



*Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture
and Rural Development
in Poland*

Report to the Federal Ministry
for Science and Transport, Austria

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1. Introduction

Future of polish agriculture

Poland will be among the first CEECs ¹⁾ to join the European Union. In the course of Poland's integration process, structural adjustments in the agricultural sector are likely to affect the rural population in a variety of undesirable ways. Unlike other CEECs, in Poland the process of collectivisation of individual farms has never been completed. Currently, there are more than two million private farms in Poland, 20% of which are considered to derive their income exclusively from farming. Many farms are of very small sizes with the average arable land per farm amounting to 6.7 ha. More than 50% of these farms have an area of less than 5 ha, while only 3% extent over an area of more than 20 ha.

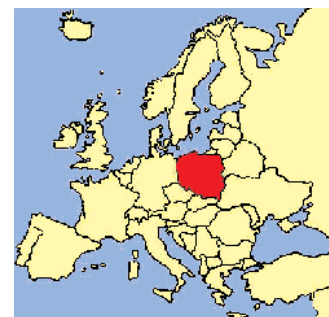
Present and past structures of Polish agriculture

The present structure of Polish agriculture continues to be characterised by almost 40 years of communist policy, requiring further improvements in the various economic sectors. Another important historical factor distinguishing Poland's agricultural sector, are structural changes associated with the recovery from a deep recession in the years 1990 and 1991. As a consequence of these past developments the country currently faces significant challenges in the search for strategies towards sustainable rural development (SZOSZKIEWICZ, 1999).

In the course of the past 10 years Poland has undergone a transition in the agricultural sector from a structure dominated by centralised planning to a more market-based economy. To the current date, however, the transition of the Polish system has brought about insufficient improvements, still facing several challenges in the years to come. These changes include those associated with the globalisation of the world economy, the liberalisation of the world trade, the creation of regional economic organisations and Poland's integration in the European Union. Among these goals, the process of Poland's integration in the European Union is considered to be of predominant importance for the country's agricultural sector (SZOSZKIEWICZ, 1999).

¹⁾ Central and Eastern European Countries

Map 1: Poland



One of the consequences of these developments will be an increase of the unemployment rate in agriculture, a sector which is already facing significant unemployment rates. Consequently, many farmers will be forced to look for additional income sources such as jobs in non-agrarian sectors and a high number of rural dwellers will need to relocate to urban centres. In order to prevent an economic collapse of the Polish agricultural sector, new strategies for rural development need to be identified. In particular, additional efforts are required to develop and implement a coherent structural and rural development policy specifically addressing the challenges faced by Poland's rural areas.

Consequences of these developments

One of the goals of Polish governmental is to prevent emigration from and depopulation of rural areas. To address these issues the creation of new income sources and job alternatives for the rural population will be a major policy priority for the years to come. Currently, a range of activities addressing structural development of rural areas have already been implemented. These activities include the following:

Polish governmental goals concerning rural areas

Implemented activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● provision of support for agricultural land privatisation and land ownership transformation; ● development of strategies for integrating rural development and infrastructure improvements; ● creation of supportive agricultural credit systems; identification of measures to modernise farms and agro-business companies, ● including input supply to food processing plants; development of agricultural market infrastructure; and ● harmonisation of rural and agricultural development measures with environmental protection goals.
Consequences of unemployment in rural regions	<p>Despite these efforts, however, the unemployment rate in rural regions is desperately high and most of the farmers currently face difficult financial situations due to limited profitability of their farms. As a consequence, entire communities face financial depressions and many young people are forced to relocate to urban centres. In the future, this process will be exacerbated in the course of measures undertaken to reach Poland's EU accession goal, requiring the development and implementation of effective strategies to address these problems.</p>
Potential strategies from Austria?	<p>One way of identifying potential strategies is to analyse and transfer successful strategies already implemented in countries that had to face similar problems in the past. In the course of Austria's EU accession process over the past decade, the country's agricultural sector had to face comparable structural problems including small farm sizes and emigration from remote and hardly accessible rural areas. In order to address these problems, Austria has developed new and innovative strategies that have been very successful. Successful strategies implemented in Austria to improve the income in rural areas include direct marketing, high quality production, organic farming, nature protection, establishment of regional and eco-labelling schemes, agri-tourism, farmers co-operation (e.g. machinery rings and relief services) and integrated regional management.</p>
Success of integrated approach	<p>This integrated approach encompassing a variety of strategies all of which focus on regional development has been successful in many remote areas of a number of western European countries. As illustrated in Austria and other countries, this approach not only leads to the creation of new jobs but also improves the relationship among agricultural and non-agricultural sectors such as gastronomy, tourism and craftsmanship. Due to these accomplishments, farmers and local people from marginalised regions in Austria are proud of their successful achievements and are willing to share their experiences with others interested in their strategies (DAX & WIESINGER, 1998).</p>

2. OBJECTIVES

The goal of this project is to support the agricultural and rural sectors in Poland in the development and implementation of new strategies aimed at both creating a healthy rural economy and ensuring the protection of the natural environment. One aspect of predominant importance is the enhancement of endogenous development ²⁾ strategies, which is based on the development and enhancement of local or regional economies focusing on location-specific patterns of available resources. Another significant aspect will be the implementation of an integrated rural development approach in order to create positive synergies among the various aspects of rural development. The major objectives are the following:

- Being the most important land use and economic activity in rural areas, agriculture is of central importance for the further development of Poland's economy. Consequently, one of the objectives of this study is to identify options for future economic activities in rural areas, including options for economic activities in the agricultural sector as well as new income sources complementing those derived from agricultural activities.
- Another goal of this study is to support Polish rural extension services in undertaking adjustments to their advisory work that are necessary in order to efficiently address the future needs of their clients. In the course of this support, extension workers and other actors in agriculture are provided with the knowledge and tools necessary to initiate, stimulate and support activities in rural development and sustainable agriculture.
- To facilitate progress and to efficiently utilise available experience and expertise, this study also aims at actively involving Austrian experts in developing and implementing innovative strategies for Poland. Our strategy for ensuring best-possible utilisation of available expertise will focus on the transfer and adaptation of the various development strategies successfully tested and implemented in Austria. Part of this effort involved the provision of information to Polish extension workers including practical examples for ways of addressing problems faced in rural areas. Another aspect of the transfer of knowledge was to facilitate the exchange of know-how and experience among Austrian and Polish professionals and workers.

Major objectives of rural development

²⁾ The term endogenous development refers to the development and enhancement of local or regional economies focusing on location-specific patterns of available resources. These endogenous development patterns typically comprise ecology resources, available labour force and expertise and local patterns for linking production to consumption (V.D.PLOEG, 1996).

3. APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The promotion of sustainable development in agricultural and rural areas is a comprehensive process that includes the involvement of many stakeholders and actors as well as the provision and dissemination of information about the benefits associated with ecologically and economically sustainable development in order to raise awareness of the various opportunities for specific actions in everybody's work environment.

Needs of the client

In order to achieve these objectives, we take a problem-solving approach oriented towards the specific needs of the client. This approach focuses on the involvement of a variety of key actors, including decision makers, people involved in the transfer and dissemination of knowledge to rural regions (i.e. extension workers) and their clients, and other people involved in the creation and application of new expertise (i.e. University professionals). This comprehensive involvement of a range of actors, will ensure the effective dissemination and multiplication of gained knowledge in the target regions.

