

CHANGES IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF THE NON-FARMING RURAL POPULATION IN 2000–2005

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Abstract. Non-farming population represents an increasingly significant group of rural residents and therefore became an important object of study. The paper is primarily focused on the description of the non-farming rural population. The main source of the analysed data were surveys of families residing in 76 villages across Poland. The sampling of villages for the surveys was purposeful and representative, based on socio-economic features of the population and the land structure. Research shows that as many as 57% of rural families own no agricultural land in 2005 and on the basis of the analysis of socio-economic development observed in rural areas, it may be assumed that the non-farming rural population will grow further and that this socio-occupational category will increasingly determine the socio-economic development of rural areas.

Key words: non-farming population, rural areas, regional differentiation

INTRODUCTION

Changes in the socio-economic structure of rural population make the one of the most important determinants of the rural development. Non-farming population represents an increasingly significant group of rural residents and therefore became an important object of study. Compared to the rest of the rural population the non-farming population can be distinguished by the quality of human capital. It is primarily related to the considerable share of relatively young and skilled persons. Their lifestyle, the adopted system of values and social aspirations were increasingly similar to behaviour patterns observed in highly urbanised and industrialised areas. In the then prevailing conditions that group is the engine of civilisational progress in rural communities and represented occupational advancement [Turski 1970, Sikorska 2005].

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Regardless of the changed conditions for the development of the non-farming rural population, an upward trend was still observed over the years covered by subsequent IAFE-NRI surveys. It stemmed from determined efforts of the rural population to improve living conditions; since the development potential of a major share of farms was marginal and the feeling of redundancy was increasingly widespread among farmers, it was necessary to find new sources of income. Competitive pressure in agri-food markets and technological progress pushed down agricultural employment, therefore strong outflow of workforce from agriculture continued, in spite of family ties and the growing role of farms as protection against the loss of off-farm jobs. After Poland's accession to the European Union, those processes became even more intensive [Chmieliński, Otlowska 2007]. As a result, despite a number of constraints on further growth of non-farming rural families, this category of households has become a permanent element of rural areas, and the future socio-economic rural development in fact largely relies on the non-farming population to be the engine of favourable changes in rural areas and agriculture.

OBJECT OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH METHOD

The paper is primarily focused on the description of the non-farming rural population (both families and individuals). Data on the mobility of the group in question, its demographic characteristics allow to identify changes which could be observed prior to accession and in the early period of Poland's membership in the European Union.

The main source of the analysed data were surveys of families residing in 76 villages across Poland, conducted by the Institute of Agricultural and Food Economics – National Research Institute (IAFE-NRI) in 2000 and 2005. The sampling of villages for the surveys was purposeful and representative, based on socio-economic features of the population and the land structure of holdings located in the distinguished regions¹. Basically, the sample excludes villages of a mixed nature (urban and rural), villages dominated by workers' families or those particularly attractive for tourists in terms of location. The surveyed villages represent a fixed sample for panel field surveys conducted periodically at the Social and Regional Policy Department of the IAFE-NRI. In 2000, the number of surveyed rural households was 8.643 and they represented the total population of the villages in question. This group included 4.716 families without agricultural land, also referred to as non-farming families. In 2005, the survey conducted in the same villages covered 8.604 rural families. It produced source materials on social characteristics and economic activities of all the residents. The group included 4.899 non-farming families (Table 1).

¹ Poland was divided into five Macroregions according to the administrative division into voivodships and similarities between historically developed characteristics of the socio-economic structure of particular rural areas and agriculture. Specific Macroregions include the following voivodships: Central-Western – the Kujawsko-Pomorskie and Wielkopolskie voivodships; Central-Eastern – the Łódzkie, Mazowieckie, Lubelskie and Podlaskie voivodships; South-Eastern – the Świętokrzyskie, Małopolskie, Podkarpackie and Śląskie voivodships; South-Western – the Opolskie, Lubuskie and Dolnośląskie voivodships; Northern – the Zachodniopomorskie, Pomorskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie voivodships. For more on the division into Macroregions see: [Sikorska 2005].

It should be emphasised that the source materials for the analysis have the merit of providing comprehensive information. In the questionnaire for non-farming families most questions refer to the family, the outflow and inflow of families and individuals from and to the village. Detailed questions concern sources of income for the family and demographic characteristics, the educational level and working life of the family members. Another section of the questionnaire refers to the possession of basic goods, with a view to determining the living standards in the surveyed group of families.

