

## Agriculture in Podlasie

On our website you can check current prices of basic agricultural production resources in Podlaskie Voivodeship: concentrates, mixtures, fertilizers, herbicides as well as the cost of services and construction materials and also prices of goods on Podlaskie markets. The information about economic subjects, working in surroundings of agriculture, is featured too. The column is edited with help of Podlaskie Voivodeship Agronomic Counselling Centre in Szepietowo.

Milk production has special meaning in Podlaskie. It is a result of the largest acreage of green grounds in Poland, which induces farmers into this kind of specialization. More and more farmers bind their future with this direction. The number of credits granted on dairy farms modernization is the best proof. Condition of farming, especially dynamically growing number of dairy cows (by 12 percent in relation with 1996) also proves the meaning of this branch of economy for our region.

There are 120,1 thousand of farms functioning in Podlaskie Voivodeship (including those of surface less than 1 hectare), which is a 4,5 proportional decrease of their quantity in relation with 1996. On the other hand, since 1996, the number of stock, particularly milk cows, has grown. The number of piping milking machines increased almost three times, the number of milk refrigerators increased over twice, which proves quick progress in modernization of farms, as well as enlarging them at the same time.

Comparing today's structure of farms to results of previous agricultural directory, which took place in 1996, a growth of percentage of small farms is observed – those of surface less than 5 hectares (from 38,4 per cent to 43,3 per cent). Large farms – of surface more than 15 hectares – became more numerous as well. According to the previous directory, they made 18,1 per cent, now they make 20,2 per cent of all farms. However, the number of average farms, of surface between 5 and 15 hectares, has decreased. In Podlasie there is almost twice as much of rural grounds as farms, than it appears from national average, that is 9,58 hectares in relation to average 5,76 hectares.

It is significant there has been a 41,2 proportional increase of fallows and uncultivated ground surfaces, which proves resignation from tillage of the weakest soils and – in a result – rationalisation of running farms. The surface of rural grounds decreased by 5,4 per cent, plough lands by 8,1 per cent, and solid grass-lands by 4,5 per cent. Comparing to the previous directory, a subsidence of general surface of sowings is

observed by 12,8 per cent (from 732,6 thousand to 638,6 thousand of hectares). The surface of potatoes' tillage decreased the most – by no less than 42,7 per cent (that is 42.100 hectares); there was a decrease of cereals too – the surfaces have been reduced to 33.700 of hectares (that is 6,2 per cent). Farmers of Podlasie grow also less of root crops – the surface of that tillage got smaller by 14.600 hectares, that is by 21,7 per cent.

Very important value of Podlasie, perfectly used by regional farmers, is the biggest surface of green grounds in the whole country, which sets a direction of development. Constant and regular growth of purchase of milk is observed in Podlaskie Voivodeship since 1995, which is a result of chosen direction of development. Apart from green grounds surface – which constitutes 35,4 per cent of all tillage grounds (13 per cent of grass-lands and 22,4 per cent of meadows), milk production stimulated by a strong position of dairies is of great importance as well. There are large subjects in Podlaskie Voivodeship, buying milk up, which stimulates development of this branch. These are ones of country leaders obeying European Union standards. As far as the milk production is concerned, Podlaskie is in the fore front in the country. However it is an absolutely potentate in comparison of the milk production to the surface of rural grounds, or to the inhabitants number.

The number of cattle in Podlaskie is larger than national statistics by 70 per cent: there are 55,9 heads of cattle (including 32,7 cows) on 100 hectares of rural grounds, whereas in rest of the country there are 32,7 heads of cattle on 100 hectares of rural grounds. In relation with 1996, there was an increase of cattle number in Podlaskie (by 3,5 per cent), particularly cows – by no less than 12 per cent. There was a decrease of number of pigs (by 2,8 per cent), horses (by 39,6 per cent) and sheep as well (by 42,6 per cent).

Cereals cover an area of 80,2 per cent of sowings grounds – including 50,5 per cent of basic cereals (wheat – 8,9 per cent, rye – 17,7 per cent). Potatoes cover an area of 8,9 per cent of total sowings grounds, whereas root crops – 8,3 per cent (with dynamic development of corn tillage from 0,5 per cent in 1995 to 3,4 per cent in 2002).

Sugar-beets are also significant among tillage (sugar factory in Łapy buys them up). Sugar-beets are grown in about 2000 farms and they cover an area of 1 per cent of all sowings grounds.



