

Care Farms in the Strategy of the Multifunctional Development of Rural Areas

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Abstract. The following text, using the paradigm of multifunctional rural development, points out the new possibilities for exploiting the potential inherent in family farms. The idea of care farms, combining care services with elements of agricultural production, allows to introduce innovative solutions related to the processes of ageing of societies. Implementing rural care services improves the quality of senior's life, provides a new source of income for the farm and also helps to reduce inequalities in access to social services for inhabitants of villages and small towns. The content of this article is in the field of economic and social analyses of rural areas, and the reflections, using the achievements of sociological and economic researches, were based on existing sources and achievements of own researches. The descriptive analysis was used in the presentation.

Keywords: Care Farms, Ageing of Societies, Multifunctional Development, Rural Areas

1 Introduction

Care farms are a relatively new solution in some of the European Union countries and completely innovative in Poland. They are becoming a part of the multifunctional rural development model, in particular, the development of multifunctional agriculture. The task of care farms is to combine a day or long-term care with elements of agricultural production and farming. This activity may be an effective response to: 1) the deepening process of the ageing of Polish society; 2) the need to level the social inequalities in access to care services in rural areas in Poland, especially when it comes to daily care; 3) to seek directions for multifunctional rural development.

The purpose of this article is to indicate how the idea of care farms is implemented in Polish conditions. The article is a part of the economic and social analysis of rural areas and shows three important aspects that influence the need for the research: the need to implement multifunctional rural development, the intensive ageing phenomenon of the society and the need for an alternative solution for the development of care services in the countryside.

2 Multifunctional Development of Rural Areas

In Polish rural areas positive phenomena can be observed - less agricultural character of the countryside, age of inhabitants is extending, above average population involvement in social work, high satisfaction of life among inhabitants of rural areas, shaping the quality and diversity of the natural environment by agriculture and non-agricultural activities, as well as negative phenomena - low productivity in Polish agriculture (only about 30% of the average level in agriculture in EU-28) or high share of rural population in the population living in Poland in extreme poverty (over 60%) [4]. Many of them point to the need for exploration of alternative ways of farming in rural areas, therefore to its multifunctional development.

The basic premise of multifunctional rural development is launching of the non-agricultural functions in rural areas, enabling them to use their potential and create new jobs. M. Stanny [10] focuses on: raising the standard of living of rural families through creating the non-agricultural workplaces, the actions for the multifunctional agriculture (development of non-market agricultural functions), building the local initiatives, identities and the activation of rural communities.

As noted by M. Kłodziński [9], the development of non-agricultural forms of economic activity in rural areas is and will be a slow process, requiring timing in different types of activities based on such factors as human entrepreneurship, capital, demand, promotion, comprehensive infrastructure, good education level, skills of strategic planning, etc. Undoubtedly, multifunctional rural development must be supported by adequate funds. Implementing the concept of multifunctionality of agriculture and rural areas, assuming the economic strengthening of farms and increasing the competitiveness of the agri-sector was the primary goal of the Rural Development Program (RDP) for the years 2007-2013. In the current programming period, the support for RDP 2014-2020 non-agricultural rural development and job creation was limited to Leader action, providing co-financing for the development of entrepreneurship in rural areas under the Cohesion Fund and its programs.

According to Czarnecki, Kłodziński and Stanny [3], the transformation of the country towards multifunctionality is basing mainly on the reorganization of the three basic ways of using rural space: production, consumption and protection. These mentioned rural functions can be found in three basic types and three mixed types, that are their own combination (Holmes typology):

- type 1 - productive agricultural, predominantly productive,
- type 2 - investment and settlement attractiveness, with the dominance of consumer values,
- type 3 - bidirectional, a combination of production and consumption values,
- type 4 - *peri-urban*, in which values of production, consumption and protection are competing,
- type 5 - marginalized agriculture, assuming potential integration of production and protection values,
- type 6 - protective, emphasizing socially relevant values, corresponding to the objectives of sustainable development and protection.

For types 4, 5 and 6 perfectly suits the idea of the concept of nursing homes because the protective function emphasizes socially relevant values, compatible among others with the objectives of sustainable rural development.

One of the directions of multifunctional rural development is agritourism - in the case of agritourism farms, it is possible to develop additional activities related to care for seniors, disabled, orphans or sick people, with relatively small expenditures (existence of the home base, experience in working with people). It is difficult to disagree with P. Wasiak [1] that caregiving is a 'promising direction for additional non-agricultural activity, which however requires many complex actions - a friendly approach of the whole social environment to those problems and a good cooperation between the various resorts and public administration sectors in the field of health, social affairs and agriculture. The idea of care farms can be a great opportunity for rural development'.