STRUCTURE AND MOBILITY

According to the applicable typology of rural areas, in Poland such regions represent 93.2% of Poland's total area. Those areas are inhabited by 14.7 million persons, i.e. 38.6% of Poland's population, but the farming population (with farms of more than 1 ha of agricultural land) represents only half of the rural population. It should be noted, however, that the share of the rural population has been slightly increasing. Particularly strong population growth has been in rural areas in the proximity of major cities or in those characterised by attractive rural and natural landscape. At the same time, fluctuations in the number of rural residents is increasingly accompanied by a marked downward trend of the farming population, following the fall in the number of family farms. As their number decreases, the role of agricultural holdings in providing the source of income is gradually diminishing. Therefore, economic activity and sources of income of the farming population have been increasingly diversified. In 2005, farming provided the main activity and income source only for 36% of households with a farm of more than 1 ha of agricultural land, whereas the corresponding figure for 2000 was 42%. Such rural households accounted for 36% and 43% respectively of the farming population.

The analysis of the non-farming population has primarily demonstrated that this group represents a growing and ever more significant share of the rural population. As many as 57% of rural families own no agricultural land. Therefore, the rural community can no longer be identified exclusively with agricultural activities.

The regional distribution of non-farming rural residents suggests that the division into in the west and north of Poland, where the rural population was characterised by a high share of non-farming families, and central and eastern regions, with a relatively minor proportion of non-farming households, remained virtually unchanged. In some areas, particularly in the north and southwest, the group in question accounted for three-fourths of all rural families. Even in the southern regions, where agricultural holdings are characterised by very traditional family ties, non-farming families represented nearly half of the rural community, irrespective of the economic status of individuals.

For the description of changes observed in rural areas, the increasing share of the non-farming population is significant in a number of ways. First of all, it indicates the diminishing role of agriculture as a determinant of the economic situation of the rural population. For more than a decade, the process has been intensified. In the past, the main mechanism for reducing the economic dependence of rural residents on agricultural holdings was the outflow of rural youth from agriculture to non-agricultural occupations. It was primarily driven by prospects of rapid social advancement and frequently involved

Table 1. Non-farming families in 2000 and 2005
Tabela 1. Rodziny bezrolne w 2000 i 2005 roku

Macroregion Makroregion	Year Rok	Surveyed families, total Liczba badanych rodzin	Of which: non-farming families w tym bezrolne	
			number liczba	share udział
Total Ogółem	2000	8643	4716	54.6
	2005	8604	4899	56.9
Central-Western Środkowozachodni	2000	1012	534	52.8
	2005	1031	556	53.9
Central-Eastern Środkowowschodni	2000	2787	1249	44.8
	2005	2635	1213	46.0
South-Eastern Południowo-wschodni	2000	2368	1117	47.2
	2005	2408	1229	51.0
South-Western Południowo-zachodni	2000	1255	897	71.5
	2005	1278	946	74.0
Northern Północny	2000	1221	919	75.3
	2005	1252	955	76.3

Source: IAFE-NRI surveys 2000, 2005.

Źródło: Badanie IERiGŻ-PIB 2000 i 2005.

plans to leave rural areas [Rosner 1991]. The outflow of labour from agriculture observed in the past twenty years should be primarily attributed to necessary adjustments to new macroeconomic conditions, particularly the need to cope with greater competitive pressure and to reduce production costs. Significant land fragmentation, characteristic of Polish agricultural holdings, rapidly increased hidden unemployment in agriculture and, regardless of the imbalance in the labour market, the situation in agriculture pushed farmers to seek alternative incomes. As a result, even though non-farming rural families suffered all the adverse effects of Poland's economic transition, the number of such households continued to rise. Furthermore, partly due to increased interest on the part of rural youth in taking over the farms as rightful successors, the non-farming rural population included a growing number of retired farmers.

After Poland's accession to the European Union, the generally improving economic conditions and significant land fragmentation contributed to greater interest in non-agricultural activities, thus more new rural households became non-farming families [Wilkin 2005]. Ever greater job opportunities encouraged such attitudes. As a consequence, over 70% of new non-farming families had a farming background.

