There has been a decrease in the birth-rate and the population in rural areas has been ageing. All of Europe is ageing at a rapid pace; in 1990 13.9% of the population was over 65 years old and in 2020 this share is projected to reach 24% (Bagiński, 2014). The ageing processes will result in the declined consumption and increased demand for social and medical services.

Social farming is an innovative approach based on available manpower resources hidden in rural areas. It may be appealing especially for rural women, who for generations have provided care for their own family members of all ages. Currently all activities which use agricultural resources in order to provide various services in the field of care, social reintegration, training, social and vocational rehabilitation of the disadvantaged and training of people with particular needs are referred to as 'social farming'.



The aim of the article is to present the idea of social farming, including care farms in the context of population projections and innovation.

To achieve the aforementioned objectives, the following research questions have been formulated:

- _ What are the preconditions for the development of social farming in Poland?
- _ How does the rural community benefit from social farming, including care farms?
- _ Are the activities undertaken within the framework of social farming innovative and entrepreneurial?

This paper assumes that the development of social farming can play a significant role in shaping the approach to agriculture and rural areas in modern society and it may create new opportunities for the development of rural entrepreneurship.

The research study was based on the literature review, data from Central Statistical Office (CSO) and information provided by the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) of March 2015. Additionally, the study of the operations of Kujawsko –Pomorski Agricultural Advisory Centre in Minikowo has been conducted in the area of setting up and supporting care farms. Data on care farms cooperating with the aforementioned agricultural advisory center were obtained in a diagnostic survey using the technique of an unstructured interview. The interviews were conducted with the owners of care farms. The interviews were conducted in January 2015 with the owners of 13 care farms operating in Bory Tucholskie. The aim of the interviews was to obtain information regarding: the scope of provided services, the activities available for residents, the forms of cooperation with various institutions and organizations regarding establishing and functioning of care farms and the attitude of the local community to this type of activity. The obtained results underwent qualitative analysis which has broadened the existing knowledge on care farms.

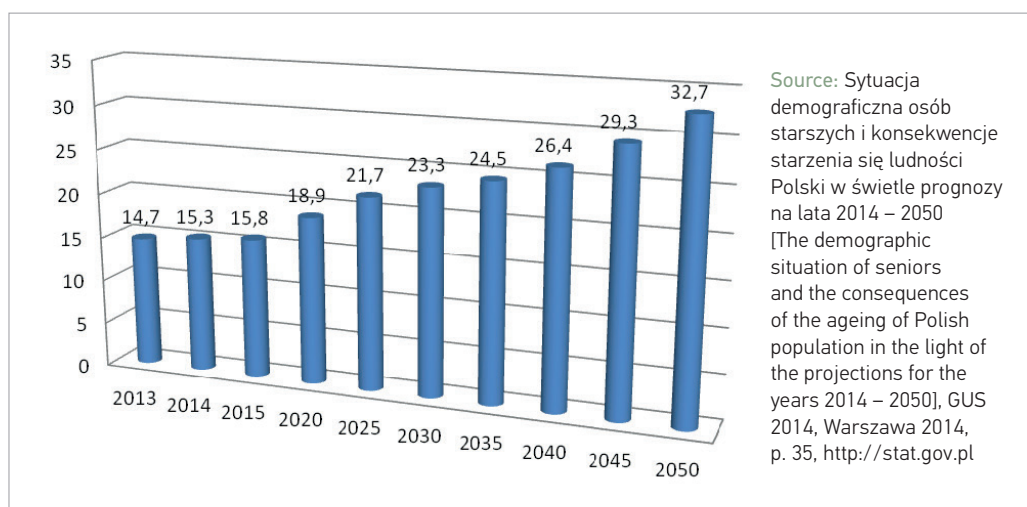
Nowadays, human life expectancy is rising and consequently the number of seniors is growing. Simultaneously, the declining birth rate results in the decreasing proportion of children and young people in the next generations. These processes are taking place all over the world, although to varying degrees. The ageing processes should be considered with regard to two other processes taking place in modern societies. The first relates to the fact that the social status of older people in modern societies is lower and they are less powerful than they used to be in the past. The second process concerns advances in medicine and changes in diet determining the perception of the old age, which is no longer regarded as a process of physical degeneration. Ageing is treated as a natural process and due to better nutrition, hygiene and health care people live longer than it was a hundred years ago (Giddens, 2004). It is symptomatic that the term 'graying population' is used increasingly often. Over the next few decades the populations of almost all developed countries will age. This process is clearly observable in statistics. However, this is not a purely statistical phenomenon. It leads to considerable social and economic consequences. One manifestation of ageing processes is the fact that the decisions to get married, have children, complete education or get a job are taken by older and older people.

