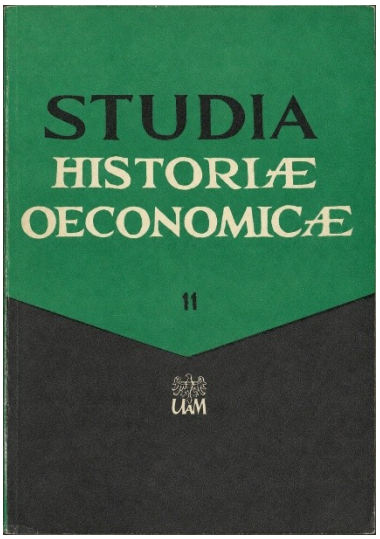


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THE EVOLUTION IN AGRARIAN STRUCTURE IN POLAND 1960 - 1974

The agrarian structure is a variable which exercises a considerable influence on agricultural production and which creates a framework for the mutual merger of technological and human factors in the process of agricultural production. At the same time, it is subject to evolution according to the relation of these factors. Changes in the agrarian structure have always attracted much attention since it was regarded not only as an index reflecting changes in the division of land among particular production units but also as an exponent of some changes in the socio-economic structure of the villages, especially in the forms of land possesion.

From the point of view of agricultural production itself, the size of a farm plays an important role because it conditions the economic potential of the farm in the given circumstances. Naturally, that variable is not sufficient to explain the whole problem and therefore, most often, the volume of agricultural production per unit of area or per one employee is used in measurements. The volume of labour (especially the contribution of hired labour) and the equipment in durable means of production are treated as supplementary standards of measurement.

The problem of scale plays an important role in agricultural production. It influences the efficiency of work and is connected with a definite structure of professional and general of workers qualification. One can point out here the following factors favouring the increase of both the size of a farm and its production. These factors make the farm more efficient in term of a labour unit:

1) The increase of area facilitates better exploitation of highly efficient technical equipment and machinery; it reduces (to a certain extent, of course) difficulties in coordination.

2) It creates greater possibilities of directing the process of production and makes it possible to utilize manpower in a better way.

3) Large farms can adapt themselves more easily to market requirements; they are more closely connected with the market.

4) The single cost of a purchase or a supply is lower because of its large-scale

character, the decrease in the cost of transportation and of other kinds of allowance.

5) Taking into consideration the fact that some means of production like tractors, milkers, etc. are indivisible, the larger scale influences their full utilization through the possibility to regulate the utilization of divisible goods.

6) The sufficient amount of space allows for building a network of grain elevators or a system of internal transport which facilitates the work, saves the wastage of production and allows for a better collection and allocation of reserves.

On the other hand, large farms may also have some disadvantages:

1) There is the problem of space, the increase of transformation costs, difficulties in supervising the work, etc.

2) There are difficulties in management and the groups of non-productive workers grow in size.

3) Usually, with the increase of size the uniformity of conditions and means (like, for example, different types of soil) decreases. This enhances difficulties in planning and organization.

4) Executive qualified wage-earners are more and more difficult to obtain, not only because of the unsatisfactory level of management but also because of the low value of hired workers to whom the highly valued property is consigned. There is no kind of involvement here which is characteristic of family farms where one can find both unity of management and execution.

5) There is an increase in scale of such investment outlays which are difficult to obtain through accumulation or loans. The state assistance is necessary.

Most often, however, advantages prevail and therefore, as human resources in agriculture decrease and the capital grows, the average size of a farm increases and the whole agrarian structure is changed. The transformation of agrarian structure depends mainly on the social structure, i.e. on the abundance in manpower and on the technical equipment of agriculture. In the conditions of poor technical equipment, decisions on agrarian structure were made according to the acreage which could be cultivated and used effectively by the family of an owner.

