

## ABSORPTION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION FUNDS BY FARMERS OF THE WESTERN KUJAWY ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE KCYNIA COMMUNE

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***Abstract:** The uneven development of European countries has led to the creation of the Common Agricultural Policy. The aim was to standardise the European agricultural market and related market. The CAP was supposed to finance the factors of production such as land, labour and capital. In order to achieve these objectives, Member States have decided to support individual farmers to increase their income and thus translate into increased investment, the purchase of the most needed raw materials or a change in the way they farm. The presented study was aimed at confirming whether the inhabitants of the Kcynia commune are willing to use the European Union aid programs. The research conducted among residents confirmed the hypothesis that the majority of respondents willingly used EU programs. Respondents often used more than one program, moreover, the respondents willingly used the support provided to them, the material status in their perception increased, and the way to obtain funds was quick and understandable.*

***Keywords:** Rural development, European funds, European aid implementation*

### INTRODUCTION

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) covers the Member States of the European Union. The aim of the CAP is to create a single agricultural market by equalising the standards of production, processing and competition in the agricultural market and processing. Due to the economic disparities between the Member States and the low profitability of farms, an initiative was created to subsidise farms. The co-financing also covered other areas of the economy related to this activity, including processing companies. The European Union's financial support programmes are intended to help develop rural areas. Their main objective is to help farm owners increase the profitability and development of their farms [1,2,3,4,5,6,9,14]. In this study, the presented issues have been discussed on the example of the municipality of Kcynia. The municipality of Kcynia is typically agricultural, the average area of individual farms is 11.5 ha, and the number of individual farms is 1200. The main crops are: cereals – 63%, potatoes – 11%, sugar beet – 9%, others – 17%. Kcynia is also an important transport hub.

The aim of the study was to investigate the impact of how farmers from the Kcynia commune benefited from European Union support programs. The research aimed to determine the level of interest as well as the use of funds allocated to specific programs. Farmers' opinions formed the basis for an attempt to determine which programmes farmers use most often.

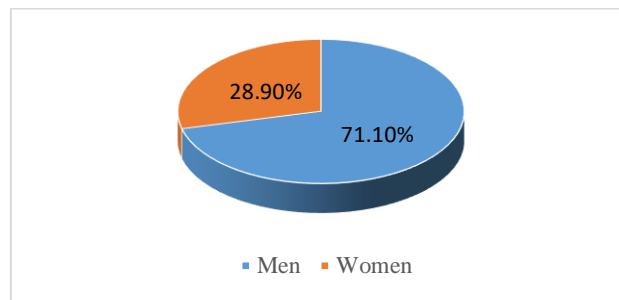
### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The basic issue that was decided to investigate was whether agriculture in the Kcynia commune developed their farms using funds from European Union support programs. The next step was to determine what kind of programs they used most often. For this purpose, it was necessary to get acquainted with the opinions of residents (farmers) of towns that are part of the Kcynia commune. A group of individual farmers living and conducting business activity in this commune was selected for the study. When planning the presented research,

the following main research hypothesis was posed: The use of funds from European Union programs had a beneficial impact on the development of farms in the Kcynia commune.

The survey was conducted among 97 adult respondents. The size of the sample was 1.84% of the inhabitants of the Kcynia commune. The sample size was 1200, which was taken as the number of individual farms. For an error of 8% with a significance level of  $\alpha=0.10$  and a value of 1.64. The questionnaire contained 10 questions and it served to learn the respondents' opinions on the researched topic. In order to obtain the information necessary for the research, the Report on the state of the municipality of Kcynia for 2021 was used.

97 respondents from the Kcynia commune, where 12875 people live, took part in the survey. There are 1200 farms in the municipality. The respondents were individual farmers who operated in the municipality. Of the 97 people, the majority of respondents were "men", 71.1% of respondents (69 people), the remaining part were "women" 28.9% of respondents (28 people) (Figure 1).



