

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CROSS-COMPLIANCE POSSESSED BY FARMERS FROM OPOLSKIE VOIVODSHIP

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Abstract. In the article there were presented the results of survey conducted in 2011, among 250 farmholders in the area of Opolskie Voivodship. The aim of research was determination of knowledge about cross-compliance possessed by agricultural producers from Opolskie Voivodship and consequences resulting from its realization. On the basis of research it is possible to state that the level of agricultural producers' knowledge, regarding cross-compliance, is not satisfactory and, therefore, requires immediate filling. Investigation constitutes the part of broader research project involving the authors' examination of the knowledge possessed by agricultural producers from south-west Poland about the mentioned subject. The articles published so far have referred to the knowledge about cross-compliance possessed by agricultural producers from Lower Silesia and Łódzkie Voivodship.

Key words: cross-compliance rules (requirements), Common Agricultural Policy, protection of rural environment, agriculture, Lower Silesian Voivodship

INTRODUCTION

Introduction by the European Union of Single Payment System (SPS) involving three models of payment: regional, historic and hybrid (mixed), results in the fact that obtaining funds, within the frames of the payment featuring independence from the production size and structure, makes agricultural producers meet the requirements constituting the mechanism called cross-compliance.

Instrument cross-compliance, brought to life by the European Union during the summit in Luxembourg (26th June 2003), has been realized in Poland since 1st January 2009,

while full implementation of all the requirements regarding cross-compliance will take place in 2013 [Borkowska and Kruszyński 2011].

So far there have been implemented regulations dealing with the requirements of Area A, involving animal identification and registration, as well as the issues regarding protection of natural environment (1st January 2009) and of Area B, dealing with public health, animal health and plant health (1st January 2011). The requirements of Area C, connected with animal welfare, will come into force on 1st January 2013.

Introduction of cross-compliance into Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), as well as agro-environmental programs, is continuation of CAP reform which aims at mercantilization of agricultural sector and, first of all, increasing the importance of environmental protection policy within agricultural policy of the whole European Union. This thesis has been confirmed by Dacian Cioloș, commissioner for agriculture and rural development, who said: “CAP is something more than only policy for farmers. There does exist apparent relation between agriculture and natural environment, biodiversity, changes in climate and sustainable management of natural resources, like water and soil. There is also evident correlation between agriculture and economic and social development of EU rural areas” [Cioloș 2010].

The task of cross-compliance implementation is to support the idea of sustainable agriculture [Berling 2007] in order to protect natural environment through rational management in agriculture, ensure food safety, as well as to secure appropriate conditions for domestic animals breeding.

Cross-compliance mechanism is not limited solely to the question of direct payments, since meeting its requirements also applies to beneficiaries making use of funds available within the frames of Rural Development Program for the years 2007–2013. It especially refers to the following activities:

- supporting farming in mountain areas and other less favourable areas (LFA),
- agro-environmental program (agro-environmental payments),
- afforestation of agricultural acreage and afforestation of other areas than agricultural acreage and also payments realized on Natura 2000 areas, as well as payments of animal welfare.

Implementation of cross-compliance and the requirements connected with ensuring animal welfare bring about the changes in the structure of economics in agriculture [Zegar 2007]. Realizing new requirements and instruments in the field of Common Agricultural Policy by The European Union, there should be undertaken all possible activities to maximally protect natural environment through reduction in negative influence of agriculture, yet not to forget that cost of the mentioned reduction must be offset by farmers. As an example of the discussed compensation can currently serve, among others: direct payments, agro-environmental payments, as well as payments for the production of bio-materials.

“The imperative of cross-compliance rules is a justification of direct payments, received by farmers, for non-agricultural part of the society” [Duer 2010].

One should believe that implementation of cross-compliance, forcing agricultural producers to realize pro-environmental activities, will contribute, in the long term, to reduced pressure on the environment by agriculture [Łuczka-Bakuła 2006].

The aim of this elaboration is determination of the knowledge about cross-compliance possessed by agricultural producers keeping their farmholds in Opolskie Voivodship. The purpose of research was to assess broadly-understood environmental awareness of the examined farmers.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

Research was conducted in 2011, according to the method of directed interview, using an interview questionnaire. The group of 300 farmers, keeping their farmholds in Opolskie Voivodship, was the subject of investigation. Selection of research material was of a stratified-randomized character and a criterion was keeping a farmhold of the area larger than 5 hectares of natural.

Another method used during collection of research material was systemic information analysis, based on desk research [Kędzior 2005], including elaborations dealing with national and EU legislation regarding cross-compliance.

Interview questionnaire was developed in such a way that it contained questions not only connected with knowledge and following cross-compliance, but also it referred to broadly-understood environmental awareness of farmers from Opolskie Voivodship.