Technical devices which increased the efficiency of work influenced the increase of that acreage as well. The growing costs which induce greater specialization of both production and qualification may be regarded as a limiting factor here. They result in the formation of either specialistic farms or large farms where some specialized groups of workers are employed. These groups are organized in such a way that they can find work all the time. So far, the family farms in Poland have been accumulating sufficient means to purchase and to develop their production. As a result, the income they bring (in spite of the lack of both technical and service sources) do not induce peasants to a rapid transformation or abandonment of their holdings. This carries some essential impli-

cation for training the personnel for agriculture; it becomes necessary to determine the professional training depending on the line of production, and on the general level of and changes in the technical equipment of agriculture.

In terms of both, the size and the form of land possession two categories of farms may be distinguished in Poland: socialized farms and private ones. The former are divided into state farms and co-operative farms. A different subgroup is formed by the land belonging to agricultural circles which conduct collective husbandry. The area of land under collective cultivation is still relatively small but it is being systematically and rapidly increased; in 1970 it accounted for 0,5 per cent of the total arable land and in 1974 it increased to 0,8 per cent[1].

The socialized sector plays a more and more important role in farm production, no matter if we judge it by its share in the arable land area, in gross farm production, or especially, in commodity farm production (compare Tab. 1).

It must be added here that the average size of state farms does not reflect the fact that the most important of them (from the point of view of farm production) are subordinated to the Ministry of Agriculture and cover a much larger area of arable land. For example, in 1974 the average agricultural acreage of state farms under the auspices of the Ministry equalled 751.9 ha; farms subordinated to associations covered a still larger area of 912.2 ha; specialistic farms were smaller and their area amounted to 468.8 ha. Large state farms could and, to a greater and greater extent, did develop the economy of industrial-agricultural type.

At the same time, it is worth mentioning that the size of a medium private farm is the resultant of many factors. Therefore, from the point of view of the scale of production, changes of this resultant are not especially significant and publishing them here has mainly an illustrative function. It may be useful to know that the average acreage of an agricultural holding in the country size increased in the period between 1960 and 1970 from 5.20 to 5.39 ha. In the town it remained unchanged and equalled 1.65 ha.

It is obvious that structural changes do not reflect fully the dynamism in the growth of acreage belonging to state and co-operative farms[2]. A greater growth of production dynamism in socialized farms and not in the private ones resulted from much larger investment outlays in the socialized sector. These outlays were mainly designed to improve the state of land and buildings which had been taken over and also to improve the terms of production in the already existing farms. It was reflected in the fact that the share of state farms grew quicker in gross farm production than in commodity farm production (although

[1] Rocznik Statystyczny [Statistical Yearbook] 1974 p. 244, 269.

[2] F. Kolbusz: *Socjalistyczne przeobrażenia w rolnictwie polskim* [Socialist Changes in Polish Agriculture] in: Wieś Współczesna [Contemporary Village] 1974 No. 3 p. 23.

Table 1

The share of socialized farms and the average area of state, co-operative, and private farms in Poland

Years	Total area of arable land in thousand ha	Share of socialized farms in the total acreage of arable land = 100		Share of socialized farms in gross production = 100		Share of socialized farms in commodity production = 100		Average area of farms in hectares		
								socialized		private
		Total	State only	Total	State only	Total	State only	State[2]	co-operative	
1950	20 440,4[1]	10,4	9,6	8,0	7,5	8,2	7,8	322	267	·
1960	20 402,8	13,1	11,9	11,2	10,9	13,1	12,7	308	117	4,68
1970	19 543,2	16,6	14,8	14,9	13,4	20,0	17,9	373	223	4,83
1971	19 507,8	17,0	15,1	15,5	13,9	21,1	18,9	377	236	·
1972	19 371,1	19,3	17,3	16,0	14,2	20,3	17,8	411	245	·
1973	19 325,9	19,5	17,4	16,9	14,8	21,0	18,2	440	251	·
1974	19 257,0	19,8	17,5	18,3	15,8	22,2	18,8	457	268	·

Notice: 1) Data refer to 1949; 2) State-owned farms cover the area belonging to State Agricultural Farms and to other farms possessed by the state i.e. racing stables and different small agricultural objects; 3) Infields were not taken into consideration while calculating area of an average co-operative farm; only the area of co-operatives which distribute their income was considered.