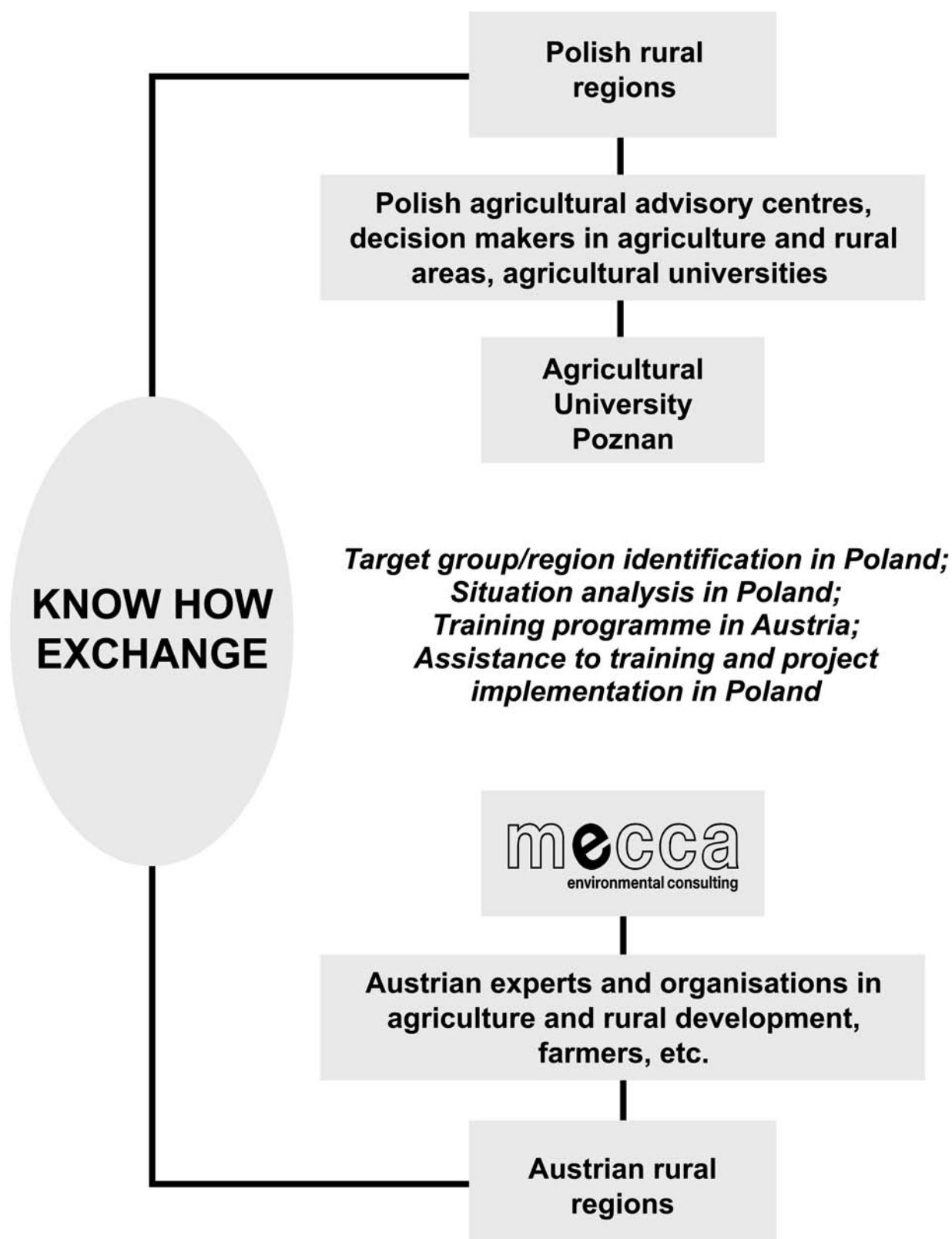
Identification of main actors

The identification of these actors, the characterisation of their specific work environments and expertise, and the identification of required additional expertise took place in the beginning of our study. This process also involved the identification of priorities for developing and implementing our training programme in order to provide best possible contributions to the identification of viable options for Poland's rural development. In designing this training programme, we focused on the concept of 'learning by seeing', which involves study tours to Austrian projects as well as on the exchange of available experiences.

Austrian experiences

A study of the Austrian Governmental Association for Mountain Issues confirms that peasants not only significantly increased their knowledge based on information provided in the course of study tours involving comparable projects but following the study tours also created environments, which today successfully support study tours to their own projects. Another significant result of this study was that some extension workers indicated that successful initiatives tend to readily provide information to interested people whereas initiatives afraid of competition are not likely to be successful in the long run (LOIBL, 1999).

Graph 1: Methodological Approach



Characterization, measures and institutional framework of Polish agriculture

3.1 Analysis of the Current Situation

Our analysis of the current situation of Polish agriculture and rural areas focuses on the existing social and economic conditions as well as on the identification of problems faced by Polish farmers and rural dwellers. In conducting this analysis we utilised information and data available in the literature and conducted interviews with knowledgeable individuals from the Polish Agricultural Advisory Centres and the Polish Agricultural Ministry.³⁾ Specific information provided in this analysis, includes (1) a characterisation of the organisational structure of the agricultural advisory system as well as (2) a summary of measures currently planned or implemented by Poland's Ministry of Agriculture in order to address the specific requirements of Poland's future EU integration and to support the Polish agricultural sector in addressing factors currently limiting Poland's rural development. In addition (3), our analysis also provides an overview of the actual and planned institutional framework of Advisory Centres. Among the 16 Polish provinces, we selected two to serve as case studies based on our existing collaboration with the Agricultural Advisory Centres of the two regions.

3.2 Identification of Target Groups and Training Needs

In order to successfully promote new and innovative approaches to agricultural and rural development, we put considerable efforts into the identification of individuals, who are not only important stakeholders holding the experience and influence to successfully promote activities in rural areas but are also open to developing and implementing new approaches. Agricultural Advisory Centres and their extension workers form our major task group since they are responsible for the provision of new knowledge to farmers and other actors in rural regions. In addition, focusing on these centres and extension workers ensures the efficient utilisation of already existing structures which are already explicitly aimed at the dissemination of knowledge.

Focus on two provincial Agricultural Advisory centres

In order to identify and address a representative sample of extension workers, we based our approach on a thorough analysis of the organisational structure of the Polish agricultural advisory system. Based on this analysis, we focused our training programme on two provincial Agricultural Advisory Centres responsible for the provision of information to farmers and rural dwellers as well as a national Advisory Centre engaged in providing advanced training to local extension workers.

The various specific focus points of the training courses were identified in collaboration with employees of the Advisory Centres, which were also in charge of the selection of training participants.

³⁾ Interviews were conducted in the course of a visit to Poland in February 1999.

3.3 Planning and Implementation of the Training Programme

Based on information derived from efforts described above (i.e. an analysis of the current situation and identification of target groups) we designed a training programme in collaboration with representatives of all identified target groups, i.e. extension workers and other employees of provincial Agricultural Advisory Centres, ODRs (Ośrodek Doradztwa Rolniczego) and the national Advisory Centre, NACARD (National Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development). The developed series of training activities comprised five topic oriented seminars and one expert conference for Polish scientists organised in co-operation with our scientific partners from the Agricultural University of Poznań. All these seminars took part in Austria in spring and autumn of 1999. The second part of the training series involved two workshops, one for a provincial Agricultural Advisory Centres and another one for the national Advisory Centre. These workshops took part in November of 1999 in Łosiow and Krakow.

Design of the training program for rural development

3.4 Overview of Project Implementation

Graph 2: Promotion of sustainable agriculture and rural development in Poland



4 POLISH AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AREAS

4.1 Agricultural Structure

Polish agriculture in figures

Agriculture plays an important role in the Polish economy even though the share of agriculture in the country's GDP decreased since from 12.9% in 1989 to only 6,6% in 1995. There were approximately 4.7 million people working in the agricultural sector in 1995. Out of these, 4.3 million worked full-time in agriculture corresponding to 26% of the total employment. Although fluctuating, the number of people employed in agriculture is steadily decreasing and employment in agriculture fell by 4.5% from 1989 to 1995.

The agricultural sector in Poland is dominated by small-scale, low productivity private farms, which constitute 80 % of the land holdings with the average farm extending over only 6,7 ha of agricultural land. Compared to other European countries the average use of agricultural chemicals and technical machinery in agriculture is relatively low and has even decreased during the period of economic transition. Despite the limited use of substances and machinery potentially harmful to ecological resources, the current development in many rural regions leads to various environmental problems such as erosion and surface and ground water degradation threatening biodiversity and aesthetic values in addition to economic problems such as decreases in income opportunities derived from agricultural activities.

Table 1: Agricultural structures (data from 1996), Key figures of Polish agriculture, PSE = producer subsidy equivalent, Source: Business Central Europe: Survey on Agriculture, May 1998

Land Use	
Agricultural land	18, 5 Mio ha (=13,4 % of EU total agric. area)
Arable land	14,1 Mio ha
Grassland/permanent pastures	4,4 Mio ha
Forest	8,8 Mio ha
Agricultural enterprises (in % of agricultural land)	
State farms	7,3
Co-operatives	2,9
Company farms and private farms	89,8
Contribution to the national economy	
Agricultural contribution to GDP (in %)	6
Share of agricultural in employment (in %)	26
Subsidy level (PSE) in % of production	28
Share of Agriculture in exports (in %)	11
Rural population, in % of total	38

As a consequence of declining income opportunities, the economic importance of agriculture is decreasing while the proportion of the population occupied in agriculture remains very high (i.e., 26% of the total employed work force).

In comparison to other transformation economies, Poland has the highest number of private farms characterised mainly by small sized family farms. There are more than two million private farms with an average farm size of 6.7 ha, an average cattle herd of 4 animals (two of which typically are cows and an average pig herd of 8 animals. More than 50% of these farms extend over an areas of less than 5 ha but in total occupy 20% of the total agricultural area. Another 20 % of the total agricultural area is occupied by farms larger than 20 ha (i.e., an average of 63 ha), amounting to a total of 3% of all farms. More than 50% of all private farms are subsistancy farms, which produce only for self consumption.

The landscapes of the northern and western regions of Poland used to be characterised by numerous state owned farms that occupied a significant proportion of the total agricultural land. In 1990 state owned farms amounted to almost 40% of the total agricultural land in northern and western parts of Poland compared to the national average of 18%. Although most of this land is still state owned, many properties are now managed by private entities. This shift in the management structure let to a reduction of governmentally managed land from 1990 around 20% in to 7.3 % in 1996. Today, private farms are the dominant feature of Polish agriculture particularly in the central, southern and eastern regions of the country.

The structure of Polands agriculture

State owned farms and private enterprises

4.2 The Rural Economy

4.2.1 Economic Situation of the Rural Population

Using the OECD classification of rural areas, Poland can be described as a rural country, with 38% of the population living in communities of densities lower than 150 people / km². A significant percentage of the people (i.e.,81% of the total population of Poland) live in 'predominantly rural' or 'significantly rural' regions. The lowest population densities can be found in the central and south-eastern regions of Poland where more than half of the total population live in communities with densities of less than 150 people / km². Another interesting aspect of the population characteristics of Poland is that of the age distribution in rural and urban areas. Today, the average age of the population is higher in rural areas largely due to the relocation of younger people from rural areas to metropolitan centres.

Economic situation of rural Population

The rural Voivodships (i.e. Polish provinces) vary greatly in their structure, economy and demography. In general, Regions where much of the land was historically managed as large state collective enterprises, tend to have high unemployment rates when compared to the national average caused by the privatisation of state farms, decreases in the agricultural workforce associated with rationalisation measures, and few job alternatives in the region.

Productivity of farms

Due to the high level of technical expertise and commercial management and productivity, the agricultural outputs of big privatised farms tend to be higher than those of very small individual holdings. Despite the relatively high agricultural productivity, however, the regions tend to be amongst the poorest in Poland due to a lack of non-agricultural economic activities. One significant consequence of this trend is the creation of a two-tier society with great disparities between families with earned income and those dependent on the state.