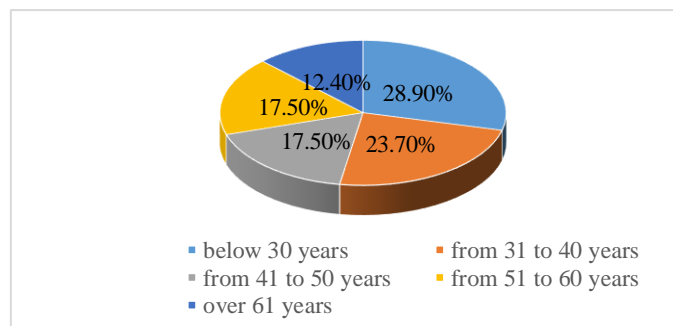
**Figure 1. Gender of respondents**

*Source: own elaboration*

### RESEARCH RESULTS

The age of the farmer, as an indicator of the innovations achieved by the farm, has a significant impact on the process of their implementation. People between the ages of 35 and 50 are the most likely to innovate. The problem for older farmers is related to their traditional family farming. The problem for younger people who own a farm is the lack of experience and the fact that their parents manage their work [7].

Among the respondents, the largest group of people were farmers aged between "18 and 30", who accounted for 28.9% of the number of respondents (28 people). The second group were people aged "51 to 60", who accounted for 23.7% of the number of people surveyed (23 people). The third group were people from the groups aged "31 to 40" and "41 to 50" years, which constituted 17.5% of the number of people surveyed (17 people each). The least numerous group were farmers "over 61" years of age, who accounted for 12.4% of the number of people surveyed (12 people). (Figure 2)

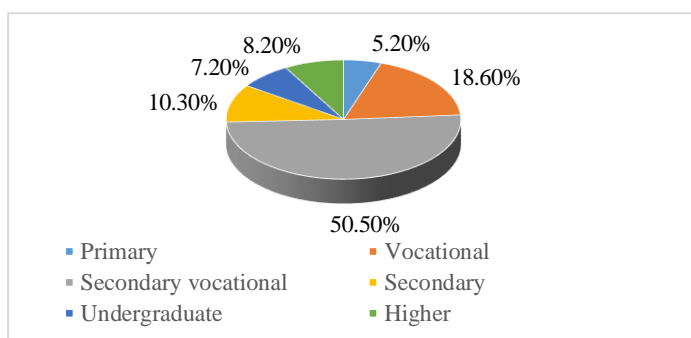


**Figure 2. Age of respondents**

*Source: own elaboration*

Education, as an element of human capital for agriculture, in which there is the least qualified workforce, is undergoing beneficial changes over the years. For farmers, education is accepted as the use of skills in farm management [8,10,13].

Of the respondents, the most common education was "secondary vocational" education, which was indicated by 51% of respondents (49 people). The next declared level was "vocational" education, indicated by 19% of respondents (18 people). "Secondary general education" was indicated by 10% of respondents (10 people). Graduation was marked by 15% of respondents, of which 8% indicated completion of "second-cycle studies" (8 people) and 7% "first-cycle" (7 people). On the other hand, 5% of respondents indicated having "primary" education (5 people) (Figure 3).

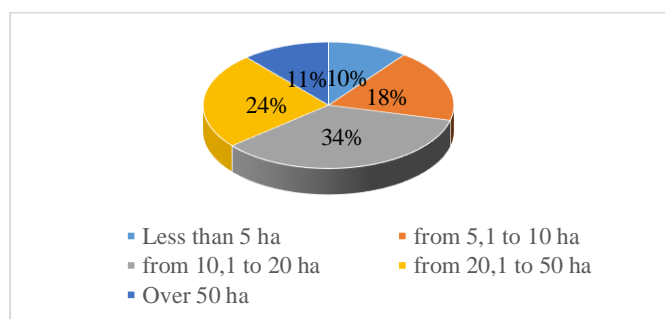


**Figure 3. Education of respondents**

*Source: own elaboration*

The size of the farm, as a factor, causes economic growth, production scale, the possibility of development and the effectiveness of the use of capital and labor resources, machinery and tools, etc. [11,12,16].

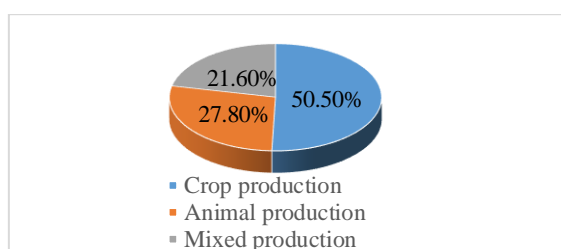
The surveyed farms were divided into 5 groups separated in terms of their area. The most numerous farms were with a size from "10.1 to 20 ha", they accounted for 35.1% of all responses (34 people). The second are farms with an area of "20.1 to 50 ha", which accounted for 24.7% of responses (24 people). However, 18.6% of responses (18 people) are in the range from "5.1 to 10 ha". People running farms "over 50 ha" accounted for 11.3% of responses (11 people). The least area farms ("up to 5 ha") accounted for 10.3% of responses (10 people) (Figure 4).



