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## **ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY OF POLISH ECO-FARMS AFTER ACCESSION TO THE EU**

**Abstract.** The ecological agriculture becomes of a crucial meaning, because thanks to this type of method farmers assure the high quality food, animals' welfare, protection of environment, as well as, which is essential they get from this activity financial means for keeping appropriate standards of living.

Large support for farmers are additional payment to ecological agriculture. In Poland small additional payment appeared in 1998 covering 1/3 of control costs. In the next years, however, additional financial support was introduced to selected types of crop output and green areas. After accession to the European Union the size of additional payment to ecological farmers grew up significantly and the economic efficiency of farms improved. Before accession to the EU it depended on agricultural land area. Farmers got the highest additional payment, who possessed above 100 ha, the smallest support was directed to those who possessed agricultural land smaller up to 5 ha. The rates of additional payments in 1998 valued between 75 and 300 zloty on farm and from one year to another were getting higher, so that in 2003 year payments reached the range from 400 to 800 zloty on farm. After accession to the EU the additional payment for farms grew up clearly, because except national additional payment farmers received financial support from the EU. For example in 2007, the agricultural net income from 1 ha of arable land was from 140 to 1,346 zloty.

**Key words:** ecological farms, additional payment to ecological agriculture, economic efficiency

The system of ecological farming has been known both in Poland and in other countries for many years. It was pioneered by Rudolf Steiner who, at the request of Count and Countess von Keyserlingk residing at Schloss Koberwitz (today's Kobierzyce) near Wrocław, gave a series of lectures devoted to biodynamic agriculture in 1924. It was already at that time that he drew attention to the fact that soil processes were regulated by the coexistence of bacteria and plants ensuring mutual harmony. Consequently, an agricultural farm, which could be compared to an individual organism distinctive for its closed cycle of matter, should only use animal feed and fertilisers of its own production (Szołtysek U. [2004]).

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An advocate of biodynamic farming in Poland was Count Stanisław Karłowski (Senator during the period of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Polish Republic) who ran his estate (located in Szelejewo near Gostyń) using the biodynamic method. Biodynamic agriculture was later promoted by Engineer Julian Osetek (Szołtysek U. [2004]).

This approach to farming has been followed and endorsed in a number of countries under a great variety of names such as “organo-biological”, “organic” or “biological”. Regardless of the name, however, all the methods shared the same goals, including restricted use of industrial means of production, optimum use of natural production means, rejection of synthetic fertilisers or crop protection products, respect for the behavioural needs of livestock and provision of appropriate keeping conditions (Tyburski J., Żakowska-Biemans S. [2007]).

The development proper of ecological farming in Poland took place in the 1980s and is mainly accredited to activities taken by the EKOLAND Association of Organic Food Producers under the motto of “To produce without destroying the Earth; to nourish without harming the consumer”. The Association continues to perform a major role today. One of its accomplishments was the development, on the basis of standards promoted by the International Foundation for Organic Agriculture (IFOAM), of a set of rules (guidelines) for ecological farming. Furthermore, the Association grants eco-certificates, organises conferences and trainings for farmers, as well as promoting ecological agriculture among consumers (Tyburski J., Żakowska-Biemans S. [2007] and [www.ekoland.org.pl](http://www.ekoland.org.pl) of 23 May 2009).

A very rapid growth of the number of eco-farms began in 1990. In that year, there were a total of 32 ecological farms, with 27 undergoing transition, occupying an area of 300 ha (Table 1, Fig. 1). In 1992, the first EKOLAND certificate was granted to 20 out of 94 controlled farms (Motowidlak U. [2007]).

In the years 1994–1995, the number of eco-farms rose nearly 8-fold in comparison to 1993 figures. The period 1997–1998 saw an 11.5% fall in the number of certified farms. In the following years, the number of certified farms underwent rapid growth at an average rate of 46.3%. The system of ecological farming is not as profitable as conventional industrialised agriculture, which triggered a fall in the number of certified farms.

Ecological farms received financial aid already in the first years of activity; however the resources were allocated for covering the costs of farm control. The situation improved after 1999, when subsidies per hectare of ecological crops were introduced. Accordingly, in 2004 there were 3,760 controlled farms; 2,077 farms undergoing transition and 1,683 certified farms. The total area occupied by eco-farms was 82,730 ha (cf. Fig. 1).