Research material underwent economic horizontal and comparative analysis [Kopeć 1983]. Summary data were tabled and described. Opolskie Voivodship was deliberately selected for a research.

RESULTS OF RESEARCH

Cross-compliance condition obtaining by farmers financial aid, in the form of direct payments and others, of meeting determined requirements connected, among others, with environmental protection, as well as animal health and welfare.

In the investigation carried out in the second half of 2011 in the area of Opolskie Voivodship took part 300 agricultural producers, residing in Opolskie Voivodship and keeping there their farmholds.

Among people under examination, 51% represented farmers under 40, i.e. who can fully make use of Rural Development Program for the years 2007–2013 – it is age limit (under forty years of age) for beneficiaries in the case of: “Setting up young farmers” or “Modernization of farmholds” (activities connected with axis “Improvement in competitiveness of agricultural and forestry sector”). Men provided for 91% of surveyed people, while percentage of women in the analyzed sample was only 9%. As far as education was concerned, there dominated people with secondary vocational education (53%) and vocational education (34%); higher education was declared by 13% of the examined respondents. Among investigated farmers, 13% confirmed completing the course and obtaining the title of “qualified farmer”. The mentioned courses were organized by agricultural advisory center, lifelong learning centers, as well as by secondary schools of agricultural profile. Assessing farmers’ awareness regarding cross-compliance, it is possible to notice

immediate necessity of filling their knowledge in this field. Among 88% of the examined farmers know the notion of cross-compliance, but only 68% of them can give a correct definition connected with the analyzed problems. The level of agricultural producers' knowledge on the analyzed subject is highly diversified in particular districts of Opolskie Voivodship (Fig. 1).

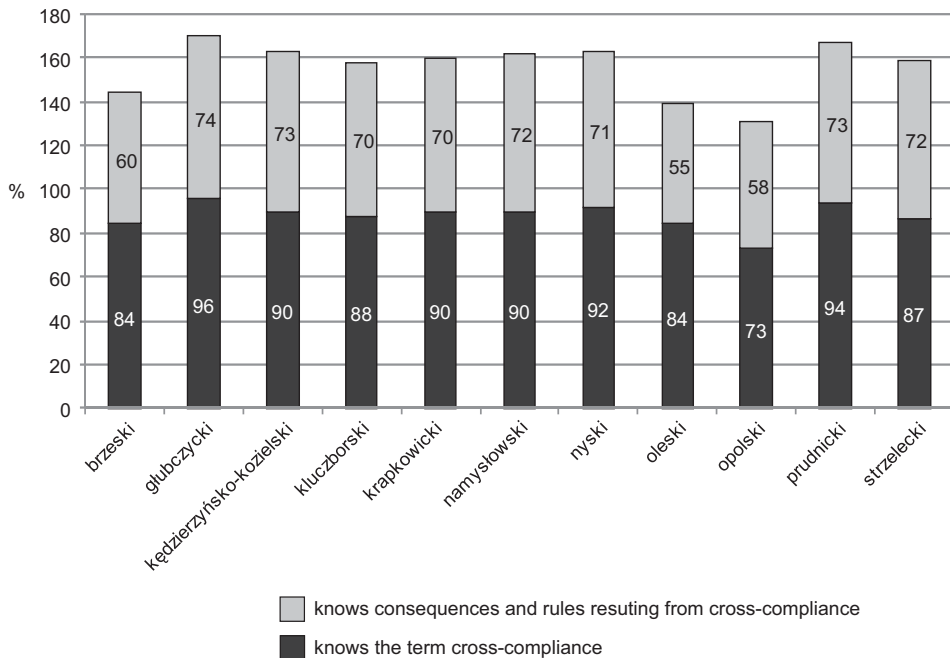


Fig. 1. Knowledge about cross-compliance in the districts of Opolskie Voivodship
Rys. 1. Znajomość zasad wzajemnej zgodności w powiatach woj. opolskiego

Source: Elaboration by the author.

Źródło: Opracowanie własne.

It is possible to notice that the broadest knowledge about cross-compliance features the farmholders from Głubczycki District, where 96% of the examined people know the notion of cross-compliance and 74% of them are able to define it properly, as well as to determine the consequences resulting from implementation of the analyzed mechanism. Satisfactory situation, regarding farmers' knowledge, characterizes the following districts: Prudnicki, Nyski, Kędzierzyńsko-Kozielski and Namysłowski (Fig. 1). However, the lowest level of awareness, connected with cross-compliance, proved to occur in Opolski, Oleski and Brzeski District, where information about the analyzed mechanism can be given by not more than 60% of the examined farmers.