**Figure 4. Area of surveyed holdings**

*Source: own elaboration*

The type of agricultural production in the municipality of Kcynia was mostly declared as "crop production", which accounted for 50.5% of responses (49 people). Conducting "animal production" was declared by 27.8% of respondents (27 people). The last type of agricultural production was "mixed production" (crop and animal) with 21.7% of responses (21 people) (Figure 5).

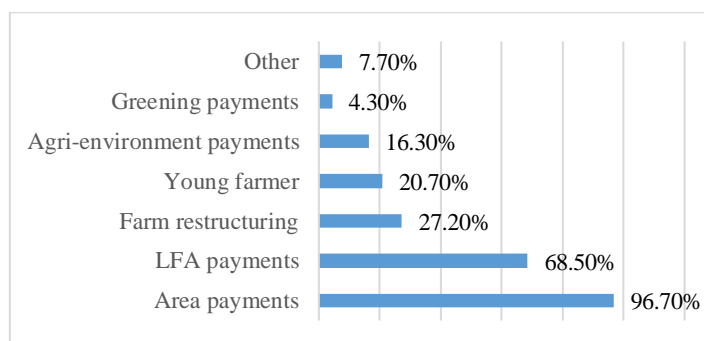


**Figure 5. Type of production carried out on the surveyed agricultural holdings**

*Source: own elaboration*

During the survey, respondents were asked to answer the question whether they had benefited from European Union programmes. Most people answered affirmatively 94.8% of respondents (92 people), negatively answered 5.2% of respondents (5 people).

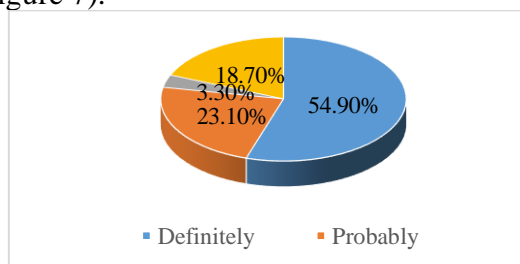
The most common form of aid applied for by farmers was "area payments" of 96.8% of respondents (89 people). "Payments to areas with disadvantaged properties" came second with 68.5% of respondents (63 people). "Farm restructuring" was a form of support that was used among 27.2% of respondents (25 people). The subsidy for running a farm by a young farmer was popular with 20.7% of respondents (19 people). The use of "agri-environmental payments" was declared by 16.3% of respondents (15 people). The last place of the available answers is the greening payment, which accounted for 4.3% (4 people). Seven people indicated other forms of assistance obtained (Figure 6).



**Figure 6. Declared forms of support used by respondents**

*Source: own elaboration*

When asked about the respondents' opinions whether they felt an increase in their material status thanks to the use of EU funds, they most often answered in the affirmative. "Definitely yes" answered 54.3% of respondents (50 people), the answer "rather yes" was recorded among 22.8% of respondents (21 people). 19.6% of respondents indicated the answer "I do not know" (18 people). For 3.3% of respondents, the material status is unlikely to increase (3 people) (Figure 7).

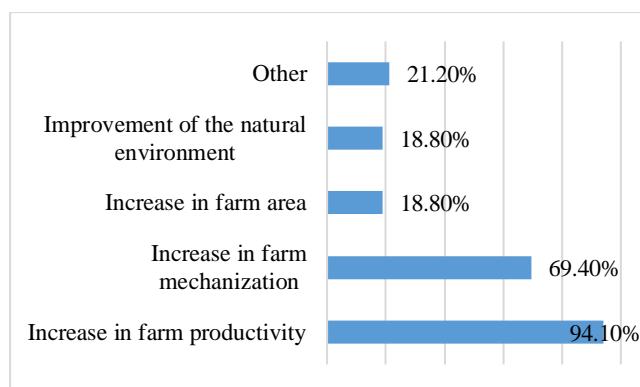


**Figure 7. Declaration of respondents regarding the perception of the increase in material status thanks to obtaining EU funds**

*Source: own elaboration*

In the years 2002-2012, the changes that took place in agriculture were generational. Despite the reduced agricultural area, plant area and animal population, progress was increased through increased productivity of plant and animal production [13, 15].