Table 1. Number of ecological farms and their growth dynamics

Year	Number of farms			Increase/decrease (-) of the number of certified farms relative to the preceding year (%)
	Controlled	Undergoing transition	Certified	
1990	32	27	–	–
1991	49	49	–	–
1992	94	74	20	–
1993	180	144	30	50
1994	246	152	73	143
1995	263	–	235	222
1996	238	–	236	0.43
1997	324	–	207	–12.3
1998	417	–	185	–10.6
1999	555	282	231	24.9
2000	1,279	611	338	46.3
2001	1,787	1,109	669	97.9
2002	1,977	1,095	882	31.8
2003	2,304	999	1,287	45.9
2004	3,760	2,077	1,683	30.8

Source: own study based on Motowidlak U. [2007].

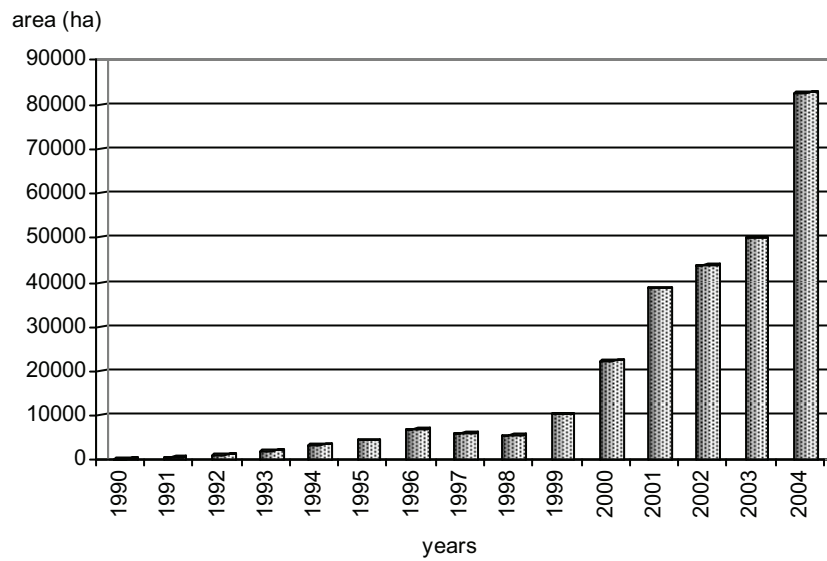


Fig. 1. Eco-farm area in 1990–2004

Source: own study based on Motowidlak U. [2007].

Dynamic expansion of ecological farming was noted directly after Poland's EU entry, with the number of eco-farms rising by approx. 91% (cf. Table 2). In the following years, the number of ecological farms had an average growth rate of ca. 28.3%.

Table 2. Number of ecological farms in Poland in 2004–2008

Year	Number of eco-farms	Increase in the number of farms relative to the preceding year (%)
2004	3,760	–
2005	7,182	91.0
2006	9,194	28.0
2007	11,870	29.1
2008	15,158	27.7

Source: Agricultural and Food Quality Inspection, [www.ijhar-s.gov.pl](http://www.ijhar-s.gov.pl) of 23 May 2009.

The 2007 figures were as follows: 6,618 certified ecological farms with an overall area of 137,890.8 ha; 5,252 farms undergoing transition, covering 149,637.8 ha, and a total of 206 processing plants. As for individual provinces, the greatest number of eco-farms was recorded in Małopolskie (1,627), Podkarpackie (1,577), Lubelskie (1,402), Mazowieckie (1,215) and Zachodniopomorskie (1,059) Provinces. The largest area of cropland designated for ecological activity is in Zachodniopomorskie (59,113.5 ha), Warmińsko-Mazurskie (28,210.0 ha) and Podkarpackie (27,049.7 ha) Provinces (Ochrona Środowiska [2008]).

Ecological farming has also been expanding in other European Union countries (cf. Table 3). For comparison, Poland ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in the number of eco-farms (11,887 in total), after Italy (45,115), Greece (23,769), Austria (20,200), Germany (18,703) and Spain (18,226) in 2006–2007. In terms of arable land (AL) area, Poland was classified 22<sup>nd</sup> with a total area of ca. 286,000 ha (corresponding to 1.94% AL). The leader is Austria with 371,000 ha (13.37% AL), with Malta in the last position: 20 ha (0.20% AL) (Ochrona Środowiska [2008]).

Due to a set of definite rules which must be observed by ecological food producers, eco-farming is associated with lower yields compared to conventional farms, with similar production costs. What is more, the eco-food market is still relatively underdeveloped (Tyburski J., Żakowska-Biemans S., [2007]).

