



Modernization or marginalization: contemporary trends of family farming in Poland

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In Polish agriculture over 90% of all farms are family-owned. These are generally small entities (average area of about 9 hectares) with spatially diversified specialization of production and varied level of commercialization. The last 25 years, in which Poland has undergone system transformation from socialist to market economy, and especially the period of preparation concerning accession and membership in the European Union resulted in very significant changes in the agricultural sector. The requirements for competitiveness and production efficiency caused polarization in family farms structure, among which, on the one hand modern farms and better managed, and on the other hand farms of slight surplus production evolved. This entails a number of consequences, such as: increase in functional diversity of rural areas, decrease of the number of farms, change of farms' employment structure and increase in the level of education of farm owners. The aim of this study is to assess contemporary trends taking place in family farms in Poland with the special attention to the education development on rural areas. In most cases, they are generally positive, associated with the higher level and living conditions, increase of social awareness and more favorable structure of education. However, these changes also bring along adverse processes such as unemployment, poverty or social exclusion. It could be generalized that family farms, which do not take competition and modernization of production based on human capital resulting from farmer knowledge are condemned to marginalization or gradual liquidation.

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