Seventy nine percent of agricultural producers are aware of the existence of three areas within cross-compliance, while 57% of the respondents possess the knowledge

about the components of the mentioned areas. Eighty percent of farmers know about full implementation of cross-compliance, which is to take place on 1st January 2013 and 67% of farmers declare the knowledge about already implemented Area A, covering: identification and registration of animals, as well as the issues concerning environmental protection, and the knowledge about public health, animal health and plant health.

Further part of research consisted in checking practical side of cross-compliance, in order to become familiar with putting to practice its implementation and, therefore, to get to know how agricultural producers protect natural environment in the area of Opolskie Voivodship. It occurred that as many as 83% of the examined farmers possess the knowledge connected with the necessity of keeping records regarding plant protection chemicals used in their farmholds. Moreover, the farmers admitted that this is advantageous for them from an economic point of view, because they can compare expenditures on particular crop within longer range of time. It is also a positively surprising fact that high percentage of farmers (57%) are aware of the necessity of recording biocides. Considering the requirements connected with the storage of animal feed, majority of agricultural producers (83%) have knowledge about appropriate feed storage and are able to put their knowledge into practice (74%). The storage of domestic animals feed in stores, together with pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers or fuels, belongs to exceptional cases.

In farmholds specializing in animal production, in the field of breeding dairy or meat cattle, and also pigs, the questions were asked about the possibility of feeding with feed containing animal protein (popular in the 1990s fish meal). All the respondents confirmed their knowledge about prohibition of using that kind of feed in animal production and 3% of the examined farmers confessed that they regularly feed their domestic animals with the mentioned feed because of economic reasons and higher production efficiency.

As far as the questions about protection of wild fauna and flora, as well as natural habitats and wild birds were concerned, the farmers admitted the fact that they had heard about Birds Directive and Habitats Directive (87%), and only 49% of the examined people could give examples of requirements written down in both legal acts by the European Union.

In further part of the questionnaire the interviewers focused on the problems connected with protection of surface and underground waters against harmful effects of nitrates of agricultural origin. The farmers were asked two questions referring to:

- knowledge about so-called annual fertilization plan,
- knowledge regarding the rules of the storage of organic fertilizer (liquid manure, slurry and manure).

Answering the question about annual fertilization plan, as many as 71% of respondents correctly indicated that it must contain the following elements: plants demand for nutrients, determination of the source of fertilizers in particular production unit (farmhold) and determination of soil reaction and richness in nutrients conditioning desired efficiency. Similarly, farmers' knowledge about the rules of organic fertilizers storage proved to be of a high level, since as many as 89% of the examined people know the

assumptions of nitrate directive, 74% can give parameters of manure concrete pad and know the length of storage period of organic fertilizers.

Then came the question about minimum standards regarding Good Agricultural Practice. Ninety nine percent of the interviewees confirmed that they possessed knowledge about compliance with the prohibition of burning grass, stubble, bounds or roadside ditches, while as many as 74% of them admitted that they apply burning, mainly of roadside ditches.

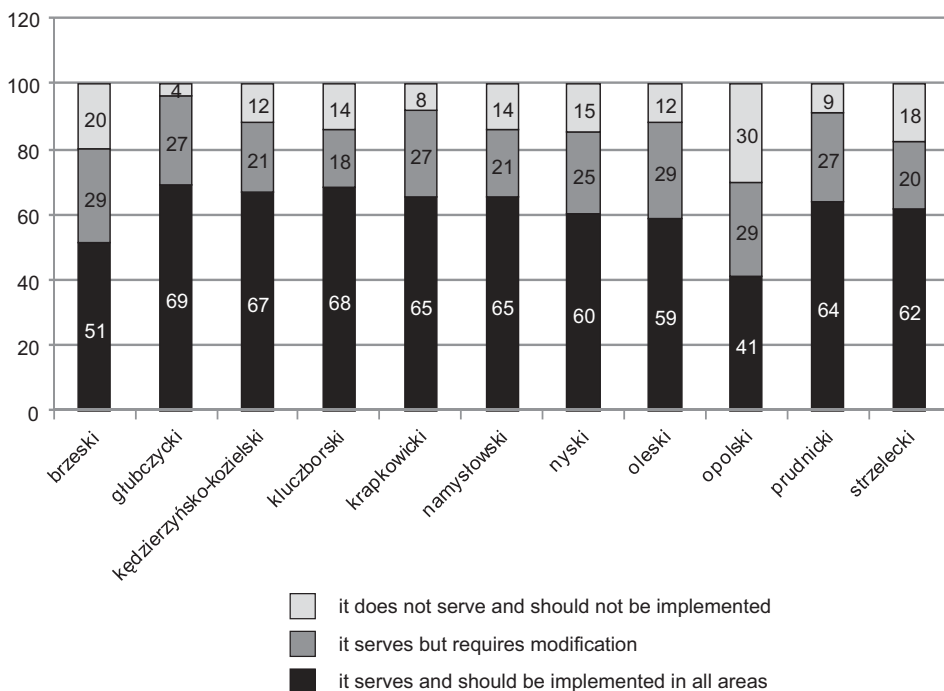


Fig. 2. Assessment of cross-compliance mechanism in the districts of Opolskie Voivodship

Rys. 2. Ocena mechanizmu cross-compliance w powiatach województwa opolskiego

Source: Elaboration by the author.

