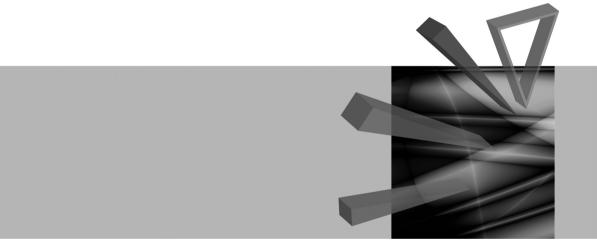
PRACE NAUKOWE Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu **RESEARCH PAPERS** of Wrocław University of Economics

324

Economy and Space



edited by **Stanisław Korenik** Niki Derlukiewicz



Publishing House of Wrocław University of Economics Wrocław 2013

Copy-editing: Agnieszka Flasińska Layout: Barbara Łopusiewicz Proof-reading: Barbara Cibis Typesetting: Comp-rajt Cover design: Beata Dębska

This publication is available at www.ibuk.pl, www.ebscohost.com, Nqy gt''Ukgukcp''F ki kcri'Nkdtct{ 'y y y & dely tqe0 n and in The Central and Eastern European Online Library www.ceeol.com as well as in the annotated bibliography of economic issues of BazEkon http://kangur.uek.krakow.pl/bazy_ae/bazekon/nowy/index.php

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ISSN 1899-3192 ISBN 978-83-7695-391-5

The original version: printed Printing: Printing House TOTEM

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Economy and Space

ISSN 1899-3192

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PLACE OF DAIRY COOPERATIVES IN THE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: CASE OF ŁÓDZKIE VOIVODSHIP, POLAND*

Abstract: The purpose of the article was to show the importance of dairy cooperatives in regional development on the example of Łódzkie voivodship. The elements subjected to analysis were the number of employees in studied Łódzkie voivodship cooperatives, range of products as well as quality and safety of the products. It was concluded that dairy cooperatives in Łódzkie voivodship are characterized by their ability to maintain and create new jobs. The dairy cooperatives' assortment and an appropriate level of quality of products offered affect the expansion into new markets and increase in attractiveness of the area in which dairy cooperatives.

Keywords: dairy cooperatives, assortment, food safety, regional development, Łódzkie voivodship.

1. Introduction

Regional development is a socio-economic progress taking place in a region. It is treated as an increase in economic potential of a region, marked by lasting improvement in its competitiveness as well as elevated quality of life of its inhabitants. It is a process of positive changes seen as both quantitative and qualitative in the dimension of economic, cultural and social activity, as well as in the area of socio-productive and political and constitutional interactions taking place in a region [Markowska 2002].

Considering the sphere of agribusiness it is important to remember that its development will not be the same everywhere because of the differences existing among various regions. Depending on the region one should consider factors for sustainable development of rural areas. Their development is dependent on:

^{*} Research paper realized from research budget means for 2010–2013 as research project Nr NN112204539.

community location, local economic structure (the significance of agriculture in regional economy), previous state of infrastructure, efficiency of rural institutions and level of activity of the agricultural government [Kożuch 2009].

Nevertheless, cooperatives in agribusiness and regional development still have many functions and tasks to perform. It is not possible to substitute them by other economic entities, organizational units or structures even in a market economy. Contemporary food sector and multifunctional countryside require, among others, specialized cooperatives of agro-food processing, including dairy cooperatives [Kawa, Kata 2006], presence of which in a given area influences regional development. The development of rural areas causes an improvement in economic situation and living conditions of local people, which in turn causes an increase in assortment and improvement in quality of goods delivered to the society by rural areas [Malinowski 2004, p. 42].

2. Research material and methodology

The purpose of the research was to present the significance of dairy cooperatives in regional development on the example of Łódzkie voivodship. Dairy cooperatives were the research subject. The choice of cooperatives for the research was intentional. Eight dairy cooperatives located in Łódzkie voivodship were included in the research. The cooperatives are associated in the National Association of Dairy Cooperatives (NADC). The cooperatives chosen for the study constitute 61% of cooperatives affiliated with this association (NADC) in Łódzkie voivodship. The research includes years between 2004 and 2010. The subject of the research was the number of employed workers, the number of employees originating from the commune, the assortment of products offered by dairy cooperatives as well as the safety and quality of products.

The source material for the research was information obtained from questionnaire and direct interviews conducted with cooperatives' presidents (SM 1, SM 3, SM 8). They responded to questions pertaining employment, while questions related to assortment as well as quality and safety of the products were directed to employees connected with the quality and safety of food products. Data from documents of dairy cooperatives in Łódzkie voivodship was also obtained.