Agricultural labour force

In Voivodships where farms not only tend to be much smaller but have also been in private ownership for much longer periods of time, dwellers activities tend to be more diversified. Although agricultural income levels are very low, younger farm families often complement their income with non-agricultural activities, leading to a more diversified economic base. Perhaps due to the historical structure of small, individually managed holdings, the labour force is also more flexible although not necessarily any better trained. The 1996 GUS Census estimates that in Poland only 12% of the 2 million private farms derive their income from farming only. Older farmers, however are frequently entirely dependent upon their farms or state pensions and must survive on very low incomes.

Agricultural income

Agriculture is the most important income source in rural areas accounting for 44% of all jobs in the predominantly rural regions, and for 22% of the jobs in the significantly rural Voivodships. This extremely high proportion of the workforce engaged in agricultural activities is also reflected on the national level, where agricultural employment accounts for 26% of all jobs. As Poland seeks to modernise and restructure the agricultural sector without destroying rural communities, this high proportion of agricultural employment is one of the biggest challenges.

Unemployment in rural areas

As outlined above, rural areas have significantly higher unemployment rates than urban areas. Although national unemployment rates have decreased to 10.5% in 1997, unemployment rates in rural areas have increased. According to official data, unemployment rates in some rural Voivodships are as high as 30%. These data, however, do not account for 'hidden unemployment' not reflected in official statistics and actual unemployment rates in rural areas tend to be even higher.

4.2.2 Factors Limiting Rural Development

Rural areas in Poland suffer from a number of constraints that not only tend to limit development in these areas but also exacerbate the isolation and remoteness of rural areas. Below, we describe the major factors limiting rural development:

Dispersed settlement patterns tend to make the provision of infrastructure and services in rural areas difficult, leading to a lack of access to transport, which exacerbates the disparities between rural and urban centres. In addition, existing infrastructure is often of poor quality further limiting the possibilities for development. Today, the existing road network is in bad condition and many villages do not have a tarmac access road. As a consequence, almost 20% of the farmers face difficulties cultivating their lands due to poor access.

Lack of rural infrastructure

Several years ago, the Ministry of Telecommunication implemented a programme aimed at the extension of the existing telephone network in rural areas. Despite these efforts, the number of telephones in rural areas is still extremely low, amounting to only 5 telephones per 100 people.

In 1994 a programme was implemented to support the necessary improvements in sanitation infrastructure in rural areas. Despite some successes of the programme, the country still faces major problems associated with insufficient or not existent waste water treatment leading to a deterioration of the quality of surface and groundwater resources. Today, almost half of the rural population derives drinking water from private wells, 66% of which do not meet drinking water standards due to high levels of nitrate and bacterial contamination. In addition, poor water quality has affected many public wells with 17% of the piped water in rural areas failing to meet drinking water standards.

Rural development programme

Despite ongoing investment in waste water infrastructure, only a few rural villages are currently connected to mains drainage and 74% of the total sewage consisting of human and animal waste from farm holdings remains entirely untreated. In 1993, the total length of waste water utility lines in rural areas amounted to less than 3% of the county's waste water pipelines.

A major handicap for rural people, which has knock-on effects throughout the entire rural economy is access to the education system. In rural areas schools are typically available to local children under the age of 15. In order to obtain additional education, children are often forced to travel to secondary or vocational school, leading to significant financial burdens on families. Although tuition is typically not required, families must not only absorb expenses for travel but also for accommodation since it is often not possible to commute from rural areas on a daily basis. This additional burden on the rural population significantly reduces the numbers of students, who continue their education beyond the age of 15. More than half of all farmers (i.e., 58%) have no secondary-level education and lack any formal agricultural training.

Lack of education

Agricultural schools offer only limited curricula

Amongst those who do complete their secondary education, agricultural vocational schools are the most common choice, as they tend to be the closest and most easily accessible. Unfortunately, their limited curricula frequently do not offer the best preparation for young rural people, who will have to address the challenges to come. A study on agricultural schools concluded that these schools should be upgraded to the status of secondary schools and their curricula should be broadened to prepare students for a wider range of jobs (e.g., marketing and business management), rather than concentrating predominately on farming. Findings of this report have, however, not yet been implemented.

Individuals working in agriculture are 5 times less likely to have completed any form of higher education compared to people working in other sectors. In rural areas, only 2% of the population hold a university degrees compared to 7.5% academics on the national level. Unfortunately, there are not yet any signs of adjustments to this educational imbalance although rural communes represent 38% of the total population.

Lack of an effective land registry

A considerable constraint currently limiting agricultural restructuring and modernisation is the lack of an effective land registry. At the present time there are three separate systems operated by three different ministries, none of which maintain a comprehensive and well structured land register containing all the information necessary in a market economy. This unfortunate situation causes a variety of problems in the land market, including delays in farm consolidation and restructuring processes, impossibility to proof financial security to obtain credits or loans for investment, and uncertainties among land managers about long-term strategies.

In April of 1998 the Surveyor General presented a draft programme aimed at modernising the land registry system. This programme would involve the creation of an integrated system linking together a Real Estate Cadastre containing data on physical attributes of properties, a Real Estate Register holding information on property rights and ownership, and a Fiscal Cadastre providing information on valuations and tax liabilities. While the creation of a comprehensive land registry system is not only likely to efficiently address all the current shortcomings outlined above, it will take considerable time and resources to implement the new system.

Shortcomings of the agricultural tax system

Other factor limiting economic development in rural areas are associated with the currently existing agricultural tax system. Currently, farmers are exempt from income tax, unless they 1) produce certain specialised crops such as vegetables or mushrooms or 2) are engaged in non-agricultural activities in addition to farming. Instead, farmers are typically required to pay a lower 'land tax', which is collected by the Gmina (i.e., the local community). One of the consequences of this system is a lack of incentives to diversify or to develop more profitable enterprises since farmers often wish to avoid being reclassified for tax purposes. While Gmina authorities have the right to reduce land taxes in case they feel that taxes are too high for some of their farmers, the rate per hectare must remain the same for all farmers within the Gmina.

This results in a loss of income for local governments, and a restriction on their activities to the detriment of the entire community, if the rate is reduced to take account of the poorest farms.

In order to address these issues, it has been suggested to reform the agricultural tax system by switching to a system based on income levels rather than size of the agricultural land. Additional measures proposed include the introduction of a value-added tax on agricultural outputs which would permit farmers to reclaim taxes paid on their purchased agricultural inputs. One of the barriers facing these reforms is limited willingness of farming communities to adapt to a new system. Another barrier is the widespread lack of formal farm accounts. To address this barrier, some projects were implemented recently focusing on the dissemination of information on farm accounting techniques by the provincial Agricultural Advisory Centres.

New tax system in agriculture

4.3 Agricultural and Rural Policies

4.3.1 Regional Reform

In Poland, the administrative framework for policy decisions and implementation of programmes related to rural development has changed substantially over the past years. In the course of a territorial reform, which was implemented on January 1st , 1999, some of the former 49 Voivoidships (i.e., provinces) were merged to form 16 larger provinces which correspond to the EU NUTS II level regions. While the Gmina (i.e., local community) remained unchanged an additional intermediate tier of regional administration, the Poviats, was created, which is equivalent to the NUTS III level.

Regional reform in Poland

Map 2: new Voivoidships in Poland



Voivodships as new administrative units, similar to NUTS III

In addition, an administrative reform has been implemented, which focuses on the transfer of former central governmental responsibilities to the Voivoidships and Poviats. In the course of this reform, several laws were passed, which mandate measures to decentralise administrative powers transferring power to regional and local governments. This administrative reform also positively impacts local government finance through measures aimed at both creating a sound financial base for local governments and improving the potential for economic development. Today, roughly 16 % of Poland's GDP is allocated to three levels of local governments (i.e., Voivoidship, Poviats, Gmina), compared to historical expenditures, which amounted to 10 % of the GDP.

New role for agricultural actors

These changes in the structure of Poland's governmental institutions will significantly increase the importance of regional and local authorities. As a consequence, local decision makers such as mayors of rural settlements will play an important role in rural development. Specifically, mayors will have to find new and innovative ways to address existing problems in order to find solutions that best serve the interests of rural areas and their dwellers. To support mayors in their decision making process, the administrative reform also mandates measures specifically aimed at providing information and knowledge to mayors by Poviats Voivodships administrations.

4.3.2 Enhancement of Poland's Rural Policy to meet EU Standards

In April 1994 Poland officially applied for accession to the European Union, declaring the country's intend to perform structural changes in its economy. In order to develop and implement structural and rural development policies that meet EU standards, a Working Group for Structural Funds in rural development was established in the Polish Ministry for Agriculture and Food Economy. A major objective of all planned activities in the course of policy implementation is to enhance the skills of individuals who are currently involved in rural development projects or will be engaged in these projects in the future. The following medium-term activities are being planned in order to restructure rural policy to meet EU standards 4):

Creation of non agricultural employment opportunities

- Development and/or improvement of rural infrastructure, including roads, drinking water supplies, and telecommunication;
- Improvements in education and vocational training available to the rural population; and
- Provision of assistance to entrepreneurs in the establishment of small and medium sized enterprises.

Farm consolidation, amalgamation and co-operation

- Implementation of an early retirement scheme targeted at older farmers wishing to retire;
- Establishment of young farmers on those farms for which economic viability can be assured;
- Implementation of appropriate measures to promote land consolidation; and
- Provision of support in the creation of producer organisations.

