

## SUPPORT FOR RESTRICTING THE POSSIBILITY OF AFRICAN SWINE FEVER SPREAD UNDER THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2014–2020

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### ABSTRACT

Of the many measures under Polish Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014–2020, the aid instrument entitled “Support for investments in preventive measures aimed at reducing the effects of probable natural disasters, adverse climatic phenomena and catastrophes” is the focus of this publication. This mechanism is intended to support, *inter alia*, agricultural producers at risk of damage caused by natural disasters such as African swine fever (ASF). The aim of the article is to attempt to analyse whether, and to what extent, this form of support ensures the sustainability of an agricultural producer’s business by restricting the possibility of African swine fever spread. The author focuses on an analysis of normative solutions contained in the instrument to support investments aimed at preventing the destruction of agricultural productive potential, offered by RDP 2014–2020. The aid form concerned encourages agricultural producers to initiate preventive measures arising from the biosecurity programme aimed at restricting the spread of African swine fever. These are preventive in nature and enable making specific investments to prevent the destruction of agricultural productive potential due to the emergence of specific epizootic events.

**Keywords:** Polish Rural Development Programme 2014–2020, financial aid, African swine fever, biosecurity programme, investment, farm

### INTRODUCTION

Financial assistance through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development is implemented in Poland under a single aid scheme entitled “Rural Development Programme for 2014–2020 (RDP 2014–2020)”. It implements the general objective [Czechowski, 2019] and specific objectives corresponding to the mission and objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy as well as to the European Union rural development priorities [Giemza, 2017]. These

objectives include instruments to support investments aimed at preventing the destruction of agricultural production potential. Of the many measures under RDP 2014–2020, the aid instrument entitled “Support for investments in preventive measures aimed at reducing the effects of probable natural disasters, adverse climatic phenomena and catastrophes” is the focus of this publication [Mickiewicz & Mickiewicz, 2015]. This mechanism is intended to support, *inter alia*, agricultural producers at risk of damage caused by natural disasters such as African swine fever. Even

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though the issue of production risk in agriculture has been addressed by both lawyers and economists [Jeżyńska, 2008; Rembisz, 2013], the matter concerned has been the subject of research conducted by only a few authors [Lipińska, 2019] and has not been analysed at length.

The aim of the article is to attempt to analyse whether, and to what extent, this form of support ensures the sustainability of an agricultural producer's business by restricting the possibility of African swine fever spread. The author focuses on an analysis of normative solutions contained in the instrument to support investments aimed at preventing the destruction of agricultural productive potential, offered by RDP 2014–2020. According to the assumptions, this measure is intended to promote preventive measures aimed at reducing the effects of probable natural disasters, adverse climatic phenomena and catastrophes. The lack of adequate protection for an agricultural producer can, in extreme cases, contribute to the cessation of agricultural activity.

The study applied a dogmatic method for analysing regulations as well as a descriptive method. Moreover, the study used the literature on the subject as well as statistical data through access to public information, derived from the Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture (ARMA) and presenting the level of agricultural producers' use of public aid offered. Based on the indicated research material, final conclusions will be presented.

### **Support as part of preventing the destruction of agricultural productive potential**

The protection of sustainability of an agricultural producer's business often involves the need to commit specific financial resources. This primarily concerns activities aimed at reducing the risk of conducting agricultural activities to eliminate its possible adverse effects. In the preamble to the Basic Regulation (EU) No. 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Council

Regulation (EC) No. 1698/2005 (O.J. L 347), the legislator pointed out that the agricultural sector, more than other sectors, was subject to damage to its productive potential caused by natural disasters. Accordingly, to support farms' profitability and competitiveness in the face of such disasters or phenomena, support should be granted to help farmers protect agricultural production potential. This is precisely what the financial support through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, implemented in Poland under a single aid scheme, is intended for [Litwiniuk, 2018].