Accelerated ageing of the population is reflected in the increasing proportion of senior citizens (60 years and older) in the whole population. This is the result of the constant rising of average life expectancy and declining fertility observable in most societies. In many countries, including the European states, ageing is the most influential demographic factor affecting the style and quality of life of societies.

**Ageing
society**

The ageing of the population in the Member States is one of the most important determinants of a long-term development of the European Union (Nowak-Far, 2011). The long-term Eurostat projections show that under current demographic trends for 2050 the number of people aged 65 and over in the EU countries will increase by about 70% and the number of people at working age (15-64 years) will fall by 12 %. This means that for every retiree there will be only two people working – currently it is four people. The prospect of such a large increase in the population of older people should be a matter of concern to those responsible for the functioning of society and urge them to prepare for this challenge. For many years Poland has ranked in the top thirty of demographically old countries in the world. In 1967 Poland crossed the threshold of demographic old age, and the threshold of advanced demographic old age already in 1980 (Senate Chancellery, 2011). At the end of 2013 the population of Poland was 38.5 million, including about 5.7 million people aged 65 years or more. In the years 1989 – 2013 the number of elderly people has increased by almost 1.9 million, and its share in the total population has grown by 4.7 percentage points i.e. from 10% in 1989 to 14.7% in 2013. The projected changes in the proportion of the population aged 65 years and over in the years 2013 to 2050 is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Proportion of the population aged 65 years and over in the total population (in %).



The predicted increase in the share of elderly people in the general population of Poles will have impact on the demographic structure of a family, which will take the form of an 'inverted triangle'. This means that the number of adults and the elderly in the family often exceeds the number of children and young people. For the first time in the history of mankind an average adult has more living parents than their own children (Synak, 2000). The ageing population also generates economic consequences e.g. in the form of increased spending on pensions, or 'ageing' of labor resources which can lead to the decline in economic growth. The economic dependency ratio is the ratio of the population at retirement age (women aged 60 years and over, men aged 65 years and over) to the population at working age (women aged 18-59 years, men aged 18 to 64 years). This ratio is projected to increase in Poland between 2007 and 2030 from 24.8 to 43.7 persons of retirement age per 100 persons of working age. This means that in order to maintain the level of pension payments and health care for seniors it is necessary to increase the fiscal burden imposed on wages of economically active persons or raise the state pension age. There is an increasing need for benefits for older people and various social services provided locally. It is therefore necessary to provide

facilities and educate gerontologists to meet the needs of the elderly (Senate Chancellery, 2011). Furthermore, the sources of assistance for older people are changing. Until recently, assistance was provided mainly by the family. At the moment, concerns about work and responsibility for the growing number of older family members make the family unable to meet these challenges, especially, as the increasing number of people aged over 85 often require specialized care. Therefore, the family assistance should be replaced by the services provided by the state, local governments, social organizations, non-governmental organizations and private institutions.

The literature on gerontology provides two extreme views on the philosophy of aging. One of them accentuates the need to withdraw from the previously performed roles and responsibilities. The second one proposes to replace professional activity with different activities, responsibilities and contacts (Wisniewska – Roszkowska, 1982). The ‘disengagement’ theory assumes that as people age, their contact with the world weakens. On the one hand, it is a consequence of the progressive degradation of the sensory organs. On the other hand, this is explained on the social level. Such events as the loss of a spouse, friends or social ‘exclusion’ such as retirement result in older people being cut off from contact with other people (Stuart –Hamilton, 2000). In Poland the ‘withdrawal’ style is still a very popular which unveils in the stereotypical sayings like: ‘Really, still feel like doing it?’, ‘At your age, it is not suitable’ or ‘You’d better sit and rest’. Such opinions can discourage and block the desire to diversify one’s own life. The second theory on ageing postulates the policy to keep the elderly as active as possible. The foundation of this theory is a noticeable increase in the level of life satisfaction declared by people who are actively socially engaged as they have their purpose and aspirations. The ‘disengagement’ theories and ‘activating’ theories describe the strategies and activities suitable for different groups of older people. Which one is more adequate is determined by a number of different factors, such as financial resources, health condition and personality type.