Farm modernisation and support for the investment in agricultural holdings

- Improvements in the quality of agricultural products and modernisation of production processes to meet market requirements and in some cases community quality standards;
- Diversification of economic activities of the holdings focusing on the enhancement of the tourism potential and associated income sources (e.g., craftsmanship) and/or the production and direct sale of farm produce.
- Implementation of measures to reduce production costs and saving of energy;
- Improvement of living standards and work environments;
- Protection and improvement of ecological resources;

4) SAEPR/FAPA, 1998

4.3.3 EU Integration Programmes

Starting by the year 2000 the EU will double its funding to Central Europe in an effort to prepare all ten candidates for the accession to the EU (BUSINESS CENTRAL EUROPE, 1999). For each candidate country the EU has prepared documents entitled 'Partnership for Membership', which list the specific areas requiring reforms and preparatory works. For the purpose of EU extension, the union devoted 3 billion Euro to be distributed among the candidate countries. The idea is to train Central European professionals to cope with the complexities of EU bureaucracy by launching mini structural and agricultural funds (GRZYBEK, 1998). The following two programmes are part of the funding scheme:

This programme is targeted towards large investment projects such as transport, other infrastructure and environmental protection. ISPA is the most important of the new funds with 1 billion Euro available for the support of Central European Countries. Among these countries, Poland will receive an annual funding of 350 million Euro (BUSINESS CENTRAL EUROPE, 1999)

ISPA (Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-accession)

This programme aims at supporting necessary pre-accession adjustments such as agricultural modernisation and development of rural areas. Specifically, the SAPARD programmes provides funding for measures aimed at farm modernisation, improvement of food quality and food processing, and veterinary and phytosanitary supervision. Additional goals of the fund are improvements of rural infrastructure, modernisation of forestry and enhancements in the management of water resources.

SAPARD (Support for Pre-accession Measures for Agriculture and Rural Development)

Recently the SAPARD fund was expanded by the EU and now amounts to an annual budget of 0,5 billion Euro (BUSINESS CENTRAL EUROPE, 1999). Of these resources, Poland can obtain 168 million Euro for the realisation of the fund's objectives. Supplementary resources necessary to meet the goals will have to be provided by the country.

Granting SAPARD subventions must be proceeded with preparatory works, which should be reflected in a 'Long-term Agriculture and Rural Areas Development Programme' according to the union's requirements. The programme should cover a period of 7 years and it should have been submitted to the European Commission prior to June 1999. The financing of accepted proposals by the EU can amount to 25% of the total costs (GRZYBEK, 1998).

High adjustment costs for polish agriculture

Polish integration in the Union will be associated with high adjustment costs for Polish agriculture and modernisation of agrarian structures. At the present date the agricultural sector would be in need of significant restructuring, regardless of Poland's accession into the European structures. Economic transformation costs will be high but during the process of integration Poland can count on support for economic and structural changes from the Union (GORA-DROZDZ & DORZDZ, 1998).

4.3.4 Need for Measures for Environmental Protection in Agriculture

Environmental protection in Agriculture

Currently, there are no agri-environmental measures applied in Poland. The possibilities of introducing new policy tools of the type provided by the EU regulation 2078/92 represents a very important opportunity for improving the interactions between agriculture and environment ⁵⁾.

The Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Food Economy has established an Agri-Environmental Working Group, which has identified six major areas on which design efforts for agri-environmental programmes should be focused. These are:

- Education, training and demonstration projects;
- Maintenance or restoration of biodiversity in agricultural areas;
- Promotion of organic farming;
- Establishment and/or restoration of small-scale water-retention measures on agricultural land.;
- Pollution prevention and/or counteracting detrimental effects of pollution from agricultural sources; and
- Prevention or combating of soil erosion.

4.4 Organisation of the Agricultural Advisory Service

4.4.1 Decentralisation of Agricultural Extension

Agricultural Advisory centers (ODRs)

Agricultural Advise is given by the provincial Agricultural Advisory Centres (ODRs), which operate since 1991 in every Voivoidship and employ about 4700 extension workers. Due to the regional reform rural policy implementation and administration will take place on a regional level and will operate in a decentralised fashion under the control of regional authorities. The reform has far-reaching consequences for rural communities and agricultural advisory services serving these communities, which are undergoing an adaptation process to meet the new requirements associated with regional structures ⁶⁾.

The new structure of the agricultural advisory system in Poland operates on the grounds of the 'Act on Provisions Introducing the Acts on Reforming the State Administration,' of October 13th, 1998, published in Dz. U. No.133, Art. 25 par. 4, pos. 872. The Act stipulates that, as of January 1st 1999, the responsibility for Agricultural Advisory Centres shall be taken over by the Governors of respective provinces in accordance with the new administrative division of Poland. This applies to all agricultural centres except for six centres which shall report to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Economy and form the basis for the National Advisory Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development or NAC-ARD.

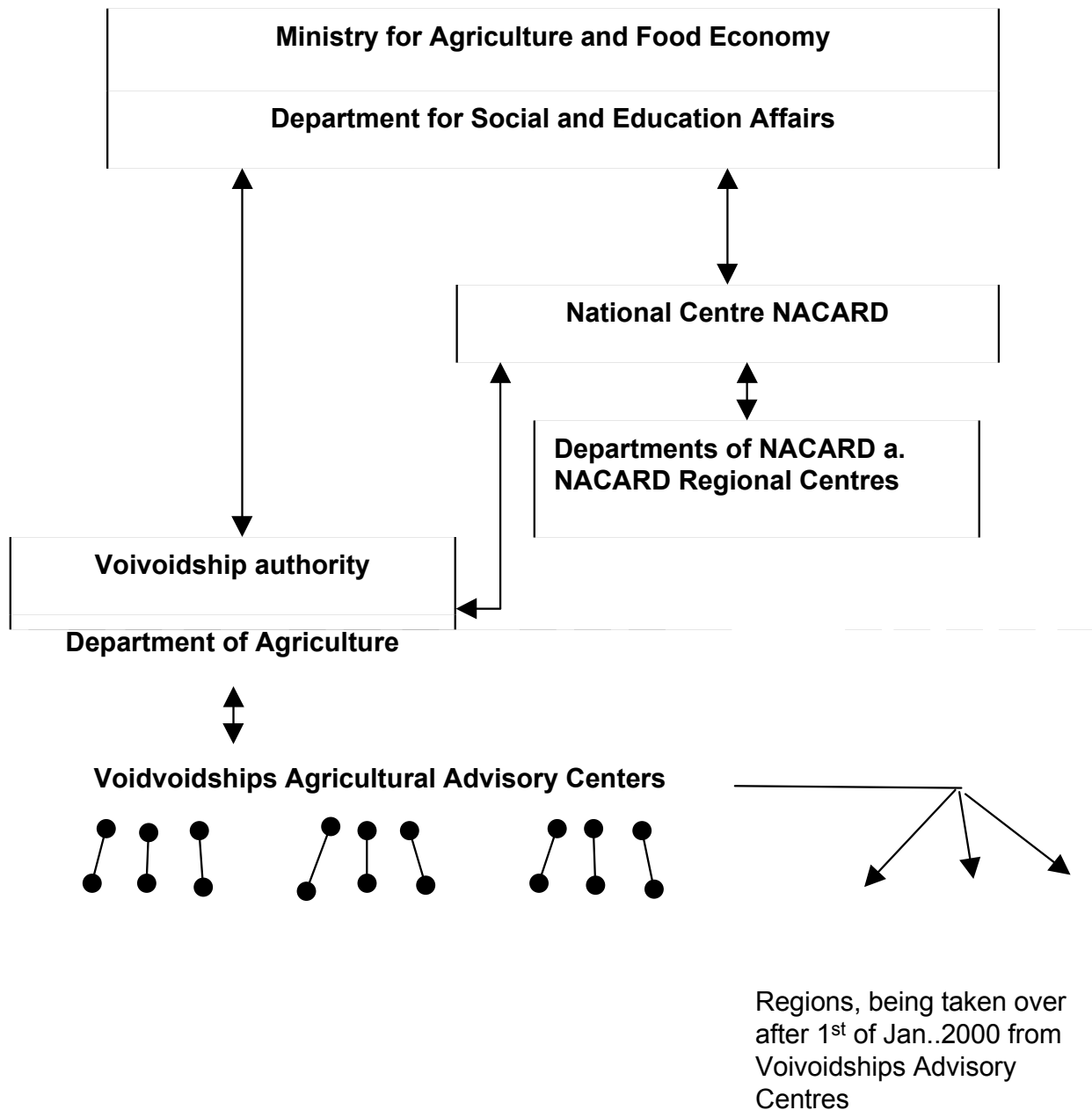
5) Zdanowicz, 1997

6) NACARD, 1999

The National Centre consist of the headquarter located in Brwinów and two branches located in Pozna and Kraków as well as six Regional Centres in the following 6 voviodships: Barzkowice - Zachodnio-Pomorskie Voivodeship, Poświętne - Mazowieckie Voivodeship, Przysiek - Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship, Radom - Mazowieckie Voivodeship, Stare Pole - Pomorskie Voivodeship, Wrocław - Dolnośląskie Voivodeship.