3 The Ageing of Societies

The analysis of demographic trends made by the most prestigious international organizations and prominent demographic researchers clearly indicate the occurrence of the ageing of the world population on an unprecedented scale. According to the definition, population ageing means increasing the proportion of elderly people while decreasing the percentage of children. In literature, as the metric threshold of age, it is usually taken 60 (WHO) or 65 years (UN, Eurostat). There are many measures and classifications of the degree of ageing of society. According to the UN criteria, the population is considered to be old, with the proportion of people aged 65 and over - exceeding 7%, and the percentage above 10% indicates the phase of advanced age. According to projections of the Central Statistical Office [5], in Poland, the proportion of people aged 65 and over in the total population in 2050 will be 32.7%, and people aged 80 and over will constitute 10.4% of the total population (in 2013 - 3.9%).

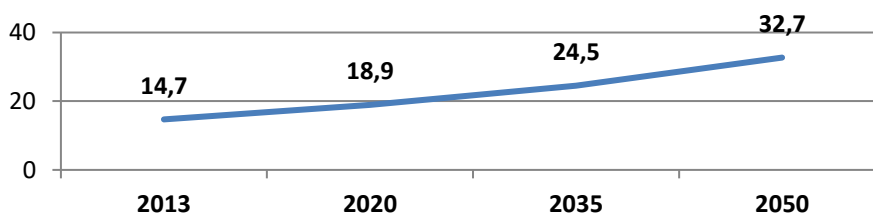


Fig. 1. Participation of population aged 65 and over in total Polish population (in %) in years 2013, 2020, 2035, 2050 [5].

The ageing of societies is quite complex. As noted by A. Klimczuk [8], there are at least ten effects of ageing of populations: feminisation of the population, increased demand for social care and health services, decline in political dynamism and political preferences, changes in demand for social education and the need to change the

means of financing public expenditure, changes in family structure and in local communities (e.g. deurbanization), changes in the structure of consumption and investment and also changes in innovativeness and productivity of human work.

These data undoubtedly lead to an analysis of the phenomenon, wide discussion and the development of an effective strategy that takes into account the process, its dynamics and the consequences of occurrence. In this situation, the emphasis should be placed primarily on changes in an ineffective: care and social security systems. Concerns about the ageing of societies should be treated as a challenge for societies. To meet this challenge will depend on immediate concrete action, which, in anticipation of the effects of increasing number of older people in the population - will reduce its consequences in advance. One of such activity may be the caregiving farms in question.

4 Care Farms

The initiative to create care farms in Poland is related to the searches for innovative solutions aimed at realizing important social goals. On the one hand, we have to look for alternatives to the existing (and very imperfect) healthcare model, and on the other hand, we have to seek for new opportunities for economic activity for rural residents. Care farms are a very interesting proposition for the owners of the small family farms who, because of their economic potential, are not able to compete on the market, but have significant assets that enable them to develop their businesses in a different way - linking them to agricultural work.

Caring farms, also called social farming, have the task of combining the day or long-term care with elements of agricultural production and farming. According to the definition, a caring farm is a form of support for social care and integration, carried out within the framework of a farm engaged in agricultural activity [2]. The idea of their operation has been successfully implemented in many European countries such as Italy, France, Norway, Belgium, Austria, Germany and Great Britain and in the United States. The services provided by these farms are offered not only to seniors but also to people with disabilities (including intellectual), to people affected by professional burn out of steam or depression, as well as people diagnosed with autism. Care farms in these countries are part of a broader perspective of the use of farms, creating opportunities for therapeutic activities. In the literature of the subject [5], this type of activity is called "green care", that besides purely caring functions also serves as a therapeutic function.

The history of care farms around the world dates back to the sixties, but in the Netherlands, in the nineties they were just flourishing. Then the Dutch state introduced care solutions where health system concerned people could benefit not only from the classic forms of care but also innovative solutions. The effectiveness of this system and the attractiveness of care solutions served as an example to other countries - and today Poland is also reaching for these solutions.

The creation of Polish model of caring farms primarily aims to build a network of farms that fit in with the idea of social agriculture and in developing appropriate solutions for their development needs. In Poland, there are problems already raised in the following aspects:

- advanced ageing processes of the Polish population, resulting in a significant increase in the demand for care services that the current care system is unable to provide,
- the need to minimize disparities in access to care services for rural residents and to eliminate the consequences of social inequalities,
- the need to constantly seek directions for multifunctional development of rural areas in order to secure, alternative for agriculture employment, and the occupational activation of the inhabitants,
- raising the level and quality of life of the inhabitants.