Źródło: Opracowanie własne.

The questionnaire was crowned with the question regarding the assessment of implementation of the two areas forming cross-compliance taken so far. Distribution of answers in particular districts of Opolskie Voivodship is shown in Figure 2.

The most considerable understanding for the idea cross-compliance implementation can be found among farmholders from Głubczycki District, where 69% of the respondents claimed that cross-compliance mechanism serves the improvement in natural environment of rural areas and it should be implemented, in the form of binding regulations, in all fields of issues. Głubczycki District is also the place where farmers possess the broadest knowledge about cross-compliance (Fig. 1). A satisfactory situation is also in

the following districts: Kluczborski, Kędzierzyńsko-Kozielski, Krapkowicki and Kluczborski, where understanding for the necessity of full implementation of cross-compliance is declared by over 65% of the examined agricultural producers. The highest number of opponents of cross-compliance keep their farms in Opolski and Brzeski District, 30 and 20% respectively of the examined farmholders stated that the requirements of cross-compliance do not serve protection of natural environment and they should not be implemented in Poland.

DISCUSSION

Implementation of cross-compliance has lasted too short to be thoroughly comprehended and objectively assessed, regarding environmental and economic effects of realization of this mechanism. According to the opinion by some experts, meeting the requirements specified as cross-compliance, is not connected with considerable financial outlays on the part of farmholders implementing this mechanism [Jones 2006]. Yet different opinions have also occurred: "...Beneficiaries of direct payments will have to be prepared for additional expenses connected with adjustment to the requirements of cross-compliance. Many farmholds currently benefiting from direct payments within the frames of SAPS, might be not able to finance necessary financial outlays..." [Drygas and Spychalski 2006].

Realization of cross-compliance in the A and Area B contributes to multifunctional development of rural areas through access to diversified CAP mechanisms WPR [Bisaga 2009].

Apart from positive opinions, some criticism regarding analyzed mechanism can also be heard. COPA-COGECA (Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations – General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives) claims that realization of cross-compliance results in the occurrence of uneven conditions of competition in the European Union. Doubts are connected with cost of cross-compliance implementation requirements.

CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of conducted research there can be drawn the following conclusions:

1. The level of awareness of agricultural producers from Opolskie Voivodship in the range of cross-compliance requires filling. Out of 88% of the examined farmholders, familiar with the term cross-compliance, only 68% can indicate detailed aims and requirements to be followed during implementation of this mechanism.
2. The highest level of knowledge and conviction to cross-compliance represent farmholders from Głubczycki District, where 69% of the examined farmers claim that cross-compliance mechanism serves the improvement in natural environment of rural areas and, therefore, it should be implemented in all problem areas in a binding form.

3. The fact that farmholders keep record of using plant protection products, as well as lack of drastic violation of environmental protection within their farms, is a positive phenomenon.
4. To the activities that should be immediately eliminated from agricultural practice belong: grass, stubble, bounds and roadside ditches burning, as well as rare, yet extremely dangerous, usage of fish meal in animal production.

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ZNAJOMOŚĆ ZASAD WZAJEMNEJ ZGODNOŚCI (CROSS-COMPLIANCE) WŚRÓD ROLNIKÓW Z WOJEWÓDZTWA OPOLSKIEGO

Streszczenie. W artykule przedstawiono wyniki badań ankietowych przeprowadzonych w 2011 roku wśród 250 rolników prowadzących gospodarstwa rolne na terenie województwa opolskiego. Celem badań było poznanie stanu wiedzy opolskich producentów rolnych na temat zasad wzajemnej zgodności (cross-compliance) oraz konsekwencji, jakie wynikają z tytułu ich realizacji. Na podstawie przeprowadzonych badań stwierdza się, że poziom wiedzy producentów rolnych w zakresie cross-compliance jest niewielki i wymaga

natychmiastowego uzupełnienia. Badania stanowią część większego projektu badawczego, w ramach którego autorzy pragną poznać poziom wiedzy w obszarze cross-compliance producentów rolnych z terenu południowo-zachodniej Polski. Dotychczas opublikowano artykuły nt. znajomości zasad wzajemnej zgodności wśród dolnośląskich i łódzkich producentów rolnych.

Słowa kluczowe: zasady (wymogi) wzajemnej zgodności, wspólna polityka rolna, ochrona środowiska terenów wiejskich, rolnictwo, województwo dolnośląskie

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