Agricultural Advisory Centres: The National headquarter and the six regional centres

Graph 3: Organisational Scheme of the Agricultural Advisory System



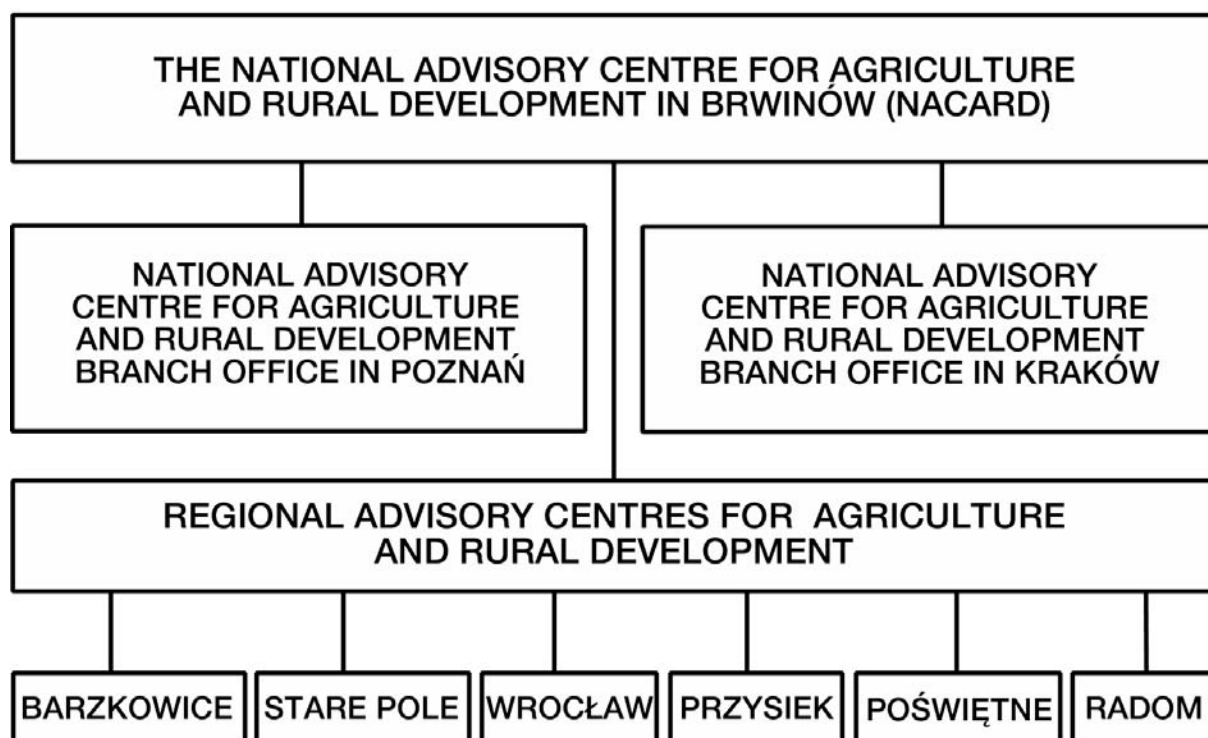
National Advisory Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development (NACARD)

The National Advisory Centre for Agriculture and Rural Development (NACARD) reports to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Economy and co-operates with other units in implementing agricultural and rural state policy in order to accelerate the adjustment to free-market conditions.

The remaining 43 Advisory Centres (i.e., the Voivodships Agricultural Advisory Centres) report directly to the Governors of the sixteen new provinces. In each Voivodeship there is at least one Advisory Centre and in the provinces with several centres, one Advisory Centre is selected to co-ordinate the activities of the others.

Graph 4: The national advisory Center for agricultural and rural development

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



4.5 Opole Voivoidship - Case Study Region

The Opole Voivoidship is situated in the south-west of Poland at the border to the Czech Republic. It extends over an area of 9,420,000 km² accounting for 3% of the total Polish area. The region has around one million inhabitants, 47% of which about live in rural areas. The population comprises some minorities including repatriates from the former eastern Polish regions, settlers from central Poland and a German minority, consisting of people who did not leave the former Schlesia. The Opole region counts 65 communities in total and is comprised of 901 villages. The urban land-use constitutes 8.535 km² in total.

In the course of the administration reform, Voivoidships received their own administrative structure. Because of its economic importance, Opole obtained its regional status after the administrative reform and was not merged with other regions to form a larger administration unit.

Characteristics of the Opole voivodship

Map 3: Opole Voivoidship



Location in Poland



The agricultural development of Opole

After the first elections of a regional parliament in October 1998 the Opole Voivoidship established its own administration with its own budget and numerous new competencies. Due to the good quality of soils and a relatively mild climate, agricultural production conditions are good. Of the total agricultural land (i.e., 5.335 km²) the arable land constitutes 82 % and grassland and pastures constitute 17 %. Orchards and horticulture on the other hand are relatively little developed. In the animal husbandry the main sector is pig production followed by cattle production. Although the milk production has been decreasing gradually since 1989, the region still provides over 288 millions litre of milk annually.

About 64 % of the agricultural land is cultivated by small family farms, with an average farm size of 8 ha. A recent trend in structural adjustments led to a reduction in the number of farms from 48 thousand to 43 thousand from 1988 to 1996. 32 % of the Opole population is working in agriculture and only one fifth of the agricultural work force manage to live solely on their farm income.

Opole Schlesia has a high potential for developing rural tourism due to its large and closed forests that contain attractive remnants of original vegetation, rich water resources including a high number of ponds, the Opava range, palaces and a well preserved tradition of the Schlesien Folklore. This abundance of natural and cultural resources is also reflected in the high percentage of protected areas which include two landscape parks, 20 nature protection areas, and more than 250 thousand ha protected landscape areas.

4.6 Kalisz Region - Case Study Region

The Kalisz region, an independent Voivodship before 1999, now belongs to the large Wielkopolska Voivodship situated in western Poland. The area of the Kalisz region is 6,512 km², and it is 21.8% of the total Wielkopolska. The Kalisz region consists of 58 communities with a total of 20 towns and 1343 villages. Currently 723,500 people live in the region and 58% of the total population are members of the potential working force. As much as 36% of the working population is currently employed in agriculture.

Map 4: Wielkopolska Voivodship



Characteristics of the Kalisz Region

Location in Poland



The agricultural production in Kalisz region is relatively well developed and agricultural land extends of as much as 443.200 ha. Of this area, arable land accounts for 367.255 ha, orchards for 4.198 ha and grasslands for 71.708 ha. The major crops are cereals, potatoes and sugar beets with annual agricultural yields of 3,1 t / ha, 18,1 t / ha, and 41,2 t / ha, respectively. Average yields for all major crops are higher than the country average with the cereal yield being 9,9% high than the country average, and the potato yield and sugar beets yields being 13,8% and 11,3% higher, respectively.

Well developed agriculture

In the animal husbandry the main sectors are pig production (206,8 heads per 100 ha of agricultural land) and cattle production (50,9 heads per 100 ha of agricultural land). The milk production has been decreasing gradually since 1989. Nevertheless the region provides over 2,4% of Poland's milk.

Private farms constitute 88,7% of the total agricultural land. The average farm size is 8,3 ha, a size that is comparable to the other 4 regions of Wielkopolska. Although private farms are small and agriculture still requires modernisation yields are relatively high.

The Kalisz region is very poor in woodlands with merely 23,4% of the total area constituting forests and other wooden areas. Correspondingly, the Kalisz region has little natural land and just one landscape park between Kalisz and Wrocław regions.

5 TARGET GROUPS AND SPECIFIC TRAINING NEEDS

5.1 Agricultural Extension Centres and Their Clients

**Agricultural Advisory
Centre Łosiow (Opole
Voivoidship)
Agricultural Advisory
Centre Marszew
(Wielkopolska
Voivoidship)**

In search for new strategies and solutions for their clients, Polish agricultural advisors are very interested in European countries, which had to tackle similar problems in the past. Austria's agricultural structures are comparable to those of Poland's private agricultural sector, which is characterised by small family farms many of which depend on income sources in addition to farming. Due in part to these similarities a good co-operation between MECCA Environmental Consulting and two provincial Agricultural Advisory Centres has been developed over the past 10 years. In order to understand their environment of action, the two Voivoidships are described as case study regions in the above section.

The continuation of the co-operation with the two provincial Advisory Centres is founded in part on previous activities including consultant work and the organisation of seminars in Austria. This work led to the formulation of the present project which benefited from previous experiences gained during a long-term co-operation.

Goals for cooperation

The ODRs of Marszew and Łosiow are in direct contact to their clients (i.e., farmers and rural dwellers) and offer solutions to immediate problems. These problems include high unemployment rates among the rural population, low agricultural productivity and associated low income, and low quality of farm products. In order to tackle these problems the ODRs defined the following goals:

- Development of training programmes for unemployed farmers and land workers;
- Promotion of marketing initiatives and producer groups;
- Rural development (especially agro-tourism, "Dorferneuerung");
- Development of programmes and projects which meet EU structural funds criteria for rural areas; and
- Especially for the SAPARD programme - improvement of knowledge about needs for implementation and supervision

National Advisory Centres (NACARD)

An important goal of the project was the extension of co-operation beyond the two regional co-operation partners and the involvement of higher level extension (i.e., NACARD). A major task of NACARD is the education and professional training of extension workers from Polish provincial centres. Moreover it is in charge of developing a system for professional training and skill enhancement for farmers and rural communities in accordance to EU standards. The co-operation with NACARD will guarantee the professional dissemination of information in all Polish Voivoidships. Further objectives of NACARD are:

- Outlining and implementing solutions for the development of agriculture and rural areas as well as organising and promoting advisory services;
- Co-ordinating the implementation of local and regional development programmes for agriculture and rural areas including extra-curricular courses for children and teenagers in rural communities;
- Co-operating with scientific research units, centres for agricultural education and training as well as agricultural schools in organising training courses for the sector;
- Disseminating information on pre-accession assistance funds available from the EU and World Bank as well as on staff training related to EU integration.
- Co-operating with foreign partners on providing advisory activities and education for the advisory staff, teachers from agricultural schools as well as farmers and rural communities; and
- Developing a national information system and database as well as preparing analyses and forecasts for the use of advisory services and for publication.

NACARD training of extension workers from Agricultural Advisory Centers

Objectives of NACARD

5.2. Assessment of Training Needs

New responsibilities

Agricultural Advisory Centres of the Voivodships, ODRs and the national Advisory Centre, NACARD have to face new challenges associated with the shift from a mere agro-technical advisory service to a wider area of responsibilities. Consequently, agricultural extension centres have to train their staff in order to take over these new responsibilities.