3. Employment in dairy cooperatives

Dairy cooperatives are often the only significant entity operating in a commune, district or a number of districts, that is involved in purchase and processing of crops. Their knowledge of countryside and agricultural problems, experience in dealing with them as well as strong assimilation with local community in which they function [Kawa, Kata 2006, pp. 425, 426] are their advantage. The importance

of dairy cooperatives of Łódź province in regional development is dependent not only on the number of cooperatives in a given area but also, among others, on the scale of employment in the company, number of sales, turnover as well as cooperation with local government units [Nowak 2008, p. 121]. Creation and retention of work places is a positive element of their activity in a region. The above-mentioned cooperatives are often one of the largest employers in the commune or district. Effective use of labour resources should support economic growth as well as decrease disproportions in regional development. An increase in employment is an elementary factor in decreasing of danger of social tensions and inconsistencies [Ministerstwo Rozwoju Regionalnego 2006, p. 41].

That is why the number of employed workers in selected dairy cooperatives in Łódź province between 2004 and 2010 has been analysed at the first stage of research (Table 1). It was concluded that the number of employed workers differed within particular cooperatives considering respective years.

The difference in number of employed workers was also noted between various dairy cooperatives. In 2004 DC 7 employed the largest number of employees (603), and DC 8 the smallest number (66). On the other hand, in 2010 the largest number of employees was noted in DC 1 (827), and the smallest number was still in DC 8 (only 40).

Dairy		Number of employed workers						
cooperative	Specification	Years						
number	_	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
DC 1	TE	501	514	520	560	706	794	827
	EC	250	250	252	265	549	558	645
DC 2	TE	502	645	623	622	602	628	610
	EC	320	375	325	325	315	323	307
DC 3	TE	147	144	144	147	140	141	133
	EC	111	110	110	112	112	112	109
DC 4	TE	260	260	250	235	219	218	201
	EC	140	140	137	120	118	118	111
DC 5	TE	470	461	436	421	400	391	396
	EC	282	279	270	261	246	252	256
DC 6	TE	104	97	96	107	111	117	117
	EC	70	70	70	71	71	72	72
DC 7	TE	603	559	525	497	451	464	461
	EC	141	78	58	_	-	103	98
DC 8	TE	66	63	59	45	43	41	40
	EC	42	37	36	26	25	25	25

Table 1. Total number of employed workers (at the end of a year) and the number of employees living in the commune in which the dairy cooperative is located in 2004–2010

TE – total employment, EC – employees living in the commune in which the dairy cooperative is located. Source: personal research based on the dairy cooperatives' data. From the data presented in Table 1 it results that the number of employed workers in DC 1 in the years 2004–2010 increased systematically. The highest increase in number of employed workers was also noted in this cooperative. In this case the number of employed workers in 2010 was 165.07% higher than in 2004. On the other hand, the biggest drop in workers employed was noted in cooperative no. 8. The number of employed workers in 2010 was 60.61% of that in 2004. An increase in employment in 2010 in relation to 2004 was noted in case of three cooperatives (DC 1, DC 2, DC 6). Persons employed in the discussed cooperatives are often residents of the town and its surrounding area in which the dairy cooperatives are located. As one can see from the data presented in Table 1, from about 24% (DC 7) to about 76% (DC 3) of people employed in the cooperatives originated from the commune area in which the dairy cooperative is located. In 2010, on the other hand, such people constituted from about 22% (DC 7) to over 81% (DC 3) of employees.

4. The product assortment of dairy cooperatives

Despite many difficulties which have affected the dairy cooperativeness, it still has a significant place in dairy industry. The participation of cooperativeness in production of individual assortment varies, as much as the dairy cooperativeness situation is visibly varied regionally [Nowak 2012, pp. 106–108]. From the range of products offered by discussed cooperatives (Table 2) it results that the number of products offered differs among respective cooperatives.

Assortment specification	DC 1	DC 2	DC 3	DC 4	DC 5	DC 6	DC 7	DC 8
Milk	33	16	-	13	1	7	6	-
Powdered milk	-	1	1	2	1	-	-	-
Sour cream and cream	23	7	_	6	9	3	7	-
Quantity of assortment	23	7	_	6	9	3	7	-
Yellow cheeses	37	10	6	I	I	I	I	-
Curd cheeses	61	20	_	11	17	3	27	14
Butter	6	4	2	4	3	I	1	1
Fat mixes	1	3	1	-	-	-	-	-
Fermented drinks	38	10	-	3	2	5	43	-
Drinks	5	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Desserts	14	7	-	-	-	-	3	-
Single portion products	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dairy drinks for animals	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Whey powder				1		-	-	-
Export products	8	I	_	I	I	I	I	-
Other	2	-	_	_	_	-	10	_
Including new products	28	7	_	_	-	_	-	-

Table 2. Quantity of assortment of selected dairy cooperatives in Łódzkie voivodship

- Assortment not produced.