In recent years, to a greater extent than before, the formation of the non-farming population in rural areas has been affected by family and individual migration. In 2000–2005, a total of 12% of the households in question lost the status of a non-farming rural family. Within this group, relatively the most non-farming families left rural areas to live in towns or cities (nearly 60%). Almost 40% of migrant families moved to another village, whereas a mere 5% decided to go abroad. At the same time, very rare occurrences of individual migration by members of non-farming rural households, unlike in the case of family migration, usually involved geographical mobility within rural areas – 45% of

individual leaving the surveyed villages moved to another village. According to survey findings, an increasing number of migrants decided to leave Poland. It concerned nearly 14% of the total number of individual migrants.

In general, in 2000–2005 net migration among non-farming families was positive. The increase in the number of the surveyed households (new families accounted for 13%) was greater than the decrease (12% had left the surveyed villages), but the difference was less significant than in 1996–2000 (16% against 5% respectively). Therefore, the conclusion is that the period of 1996–2005 witnessed an upward trend in the mobility of the non-farming population.

The non-farming rural population was characterised by a high share of younger working age persons, as well as by a relatively high proportion of children and young people. The pre-working age population accounted for ca. one-fourth, a higher share than that of the post-working age population (less than one-fifth of the surveyed group). However, in recent years there has been an intensification of the demographic ageing of the non-farming rural population. In 2000–2005, as compared to 1996–2000, there was an increase in both the post-working age population and the non-mobility working age population.

For years, the demographic structure of the non-farming population in rural areas has been determined by the inflow of persons who discontinued farming and took up paid employment. In recent years, the age structure of the group in question has largely been affected by changes resulting from job migration of families/individuals and more widespread education, particularly higher education. Another important factor has been a growing number of retired farmers in the non-farming population. Combined with job migration by young members of non-farming families, this pattern determines the demographic ageing of the population in question.

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE

With regard to the whole non-farming population surveyed, the working age population accounted for more than half, the majority being the mobility age population, i.e. persons at the stage in life distinguished by greater social activity. It could be reflected in geographical or job mobility, choosing a different type of employment or in the family situation. Presumably, such demographic features of the surveyed group indicated its significant potential and the capacity to influence overall changes in rural communities.

The demographic “youth” of non-farming rural population was reflected not only in a high share of younger working age persons, but also in a relatively high proportion of children and young people. The pre-working age population accounts for approx. one-fourth, a higher proportion than that of the post-working age population (less than one-fifth of the surveyed group). However, in recent years there has been an intensification of the demographic ageing of the non-farming rural population. In 2000–2005, as compared to the previous period covered by the surveys, there was an increase in both the post-working age population and the non-mobility working age population (Table 2).

Importantly, the rural community is also characterised by significant differences in the educational level between the farming and non-farming population. Relevant data

Table 2. Non-farming rural population by age in 2000 and 2005
 Tabela 2. Ludność bezrolna według ekonomicznych grup wieku w latach 2000 i 2005

Specification Wyszczególnienie	Share of*/Udział ludności w wieku*									
	the pre-working age population przedprodukcyj- nym		the working age population produkcyjnym		of which/z czego				the post-working age population poprodukcyjnym	
	2000	2005	2000	2005	the age of mobility mobilnym		the age of non-mobility niemobilnym		2000	2005
Year/Rok	2000	2005	2000	2005	2000	2005	2000	2005	2000	2005
Non-farming families Rodziny bezrolne	26.5	22.2	54.0	58.8	37.0	38.1	17.0	20.7	19.5	19.0

*Economic age groups according to the Central Statistical Office: the pre-working age population – persons aged 17 or under; the working age population – women aged 18–59 and men aged 18–64; the post-working age population – women aged 60 or over and men aged 65 or over. The working age population was subdivided into two groups: the age of mobility population – persons aged 18–44 – and age of non-mobility population – women aged 45–59 and men aged 45–64.

*Przyjęto stosowane przez GUS ekonomiczne grupy wieku: przedprodukcyjny – osoby do 17 lat; produkcyjny – kobiety w wieku 18–59 lat i mężczyźni w wieku 18–64 lat; poprodukcyjny – kobiety 60 i więcej oraz mężczyźni 65 i więcej lat. W wieku produkcyjnym wydzielone zostały jeszcze dwie grupy: mobilny – osoby w wieku 18–44 lat i niemobilny – kobiety w wieku 45–59 lat i mężczyźni w wieku 45–64 lat.