Conditions for extension workers

- Low productivity farms with an average farm size of 6,7 ha
- Relatively low quality of agricultural soils with 1,5 -1,8 Mio ha considered not suitable for agriculture
- Environmental problems associate with erosion, and surface and ground water degradation
- Very high proportion of the total population (i.e., 26%) employed in agriculture with merely 12 % of private farms deriving their income exclusively from farming
- High unemployment rates in rural areas (i.e., 17,7% of the total rural population)
- Lack of infrastructure (e.g. bad road conditions)
- Low education of rural population with 58% of all farmers having no secondary-level education.

In the course of this project, we identified the kind of expertise necessary to fulfil future responsibilities of extension workers and negotiated the content of the training programme with the two provincial Agricultural Advisory Centres in Łosiw and Marzew and the Poznań and Krakow branches of the National Advisory Centre. The following training subjects have been agreed on:

Training subjects

- Additional income sources for small farms
- Rural development strategies in marginal areas
- Ecological Agriculture
- New requirements of extension in rural areas
- Agri-tourism

6 TRAINING PROGRAMME

6.1 Design

During a visit to Poland in February 1999, the training programme was designed in close dialogue with the following co-operation partners: Agricultural University of Poznań, ODR Łosiw and ODR Marshew, NACARD Krakow and Poznań branch and Ekoland from Wroclaw. The specific contents of particular courses were discussed and decided in collaboration with the Polish co-operation partners. In the choice of contents, the results of the analysis of the current situation and the interviews with co-operation partners played an important role.

Design of training programme

It was agreed to implement the programme in two phases. The first phase of the project was to take place in Austria and the second phase in Poland. The aim was to provide extension workers with a range of know-how and tools that will help Polish farmers and rural dwellers to overcome existing socio-economic problems and to build on emerging possibilities in course of EU integration.

It was decided that extension workers shall also be informed about the institutional framework of rural development in Europe, including EU policies for rural areas and associated implementation measures in EU member countries. Austria's strategies towards agriculture and rural development shall be used as examples of approaches that proved to be successful.

To each course one or two Polish co-operation partners were assigned to be responsible for the organisation in Poland, including the invitation and selection of participants.

Table 2: Design of the Training Programme - Overview

	Courses	Goal	Place
Phase 1	Expert conference	Reach a broad understanding and acceptance of the interactions between sustainable agriculture and rural development among scientists involved in the creation of new knowledge	Austria
	5 Subject oriented study tours	Supply extension workers, decision makers and other actors in rural areas with ideas for rural development projects and the tools for implementation.	Austria
Phase 2	2 Workshops in Poland	Consolidate the gained knowledge and prepare support in the implementation of projects in Poland	Poland

6.2 Implementation

Training courses in Austria

The start of the course series was organised as expert conference, in which scientists from seven different Polish agricultural universities and the heads of co-operating Advisory Centres participated. One major goal of the conference was to discuss Polish agricultural and rural problems in the course of the EU integration and possible solutions developed in Austria. Another goal was to promote sustainable development strategies in agriculture and rural areas among actors who are involved in the creation of new knowledge. Specifically scientists were informed about alternative ways in order to develop possible implementations in Poland.

The major part of Phase 1 was a series of training courses in Austria that focused on 5 subject oriented seminars with a duration of 3 ~ days each. Specific emphasis was put on the demonstration of practical examples of rural development strategies such as projects in which farmers and rural dwellers were actively involved. This involvement of clients in the practical examples ensured that Polish trainees could relate to the examples given.

Workshops in Poland

In the second phase (Phase 2) two workshops took part in Poland. The major goal of these workshops was the consolidation of the knowledge on specific rural development strategies gained during Phase 1, project implementation and management. Specific emphasis was put on creating a positive environment which motivates participants.

6.3 Detailed Contents of the Training Courses

Table 3-1: Topics of expert conferences

Subject	Participants	Content	Outcome & feedback
Sustainable agriculture and rural development	Scientists from Poznań, Warsaw, Wrocław, Cracow, Lublin, Bydgoszcz and Szczecin Agricultural Universities	EU integration process Special problems and challenges in Poland, Successful Austrian strategies; Agri-environmental measures; Strategies in rural development	Publication of the conference proceedings 'Sustainable agriculture and rural development in the enlarged EU' as an independent volume of the scientific journal of the Poznań Society for the Advancement of the Arts and Sciences. Also articles in 'Wieści'.

Table 3-2: Topics of the seminar programme

Subject	Participants	Content	Outcome & feedback
Additional income in agriculture	extension workers from Maršev and Łosiw ODRs, representatives of farmers union and voivodship administration	How to support farmers innovation and co-operation; Farmers processing and marketing cooperations; Farmers co-operations with other rural sectors ("Maschi-nenringe", school milk, tourism); Quality production and ecological sound production of cereals; Farmers product innovations	Highly relevant issue, especially for provincial ODR extension workers, because these subjects are a priority in current extension work. Trainer material 'How to support farm initiatives' was published in Polish 'Kreowanie dodatkowych źródeł dochodów w gospodarstwie rolnym'. Also articles in "Rolnik kaliski" and "Kurier rolniczy". The professional report of the seminar was prepared by participants and distributed among ODR staff. Series of meetings, seminars and trainings with utilisation of the knowledge following the training.
Ecological agriculture	Ecoland farmers, agricultural teachers and marketing agents	Development of ecological agriculture in EU, incl. guidelines and subsidies; Marketing of eco-products: direct marketing, co-operative marketing, consumer information	Did not receive as much attention as expected, especially not from extension centres. Only few Ecoland members participated, who required more information on ecological farming methods than marketing.
Promotion of Rural development	Extension workers from NACARDs	Promotion of rural development in EU and successful strategies in Austria Organisation and role of advisors in rural development, Meeting and discussions with rural development managers "Dorferneuerung", revitalisation of wineries, farmers project with horse riding facilities, farmers landscape project, fruits marketing co-operation. landscape project, fruits marketing co-operation.	Highly relevant issue NACAR extension agents. Special attention received the organisation of rural development advise and extension methods in project implementation.
Extension in rural development	Extension workers from ODRs, NACARD and representative from local authorities	Promotion of rural development in EU , successful strategies in Austria, role of advisors in projects Discussions with rural development managers Farmers processing and marketing co-operation, Dorferneuerung, agritourism with horse riding facilities, agritourism concept of the region "Mühlviertler Alm"	Highly relevant issue for both NACAR and ODR extension workers. Special interest received the discussion with regional managers and other project advisors. The approach to rural development became especially clear when illustrated through presented projects. Articles in "Rolnik kaliski" and "Kurier rolniczy" on this specific issue were published. The professional report of the seminar was prepared by participants and distributed among ODR staff. Series of meetings, seminars and trainings with application of the knowledge.
Agrotourism	Extension workers from NACAR with some clients	Successful promotion of tourism in rural areas (example from Waldviertel), rural tourism associations and their criteria Discussion with rural tourism experts, projects on farms involved in rural tourism, youth (schools) tourism, education and training for rural tourism, using local resources and specialities for tourism. Concept of the region "Mühlviertler Alm", villagers project - youth hostel, poppy and rural tourism poppy and rural tourism.	Highly relevant issue It was acknowledged that agro-tourism is a very important aspect for an integrated rural development approach with a high potential.

Table 3-3: Topics of the workshops

Subject	Participants	Content	Outcome & feedback
Rural development strategies in EU	Extension workers from NACAR Decision makers in local authorities	Role of regional managers in promotion of rural development - information exchange with an Austrian regional manager Organisation and strategies of rural development in Europe. Discussion on the types of experiences in Austria that may be useful in Poland	To learn about the possible implementation in Poland, a case study in a Polish region is likely to be conducted. This case study could be supervised by Austrian regional managers.
Extension workers for ODR Łosiów, representatives from local government	Extension workers from NACAR Decision makers in local authorities	Agri-environmental programme in Austria Rural development strategies and how to support farmers implementing projects	The Centre is specially interested in a closer co-operation with local communities from the region in the formulation and implementation of projects

Experts invited in the training course

28 experts were invited to the seminars in Austria who not only gave lectures about the specific issues of the seminars but also talked about their experiences to share their knowledge with Polish participants (see expert list in appendix). Seven of these experts were representatives from Poland, who presented information on the actual situation in Poland. In this interactive process the lectures provided the theoretical background as well as information on the framework needed in the discussions following the lectures. The contribution of the Polish experts ensured that important aspects of the problem definition that are specific to Poland were examined in the seminar and discussions.

Possible solutions were presented in form of practical project examples which were demonstrated by the involved actors (i.e., Austrian farmers, regional managers and advisors and other rural actors (see appendix). In this process, Polish trainees could see and understand options for activities leading towards rural development by gaining information on already implemented innovative projects and having direct contact to the Austrian actors involved.

Evaluation

After each seminar an evaluation among participants was carried out in order to receive feedback on the relevance of the topic, the quality of given lectures and the applicability of visited projects in future work in Poland. In total 120 extension workers, scientists and decision makers participated at the seminars. In November 1999 two workshops were organised and implemented in Poland, one (1) in collaboration with the NACARD Krakow branch and participants from the Marszew ODR and the Agricultural Universities from Poznań, Warsaw and Cracow and another one (2) in collaboration with the ODR Łosiów and participants from the Agricultural universities in Poznań and Wrocław. The workshop with NACARD focused on rural development advisory organisation and implementation. The workshop benefited from the participation of an Austrian regional manager, who presented project planning and implementation based on case studies. The workshop with ODR Łosiów focused on the implementation of sustainable measures in agriculture, different strategies in rural development and their promotion among farmers and rural communities.