Aging is an inevitable and irreversible process. It is important to accept it, recognize it and establish social institutions to meet the needs of the elderly.

Issues related to rural entrepreneurship are often discussed in scientific publications. However, since the number of farms is steadily decreasing as people seek employment outside agriculture it should be monitored. There are still questions to be asked about the directions of rural development. The most probable scenario of rural development includes creating new jobs by setting up businesses in the service sector. According to Halamska (2013), non-agricultural businesses in rural areas are not so competitive in purely economic terms but are run ‘with common sense’ – they operate without big investments but, especially at the beginning, the owners use their own resources and are able to adjust to changing external conditions and meet market demand.

The scientific literature does not provide clearly defined concept of entrepreneurship. In the Agribusiness Encyclopedia (1998) the term ‘entrepreneurship’ is defined as individual attitude actively shaping the reality and a general phenomenon that contributes to the enhancement of the existing economic resources and - functioning on this foundation - socio-economic structures. This entry corresponds to the concept of entrepreneurship presented by Piecuch (2010), where entrepreneurship comprises three categories: attitude, behavior and process. All these categories are closely related, complementary and mutually intertwined. Entrepreneurship can be considered also as a function (Moczyłowska, 2007). In the economic literature, the term is identified with the purpose of business operations and defined as the

Innovation and rural entrepreneurship

relationship between the means employed and the aim achieved. In this approach the effect of entrepreneurship may be new products or services. Also the term 'innovation' should be worth recalling here. It has been assumed that innovation means introduction to business practice a new or significantly improved solution concerning product, process, marketing or organization. Traditionally the source of innovation was sought in science and technology development. Innovations introduced to the market resulted from research and development of universities, institutes and R&D divisions in companies. In opposition to this approach, the concept of 'demand driven innovation' has been conceived. In this concept innovation is stimulated by the market demand and products and services are developed to meet the consumers' needs (Baran et al., 2012). The introduction of demand driven innovation by enterprises is stimulated by market. One of them is the proliferation of IT solutions that do not only facilitate the dissemination of knowledge but also facilitate the introduction of more open and dispersed innovation processes. Also more sophisticated and demanding consumers play a role here. Currently, the consumers have unlimited access information and possibility to buy products or services from companies around the world. The value represented by the price to quality ratio is replaced by the value produced when a company and its products or services meet the personal needs of the consumer. There is a clearly visible trend of a mass product being replaced by a personalized product (Prahalad and Krishnan, 2008). Thus, the modern innovative activities are responding to the changing needs of the market. According to Drucker, one of the sources of innovation may be demography (Drucker, 2006). The analysis of demographic changes may stimulate the search for innovative solutions.

Demographic changes and needs which emerge as consequences of these processes are stimulating the demand for innovative initiatives in the field of health care and social services. There is a great potential for new products and services. People's expectations concerning their health and quality of life are growing and entrepreneurship in the field of health and social care is gaining wider social acceptance and more positive attitude (Mellor et al., 2009). In rural areas there will be a demand for new services provided at home such as daily care and medical care for the elderly. This vision is in line with the idea of social farming. This innovative approach is located within two concepts: multifunctional agriculture and community-based social/health care. Although there is no universally accepted definition of social farming, there is a widespread agreement among practitioners and researchers that social farming is a cluster of activities that use agricultural resources to generate social services in rural or semi-rural areas, such as rehabilitation, therapy, sheltered jobs, lifelong learning and other activities contributing to social integration (O'Connor, Lai and Watson, 2010). Social farming gives farmers the opportunity to provide new services and thereby expand and diversify their business and adopt multifunctional role in society. This integration of agricultural and social activities can create additional sources of income for farmers and provide services that are increasingly in demand.

Care farms in Poland and other countries

Social farming has been expanding in rural areas across Europe since the end of the last century as a new, economic practice. The number of social farms is increasing but still, in all European countries, accounts for less than 1% of all farms. The European Union countries have not developed a uniform definition of social farming and the expressions 'farming for health', 'care farming', 'green care' and 'green therapies' are also used. These activities enable those in difficulty to re-establish contact with productive activity and the natural environment and contribute to their well-being, improved health and social inclusion; they facilitate learning and boost self-esteem and hence participation in the life of society (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009).