Table 3. Number of ecological farms and arable land area in EU Member States in 2006–2007.

Country	Number of eco-farms	Arable land occupied by eco-farms	
		in [ha]	in % of total arable land area
Austria	20,200	371,000	13.37
Belgium	852	33,057	2.39
Bulgaria	240	166,675	–
Cyprus	305	1,979	1.31
Denmark	2,794	138,097	5.33
Estonia	1,173	72,886	8.79
Finland	3,900	149,346	6.73
France	11,640	552,824	2.00
Greece	23,769	302,256	7.59
Spain	18,226	988,323	3.98
Ireland	1,104	39,947	0.95
Lithuania	2,855	120,418	4.31
Luxemburg	72	3,630	2.81
Latvia	4,108	173,464	9.35
Malta	10	20	0.20
Netherlands	1,374	47,019	2.46
Germany	18,703	865,336	5.08
<b>Poland</b>	<b>11,887</b>	<b>285,878</b>	<b>1.94</b>
Portugal	1,696	269,374	7.32
Czech Republic	1,318	312,890	7.35
Romania	3,033	107,582	0.77
Slovakia	279	122,589	6.29
Slovenia	1,953	26,831	5.53
Sweden	2,380	225,385	7.06
Hungary	1,553	122,765	2.88
UK	5,506	682,196	3.92
Italy	45,115	1,148,162	9.04

Source: Ochrona Środowiska [2008].

Economic efficiency analysis of ecological farms is subject to the same principles as conventional farms. As the rapid expansion of ecological farming in Poland occurred only recently, there were few economic analyses in the initial period. The first assessments of financial efficiency of eco-farms were carried out at the Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation (IUNG) of the National Research Institute in Puławy (Tyburski J., Żakowska-Biemans S. [2007]). At present, comprehensive data describing the condition of ecological farms in production- and economy-related aspects are supplied by the Polish FADN (Farm Accountancy Data Network), i.e. a system of collecting and using accountancy data from agricultural holdings. Data thus obtained are used in the development of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, including agricultural subsidies (www.fadn.pl of 23 May 2009 and Tyburski J., Żakowska-Biemans S. [2007]).

Thanks to such studies, it is possible to evaluate certified ecological farms included in the study sample of the Polish FADN (Nachtman G. [2006], p. 51–64).

The first analysis of farm accountancy data in the FADN system was performed in 2004. The selection of eco-farm samples was based on three criteria listed below: (Nachtman G. [2006], p. 51–64 and Opis realizacji planu wyboru próby gospodarstw rolnych dla Polskiego FADN w 2009 roku Polski [2009]).

1) regional location with a breakdown into four regions, each including four Provinces:

I. Pomorze and Mazury (Lubuskie, Zachodniopomorskie, Pomorskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie Provinces),

II. Wielkopolska and Śląsk (Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Wielkopolskie, Dolnośląskie and Opolskie Provinces),

III. Mazowsze and Podlasie (Podlaskie, Mazowieckie, Łódzkie and Lubelskie Provinces),

IV. Małopolska and Pogórze (Śląskie, Świętokrzyskie, Małopolskie and Podkarpackie Provinces).

2) farming type (TF8) accommodating eight general agricultural production types, including (Czyżewski A., Henisz-Matuszczak A. [2006]):

- fieldcrops,
- grazing livestock,
- dairy cattle,
- horticulture,
- mixed crops and livestock,
- field crops, market garden cropping and permanent crops combined,

3) economic size (ES-6) classified as:

- very small      0–4 ESU
- small            4–8 ESU
- medium small   8–16 ESU
- medium large   16–40 ESU
- large            40–100 ESU
- very large      over 100 ESU<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ESU = European Size Unit. ESUs were introduced in the programme devoted to economic size of agricultural holdings as an informative measure and an auxiliary tool to define the economic size of farms which, in turn, forms a basis for farm classification into the group of semi-subsistence farms which can be supported under the Rural Area Development Plan (1 ESU = EUR 1,200). Economic size, according to the Commission Regulation (EC) no. 1242/2008 of 8 December 2008 establishing a Community typology for agricultural holdings, will correspond to total standard farm output expressed in euro. The value incorporates a total of 14 classes, with class I < EUR 2,000 and class XIV ≥ EUR 3,000,000.