6.4. Outcome and Evaluation

6.4.1 General Achievements of the Project

In the course of the project a wide range of activities were undertaken. Major achievements of the project include the following:

- Polish agricultural advisory services and training centres were supported in the extension of their advisory service to farmers and rural population strengthening activities towards sustainable agriculture and rural development. Specifically, more than 120 Polish actors in rural areas (i.e., extension workers and other experts in agriculture) could be informed about sustainable measures for agricultural and rural development in the course of the project.
- Austrian-Polish information packages on specific issues of sustainable agriculture and rural development were developed in the course of the seminars.
- A know-how exchange between Austrian and Polish actors could be fostered providing structures for a continuous international exchange of experience of local and regional institutions in Austria and Poland.
- The demonstration of successful development strategies and the exchange of experience among involved individuals could not only broaden the knowledge of extension workers on rural development strategies but also illustrated possible future perspectives for their own working areas. As a result, extension workers and rural decision makers who participated in the programme are now familiar with the concept of integrated rural development and will be able to apply this newly gained knowledge in their specific working fields.
- Due to the participation of NACARD, which is in charge of the future training of extension agents, the knowledge and ideas provided and developed in the course of this projects will be disseminated in entire Poland. In addition, the know-how and expertise necessary to prepare and implement projects in general and EU projects in particular has increased among extension agents and rural leaders. However, since this issue was only discussed on a theoretical level in the workshop sessions, extension agents and rural leaders will require further training in this field.

Achievements of the Project

6.4.2 Evaluation of Training

Among the many issues discussed the following subjects were highly accepted according to the evaluation by participants suggesting the need for more training in these areas.

- Pluriactivity and additional income creation
- Co-operative product processing and marketing
- Agro-tourism
- Dorferneuerung

Subject Oriented Training

The involvement of leaders in the seminars resulted in a very positive interaction between local leaders and advisors, involving lively discussions about the possibilities of implementing projects similar to those visited as well as future co-operation plans. Many extension workers felt that the involvement of more key persons (i.e., local leaders) in the seminar series would be desirable in order to augment the discussions on possible innovations and viable solutions.

„Dorferneuerung“

‘Dorferneuerung’ is already an issue in the province of Opole since German consultants offered workshops on this issue in the past. While these workshops focused more on the methodological approach, in the course of our project ODR extension workers were exposed to practical examples for ‘Dorferneuerung’, which further ensured the active involvement of experts and communities. One outcome of our seminars was that many participants expressed their interest in inviting experts from the Austrian Association for "Dorferneuerung" to provide consulting services to Polish communities. Another outcome was that in the future more mayors of Polish communities should be invited to participate in related study tours in order to provide them with information on the possibilities associated with ‘Dorferneuerung’.

Agro-tourism

The subject Agro-tourism, which was discussed in a seminar specifically devoted to this issue organised by NACARD Krakow branch as well as in various other seminars, received much attention from all groups. Currently agro-tourism is considered the most promising option in the field of rural development all over Poland. NACARD Krakow offers many training courses for extension workers providing advice to agro-tourism project leaders and supporting the establishment of agro-tourism associations. Therefore NACARD Krakow is very interested in the continuation of the co-operative training programme utilising Austrian experiences as practical examples.

Ecological farming

The seminar on ecological farming did not receive as much attention as expected. The generally low interest of Advisory Centres in the ecological farming approach can be attributed to both a lack of incentives for farmers and a small market demand for ecological products. Due to these limiting factors, only members from ‘Ekoland’ (i.e., a Polish organic farming association) participated in the course. Based on MECCA’s long-time experience with Polish agriculturists we understand that environmental problems are treated very seriously in Poland and EU environmental requirements are recognised as a very important issue of Poland’s EU integration process. Currently, the organic farming approach, however, seems to be considered a less important issue in the larger EU integration process. In order to promote ecological farming approaches, Poland’s farmers currently require more basic information on ecological farming methods than on the ecological product marketing.

Landscape and nature protection and sustainable agriculture was not explicitly included in our seminar series. However this issue was discussed during some of our study tours since many visited rural development projects focus on related aspects. Many of the participants showed great interest in nature protection and suggested to conduct seminars devoted to this issue in the course of a follow up seminar series.

- Establishment and organisation of rural development advise
- Extension methods in facilitating project implementation

Agricultural Advisory Centres are currently preparing to take over special tasks concerning rural development programme implementation and will participate in the development of the associated framework. Supportive pre-accession aid programme like SAPARD will further promote the implementation of such supportive structures. Consequently, the Polish agricultural advisory system is currently undergoing organisational changes in the preparation for EU integration and Advisory Centres are eager to train their employees in the new tasks. However, while new departments for rural development have already been established, the restructuring of Agricultural Advisory Centres in Poland is delayed due to ongoing negotiations with the EU. Consequently many specific requirements have not yet been identified leading to uncertainties about the specific tasks that will be assigned to representatives of Advisory Centres and extension workers by provincial and national governmental institutions.

As a consequence of these uncertainties participants in the training programme showed special interest in the establishment and organisation of structures suitable to facilitate local projects. Knowing that they will play an important role as mediators between the government and rural people, representatives of Advisory Centres and extension workers requested more information on related aspects including the organisation of advisory services, the structure of 'regional management offices', the fulfilment of EU criteria, and pre-conditions for EU funding of projects in rural areas. Training participants learned that supervising rural development projects requires approaches different to the current agro-technical advise and new expertise in specific extension methods. During the courses many trainees noted that they currently experience difficulties and obstacles motivating farmers and rural dwellers due to a lack of know-how on motivation techniques, project facilitation, and supervision of project implementation. The following major limiting factors in rural development were pointed out by the participants:

- desperation among rural people and lack of motivation;
- lack of financial resources; and
- lack of co-operation among farmers.

Landscape and nature protection and sustainable agriculture

Agricultural Advisory Centres will take over tasks concerning rural development

Knowledge and structures to facilitate local projects are needed

How to tackle current problems?

Since Austrian regional managers and rural advisors had to face similar obstacles in the past, Austrian experts discussed their experiences during the training sessions, including successful and less successful approaches to overcoming these problems in collaboration with farmers and the important role of the advisors as mediators between governmental institutions and rural people. Polish extension workers agreed that conventional advisory skills will not be sufficient to tackle current problems, stressing the need for more training in new methodologies.

Benefits for Polish participants

As noted above participating advisors benefited from the seminars in Austria since they learned about practical examples and made new and valuable contacts. The workshops in Poland at the end of the project provided additional important incentives for real and deep transformations in the advisory systems.

Success is illustrated by good feedback from Agricultural Advisory centres

The success of the project is illustrated by the good feed-back received from the directors of the Advisory Centres, who concluded that they intend to implement approaches to regional development in Poland, which are very similar to those of Austria. The director of ODR Łosiow officially announced that in the near future the technological programmes will be replaced with approaches towards rural development providing important alternatives to farmers. While we attribute the success of the seminar series to our long-term relationship to Poland during which we could establish essential contacts to advisory centres as well as to Poland's openness to innovative rural policy, the seminar program acted as an important step for ODRs which is likely to constitute a turning point in the future implementation of innovative approaches. Specific results of the seminar series are already visible in the ongoing reorganisation of the structure of ODRs include emerging separate units focusing on rural development, European integration, agro-tourism, and others important aspects. We note, however, that in order to integrate these various approaches, further training will be necessary.

6.4.3 Learning Lessons from the Training Programme

Benefits for Austrian participants

During the seminars in Austria participants not only learned about many successful examples of innovative rural development projects but also had the possibility to meet experts who are engaged in facilitating and supervising these projects. Due to this practical approach trainees could vividly envision positive changes.

The importance of pre-EU activities

However, since the projects presented to the participants are already in advanced stages, many trainees considered it hard to believe that rapid changes could be possible under actual Polish conditions. In fact many visited Austrian initiatives and projects started already long time before Austria's EU integration and received extensive support from external advisors as well as financial support. Therefore it was important to emphasise that early exposure to coherent supportive regional policy measures prior to EU integration constitute a prerequisite for successful rural development projects. ⁹⁾

⁹⁾ In Austria rural development started to be a distinct priority for regional policy in the late 1970s, 25 years prior to Austria's EU accession.

In Poland, due to the forthcoming EU integration, changes in the agricultural organisation and preparations for CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) implementations are undertaken very fast. Consequently, Polish extension workers expect the implementation of a supportive institutional framework in the near future, emphasising the urgent need for additional training in order to adequately prepare them for their new tasks.

Polish preparation for CAP

Being exposed to Austrian projects, participating extension workers realised that a major aspect of rural development is the provision of supportive legislative, administrative, and financial frameworks by public institutions in addition to the services provided by the extension workers. Within this framework the provision of consulting services to farmers will be a decisive factor and extension workers will be important actors mediating between governmental institutions and participants in rural areas.

Involvement of decision Makers

As a consequence the stimulation of mediating activities, including lobbying for regional development issues, is considered a very important aspect of regional development. Another important aspect is increasing the involvement of high profile decision makers (e.g., politicians and experts from public institutions) through the provision of high quality information to this group in order to raise awareness and to promote support by governmental institutions. Especially decision makers in the regions (i.e., mayors and representatives of local authorities) should be better integrated since they are the main actors in their communities, who will be responsible for implementing rural development projects.

Stimulation of lobbying activities for regional development

Scientists participating in the expert conference proposed to invite Polish politicians and Austrian experts to an expert conference taking place in Poland. This conference would serve as an important part of an information campaign on rural development strategies and environmental measures in agriculture.

Trainees have learned that specific issues in rural areas such as agro-tourism, sustainable farming, direct marketing and other innovative approaches have to be integrated in the larger context of a rural development policy since all these strategies act as complementing factors forming part of a comprehensive strategy. This synergetic effect of all rural initiatives was illustrated in the seminars through the presentation of successful examples of projects following this integrated approach.