Social farming uses the experience of different types of agricultural organizations like the self-help rural networks functioning at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century. However, today the aim is to create formal and professional social services, develop mechanisms for cooperation between the entities involved in social farming at the local level in order to make it easier for minor entrepreneurs to engage in such practices. Social farming seems an interesting proposition especially for rural areas, where it could foster diversification of non-agricultural sources of income and inhibit the adverse depopulation process. The residents of rural areas seem to be aware of the potential of social farming as evidenced by the examples of such projects in the EU Member States. They see the new opportunities for the rural community to expand and diversify their business activities. On the one hand, social farming is seen as a way to close the gap in the social care system, on the other hand, as an instrument to create new jobs in rural areas (especially for women). European initiatives within the broadly defined social farming cover the following areas (Di Iacovo and O'Connor, 2009):

- _ education, e.g. creation of educational farms, where children, youth as well as adults are exposed to farm work, the cultural heritage of the region, etc.;
- _ social services, such as the care of people with physical and mental disabilities, care for the elderly, etc.;
- _ social integration aimed at integrating different social groups and local communities, etc.;
- _ health care;
- _ childcare, e.g. preschool childcare or even care in the form of foster families;
- _ social exclusion, including, among others, reintegration of (former) convicts, the reintegration of addicts (e.g. drugs, alcohol), working with difficult youth;
- _ recreation and much more.

However, there is no uniform system of social farming in Europe. According to the opinion of the European Economic Committee (Willems, 2012), there are three main approaches:

- _ an institutional approach, with the prevalence of public/health institutions;
- _ a private approach based on therapeutic farms;
- _ a mixed approach based on social cooperatives and private farms.

Figure 2 shows the emerging social farming systems in Europe classified with regard to regulatory system.

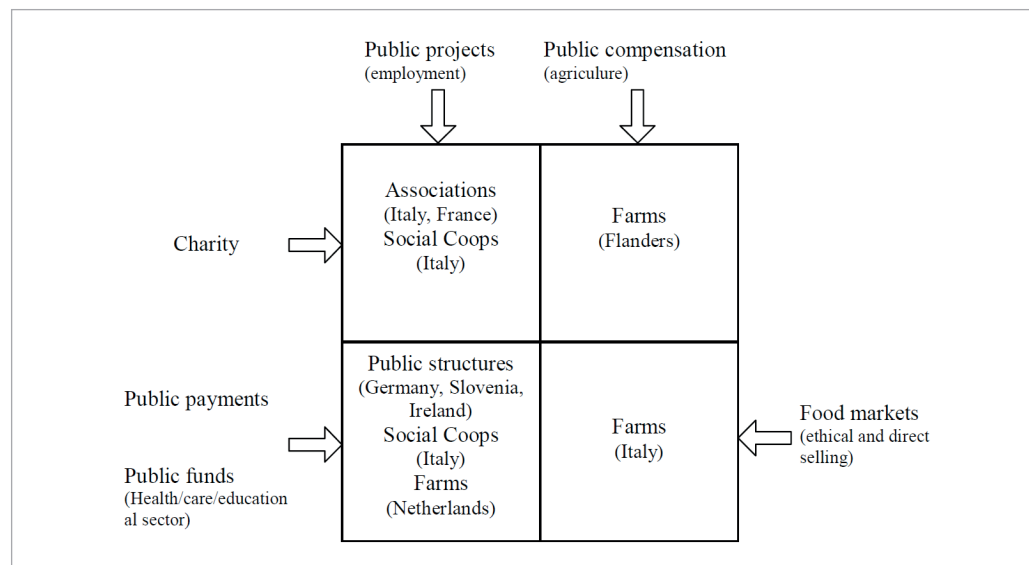


Figure 2

Different regulatory system of social farming across Europe [Di Iacovo and O'Connor (Eds.) 2009, p.32]

In Europe social farming practices focus on different areas: in Italy and France, social farming is mostly connected with the social and healthcare sector; in the Netherlands it is closer to the health system; in Flanders it is nearer to agriculture and in Germany, Great Britain, Ireland and Slovenia it lies somewhere between the social/health and health sectors (Figure 2).