Source: personal research based on the dairy cooperatives data.

DC 1 offers the largest number of products, approximately 240. The smallest number of product is offered by DC 3, only 10. At the same time DC 1 has as much as 33 types of milk and DC 5 only 1. Moreover, DC 1 offers its clients such products as milk beverages for animals, various types of ice cream (Bambino on a stick, Bambino Sandwich, Bambino Cone, Lux Bambino) or almond yoghurt with a hint of lemon (one of the most original flavours of yoghurt). Only one cooperative has whey powder in its offer (DC 4). The same cooperative also has in its sales offer UHT goat's milk in containers: 0.5 l with a re-cap and 1 l with a re-cap. DC 1 and DC 2 cooperatives introduced product innovations. Sample novelties launched by them are, e.g.: 12% cream for coffee with magnesium, yoghurt drinks (lime, raspberry, orange, forest berries), Fellada cheese in a jar, Havarti cheese 350 g, porridge 200 g, rice desserts, Toruń desserts, Greek type natural yoghurt. DC 2 offers Hey! Cheese with a baked apple flavor, Hey! Chocolate pudding, Hey! chocolate-vanilla pudding, Hey! vanilla pudding, Hey! de'Serek with raspberries (cheese dessert).

An important question related to dairy cooperative's activity and connected to regional development is safety and quality of products. Quality control in analysed dairy cooperatives is based on ensuring safety and quality at all steps of production, beginning from sourcing of raw material, through processing, storing and ending in distribution. Legal regulations requiring implementation and use of some quality control systems operate in all European Union countries and in parts of other countries in the world. Part of the mandatory quality control systems are: Good Hygiene Practice (GHP), Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP), Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCAP). Part of the non-mandatory quality control systems used in food companies are: quality management systems according to ISO 9000 series norm (ISO 9001), quality assurance control system according to ISO 22000 norm, integrated quality management systems (IQMS), integrated management systems (IMS), International Food Standard (IFS), British Retail Consortium (BRC), capital quality management system [Morkis 2008b, 2009]. DC 2, for example, worked on and implemented rules of Good Hygienic Practice (GHP), rules of Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP), rules of Good Laboratory Practice (GLP), Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP), ISO 9001 norms. Certificates in International Food Standard (IFS) and Global Standard for Food Safety (BRC) systems are a confirmation of quality in DC 1. Such certificates enable sales to international retail chains as well as product export to European Union markets. DC 4 has a certificate in Integrated Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points according to norms: PN-EN ISO 9001:2009 and PN-EN ISO 22000:2006 (HACCP). Thanks to the certificate it was possible to obtain export permits to Russia. DC 5 implemented HACCP management system as well as quality system ISO 9001. DC 6 has a certified Integrated System of Quality Management ISO 9001 and HACCP since 2006. DC 7 employs the Integrated

Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points system according to norms: ISO 9001 and ISO 22000. The plant has permits to export its products to countries in European Union, USA, and Canada.

Three cooperatives in Łódź province have been awarded with the Try Fine Food label (Table 3). The main goal of the Try Fine Food Program (TFF) is to inform of high quality of food products.

Company's name	Products	Date of award of TFF label	Expiry date of TFF label	
District Cooperative	Kefir ROBICO	16.12.2010	16.12.2013	
Powdered Milk Production	Kefir ROBICO family size	16.12.2010	16.12.2013	
Plant in Krośniewice	"Zimne Mleko" 3.2% fat content	16.12.2010	16.12.2013	
	"Zimne Mleko" 2% fat content	16.12.2010	16.12.2013	
District Dairy Cooperative	Łowicz milk UHT 2%	21.09.2004	07.12.2013	
in Łowicz	Łowicz milk UHT 0.5%	21.09.2004	07.12.2013	
	Łowicz milk UHT 1.5%	21.09.2004	07.12.2013	
	Łowicz milk UHT 3.2%	21.09.2004	07.12.2013	
	Łowicz cream UHT 12%	21.09.2004	22.09.2007	
	Łowicz cream UHT 36%	21.09.2004	22.09.2007	
Milk Suppliers Cooperative	Homogenized cream 18%	20.09.2005	24.05.2015	
in Wieluń	Homogenized cream 12%	20.09.2005	24.05.2015	
	Drinking milk 2% fat (fresh)	20.09.2005	15.09.2011	
	Cheesecake-sandwich type curds			
	"Mój Ulubiony"	21.09.2004	13.07.2014	
	Extra Butter from Wieluń	21.09.2004	01.04.2014	
	Burr Extra Butter 300 g	17.09.2007	13.07.2014	

Table 3. Dairy cooperatives from Łódzkie voivodship awarded with the Try Fine Food label

Source: personal research based on http://www.minrol.gov.pl/pol/Jakosc-zywnosci/Poznaj-Dobra-Zywnosc/Program-PDZ-Wyroznieni-Znakiem/ (22.03.2013).