The development of care farms is undoubtedly a major legal and organizational challenge for the owners of these holdings, but also a great opportunity for the stability of non-agricultural income. It should be paid more attention to the social context of the ageing of the Polish society, in which the care for a senior is being significantly modified. This is mainly related to the transformations of a contemporary family in Poland, departing from the traditional model in which the care for an older person was the domain of the closest relatives. The role of women in society (traditionally attributed to the role of caring) for the sake of professional activity and participation in the sphere of public life has also been modified. Poland is also characterized by the significant emigration of young people in the last decade resulting in the phenomenon of "euro-orphanage", that originally defined the phenomenon of children left in the country of immigrant parents and now includes the term deprivation of physical ability to care for elderly parents living in the country. According to Iwański [7] "due to the process of ageing of the population, the low birth rate and the labour migration of people at productive age abroad, will be increasing the need for care benefits in the coming years. [...] There will be growing a demand for services in the form of an environmentally and half-environmentally, that will be responsible for supporting the family in the care for a senior." One of the important ways to solve this problem can become the possibility of executing care in care farms.

From the perspective of seniors, caring in the care farms can be very attractive because of keeping the social contacts and living in rural areas, in contact with nature, and the ability to participate actively in the life of the farm. This is undoubtedly an interesting offer for all those for whom the life in the country is of value in itself. For seniors coming from rural areas, staying in close to their habitual conditions may determine the quality of their lives.

The current social policy system that is addressed to seniors, in practice differs from the model assumptions. In this situation, the implementation of the concept of the care farms is due to the numerous advantages of the development of social agriculture, which can be analysed from three perspectives: the senior requiring

support and his family having difficulties in providing care, the farmer providing the service and the whole local community.

Table 1. The advantages of social farming [2].

Farmer	Local society	Senior demanding support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a new source of income • economic improvement of the farm • the possibility of work activation of members of the farm, especially women 45+ • the pro-social orientation of the farm - actions for the local community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the increase of factors integrating the community - also in the intergenerational dimension • improving the economic situation of the local community • the increase of the use of care services in rural areas - reducing the inequalities in their access in rural areas • the increase in proactive attitudes among rural residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gratification of daily needs of life • maintaining social contacts • the ability to participate in the wider society • implementation in a social (integrational), therapeutic function

The advantages of social agriculture are understood as part of the Rural Development Program for years 2014-2020. Final solutions adopted in Poland are taking into account the existing legal and socio-economic conditions. Leading a care farm is possible by the people engaged in farming activities or by people who are household members of these farms. Such a farm, in order to provide care services, must establish a new entity - it may be a business entity or a social economy entity. The offer of the activity of a social farm should be directed primarily to everyone over 60 years of age. Three types of organization of care are recommended: daily residence, family homestay and 24-hour care facility conducted within the framework of economic activity. From a senior's point of view (for which the socio-psychic condition is important to stay as long as possible in his or her own environment) and the provider itself (due to the degree of involvement and the need for expenditures), it seems that the 24-hour care facility is the least attractive. The advantage of daycare is that it is more accessible because of the costs incurred by the beneficiaries themselves (or their families), as well as self-government entities obliged to care for the elderly. The characteristics of the services provided by care homes are shown in Table 2.

Starting a caring business in Poland is now possible with financial support from several sources. These are government programs that support seniors' activities and projects financed by the European Union. These projects can co-finance the launch of such activities in some programs even up to 80% of the costs incurred.

Table 2. Care services provided by nursing homes [2].

Beneficiaries of care services 60+	Type and scope of services provided
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people with daily difficulties - reduced psychophysical ability or disability • people with a sense of loneliness and withdrawal from social contacts • people with difficulty in organizing leisure time • people who lack any support from the family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • care and nursing services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - daily stay - at least 1 warm meal - help with basic life tasks - transport from and to the facility • activation and improvement services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - free time organization - contact with animals, - collective meals preparation - handicraft, etc. • support services for participants and their families (support and counselling)

It is also worth mentioning that the possibility of taking care activities is an interesting proposition for agritourism farms, which - as already mentioned, have appropriate infrastructure adapted to the needs of guests - tourists, and also an important experience in contacts with clients and conducting a business activity. In this context, caring farms can also be an alternative path for the development of agritourism farms.

5 Conclusion

The activation of the rural inhabitants and utilizing endogenous potentials for the local development is an extremely important issue in the sustainable development of rural areas. Taking innovative ventures that leads to a satisfactory life in rural areas and increasing opportunities for non-agricultural actions is still a challenge. The inclusion of the multifunctional development of new forms of activities such as caring farms is an interesting proposition, worth promoting.

There is a good climate in Poland for developing a network of caring farms. Although in comparison with other European countries, Poland is still delayed in this area, however, there are important steps already taken to implement good practices already developed in other European countries. An example is an inclusion in the Strategy for Responsible Development of two projects: Caring Farms and Active and healthy senior – farmer, as well as activities intensively conducted by the Agricultural Advisory Centers to prepare potential participants in the network of care farms to properly perform new tasks.

Poland has well prepared facilities for the development of this form of operation – as an example of which is a large network of agritourism farms with well-equipped technical infrastructure, as well as farmers or members of their families who have experience in care for elderly or disabled people, acquired in the country or during the work done abroad.

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