

# Support for Agricultural Labour Resources on the Example of Rural Areas Development in Poland

Keywords: labour resources, agriculture, Rural Development Programme, education level, trainings, consulting.

## Problem statement

Significant factors influencing the effectiveness and competitiveness of agriculture include the level of knowledge and skills of the people employed in that sector. The competences of people involved in agricultural production are also significant from the perspective of implementation of the environmental functions thereof, especially the creation of public goods, maintaining environmental resources and preventing climate change. For this reason, when examining the issues of economic conditions of agricultural development, as well as opportunities for improving environmental balance thereof the information is often referenced, which describes the education of the farming population as well as the scale participation of this group in various forms of educational and training activities. Available data indicates that level of education of people working in agricultural holdings in Poland was still low. For instance, general education on at least higher-secondary and tertiary level could be attributed to over one-third of all people working in individual farming (the value of this indicator for rural area inhabitants working outside agriculture was nearly two-thirds). On the other hand, tertiary education in agriculture was attained only by one in forty managers of agricultural holdings in Poland. Those working in agriculture were also found to not take much advantage of educational opportunities outside the school system, nor of professional consulting services.

## Research objective

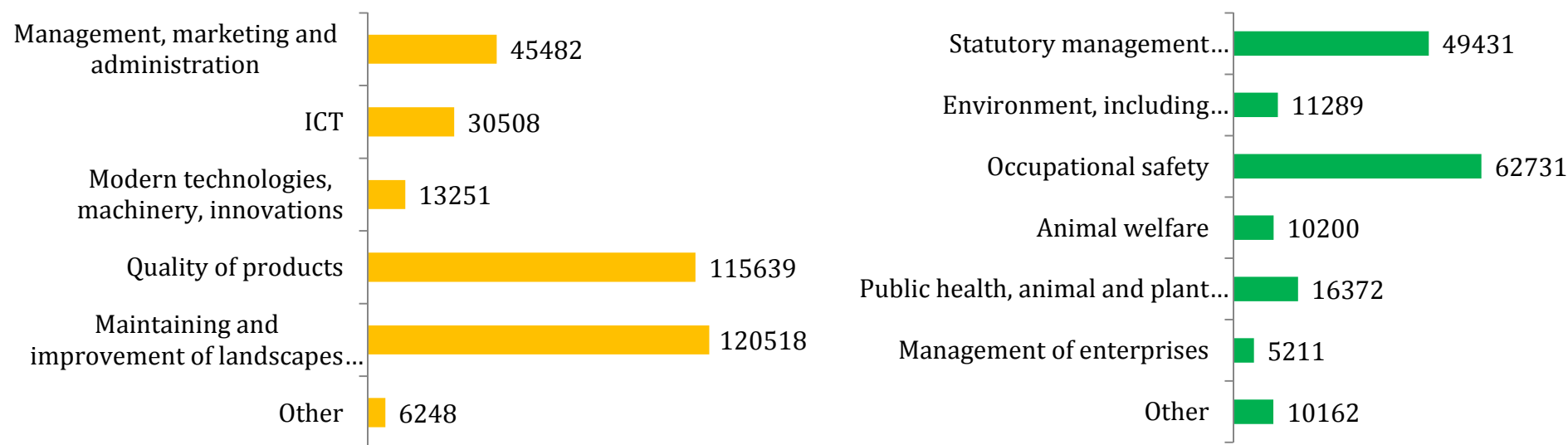
Bearing in mind the low qualifications and knowledge of people working in agriculture, programmes and instruments aimed at remedying the situation have been developed for a long time. This applies both to EU institutions and the national level. One of the instruments of improving the competences and skills for agricultural labour resources, trainings and advisorfy services offered under the CAP. The purpose of the research was to

evaluate the effects of the implementation of two measures in RDP 2007-2013 concerning professional training and advisory services in Polish agriculture. The discussion part of the research, alongside presenting the benefits and limitations of the implemented solutions, references the tools supporting knowledge and qualifications of employees of the agricultural sector under RDP 2014-2020. For the purpose of the study, public statistical data was used, as well as information on the implementation of RDP 2007-2013 in Poland, and available literature on the subject.

## Results

The gathered information indicated that in the period covered by programme intervention (i.e. 2007-2015), 14.6 thousand trainings were conducted for over 332 thousand people employed in agriculture and forestry from various thematic areas. Large interest also accompanied the use of consulting services. Under RDP 2007-2013, more than 165 thousand consulting services were rendered to 43.8 thousand beneficiaries.

Table 1. The number of participants of vocational training for persons employed in the agriculture (left side) and number of approved applications for advisory services for farmers (right side) in Polish RDP 2007-2013\*



\*Figures without persons employed in forestry and advisory services in this sector.

Source: own elaboration based on data of the Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Development.

## Discussion

Notwithstanding the significant range and using most of the reserved funds, the implementation of the analysed projects may be critically evaluated from various perspectives, i.e. justification, scale, scope and the degree of goal achievement. There is a question whether the training and advisory services in agricultural sector should be supported by the public money. Providing such services and possibilities for the workers or the owners of businesses is not common in other branches of the economy and it is perceived often as the managers responsibility. A significant public aid in the analysed area stemmed not only from the low level of education of labour force in Polish agriculture, but also a role of this sector in meeting important social needs concerning food security, climate change mitigation and protection of the environment. Government assistance is aimed at increasing the effectiveness of introducing the other measures of CAP.

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