Source: Roczniki Statystyczne [Statistical Yearbook] 1956, p. 124; 1960, p. 184, 186, 191; 1972, p. 250, 257; 1974, p. 292; 1975, p. 239, 244, 259, 266; *Ludność, zasoby mieszkaniowe, indywidualne gospodarstwa rolne. Polska* [Population, Housing Resources, Individual Farms. Poland] Warszawa 1971. GUS. Narodowy Spis Powszechny 8 XII 1970. Wyniki wstępne [The National Census of December 8th, 1970. Preliminary Results] p. 36.

it is still much bigger in the latter one). On the other hand the situation may be attributed to the growth of commodity farm production of private farms caused mainly by larger and better managed peasant holdings. A considerable part of private farms decreased their production at the same time. This refers mainly to the farms the owners of which have no successors and are forced sooner or later to hand them over to State Treasury in order to receive an old age pension. The cost of bringing this usually waste land under cultivation is very high and therefore state farms will not be able to take over and cultivate all of this land[3].

It is obvious that the possibilities and the rate of accepting the peasant land by state farms are different in different parts of the country and depend to a large extent on the agrarian structure which exist there[4]. In order to determine certain shifts which take place among different sectors of economy, it is necessary to state both the range and the rate of change soccurring within the framework of peasant economy. The process of structural changes within thepeasant farms themselves did not take a single direction. If the period between 1950 - 1960 was characterized a certain splitting up of farm units the year 1960 marked the beginning of some slow changes in that process. This was reflected in the decrease of the number of holdings and the increase of their average acreage; this refers mainly to larger farms. General speaking, from the point of view of farm production, the acreage structure of peasant farms showed some characteristics of stabilization. This was also reflected in the fact that the average acreage of a peasant holding oscilliated between 5 and 6 ha. If one did not take into consideration the small allotments up to 0.5 ha, the dominating group would consist of farms with the acreage of 2 - 10 ha. This accounted for 60 per cent of the total number of farms and more or less the same percentage of land. Farms of 0.5 - 2 ha which covered 5 - 6 per cent of land constituted nearly 25 per cent of the total number. A group of the largest (over 10 ha) farms amounted to 12 - 14 per cent of the total number of farms and covered 33 - 36 per cent of the acreage[5].

A closer study of this problem, however, shows the appearance of polarization processes within the framework of peasant economy. These processes were reflected in the increase of the number of very small farms (up to 0.5 ha) and the growth of the number of large farms. There was a decrease in the number

[3] S. Ignar: *Problemy struktury agrarnej w planie perspektywicznym* [Problems of Agrarian Structure According to a Long-Term Planning] in: Wieś Współczesna [Contemporary Village] 1970 No. 3 p. 19.

[4] Por. D. Gałaj: *Perspektywy rozwoju wsi i rolnictwa PRL* [Cf., D. Gałaj: The Perspectives of Country and Agriculture Development in People's Poland] in: Wieś i Rolnictwo [Country and Agriculture] 1974 No. 4 and 5.

[5] A. Szemberg: *O mechanizmach zmian i przyszłości struktury agrarnej* [On Mechanisms of Change and the Future of Agrarian Structure] in: Zagadnienia Ekonomiki Rolnej [Problems of Agricultural Economics] 1974 No. 4 p. 116.

