



How is it to work in Poland? CITIZENS OF UKRAINE IN POLISH AGRICULTURE

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1.1. AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN POLAND - A SHORT CHARACTERISTICS.

As shown by the data of the Central Statistical Office in 2021, only 1.2 million people worked in Polish agriculture. This level is the lowest in the entire history of employment measurements in this sector. According to the data obtained from the Central Statistical Office of Poland, agriculture employment is falling by approximately one hundred twenty-eight thousand people per year. The most significant period was the second quarter of 2021, where employment fell by 65,000 compared to the previous quarter.¹ Almost as much as employment in the countryside decreases in one year, it increases in the city. This data clearly shows that the Polish countryside is depopulating, and fewer and fewer people want to undertake hard, physical work, often exposed to accidents. Migrants, mainly from Ukraine, increasingly fill this gap.

The data obtained during the Census of 2021 has shown that the structure of farms has changed significantly over the last ten years. Their number decreased by 13%, while the total acreage of the sown area increased. Over the last decade, the average farm area has increased from 9.8 ha to 11.1 ha. The number of small farms, i.e., not exceeding 15 ha, decreased by 16%. On the other hand, the number of larger farms, i.e., over 15 ha², increased by 6%.² The way of farming has also clearly changed: decreasing number of farms aim only to support the family.

On the other hand, the number of farms dealing with agricultural production for sale has increased. This data, in turn, means hiring workers to help, usually not only for the harvest itself but also throughout the whole growing season.

It is worth noting that work is organized differently in small farms, where plant varieties are cultivated with higher yields (e.g., fruit bushes), than in multi-hectare farms, where industrial amounts of vegetables and fruit are harvested. Such diversity of crops translates into the necessary qualifications and professionalization of the employed people. Each has a particular role and lots of agricultural machinery to help on large farms. In the case of more minor crops, the same people carry out most of the work from the beginning to the end of the agricultural work. A critical factor that differentiates farms and influences the employability of seasonal workers is their distance from larger urban centers. Farmers living in regions located close to the large cities such as Warsaw, Wrocław, and Kraków are organized differently from farmers living in villages surrounded by a wreath of other villages. A short supply chain to the city means greater profitability of crops and certainty of sales. Meanwhile, there are many additional costs in places remote from distribution centers, such as food storage and transport. That is why the owners of farms located

1 Population Economic Activity Survey for the second quarter of 2021, <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/rynek-pracy/pracujacy-bezrobotni-bierni-zawodowo-wg-bael/aktywnosc-ekonomiczna-ludnosci-polski-ii-kwartal-2021-roku,4,42.html>

2 <https://www.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news%2C844003%2Cw-polsce-znacznie-spadla-liczba-gospodarstw-rolnych.html>

more distant from the cities, in a crisis, more often resign from employing additional people for work. Therefore, the owners of farms located more distant from the cities, in crisis³, more often resign from employing additional people for work.

3 Such as COVID-19