RDP 2014–2020 was developed based on European Union regulations, in particular, the already mentioned Regulation (EU) No. 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013, and on delegated and implementing acts of the European Commission. In accordance with European Union regulations, RDP 2014–2020 is integrated into the overall system of national development policy, particularly through the Partnership Agreement mechanism. This Agreement sets out a strategy for the use of EU funds to achieve the common EU objectives as set out in the EU's growth strategy "Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth", taking into account the development needs of a particular Member State [Błażejczyk & Kazimierczuk, 2018]. RDP 2014–2020 offers instruments to support investments aimed at preventing the destruction of agricultural productive potential by the effects of a natural disaster [Stankiewicz, 2008].

The tasks related to the implementation of RDP 2014–2020 have been granted, pursuant to Article 5 of the Act of 20 February 2015 on supporting rural development with funds of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development under the Rural Development Programme for the years 2014–2020 [Journal of Laws of 2015, item 349], to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development who acts as the Managing Authority. The intermediate body responsible for a safe electronic system for recording, storing and reporting statistical information on the programme and its implementation is the Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture (ARMA) [Jarosiewicz et al., 2011]. Pursuant to Article 4(2) of the Act of 9 May 2008 on the Agency for

Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture [Journal of Laws of 2016, item 1512, as amended], the Agency's task is, in particular, to support undertakings related to the resumption of production on agricultural farms, and special sections of agricultural production in which damage caused by natural disasters has occurred within the meaning of regulations on the insurance of crops and farm animals. Total public funds allocated for the implementation of RDP 2014–2020 amount to more than 13.6 billion EUR, including more than 8.6 billion EUR from the European Union budget and more than 4.9 billion EUR of national contribution [Stoksik, 2013]. The main objective of RDP 2014–2020, which is consistent with the mission and objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy [Spsychalski, 2004], includes an improvement in the competitiveness of agriculture, sustainable management of natural resources and climate action and sustainable territorial development of rural areas [Wigier, 2011].

Aid increasing the sustainability of an agricultural producer's business takes both *ex post* and *ex ante* forms [Kazimierczuk, 2021]. The first form of aid is triggered by the occurrence of a specific event resulting in damage [Litwiniuk, 2016]. On the other hand, an example of financial support taking the *ex ante* form, i.e. that granted prior to the occurrence of a risk of natural disasters, is the measure under RDP 2014–2020, set out in Regulation of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of 14 July 2017 on detailed conditions and procedures for the granting and payment of financial aid for operations "Investments preventing the destruction of agricultural productive potential" under the sub-measure "Support for investments in preventive measures aimed at limiting the effects of probable natural disasters, adverse climatic phenomena and catastrophes" [Journal of Laws, item 1478, as amended]. It is implemented as part of two operations, i.e. restricting the possibility of African swine fever spread and the protection of agricultural production against the effects of adverse weather phenomena.

There are several reasons for taking the indicated direction in both cases. Primarily livestock safety

and health protection issues. The emergence of ASF in a herd leads to considerable drops in production and usually results in 100% mortality of animals. The outbreak of the disease entails considerable financial losses due to the costs of its eradication on the farms where it has been found. This justifies the initiation of preventive measures arising from the biosecurity programme pursuant to Regulation of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of 29 July 2016 amending Regulation on the introduction of the "Biosecurity Programme aimed at the prevention of African swine fever spread" for the years 2015–2018 [Journal of Laws of 2016, item 1153, as amended] aimed at limiting the spread of this disease. As regards the second type of support, it is the climate change considerations that are decisive. Water excesses or deficits are the main determinants of an increase in crop yields for a large part of the country's agricultural land. The scale of these weather phenomena can be systemic in nature and, thus, affect many agricultural producers over vast areas. To this end, the legislator envisages support directed to water companies for the improvement and maintenance of water and drainage systems [Rakoczy, 2018; Paczuski, 2006]. Pursuant to Article 195 of the Water Law Act of 20 July 2017 [Journal of Laws of 2018, item 2268], these measures involve the regulation of hydrographic conditions to improve the productive capacity of soil and facilitate its cultivation and the protection of agricultural land against flooding.