In the light of demographic processes, mainly ageing of the society, care farms seem an interesting development in the area of social services. They are farms (including guest farms or organic farms), which draw on the available resources and offer support to those in need. The clients of care farms may include, e.g.: older people or children, for whom the hosts can be a foster family. The residents can perform a variety of activities on the farm – e.g. feed animals, take care of flowers, collect fruits and vegetables. Participation in daily activities and work on a farm has a therapeutic effect and help the service users respectively to stay active, to regain balance or to find their place in society.

The benefits of green care can be varied. Sempik, Hine and Wilcox (2010) suggest the following:

- _ Care farms can provide a green and quiet environment to live a peaceful life;
- _ Work associated with caring for plants and animals creates a sense of responsibility for other creatures, which can help people with low self-esteem;
- _ Due to the presence of factors beyond human control (like the climate or soil quality), the stay on the farm can help accept life as it is, which may help the residents find peace of mind;
- _ Basic life values, shared by the hosts and their families, determine the nature of the provided care and co-operation with them can help the residents build self-confidence;
- _ Farms are enterprises, requiring action undertaken to survive in an economic sense, which in turn stimulates a realistic view of life.

The institutions promoting the idea of care farms in Poland are farm advisory bodies. An example may be Kujawsko-Pomorski Agricultural Advisory Centre in Minikowo, which, in cooperation with the District Authorities in Tuchola, District Family Assistance Center, Association of Agritourism Farms and Local Action Group 'Tuchola', has attempted to promote the idea of care farms as alternative, non-agricultural source of income in Bory Tucholskie area. These actions were part of a larger project 'New Profession – New Opportunity'. Under this project, the workshops for farmers were held to present the idea and practices of care farms. The experiences of Dutch farmers in this area were presented by Manintveld Kees from the Netherlands (Zdanowska, 2014). The farm owners and/or other household residents completed a course (200 hours) for professional caregivers for older people and people with disabilities (including practical training in social welfare center) and were fully trained in farm tourism. Owners of local tourist farms also took part in a study trip to the Netherlands, where a system of support for seniors and people with disabilities has been operating for a long time. They could see various care services for the elderly – both provided in the form of 24 h care and therapeutic classes. The project resulted in the creation of 13 care farms in Bory Tucholskie area, which offer the following services (Bielińska et al., 2014):

- _ 24h care, long-term stays (from one month to one year, with an option to prolong the contract);
- _ 24h care, short-term stays (from two days to several weeks);
- _ regular day care;
- _ emergency day care.

The care farm owners offer activities adjusted to the needs of service users and within the available farm resources. The most common activities include: workshops (identifying herbs, handicrafts, cheese making, decoupage, making soaps, etc.), walks, including Nordic walking, cooking, therapeutic massages, making preserves, experiencing the life on the farm, e.g. by helping in the care of livestock, garden, field work and many others.

Ultimately, the Polish care farms may provide services in the following areas:

- _ children and adolescents (foster family, the family children home);
- _ teenage mothers with children;
- _ people with intellectual disabilities and mobility dysfunctions;
- _ older people (inactive, requiring support, family care homes).

These areas fit in the cultural conditions of the Polish countryside. Rural families have always been multi-generational. Caring for children and elderly parents has always been natural, (even until now pre-school education in rural areas is rare). Rural families who avoid caring for their parents are negatively perceived. Unfortunately at the moment there is no regulatory system to support Polish care farms, and their emergence in the district of Tuchola was only possible thanks to the commitment and cooperation of many entities.

The dominant social foundation for the development of social farming is progressive ageing of the population of most European countries. Drawing on the demographic projections, one may note that these changes are inevitable and irreversible. It is therefore important to monitor them in advance and prepare for them.

Social farming is an innovative approach to sustainable, multifunctional development of rural areas. It refers to the role of agriculture in nurturing social values. This creates the possibility to include farms in other areas of society such as education, health and social care. This idea fits perfectly in the development of the so-called third sector in the rural areas based on their own, human and material resources. There are numerous benefits of encouraging entrepreneurship in this area. These include the following:

- _ promoting entrepreneurship in rural areas;
- _ creation of new jobs in rural areas;
- _ diversification of non-agricultural sources of income on a farm;
- _ creating a new image of farming and rural areas especially in the eyes of the younger generation, which may have impact on the reduction of rural depopulation processes.