Source: IAFE-NRI surveys 2000, 2005.

Źródło: Badanie IERiGŻ-PIB 2000 i 2005.

primarily illustrate social and economic aspirations of young people. The improvement in the educational level was found to be stronger in the farming population (in terms of secondary, post-secondary and higher education) than among persons without agricultural land. At the same time, the gap between the two groups of the rural population had been gradually narrowing, which is primarily reflected in the growth rate of persons with secondary education (Table 3). It follows that education opportunities and aspirations have been increasingly similar in rural areas, and regardless of the type of economic activity education is perceived as a main precondition of social and economic advancement as well as of improved living standards of the rural population.

Table 3. Rural population aged 15 or over by education in 2000 and 2005
 Tabela 3. Ludność wiejska w wieku 15 lat i więcej według poziomu wykształcenia w latach 2000 i 2005

Specification Wyszczególnienie	Year Rok	Share of population with/Udział ludności z wykształceniem			
		primary education podstawowym	basic vocational education zawodowym	secondary and post-secondary education maturalnym i pomaturalnym	higher education wyższym
Non-farming families Rodziny bezrolne	2000	39.5	38.8	18.1	3.6
	2005	36.1	36.1	22.5	5.3
Farming families Rodziny rolnicze	2000	41.6	39.2	17.0	2.2
	2005	34.4	37.4	23.2	5.0

Source: IAFE-NRI surveys 2000, 2005.

Źródło: Badanie IERiGŻ-PIB 2000 i 2005.

The importance of the educational level as a determinant of individual position in the labour market is very clear in data on rural unemployment as the unemployment rate differs between social groups. According to the surveys, the situation of the population in the labour market largely depends on the following factors: age, education, trade/profession and the place of residence.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the non-farming rural population has primarily demonstrated that persons without agricultural land represent an increasingly significant group of rural residents. From 1988 the number of non-farming rural families rose by 15.4%, up to as many as 57% of all the rural households in 2005 [Chmieliński, Otłowska 2007]. The main determinant of such changes was the abandonment of farming and taking up non-agricultural activities by the rural population or the discontinuation of production at the retirement age. Therefore, the rural population can no longer be identified with the farming population. In some regions of Poland, particularly in the north and southwest, the group in question accounts for three-fourths of the total number of families. Even in the eastern Poland, where agricultural holdings have been characterised by very traditional family ties, non-farming families represent nearly half of the rural community, irrespective of the economic status of individuals.

According to data on the educational structure of the non-farming population, the group was strongly oriented towards non-agricultural activities. It was reflected not only in the relatively high share of persons with non-agricultural qualifications, but also in differences in the educational level between macroregions. Relatively the best educational level of the surveyed group was found in the south of Poland. For instance, in 2005 the share of the non-farming rural population with secondary, post-secondary or higher education in the South-Eastern macroregion exceeded 36%, compared to the national average of 28%. Those areas are characterised by the most advanced diversification of economic activities of the rural population among all the macroregions. Relatively more absorptive local labour markets provided more non-agricultural job opportunities than in villages located in other macroregions. It has been proven in the paper that the situation of the population in the labour market largely depends on the following factors: age, education, trade/profession and the place of residence.

On the basis of the analysis of socio-economic development observed in rural areas, it may be assumed that the non-farming rural population will grow further and that this socio-occupational category will increasingly determine the socio-economic development of rural areas.

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PRZEMIANY W SPOŁECZNO-EKONOMICZNEJ STRUKTURZE LUDNOŚCI BEZROLNEJ W LATACH 2000–2005

Streszczenie. Przemiany w strukturze ludności wiejskiej są najlepszą ilustracją ogólnego kierunku zmian funkcji obszarów wiejskich, z miejsca pracy rolników i produkcji żywności w stronę miejsca pracy i życia ludności niezwiązanej z rolnictwem. Celem pracy jest analiza regionalnych różnic w wybranych cechach struktury społeczno-ekonomicznej bezrolnej ludności wiejskiej. Badanie objęło 76 wsi tworzących ze względu na cechy społeczno-ekonomiczne reprezentację struktury obszarów wiejskich w Polsce.

Słowa kluczowe: ludność bezrolna, obszary wiejskie, zróżnicowanie regionalne

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