Support is granted to a beneficiary based on the agreement on the granting of assistance, concluded with the Director of ARMA regional office. A relation under civil law enables proper control of the use of the aid. One should agree with Stanisław Prutis [2009] who points out that an agreement is a flexible instrument which enables, under the principle of freedom of contract, individualised determination of the manner of use of the funds, which is particularly important when the aid is granted for investment purposes. The civil procedure safeguards the control of the fulfilment of conditions for applying for aid and gives beneficiaries the right to be granted aid in a situation in which specific conditions have been met.

## **Support for biosecurity to prevent the spread of African swine fever**

The reason for the implementation of the second type of operation under the measure “Support for investments in preventive measures aimed at limiting the effects of probable natural disasters, adverse climatic phenomena and catastrophes” is related to the fact that currently, the greatest problem to animal production is African swine fever which affects Eastern European countries, including Poland. ASF is an infectious viral disease to which pigs, boar-pig hybrids and wild boars are susceptible. In the event of an ASF outbreak in a herd, considerable drops in production occur. It should be stressed that this disease is not treated due to the lack of a proper vaccine and only combated on farms where it has been found. Another major problem is the restriction on the sale and export of pigs or their meat, both domestically and abroad which undermines the producers’ economic position.

The issues related to biological security in Poland are governed by the Act of 11 March 2004 on the protection of animal health [Journal of Laws of 2016, item 1605]. Specific solutions in this regard were introduced in 2015 to reduce the number of farms with low biosecurity standards to restrict the spread of infectious diseases of susceptible animal species housed on farms [Litwiniuk, 2017]. It should be added that the addressing of biosecurity issues by the legislator resulted from the intensification of problems related to the ASF virus outbreak in 2014 in the north-eastern part of Poland. The Act in question sets out the principles for the control of infectious animal diseases in a synthetic manner by primarily conferring competencies on competent state authorities as regards the development and implementation of the programme. On the other hand, detailed issues are contained in implementing regulations. Accordingly, the methods and procedure in the event of suspected African swine fever or the confirmation of the disease, as well as the conditions for determining the protection, surveillance and polluted areas and the measure applied to combat

the disease, the method for cleaning and disinfecting and the conditions and method for reintroducing pigs on a farm are set out in Regulation of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of 6 May 2015 on controlling African swine fever [Journal of Laws of 2015, item 754].

In order to implement the assumptions of the aforementioned Act, based on Article 57e, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development introduced, under Regulation of 3 April 2015 on the introduction of the “Biosecurity programme aimed at preventing the African swine fever spread” for the years 2015–2018 [Journal of Laws of 2015, item 517, as amended], the “Biosecurity programme aimed at preventing the African swine fever spread” for the years 2015–2018. It is aimed at limiting the spread of the ASF virus from wild animals to pig livestock, and between pig herds kept on farms. On this basis, the detailed requirements to be met by farms were adopted. Accordingly, they refer to appropriate safeguards, including fences and buildings, the implementation of a programme for rodent monitoring and control, carrying out periodical pest control treatments, keeping a register of means for transporting pigs and appropriate procedures followed by persons having contact with animals.

The measures aimed at controlling the African swine fever, taken by the European Union, resulted in the European Commission approving amendments to the Rural Development Programme for the years 2014–2020 by Commission Implementing Decision No. C(2016)8568 of 9 December 2016 approving the amendment of the rural development programme of Poland for support from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and amending Implementing Decision C(2014) 9783. The amendments concerned the introduction into the Rural Development Programme for the years 2014–2020 of measures to support limiting the effects of the emergence of cases of African swine fever in Poland in the operation type “Premiums for the start-up of non-agricultural activities” and in the operation type “Restructuring of small farms”, and in the sub-measure “Support for investments

in preventive measures aimed at limiting the effects of probable natural disasters, adverse climatic phenomena and catastrophes” [Lipińska, 2017].