Owning the TFF label (Try Fine Food) on their products can become an effective way for companies of increasing their market share. The purpose of placing the quality label on packaging of products awarded with the particular label by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is to inform of high and stable quality of a food product, excellent flavour and health benefits, as well as increasing customer trust to said product. Such labelling is supposed to help consumers choose agro-food products that will meet the highest criteria and commercial quality. Thanks to such labelling the goal of community policy can be realized, which is to widen the area of high quality and diversity of food on the internal market of European Union. The quality label is awarded by the appropriate minister responsible for agricultural markets, by decision and after consulting the Chief Inspector of Agricultural and Food Quality Inspection (IJHARS). The quality label is awarded for a period of three years.

agricultural markets, at the request of the Chief Inspector of Agricultural and Food Quality Inspection can by way of decision withdraw the quality label award before the expiry date, as discussed in Act 1, if the agricultural food product no longer fulfils the quality requirements discussed in Article 13 of the Act 1 [Ustawa z 21 grudnia 2000]. The Try Fine Food label can be awarded to products with exceptional quality features, because of its raw material, microbiological and sensory features, nutrient and functional content, processing and fixation methods. The applicant has to document the outstanding quality of products. The agro-food article must comply with strict health, sanitary, veterinary or phytosanitary requirements described in separate rules¹.

5. Conclusions

There is room for all food producers in market economy – the big and the small ones, however, success will be the domain of those who will cope with the requirements, challenges of the market, will bet on quality and health safety; those who can lower costs and prove their due diligence in retaining the level of quality required by consumers. Quality, next to the price, is the most relevant component of fierce market competition which, in conditions of our saturated market and increasingly more demanding consumers, forces producers to undertake specific actions. Quality must be continuously sought after. It is worth to place the labels, certificates and other symbols awarded for high quality on the product label. Health safety of food becomes the superior value, which means that food quality is an issue of special rank because it is closely connected with human health and life [Toruński 2003, p. 117]. Giving evidence of the use of GHP and GMP or the HACCAP systems was a crucial factor in companies' competitiveness in the first years after accession. Nowadays, implementation and use of mandatory quality management systems is not a basic competitive factor on national or foreign market but an essential condition of further operation of a food company. On the other hand, the use of non-mandatory quality management systems (IFS/BRC, ISO 9000 series among others) can be one of the essential competitive factors of a given company on the markets [Morkis 2008a, p. 410; Jeznach 2008, p. 114]. In conclusion, it should be noted that dairy cooperatives play an important role in regional development. They are characterized by their ability to retain and create new work places, thanks to which they cause a decline in unemployment as well as an increase in relative income of the population. Their vast product assortment and appropriate quality level of the products offered, supported by quality labels and certificates, have an influence on growth of the market. At the same time it makes

¹ http://www.minrol.gov.pl/pol/Jakosc-zywnosci/Poznaj-Dobra-Zywnosc/Zasady-przyznawaniaznaku-PDZ-oraz-wzory-wnioskow/ (22.03.2013.).

the regions in which cooperatives operate more attractive. Moreover, dairy cooperatives in Łódzkie voivodship generate local income through sale of products outside of their region and by exporting them abroad, which at the same time promotes the region.

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MIEJSCE SPÓŁDZIELNI MELCZARSKICH W ROZWOJU REGIONALNYM: PRZYPADEK WOJEWÓDZTWA ŁÓDZKIEGO, POLSKA

Streszczenie: Celem artykułu było przedstawienie znaczenia spółdzielni mleczarskich w rozwoju regionalnym na przykładzie województwa łódzkiego. Przeanalizowano liczbę pracowników w badanych spółdzielniach województwa łódzkiego, asortyment produktów oraz jakość i bezpieczeństwo produktów. Stwierdzono, że spółdzielnie mleczarskie województwa łódzkiego charakteryzują się zdolnością do utrzymywania i tworzenia nowych miejsc pracy. Oferta asortymentowa spółdzielni mleczarskich oraz odpowiedni poziom jakości oferowanych produktów wpływają na rozszerzenie rynków zbytu i wzrost atrakcyjności regionu, na terenie którego działalność prowadzą spółdzielnie mleczarskie.

Słowa kluczowe: spółdzielnie mleczarskie, asortyment, bezpieczeństwo żywności, rozwój regionalny, łódzkie.