To encourage the development of social farming, legal regulations are needed both in individual Member States, as well as at EU level. Social farming should be underpinned with interdisciplinary research in the fields of therapy, medicine, social work and education. These studies should be carried out in close cooperation between research and development institutions, local government, the state government and the people, whose activities fit in social farming. Interdisciplinary research would allow for the transfer of knowledge gained from practical experience and generate innovative solutions to support social farming. Innovative projects in the field of social farming are often developed in isolation, without the awareness of similar projects and exchange of experience. It is therefore vital to establish and strengthen social farming networks, which will pool experience, make different projects known and promote best practices. The first step in this direction has been taken by the European Network for Rural Development.

Conclusion

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Anna J. Parzonko, Anna Sieczko. Inovatyvios kaimo verslumo formos: socialinės žemdirbystės ūkiai

Kaimo verslumas skatina ekonominę diversifikaciją ir kaimo vietovėse kuria naujus pajamų šaltinius. Kaimo antrepneriai visų pirma pasikliauja savo turimais ištekliais (Sułkowski, 2003). Pageidaujama kaimo verslumo kryptį turi diktuoti vietos socialiniai, ekonominiai ir gamtiniai ištekliai. Taip pat labai svarbu, kad kaimo verslumas remtųsi inovatyviais sprendimais, kadangi inovacijos yra iššūkis ne tik kaimo vietovėms, bet ir nacionalinei ekonomikai.

Demografinės perspektyvos iš esmės yra nepalankios. Gimstamumas mažėja, o kaimo populiacija sensta. Senėjimo procesai lems vartojimo mažėjimą ir didėjančią socialinių ir medicininių paslaugų poreikį.

Socialinė žemdirbystė yra inovatyvi prieiga, kuri remiasi kaimo vietovėse slypinčiais žmogiškaisiais ištekliais. Ji gali būti ypač patraukli kaimo moterims, kurios tradiciškai rūpinasi visais savo šeimų nariais. Šiuo metu visos veiklos, kurios reikalauja žemdirbystės išteklių tam, kad būtų teikiamos įvairios paslaugos rūpybos, socialinės integracijos, mokymo, socialinės ir profesinės rehabilitacijos ir specialiųjų poreikių turinčių žmonių mokymo srityse yra vadinamos „socialine žemdirbyste“.

Straipsnyje pristatoma socialinės žemdirbystės idėja, socialinės žemdirbystės ūkiai populiacijos perspektyvų ir inovacijų kontekste.

Straipsnyje daroma prielaida, kad socialinės žemdirbystės vystymas gali būti reikšmingas formuojant požiūrį į žemdirbystę ir kaimo vietoves modernioje visuomenėje bei gali atverti naujas kaimo verslumo plėtojimo galimybes.

Tyrimas buvo atliktas remiantis mokslinės literatūros analize, Lenkijos Centrinės statistikos tarnybos duomenimis ir Europos kaimo plėtros tinklo informacija, pateikta 2015 metų kovo mėn. Taip pat buvo tirta Kujawsko–Pomorski žemdirbystės paramos Minikowo centro veikla, susijusi su socialinės žemdirbystės ūkių kūrimu ir parama jiems. Duomenys apie socialinės žemdirbystės ūkių bendradarbiavimą su šiuo centru buvo gauti vykdant diagnostinę apklausą, kurios metu buvo atliktas nestruktūruotas interviu. Buvo apklausti socialinių ūkių savininkai. Interviu buvo vykdomi 2015 metų sausio mėn. su 13-os ūkių, veikiančių Bory Tucholskie, savininkais. Interviu metu buvo siekiama gauti informaciją apie teikiamų paslaugų apimtį, gyventojams prieinamas veiklas, bendradarbiavimo su įvairiomis institucijomis ir organizacijomis ūkių kūrimo ir paramos jiems klausimais formas, vietinės bendruomenės požiūrį į šią veiklos formą. Kokybinę gautų rezultatų analizę praplėtė žinias apie socialinės žemdirbystės ūkius.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: socialinis ūkininkavimas, senyvas amžius, kaimo verslumas, socialinės žemdirbystės ūkiai.

Santrauka

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