Production and economy analyses in the FADN methodology are based on the categories enumerated below (Nachtman G. [2006], p. 51–64 and Nachtman G., Żekała H. [2006], p. 91–106.):

⇒ structure (area and structure of arable land along with livestock numbers expressed in livestock units – LU<sup>2</sup>) and value of production (sum total of plant, animal and other types of production). The category also takes into account production efficiency and total labour input into the agricultural farm's operating activity, expressed in AWU, i.e. annual work units = full-time person equivalent<sup>3</sup>.

Total labour input is furthermore divided into:

- unpaid labour input in the agricultural holding's operations, referring generally to family labour (FWU<sup>4</sup>),
- paid labour input (AWU) provided in exchange for remuneration either in cash or in kind.

⇒ Production inputs, including intermediate consumption, depreciation and external factors. Intermediate consumption comprises specific production costs (e.g. costs of seeds and seedlings, product preparation for sale) and overheads (e.g. costs of fuel, power supply and repairs). Costs of external factors are linked to labour hire (wages), lease rent and interest rates paid. Net added value is obtained by subtracting depreciation relating to a farm holding from gross added value. Similarly, by reducing added value by external factors, it is possible to calculate family farm income.

⇒ Economic surpluses, including gross added value, net added value and family farm income. Gross added value is calculated by subtracting intermediate consumption from agricultural farm output. This category allows for adjustments relating to the surplus value obtained by a balance of subsidies and taxes on operations.

A major support measure for farmers (and an economic surplus) is available in the form of subsidies for ecological farming. Limited subsidies were introduced in Poland in 1998 to cover a proportion of control costs (cf. Table 4). The following year saw the initiation of subsidies per area of selected crops and grasslands. Full subsidies were available to holdings with an area of up to 50 ha. For larger areas of arable land, farms were granted the full amount of subsidies for the first 50 ha, along with 50% rate for the farming land of 50–100 ha. No subsidies were available for cropland in excess of 100 ha.

Subsidy rates per hectare of crops are subject to periodic revisions. For example, in 1999 certified producers were eligible for subsidies of PLN 120 per

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<sup>2</sup> LU = Livestock Unit, i.e. the number of equines, cattle, sheep, goat, pigs and poultry kept on a farm.

<sup>3</sup> AWU = Annual Work Unit. 1 AWU=2200 hours of labour per year.

<sup>4</sup> FWU = Family Work Unit.

1 ha of agricultural crops. In the following two years (2000–2001), the subsidies rose to PLN 360/ha, to fall again by PLN 110/ha in 2002–2003 (cf. Table 5).

Table 4. Rates of subsidies for covering costs of ecological farm control in 1999–2004 (in PLN)

Farm area	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Up to 5 ha AL	75	100	300	300	400	400	450
5–10 ha AL	100	130	350	350	450	450	500
10–20 ha AL	125	150	400	400	550	550	550
20–50 ha AL	150	180	450	450	650	650	600
50–100 ha AL	175	200	500	500	700	700	650
over 100 ha AL	300	350	600	600	800	800	700

Source: Motowidlak U. [2007].

Table 5. Rates of subsidies per 1 ha of cropland in ecological farms in the year preceding certification and already certified (in PLN)

Farm	Year	Vegetable crops	Agricultural crops	Fruit crops	Meadows and pastures
In the year preceding certification	1999	200	150	220	75
	2000	600	450	660	150
	2001	600	450	660	150
	2002	500	300	600	100
	2003	500	300	600	100
	2004	980	680	1,800	330
Certified	1999	150	120	180	50
	2000	450	360	540	120
	2001	450	360	540	120
	2002	400	250	500	80
	2003	400	250	500	80
	2004	940	600	1540	260

Source: own study based on Motowidlak U. [2007] and Tyburski J., Żakowska-Biemans S. [2007].

Following Poland's EU entry, the amount of subsidies available to farmers holding up to 10 ha of arable land increased. Farm control subsidies in 2005–2006 were the same as in 2004 (cf. Table 6) (Raport o stanie rolnictwa ekologicznego w Polsce w latach 2005–2006 [2007]).



Table 6. Rates of subsidies for covering costs of ecological farm control in 2005–2006 (in PLN)

Farm area	2005	2006
up to 5 ha AL	450	450
5–10 ha AL	500	500
10–20 ha AL	550	550
20–50 ha AL	600	600
50–100 ha AL	650	650
Over 100 ha AL	700	700

Source: Raport o stanie rolnictwa ekologicznego w Polsce w latach 2005–2006 [2007].