Table 2

Agrarian structure of private farms in Poland

Total farm size	Years					
	1950		1960		1970	
	Total number of farms in %	Total area in %	Total number of farms in %	Total area in %	Total number of farms in %	Total area in %
Total (area in hectares)	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
0,1 - 0,5 ha	6,3	0,3	9,7	0,5	13,6	0,6
0,5 - 2,0 ha	19,6	4,5	23,1	5,8	23,9	5,5
2,0 - 5,0 ha	31,3	20,1	30,4	21,7	27,3	19,8
5,0 - 7,0 ha	15,1	17,0	13,2	16,7	12,3	15,9
7,0 - 10,0 ha	15,7	25,0	12,9	22,8	12,1	22,6
10,0 ha and over	12,0	33,1	10,7	32,5	10,8	35,6

Source: Rocznik Statystyczny [Statistical Yearbook] 1965, s. 239; 1975, s. 271; Indywidualne gospodarstwa rolne (stan z 8 XII 1970) [Individual Farms. State on December 8, 1970] Narodowy Spis Powszechny 1970. Wyniki ostateczne [The National Census in the Year 1970. Final Results] z. 36 Polska [Poland], Warszawa 1973, GUS, p. 30.

of farms with the acreage approximating the average.[6] These farms were too small to be the main or the only source of support for the owner and his family. On the other hand, they were too large for those who found their main source of support outside agriculture.

One of the particularly characteristic features of the agrarian structure in Poland was a dynamic and lasting increase of the number of small allotments reflected in the formation of more and more numerous group of non-agricultural population in the countryside.[7] It was connected with formation of the so-called labour-peasant group over a long period of time. This group consisted mainly of peasants from holdings up to 2 ha and also, to quite an extent, of peasants managing larger farms (up to 7 ha).[8] The spreading practice of taking up some permanent job outside the peasant holding in non-agricultural profession did not prevent further division of farms. The resulting split-up holdings were not able to preserve their agricultural character. The outside work becomes the main source of income while the proceeds obtained from the farm were only a of supplementary character. Such holdings were almost exclusively based up on manpower because of the limited possibility of production services in agriculture. The main factors which prevent the increase of production in labour-peasant type of holdings were, on the one hand, the growing intensification of work outside agriculture and, consequently, the larger wages of labourers and, on the other hand, a considerable development of mechanization of farming and the improved conditions for better and larger farms in terms of crediting and of supplies of fertilizers, seeds, etc. Therefore, it is possible to anticipate certain stagnation and future disappearance of this kind of farms and their transformation into allotment gardens, etc.[9] This process will also be more and more influenced by the social factors like for example the tendency to gain more free time. Such changes occurred much earlier in the West European countries while in Poland the process of economic elimination of poor, non-developmental peasant farms from production was started relatively late. It is expressed in the further decrease of the number of small farms (0.5 - 2 ha and 2 - 5 ha),

[6] A. Woś, et al.: *Gospodarowanie ziemią a socjalistyczna rekonstrukcja wsi i rolnictwa* [Land Management and the Socialist Reconstruction of Country and Agriculture] in: Wieś i Rolnictwo 1974 No. 1/2 p. 35 - 36.

[7] A. Szemberg: *Przemiany struktury agrarnej w latach 1967 - 1972* [Changes in Agrarian Structure in 1967 - 1972] in: Wieś Współczesna 1973 No. 9 p. 59. It indicates that the rate of this process has been slowed down recently.

[8] S. Moskal: *Rolnicza ludność dwuzawodowa* [Two occupational Rural Population Working Outside and in Agriculture] in: Wieś i Rolnictwo 1974 No. 1/2 p. 151 - 152. He concluded that about 2/3 of the total number of peasant population make use of non-agricultural sources of income (on the assumption that the minimal size of an average farm sufficient to support a family amounts to 6 hectares).

[9] M. Kłodziński: *Produkcja gospodarstw chłopsko-robotniczych* [The Production of Peasant-Labour type Farms] in: Wieś i Rolnictwo 1974 No. 2/3 p. 152 - 153. It points out that rate of growth of small farms has been slowed down recently.

in the increase of the average size of a farm, and in the progressing process of socialization in agriculture[10].