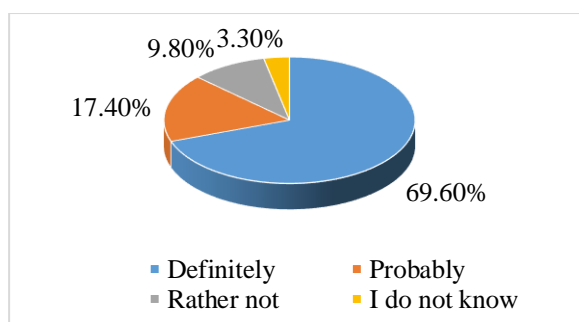
Respondents were also asked to indicate which factor on the farm has changed as a result of the use of aid from the European Union. Most respondents indicated an "increase in farm productivity" 94.1% of respondents (80 people). The second factor was "increased mechanization", which was indicated in response by 69.4% of respondents (59 people). The answer regarding "increasing the area of the farm" and "improving the condition of the natural environment" was given by 18.8% of respondents (16 people). The "other" answer was chosen by 21.2% of respondents (18 people). 7 people benefiting from European Union programmes did not answer this question (Figure 8).



**Figure 8. Respondents' declared use of EU funds**

*Source: own elaboration*

Respondents were asked to indicate whether the way they obtained EU funds was quick and uncomplicated. "Definitely yes" is the answer among 69.6% of respondents (64 people). The second choice of respondents was "rather yes", which corresponds to 17.4% of respondents (16 people). For 9.8% of respondents (9 people), obtaining EU funds was "rather not" quick and uncomplicated. Respondents corresponding to 3.3% of respondents (3 people) answered "I do not know". (Figure 9)

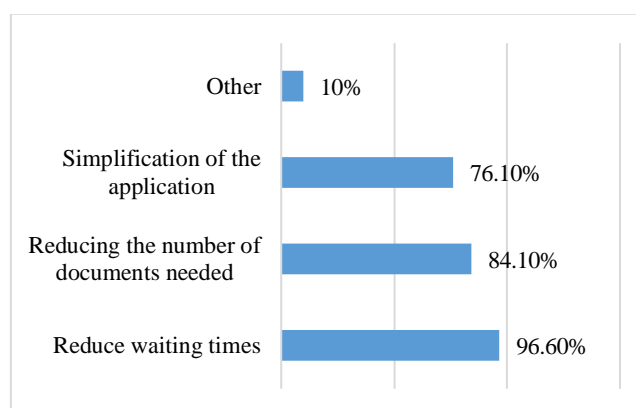


**Figure 9. Respondents' opinions on whether obtaining EU funds was quick and understandable**

*Source: own elaboration*

The last question concerned suggestions for changes in the procedure for obtaining EU funds in the coming years. The most common answer was "reducing the waiting time" is 96.6% of respondents (85 people). In second place was "reducing the number of documents needed" - 84.1% of respondents (74 people). The "method of choosing to fill in the application" was chosen by 76.1% of respondents (67 people). "Another "answer" was

indicated by 10% of respondents (9 people). Four people did not answer this question (Figure 10).



**Figure 10. Respondents' suggestions for proposed changes in the procedure for obtaining EU funds**

*Source: own elaboration*

## CONCLUSIONS

Social inequalities in agriculture and rural areas have been recognised by the countries of the European Union. The Common Agricultural Policy aimed to equalise them and increase the living and working standards of people living in rural areas. Aid for rural areas should be gradual, aimed at bringing the country into line with the standards of other countries operating in the common agricultural market. The CAP in its current form allows Polish farmers to compete on the European market with other countries in uniform standards of work, health and safety. From the consumer's point of view, this allows a wide selection of goods and products with stable prices.

The conducted research showed that the inhabitants of the Kcynia commune in the vast majority used European Union programs. Most people using the programmes have experienced an increase in their material status after obtaining funds from European Union programmes. Farmers were the most willing to use area payments, slightly less often they used payments for disadvantaged areas.

When considering the hypotheses given earlier, the main hypothesis should be confirmed. The owners of the surveyed farms willingly benefited from European Union programs, which in their opinion had a positive impact. Respondents were eager to use support measures, often choosing several aid schemes. Respondents, answering "definitely yes" or "rather yes" to the question about the sense of increasing material status, confirmed their declared feeling of increasing wealth.

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