Funds available under the PROW agro-environmental programme (Rural Area Development Programme) in 2004–2006 per 1 ha of crops for uncertified agricultural holdings were within the PLN 680–1,800 per ha range. Certified farms were eligible for PLN 600–1,540 per ha (cf. Table 7) (Raport o stanie rolnictwa ekologicznego w Polsce w latach 2005–2006 [2007]).

Table 7. Rates of subsidies per 1 ha of crops in ecological farms, available under the PROW agro-environmental programme in 2004–2006 (in PLN)

Crop type	Amount of subsidies	
	Non-certified farm	Certified farm
Agricultural crops	680	600
Permanent grassland	330	260
Vegetable crops	980	940
Fruit crops	1,800	1,540

Source: own study based on Raport o stanie rolnictwa ekologicznego w Polsce w latach 2005–2006 [2007].

Funds could be obtained subject to the filing of an application for a subsidy within a specified time frame and submitting a correction, if needed, by the required deadline.

Financial support is a very important factor improving the economic efficiency of eco-farms. Some of the first efficiency analyses were performed by Kuś *et al.* (2006) from the Institute of Soil Science and Plant Cultivation (IUNG) in Puławy. The assessment was carried out in a total of 20 ecological farms located in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Province in 2003–2004. The main criteria used in the assessment of economic efficiency included production value and

gross farm income. Economic indices were calculated according to current prices of production means or farm produce per 1 ha AL and per 1 farm. Farming profile (plant production, mixed, livestock production) and holding size (small farms – up to 10 ha, medium-size farms – 10–20 ha and large farms – over 20 ha) were also taken into account (Kuś J., Stalenga J., Kopiński J. [2006], p. 91–102).

The analysis showed that the dominant farm type in the period analysed were medium-sized holdings with an average area of 12.3 ha AL. As regards farming type, the worst results were noted in the mixed category. Economic efficiency of eco-farms was found to have improved after Poland's accession to the European Union. In 2004, final gross production per 1 ha AL was on average 27% higher than in the pre-accession year (2003), though material and financial outlays also saw a 13% increase (cf. Table 8). Improved economic efficiency of farms was a result of a number of factors, including higher yields, price rises of cereals, milk and beef cattle, as well as increased subsidies (by a mean of PLN 286 per 1 ha AL), covering 22% of financial outlays and 20% of the increase in personal income.

Table 8. Material and financial outlays, and farming income per 1 ha AL, full-time person and farm in 2003 and 2004

Breakdown	2003	2004
Final gross production (FGP), (PLN/ha)	3,031	3,858
Direct subsidies (PLN/ha AL)	–	475
Subsidies for ecological production (PLN/ha)	286	528
Share of subsidies in the personal farm income (%)	16.3	37.7
Direct costs (C), (PLN/ha )	547	652
Material and financial outlays (O), (PLN/ha)	1,291	1,454
Direct surplus (FGP-O) (PLN/ha)	2,484	3,206
Gross farm income (GFI=FGP-O), (PLN/ha)	1,740	2,404
Gross farm income (PLN/full-time person)	11,461	15,417
Personal income (PLN/full-time person)	12,782	17,046
Gross farm income (PLN/farm)	31,689	39,478
Personal income (PLN/farm)	35,342	43,649

Source: Kuś J., Stalenga J., Kopiński J. [2006], p. 91–102.

In 2004, the FADN system was used to conduct a study on a sample of certified ecological farms (109 in total) accounting for 6.5% of the set of certified eco-farms operating in Poland. The study assessed the farming type of “field crops, market garden cropping and permanent crops combined”.

The farm sample was dominated by “small” holdings, with only eight farms achieving the 40–100 ESU economic size (Table 9).

Table 9. Number of assessed ecological farms, presented by economic size classes, in the FADN sample

Economic size class	Number of farms
✓ 0–4 ESU	17
✓ 4–8 ESU	50
✓ 8–16 ESU	34
✓ 16–40 ESU	1
✓ 40–100 ESU	8
✓ over 100 ESU	–

Source: Nachtman G., Żekało H. [2006], p. 91–106.

Production value analysis showed that the highest income is generated by cereals-based plant production (PLN 28,775 per farm), followed by vegetables (12,137 per farm) and fruit (PLN 6,997 per farm). Livestock production accounts for only ca. 29% of total farming production (Table 10).