It is obvious that this process is taking (and will take) different turns in regions; the most dynamic changes occur in North-Western Poland. It is also characteristic that the idea and the size of a large developmental farm already varies in accordance to the actual agrarian structure and the level of mechanization in different parts of the country. In some regions, for example, this term applies to a farm of 15 ha where as on others, to the farm of the area larger, than 5 ha (South-Eastern Poland)[11]. As it is known, the differences in the agrarian structure in Poland are considerable, especially if one takes into consideration the degree of splitting up of farm lands or varying popularity of labour-peasant or peasant-labour types of holdings in particular regions of the country[12]. It is imperative to recognize those differences in order to ensure a successful policy in agriculture; the division of arable land has become a more and more significant factor inhibiting the development of agriculture in Poland[13].

Factors which influence the increase or decrease of the farm acreage are much diversified. The most important, however, is the potential of manpower which a farm has at its disposal. It refers both to the number of persons and to the age of the owner. Farms which had sufficient manpower have increased their area and production, while those which lacked in it have decreased their area[14]. Thus, land sales favoured the adaptation of the size of farms to the requirements of the most important factor of production[15]. It is fully understandable if one considers that fact that family holdings have become more and more dominant. This is connected with the disappearance of hired labour

[10] A. Szemberg: *O mechanizmach...*, p. 16; See also K. Oleksiak: *Gospodarstwa zmieniające obszar w latach 1968 - 1971* [Farms Changing Their Area in the Period of 1968 - - 1971] in: Zagadnienia Ekonomiki Rolnej 1975 No. 1 p. 26.

[11] A. Szemberg: *Przemiany...*, 1973 No. 9 p. 57 - 58 i 63 - 64. From 1967 to 1972 all regions of the country (except the Krakowsko-Podhalański were characterised by the decrease in the number of farms. In 1962 - 1967 the character of this process was not so common yet.

[12] B. Strużek: *O warunkach społeczno-ekonomicznych rozwoju rolnictwa* [On Socio-Economic Conditions of Development of Agriculture] in: Wieś Współczesna 1972 No. 2 p. 10 - 11. He distinguished 5 groups of districts; the least split agrarian structure could be found in individual farms in Northern Poland.

[13] F. Tomczak: *Rolnictwo Polski Ludowej* [The Agriculture of People's Poland] Warszawa 1972 p. 209.

[14] K. Oleksiak: Op. cit., p. 35.

[15] K. Olesiak: Op. cit., p. 32. See also S. Ignar: *Problemy...*, p. 12. In this process a very important role was played by the State Fund of Arable Lands. S. Ignar reminds that in the years from 1958 to 1968 the area of arable lands belonging to the State Fund increased by 365 thousand hectares. This number is a residual between the area taken over by the State Found from different sources (2 293,4 thousand ha) and the area which was transmitted to both individual and socialized farms for permanent usage (1 908,6 thousand ha).

which is constantly used in no more then 3 per cent of the total number of private peasant holdings[16]. Farm tenure, on the other hand, has never been popular in the Polish countryside. It must be mentioned, however, that partial tenuring occurred quite often. Very often the land tenured for a long period of time belonged to the State Land's Fund and the necessity of giving it back affected the limitation of production possibilities and inhibited the full employment of manpower resources[17]. The consolidation of split up plots was another problem. It was performed very systematically and exercised some influence on the organizational efficiency of a farm, facilitating mechanization and saving time, not to mention some saving of territory as well. The process of integration, however, has continued slowly, as there is still quite a large number of appeals and subsequent corrections[18]. From the point of view of agricultural production this process may be treated only as a supplement to the process of concentration of land belonging to individual farmers.

It is necessary to notice here that in the case of peasant farms in Poland mechanization was not always connected with the growth of acreage of medium-sized farms. The human factor, remaining the most important one, exercised its influence also on utilization and efficiency of other factors, like acreage, etc.

Therefore, it is essential to investigate whether (and to what extent) there have been changes among the owners responsible for the management of their holdings. Here, the rate of exchange is accelerated because of the age structure of the owners, yet there are still a number of holdings managed by persons over 65[20]. The further acceleration of this rate conditioned mainly by the provision of old age pensions for farmers — recent changes in this field create possibili-

[16] F. Kolbusz: *Ewolucja społeczno-ekonomicznego charakteru gospodarki chłopskiej* [The Evolution of Socio-Economic Character of Peasant Economy] in: Ekonomista (The Economist] 1974 No. 3 p. 596.