Under the recent measure of RDP 2014–2020, which is the subject of analysis of this article, aid is also granted (except the previously mentioned water companies) to a farmer who is either an autonomous or dependent possessor of a property located in the territory of the country in which he/she rears or breeds no fewer than 50 pigs and is planning to carry out an operation aimed at the prevention of African swine fever spread by means of the fencing a pig house along with the area necessary for the handling of pigs; constructing or improving a covered disinfection trough; the purchase of disinfection equipment; the reconstruction/repair of rooms to ensure that pigs are kept on the farm in separate, closed rooms [Kazimierczuk, 2020].

Aid is granted in the form of a refund of a part of incurred and documented eligible costs of the operation in the amount of up to 80% of eligible costs. Support is granted based on the agreement on the granting of assistance, concluded by the Director of the ARMA regional office. The aid is granted and paid up to the limit amount which, during the period of programme implementation, amounts to a maximum of 100,000 PLN per beneficiary, for a farmer who is either an autonomous or dependent possessor of a property located in the territory of Poland and rears or breeds no fewer than an average of 50 pigs per annum on a property located in the territory of Poland.

The order in which farmers are eligible for aid is determined based on the data contained in the register of marked farm animals and the locations of these animal herds, referred to in the Act of 2 April 2004 on the system of identification and registration of animals [Journal of Laws of 2004, No. 91, item 872, as amended]. The number of pigs is determined by dividing the total number of pigs kept by the farmer on the last day of each of 12 months preceding the month in which the date of commencement of the period for applying for aid falls, by the number 12. The data are extracted from the above-mentioned register as of the date of commencement of the period for applying for financial aid.

## **The use of offered public aid by agricultural producers**

The offered public aid leads to the reconstruction of certain relationships and dependencies occurring between conducting production activities and unexpected changes taking place due to the spread of African swine fever. The analysed support, of a strictly investment character, may indirectly contribute to the improvement in farm profitability, competitiveness and economic sustainability. Analysis of the data obtained through access to public information from the Analysis and Reporting Department of the Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture indicates significant interest in this measure, particularly in Wielkopolskie, Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Łódzkie, Mazowieckie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeships. It should be noted, however, that the first call for applications for financial assistance, held in 2017, attracted relatively little interest. Swine producers submitted applications for financial assistance in only four voivodeships in which the first ASF outbreaks occurred, i.e. in Lubuskie, Podlaskie, Mazowieckie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie. However, the subsequent calls for proposals indicate a significant increase in the number of applications submitted to the ARMA. The reason for this state of affairs was the rate of African swine fever spreading in the territory of Poland and the resulting need to limit it by implementing a biosecurity programme aimed at preventing the spread of ASF. This resulted in the actual submission of applications for support to control the spread of African swine fever in sixteen Polish voivodeships.

In all calls for proposals held in 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020, a total of 5,700 beneficiaries in Poland applied for aid in an amount of 296,000,000 PLN. The great interest in this form of aid is undoubtedly influenced by the 80% level of refund of eligible costs incurred, while under other RDP 2014–2020 measures, the level of aid is usually 50%. The analysed form of support significantly contributed to an increase in the protection of farmer’s business. Detailed characteristics are provided in Tables 1 and 2.

**Table 1.** Data concerning the level of assistance used as part of controlling the spread of African swine fever in 2017 and 2018