Table 10. Production value in ecological farms specialised in “field crops, market garden cropping and permanent crops combined”

Breakdown	Production	
	PLN/farm	PLN/ha AL
Total production	40,675.0	4,237.0
Fieldcrops, including:	28,775.0	2,997.4
– cereals	3,944.0	420.8
– protein crops	1,277.0	133.0
– potatoes	2,679.0	279.1
– oilseed crops	1,159.0	120.1
– industrial crops	474.0	49.4
– vegetables	12,137.0	1,264.3
– fruit	6,997.0	728.9
Livestock production	11,661.0	1,214.7
Other production types	239.0	24.9

Source: Nachtman G., Żekało H. [2006], p. 91–106.

The value of this production type was determined to the greatest extent by cereal growing, as well as vegetable and fruit farming. Thanks to lower direct costs and subsidies for operating activity, gross added value amounted to PLN 25,804 per farm and net added value reached PLN 19,171 per farm. Consequently, family farm income was nearly PLN 15,000 (Table 11).

Table 11. Economic efficiency of ecological farms assessed by FADN in the farming type “field crops, market garden cropping and permanent crops combined”

Breakdown	Equivalent to		
	per one farm (PLN)	per 1 ha AL (PLN)	per 1 FWU (PLN)
Total production	40,675	4,237	25,646
Direct consumption	17,570	1,830	11,078
Balance current subsidies and taxes	2,699	281	1,702
Gross added value	25,804	2,688	16,270
Depreciation	6,633	691	4,182
Net added value	19,171	1,997	12,088
External factors	4,177	435	2,634
Family farm income	14,994	1,785	9,430

Source: Nachtman G., Żekało H. [2006], p. 91–106.

Financial results provided by the analysis of ecological farms demonstrate that the activity has been increasingly profitable. Another beneficial development supporting ecological farming is implementation of the “Plan of Action for Ecological Food and Farming in Poland for 2007–2013”, whose principal objective is to achieve a rapid growth of the number of ecological farms in Poland. The Plan will be carried through e.g. by offering financial support to ecological food manufacturers and organising campaigns to promote ecological farm products among producers (Plan Działań dla Żywności Ekologicznej i Rolnictwa w Polsce na lata 2007–2013 [2007]).

Ecological farming is, therefore, growing in significance, as it delivers high-quality food, animal welfare and environmental protection, and equally important, it provides farmers with income that makes it possible to engage in appropriate farming management.

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#### EFEKTYWNOŚĆ EKONOMICZNA GOSPODARSTW EKOLOGICZNYCH W POLSCE PO AKCESJI DO UNII EUROPEJSKIEJ

Rolnictwo ekologiczne nabiera coraz większego znaczenia, gdyż dzięki tego typu metodzie gospodarowania rolnicy zapewniają wysokiej jakości żywność, dobrostan zwierząt, ochronę środowiska oraz, co również jest istotne uzyskują, z tego tytułu dochód umożliwiający właściwe gospodarowanie.

Dużym wsparciem dla rolników są dopłaty do rolnictwa ekologicznego. W Polsce niewielkie dopłaty pojawiły się w 1998 roku, pokrywając 1/3 kosztów kontroli. Jednak w następnych latach wprowadzono dopłaty do powierzchni wybranych rodzajów upraw i użytków zielonych. Po przystąpieniu do Unii Europejskiej wielkość dotacji dla rolników ekologicznych wzrosła dość znacząco, dzięki czemu poprawiła się również efektywność ekonomiczna gospodarstw. Stawki dotacji przed przystąpieniem do UE uzależnione były od powierzchni gospodarstwa. Najwyższe dotacje uzyskiwali rolnicy, którzy posiadali powyżej 100 ha gospodarstwo, najmniejsze zaś o powierzchni do 5 ha. Stawki dotacji w 1998 roku wynosiły od 75–300 zł na gospodarstwo i co roku były wyższe, tak że w 2003 roku wynosiły 400–800 zł na gospodarstwo. Po akcesji do UE dotacje dla gospodarstw wyraźnie wzrosły, gdyż oprócz dotacji krajowych producenci otrzymują dotacje z UE i dzięki temu np. w 2007 roku dochód rolniczy netto z 1 ha użytków rolnych (UR) wynosił od 140 do 1346 zł.

**Słowa kluczowe:** rolnictwo ekologiczne, dotacje dla rolnictwa ekologicznego, efektywność ekonomiczna.