Understanding rural development as an integrated approach

Experiences from Austria

The major purpose of the presented Austrian project examples was the provision of a pool of ideas for rural development strategies. Consequently one major objective of this training was the stimulation of the learning process based on examples of new and innovative strategies rather than the provision of ready-made solutions. Considering those examples and discussing their possible implementation in Poland contributed significantly to the understanding of underlying concepts but also highlighted the need to adapt Austrian approaches according to the specific conditions and circumstances in Poland. Provided with many examples of viable projects throughout the seminar series in Austria, many participants wondered how to implement these types of projects in Poland considering Poland's different historical, social and political environment. This adaptation of the presented projects to suit the specific needs in Poland was the main subject of the two workshops in Poland. However, except for some lectures on facilitation methods, project implementation and management this issue did not receive the expected feed-back highlighting the need for further information on this issue.

6.4.4 Need for Know-How Consolidation in order to Implement Projects in Poland

How to continue?

Polish participants generally agreed on the importance of receiving further training focusing on the specific approaches suitable to implement rural development projects in Poland. In the course of these efforts local initiatives in Poland should be analysed in order to develop ideas on how to support these initiatives. In addition, the seminars in Austria should be continued providing further support in the implementation of activities in Poland.

Future seminars

Concerning future seminars in Austria, our Polish co-operation partners expressed the wish to receive more detailed information prior to the seminars such as detailed information on the issues of the seminars and on the projects to be visited in order to improve the overall efficiency of the seminars. This information will help them to organise preparatory meetings for Polish participants in which specific questions will be formulated in advance. In the course of the training programme extension workers learned that future advisory services for the rural population will have to be more project oriented. This project-oriented approach will be especially important in terms of receiving additional funding from the EU and will include the preparation of project proposals as well as on the supervision of rural communities. In order to support Advisory Centres in these tasks, the supervision of specific projects to be implemented in Poland will be significant. In supervising Advisory Centres, however, it will be of central importance to recognise the different requirements of EU projects in Poland and to adapt approaches according to these requirements.

Guide for sustainable agriculture and rural development projects

7. CONCLUSIONS

Existing plans and policies of the EU aimed at the future extension of union suggest that Poland is likely to join the union in the foreseeable future. Among a variety of issues associated with the integration process, Poland's EU accession will require significant changes in the agricultural sector in order to address the problems associated with the current agricultural structure. In the past Austria's agricultural sector faced similar problems associated with the country's EU integration process. In the course of this process, Austria developed agricultural policy approaches that not only successfully addressed these problems but also emphasised the need for socially and environmentally sustainable development. In order to ensure socially and economically stable structures and environmentally sound development in Poland, the EU is interested in promoting the re-structuring of Poland's agricultural sector. Our project serves as an example of an approach in which an EU member country shares its experiences in order to facilitate the development of appropriate strategies in Poland. One important aspect of this approach is an increase in the efficiency of Poland's strategies towards rural development. Another significant aspect is an improvement in the understanding of the various cultural environments as a consequence of the collaboration in developing strategies.

Our approach to provide assistance in identifying sustainable agricultural and rural development strategies is based on an exchange of experiences between actors of rural regions in Poland and Austria. In this approach innovative projects that proved to be successful in addressing rural development issues in Austria serve as examples and study objects for interested Polish experts, extension workers of Advisory Centres, farmers, and other interested individuals. This international know-how exchange increases and strengthens contacts and communication among agricultural and rural development experts, which in the long run may lead to an international co-operation in developing and implementing specific projects. One important next step towards improving the international collaboration will be the identification and implementation of extension methods for rural development projects that accounting for the existing social, political, and ecological environment in Poland. Another important next step will be the development of a handbook that can be used by extension workers in order to facilitate and harmonise their activities.

In the course of the seminars in Austria but also during the workshops in Poland participants generally agreed on the relevance of the type of information provided to them. Many participants noted that the approach taken not only provided them with information on a range of practical approaches but also enabled them to further improve their know-how and to analyse the presented strategies during extensive discussions with Austrian experts.

While this project constitutes a step towards sustainable agricultural and rural development in Poland, we note that supporting Polish actors and decision makers in their search for best possible solutions will be a comprehensive long-term process. After having gained new know-how and having developed new ideas, extension workers will need additional support in their work with clients in order to develop and implement related projects. In the course of this project many potential areas of future support were identified including the further development of new extension methods and the provision of a practical hand book on extension methods and project management that can be used as a guide for the implementation of new strategies. Due to the success of the project, all co-operation partners agreed on the continuation of the co-operation. As an immediate next step, this co-operation will involve a follow up project which will focus on providing further information on extension methods and the development and implementation of projects in Poland.

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9 APPENDIX I

9.1 Participating institutions

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9.2 Calendar of Activities

Activities	1998				1999												2000							
	calendar months				09	10	11	12	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	01	02	03	04
A. Orientation period - Search for model regions and co-operation partners																								
Situation Analysis																								
Organisation of field work																								
Data-collection, interviews, review of secondary data source																								
Analysis and need identification																								
Report writing																								
C. Training programme																								
Unit 1																								
Unit 2																								
Unit 3																								
Unit 4																								
Unit 5																								
Unit 6																								
D. Workshop assisting project implementation in Poland																								
Unit 1/2																								
E. Final report writing																								

9.3 Expert List with Lectures

DI JOSEF RIEGLER, Ökosoziales Forum, former Minister for Agriculture
„Socio-ecological market economy" an Austrian concept shaping the EU agri-environmental policy

PROF. DR. HAB. RYSZARD KOSTUCH, AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY OF KRAKOW
Economic and environmental and conditions of polish agriculture and rural areas
problems and expectations in course of EU integration

DI KARL ORTNER, AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY FOR AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS
Economic effects on Austrian agriculture due to EU integration

DR. HAB. JANIA ZBIERSKA, AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY OF POZNAN
Environmental conditions of Polish rural areas - chances for sustainable development

DI THOMAS DAX, AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY FOR MOUNTAIN FARMING ISSUES
Rural development in Europe and successful strategies in Austria

DI ALOIS POSCH, AUSTRIAN MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE
Agri-environmental programme in Austria

ING. DOLESCHAL, MANAGER OF ESTATE SEEFELD-KADOLZ
The effects of EU integration and agri-environmental measures on big farms

MAG. JOLANTA PRZETAKIEWIEZ, ODR MARSZEW, PL
The role of polish extension in the promotion of additional income in agricultural

ING. KARL FRIEWALD, LAKO - AGRICULTURAL COORDINATION OFFICE NÖ
Farmers innovation and co-operation supported by LAKO

DI ERNEST REISINGER, AGRARBEZIRKSBEHÖRDE NÖ
„Landentwicklung" - rural development projects creating additional income sources in agriculture

DI ELISABETH LOIBL, AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY FOR MOUNTAIN FARMING ISSUES
Conditions for the support of farmers income alternatives

MAG. ANDREA GRUBER, MECCA ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTING
Facts and figures about agriculture in Austria

DR. LUDWIG MAURER, BOLZMANN INSTITUT FOR ECOLOGICAL AGRICULTURE, VIENNA
Development and role of ecological agriculture in Austria, success factors and perspectives

DR. JANUSZ JEDRZEJCZAK, EKLOLAND WROZLAW; PL
The actual situation of ecological agriculture in Poland, problems and future perspectives

ING. ANDREAS KARL, ERNTE VERBAND NÖ
Direct marketing of ecological farms and its organisation in Austria

JOHANN ACKERL, ÖKOLAND GMBH., AUSTRIA
Bulk marketing and export of ecological products

PETER SITZWOHL, ARGE BIOLANDBAU, VIENNA
Consumer information and public relation for ecological product

DR. EDWARD MATUSZAK, HEAD OF NACARD POZNAN, PL
Actual supportive instruments for agriculture and rural areas in Poland

DR. HANNES SCHAFFER, MECCA ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTING
Austrian extension organisation in rural development and regional areas

DI GISELA ZECHNER, TRAINER FOR PROJECT MANAGEMENT
The role of extension in rural areas

MAG. PRZEMO LECYK, NACARD POZNAN
Strength and weaknesses of rural areas in western Poland for a sustainable development

DR. HANNES SCHAFFER, MECCA ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTING

Promotion of Rural Development in Europe and successful strategies in Austria
DI HERMANN HANSY REGIONAL MANAGER OF THE WEINVIERTEL-MANAGEMENT

Role and regional managers in rural development, sector overlapping projects

DI MARTIN SCHABL, CONSULTANT FOR 5B PROJECTS, REGIONAL MANAGEMENT WEINVIERTEL

Consultant work in promoting farmers co-operation and farmers projects funded by EU

MAG. ELZBIETA KMITA, NACARD KRAKOW

Situation of Agri-tourism promotion in Poland

MAG. WALTER PÖTSCH, TOURISM TEAM AUSTRIA, RURAL TOURISM CONSULTING Integrated approach of rural development including rural tourism of the Leader region "Mühlviertler Alm"

REINHARD GREINDL, HEAD OF THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT OF WALDVIERTEL-MANAGEMENT

Promotion of Tourism in rural areas - Waldviertel, an example

MARIA FÜHRER, HEAD OF THE HOLIDAYS ON FARMS ASSOCIATION NÖ

Introduction of the Association "Urlaub am Bauernhof" - Holidays on Farms: categorisation, marketing, organisation

JOHANN SCHIERHUBER, HEAD OF THE "BÄUERLICHER GÄSTERING OTTENSCHLAG, NÖ

Introduction of the "Bäuerlicher Gästering Ottenschlag" and the project "country-side weeks for schools"

DI HERMANN HANSY, REGIONAL MANAGER OF THE REGION "WEINVIERTEL", AUSTRIA

The role of regional managers in promoting rural development in marginal areas ,which experiences from Austria are useful for polish situation

DR. HANNES SCHAFFER, MECCA ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTING, AUSTRIA

Organisation and strategies of rural development in Europe - experiences from Austria

MAG. ANDREA GRUBER, MECCA ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTING

Austria's agriculture and agri-environmental measures in agriculture

9.4 Publications

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