Voivodeship	2017		2018	
	number of applications	total amount applied for [PLN]	number of applications	total amount applied for [PLN]
Dolnośląskie	0	0	13	845,835.69
Kujawsko-Pomorskie	0	0	375	23,420,110.89
Lubelskie	93	5,549,919.57	181	10,486,714.37
Lubuskie	0	0	24	1,522,946.00
Łódzkie	0	0	233	10,811,837.19
Małopolskie	0	0	47	3,269,385.01
Mazowieckie	39	1,622,532.21	243	14,302,840.76
Opolskie	0	0	77	3,554,180.54
Podkarpackie	0	0	55	3,138,761.15
Podlaskie	56	3,744,105.81	90	5,950,292.23
Pomorskie	0	0	159	10,565,624.15
Śląskie	0	0	57	3,505,076.21
Świętokrzyskie	0	0	48	2,347,162.50
Warmińsko-Mazurskie	7	563,624.00	152	9,252,473.22
Wielkopolskie	0	0	727	40,009,314.33
Zachodniopomorskie	0	0	2	132,952.00
Total	195	11,480,181.59	2483	143,115,506.24

Source: own study based on the data obtained from the Analysis and Reporting Department of the Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture.

**Table 2.** Data concerning the level of aid used as part of controlling the spread of African swine fever in 2019 and 2020

Voivodeship	2019		2020	
	number of applications	total amount applied for [PLN]	number of applications	total amount applied for [PLN]
Dolnośląskie	30	1,601,124.96	10	516,350.60
Kujawsko-Pomorskie	359	18,492,047.94	232	11,259,246.60
Lubelskie	77	3,422,685.20	29	2,090,330.40
Lubuskie	5	338,088.00	8	493,833.20
Łódzkie	337	12,942,971.14	137	5,288,443.04
Małopolskie	40	1,761,708.20	14	730,807.00
Mazowieckie	170	8,866,356.23	88	4,564,108.48
Opolskie	61	2,386,745.00	22	974,186.40
Podkarpackie	23	1,039,707.20	11	748,805.44
Podlaskie	34	1,531,415.40	22	756,185.96
Pomorskie	116	6,257,527.80	48	2,638,207.40
Śląskie	48	2,020,034.40	16	834,612.00
Świętokrzyskie	34	1,294,466.10	17	933,944.00
Warmińsko-Mazurskie	174	8,571,863.40	52	2,508,600.60
Wielkopolskie	462	18,617,594.75	368	16,529,857.75
Zachodniopomorskie	14	1,094,248.00	6	455,104.00
Total	1984	90,238,583.72	1080	51,322,622.87

Source: own study based on the data obtained from the Analysis and Reporting Department of the Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture.

## CONCLUSIONS

The above considerations result in several conclusions. Financial support through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development is implemented in Poland under a single aid scheme RDP 2014–2020 [Litwiniuk, 2018], which offers instruments to support investments preventing the destruction of agricultural productive potential prior to the effects of a natural disaster [Czechowski, 2019]. As regards the measure “Support for investments in preventive measures aimed at limiting the effects of probable natural disasters, adverse climatic phenomena and catastrophes”, this aid has a narrow substantive scope and is a response to the emerging need for state intervention in connection with epizootic and land improvement hazards. In view of the scale of the occurring phenomena, their possible effect and impact on the safety of (not only) the rural environment and their cost-intensity, the legislator incorporated them into the area of aid being granted. Appropriate support is granted *inter alia* as part of the operation to control the spread of African swine fever. The aid form concerned encourages agricultural producers to initiate preventive measures arising from the biosecurity programme aimed at restricting the spread of African swine fever. These are preventive in nature and enable making specific investments to prevent the destruction of agricultural productive potential due to the emergence of specific epizootic events. In view of the increasing area of the ASF disease occurrence in Poland (which contributes to increasingly stringent requirements for the protection of livestock health) it appears reasonable that the legislator should include the discussed instruments to support agricultural producers in the future financial perspective for the years 2021–2027.

It can be assumed that the analysed form of *ex ante* support, i.e. the “Support for investments in preventive measures aimed at reducing the effects of probable natural disasters, adverse climatic phenomena and catastrophes” effectively protects agricultural producers and ensures the sustainability of their business in relation to specifically indicated risks.

The establishment of favourable financial conditions in these cases, as well as the introduction of clear regulations, contribute to an increase in farmers’ interest in adopting specific attitudes towards active risk management of agricultural activities and, thus, increasing their resilience to emerging crises.

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