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Community-based Social Farming towards social and economic development of fragile rural areas

**Abstract:**

Additional activity in farms remains in strong connection with maintaining their existence and development. Modernization and changes in agriculture do not take place if we focus only on traditionally perceived agricultural production. The possibilities of taking additional activities in rural areas are wide and varied, and still there are novel ideas in this field. Type of activity undertaken by small farms owners depends on their individual features, ingenuity and creativity. In Polish farms, new and not very popular form of diversification is social agriculture. Social agriculture can operate in symbiosis with the primary purpose of the existence of small farms ‒ ensuring the farmer and his family members the supply of basic food products, and generating additional revenues from the implementation of various social tasks. Social agriculture connects rural and municipal environments thanks to utilising the potential of agricultural farms to provide social services for local communities. This type of agriculture fosters social integration; as a business activity and a method of farm management in rural areas, it contributes to strengthening the relations between rural inhabitants, while at the same time allowing for strengthening of the relationships among various entities involved in social agriculture.

The basis of the innovative model *Community-based Social Farming* (CSF) presented in the article is social farming. The CSF combines many forms of operations, as well as involves various entities and engages the local community in its activities. It is based on the use of endogenous resources; it expands the scope of income sources of not only farmers, but also other rural inhabitants with a specific capital. The model is universal, is recommended in rural areas characterised by fragmentation. It offers social services corresponding to the needs of various social groups. The CSF also realizes tasks convergent with some values of nested markets. The concept of nested markets has been introduced by European researchers: Nico Polman, Krijn J. Poppe, Jan Willem van der Schans, and Jan-Douwe van der Ploeg. Nested markets are defined as segments of wider markets which are strongly imbedded in networks of producers and consumers. A goal of local development strategy created by those actors is aimed at premium prices, cost-reductions, specific connections, reduced transaction costs and differential development trends. Regarding CSF in connection with the above mentioned it promotes farming supported by consumers, enables cooperative land use and management, employs farming without chemicals or ecological (certificated) methods of plant cultivation

and animal husbandry. It is engaged in local production (homemade products), direct sales and agricultural retail trade, and provides gastronomical services for events.