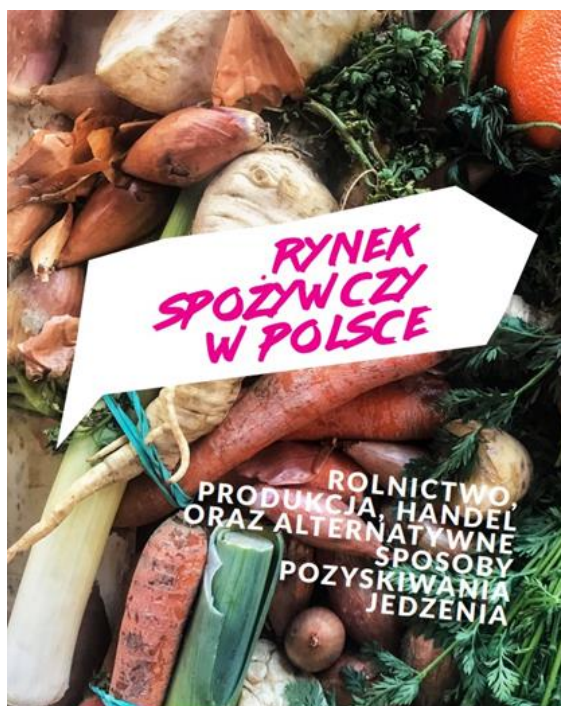


## The food Market in Poland. Agriculture, production, trade and alternative ways of food sourcing



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## Summary

This report presents an analysis of some selected issues concerning the food market in Poland. The first parts of the study concern the country's food production, both plant-based and animal-derived. Major crops grown in Poland are wheat, rye, barley, oat and cereal mixtures, triticale, maize (corn) grown for grain, potatoes, sugar beets, rapeseed, fruit and vegetables. Our country is the biggest EU producer of currants and one of top world producers of apples, strawberries, cherries and raspberries. We are also among the leading producers of processed agricultural products on the world market: concentrated juice and frozen fruit and vegetables.

Food production is the largest industrial sector in Poland. Dairy companies play an important role, producing both for the domestic and export markets: cheeses, yoghurts, kefir, butter, drinks etc. Another important element of the food industry is meat production, especially poultry and pork, and processed meat.

Looking at the map of the Polish food retail trade we can see that most outlets are general grocery stores. The most popular discount groceries with the biggest number of retail outlets belong to foreign companies.

While Polish agriculture is based mainly on conventional farming, there are some initiatives to be found on the Polish market that facilitate access to organically farmed produce. Community-supported farming, food cooperatives, urban farming and organic food markets are places and initiatives making it possible to find sustainably produced fruit and vegetables, and artisanal preserves. This form of shopping also offers direct contact with farmers and an opportunity to create a community, and sometimes to get involved in working on the farm or to take part in events related to food production. Among the initiatives based on responsible approach to business there are also social

cooperatives. In urban settings, beside urban farms we can find allotments and social gardens.

Since 2016, meat consumption has been decreasing in Poland, with availability of plant-based substitutes for animal-derived products increasing at retail stores. The number of companies producing vegan foodstuffs is also on the rise on the Polish market, as is the number of producers including plant-based products in their offer. While data and research done in late 2019 and the beginning of 2020 shows the largest number of vegan products is available at hypermarkets, discount stores and smaller grocery stores have also begun to expand their product range with plant-based substitutes for animal products.

Among imported goods available on the Polish market, such as coffee or cocoa, we can find products with Fair Trade certificates, mostly the Fairtrade one. This certificate means that farmers growing produce in the countries of the Global South receive higher prices, have better working conditions and participate in fairer terms of trade.

Numerous factors at every stage of food production cause our diet to leave carbon and water footprints. The breeding farm, the cultivation method, water consumption or transportation between the production and distribution sites can be of vital significance. Another important thing is the fact that at each stage food is stored and then sold in packaging, usually made of plastic. With the idea of zero waste and minimalism coming to Poland, some stores have opened which sell foods, especially loose products such as groats, flour, pasta, nuts and spices, into customer's containers.

According to the latest data, nearly 5 million tons of food are wasted annually in Poland.<sup>1</sup> Food wasting results from the ways and standards of its production and selling, and is also related to managing foodstuffs at homes. In Polish towns and cities, the

<sup>1</sup> Łaba, S., Bilska, B., et al., "Próba oszacowania strat i marnotrawstwa żywności w Polsce," *Przemysł Spożywczy*, 11 (74), 2020, p. 15.



practice of foodsharing is taking root – there are places where food can be donated and taken from freely. Most of them is run by informal groups belonging to the international social movement of foodsharing. Food Banks are also important institutions supporting the prevention of food wasting, acting as an agent between companies donating food and people or organizations receiving it.



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