[17] K. Oleksiak: Op. cit., p. 33.

[18] P. Daszyński: *Scalanie i wymiana gruntów* [Consolidation and Exchange of Land] in: Wieś Współczesna 1972 No. 7 p. 127.

[19] Cf. J. Przychodzen, Z. Przychodzen: *Stopień mechanizacji produkcji rolnej w gospodarstwach indywidualnych* [Degree of Mechanization of Agricultural Production in Private Farms] in: Wieś Współczesna 1974 No. 6 p. 119.

[20] A. Szemberg: *O mechanizmach...*, p. 116; A. Sikorska, *Młodzi użytkownicy gospodarstw rolnych* [Young Husbandmen] in: Zagadnienia Ekonomiki Rolnej 1974 No. 6 p. 37. In order to compare changes in the structure of entering into possession of farms, investigated by the Institute of Agricultural Economics in 1967 and 1972, the author used the following table:

The way of entering into possession	1967	1972
Taking the farm over after parents' death	19,5	11,6
Taking up the function of the head of a family	19,3	35,3
Receiving land as a result of family divisions	33,4	17,5
Purchase of land	10,2	15,7
Farm lease	13,6	13,4
Others (allowance in kind, settlement)	4,0	6,5
Total	100,0	100,0

ties to accelerate the process of changes in peasant holdings. The fact that a farm may be handed over earlier is connected not only with its productive utilization but it also creats favourable conditions for the successors to remain in the countryside. On the basis of the above survey one may claim that the latter variable may affect many other variables such as the size of a farm, the level of intensification of production and the amount of income. The gradation of these variables is not constant; they are correlated to a great extent and they are connected with the social status of a farmer, his social role and the respect attached to his occupation.

Summing it up, one may claim that land concentration in Poland becomes more and more intensified though the process is manifested in various forms. It is associated with the growing socialization of agriculture. First of all,state farms, co-operative farms, companies of different types (family and open) and units of agricultural circles are being developed. However, the process of concentration of individual farms occurs simultaneously. It reinforces the progressive vertical integration of agricultural holdings (all forms of supply contracts) with non-agricultural branches of economy and thus, it is included in the whole complex of food-producing economy[21].

The progress of concentration and socialization of farms takes different turns in different parts of the country. This process is the quickest when connected with vertical integration occurring mainly in the Western part of Poland[22].

The only way which may ensure the development of farm production and prevent severe social tensions is the creating of better and better economic mechanisms which favour the process of integration and concentration the rate of which will be determined by the decreasing resources of manpower in agriculture.

The future in Poland, like in other socialist countries, belongs to large agricultural enterprises of state-co-operative character. Only such enterprises, having the whole variety of production units at their disposal would guarantee the high efficiency of work and a satisfactory level of production. Then would also guarantee the necessary standard of non-productive services for people employed there. The establishment of rural districts in 1973 gave a kind of administrative-organizational basis for the development of agricultural units which would cover the area of about 8000 ha. This is the most common size of the already existing agricultural enterprises which include separate state-owned farms without their own legal status.

Translated by Bernadetta Klinikowska-Rosada

[21] A. Woś, et al.: *Gospodarowanie*..., p. 43.

[22] S. Gucwa: *Rolnictwo w świecie* [Agriculture in the World] in: Wieś i Rolnictwo 1974 No. 2/3 p. 22.

[23] Cf. S. Ignar: *Problemy*..., p. 13; Z. Grochowski: *Problemy*..., p. 67, 68.

[24] F. Kolbusz: *Socjalistyczne przeobrażenia w rolnictwie polskim* [Socialist Changes in Polish Agriculture] in: Wieś Współczesna 1974 No. 5 p. 24.