

Our

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Wojciech Bogusławski Theatre in Kalisz,
Photo: Krzysztof Grabowski



„European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas”.

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Krzysztof Grabowski

Deputy Marshal of the Wielkopolska Region

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I present to you this year's first issue of "Our European Countryside" quarterly, in which we promote the Wielkopolska rural areas and inform about European funds allocated for their growth under the Rural Development Program for 2014-2020 ("RDP") and actions undertaken within the National Network of Rural Areas in collaboration with the partners of this Network. The coronavirus pandemic, which we have been struggling with for a year, also affects the implementation of the RDP, which was extended to the end of 2025. At the same time, the fate of the future EU budget is at stake in the context of the involvement of regional governments in the distribution of funds. In February, the first phase of discussion on the governmental draft of the "Strategic Plan for the Common Agricultural Policy", which is to replace the RDP in the new EU perspective, ended. This draft raises a number of concerns that we write about further herein.

I strongly encourage you to read both the opinions of local government officials on this subject and the sum-

mary of the results of the RDP 2014-2020 implementation to date.

In this issue of the bulletin you will also find information on additional funds for the implementation of a community-led local development strategy with the participation of local action groups, as well as on the next edition of the campaign called "We Support the Wielkopolska Producers" aimed at helping members of the Wielkopolska Culinary Heritage Network in this difficult time.

At the very beginning, however, in connection with the Village Leader's Day celebrated on March 11, I encourage you to read an interview with Jarosław Maciejewski, a president of the Association of Village Leaders of the Wielkopolska Region, a leader of the Rudna village and a deputy president of the Wielkopolska Regional Parliament.

Hope you will enjoy reading our bulletin.

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Community leader

On March 11, the Village Leader Day is celebrated. This is an increasingly important date on the calendar. On this occasion, we talk to Jarosław Maciejewski, a president of the Association of Village Leaders of the Wielkopolska Region, a head of the Rudna village in the Złotów commune of many years' standing, and a deputy president of the Wielkopolska Regional Parliament, about the role and tasks of a village leader as well as about changes that have occurred in the Wielkopolska countryside thanks to EU funds.



You have been a leader of the village of Rudna for 14 years. What was and still is the most enjoyable and the most difficult for you in this job?

There is no way to run away from difficulties. This job requires multitasking. It often means taking care of simple, trivial matters. For example, local roads full of post-winter potholes have recently become a problem of many village leaders. For road managers it is just a task to do, but for a village leader it is often an urgent challenge because a whole group of people cannot leave the village to run their errands. We often act under pressure whether we can handle issues quickly and efficiently or not, because the whole chain of affairs for many people depends on it. It is not pleasant to know that not everything is under our control. It should be said, however, that village leaders can and handle even the most difficult and weirdest problems.

Why did you want to become a village leader? Family tradition? Coincidence?

In 2007, when the election for village leaders was approaching, my friends and family gave me to understand that I would be most needed here, in my village, to start changing its look and living conditions and also to give it a new quality.

Being a village head is a great challenge and commitment to the community you represent.

I hesitated whether to take up this challenge, whether I would get by, or meet the residents' expectations to the last day before the elections on March 7, 2007.

My mother, who was a village leader for 12 years, helped me. I was also thinking about my late grandmother, who served as a village head for 24 years. Not to mention my godmother, who was a rural commune mayor for three terms. She is the one I always talk to about contemporary countryside, the residents' expectations and about what really matters to local community. Yes, my service is largely a family tradition, but it is also my choice. It was not a coincidence.

On the other hand, getting the job done is always the most pleasant. Village leaders derive their satisfaction from the residents' delight, from the community's successes and local development. The best form of payment for the hard and social work that we do is a smile, friendly greeting and respect of fellow residents.

Will a male Village Leader Day soon be a female Village Leader Day? The number of female village leaders is already equal to the number of men performing this function. Is it a sign of the times, or are women more active?

A village administrator is an important role in the countryside that should be taken on by a natural leader. Whether it will be performed by a woman or a man, is less important. What matters is that it should be a real leader of the community. This is how it works.

Female village leaders are equal to male leaders. I think it is not about gender, but about the fact that traditionally this role was assigned to men. Women were rather involved in rural housewives' club. Today, the situation is often opposite as men also act as chairmen of the Rural Housewives' Clubs.

You have been an active Moderator of the Wielkopolska Rural Renewal Program for 11 years, that is from the beginning of this project. What is your priority?

The Rural Renewal Program is an important catalyst for changes. This is a trend, an idea initiated by Mr. Ryszard Wilczyński. Today, the Wielkopolska Region implements its program based on local resources, traditions, and values. It is an opportunity for changes, and decisions concerning the direction of these changes are made by the village assembly and the Rural Renewal Group.

In 2015, the local government launched additional support for the residents of active villages. A group of Moderators of the Wielkopolska Rural Renewal, of which I am a member, was formed. Moderators are specially trained individuals with specific persuasion skills. Their task is to support local communities in development, identify opportunities that exist in a given environment, which often go unnoticed, and encourage people to actively engage in changes in the countryside, e.g. as those suggested by the Rural Renewal Group. It is important to support such initiatives and give them additional incentives to act, for example in the form of a village council fund.

We know that you promote the village council fund in communes, because not all of them introduce this fund. And what does the situation look like in the Wielkopolska Region?

The Wielkopolska communes often have a fairly large income per capita. I do not want to talk about specific numbers, I will rather discuss the effects of introducing or not introducing the village council fund. Where communal own income exceeds 50% of the total income, the Commune Council often resigns from allocating resources to the village council fund. This is because the Polish government has recently reduced the rate of return of funds on account of a properly executed village council fund, although the act guarantees return thresholds for communes at the level of 40%, 30% and 20%. Recently, we have been informed that the maximum threshold is only 23% of money provided by the commune. In such a situation, village heads and mayors begin to wonder whether the financing of village council funds by communes is even profitable.

I always count on democratic approach of our leaders to the division of powers and responsibilities because the transfer of some money from a commune budget to village councils lightens the burden imposed on this commune. I know that there are village heads and mayors who cannot imagine any other way of performing their tasks than through village funds. The fund is a lot like the Wielkopolska village: thrifty, economical, and proactive.

By the way, I would like to mention that it was President

Bronisław Komorowski who signed the act on village fund on the Village Leader's Day, i.e. on March 11, 2014. I had a pleasure to participate in this event together with a group of other village leaders.

What is your opinion on the effects of RDP 2014-2020 in the Wielkopolska Region?

I think that the Rural Development Program has fundamentally changed Polish countryside and has shown how important non-centralized, regional interventions based on local needs are. These needs are best known and understood by local governors.

Probably the most important elements of the RDP program are investment projects in water and sewage management, construction of local roads and rural infrastructure. Building kilometres of water and sewage systems allowed us, the residents of the countryside, to look into the future in a completely different way. My village was connected to the water and sewage system in 2010. It was a major breakthrough for us. I used to say it was then that Rudna had entered the 21st century in grand style.

EU funds allocated for the construction or expansion of halls, community and leisure centres helped to create a completely different quality of life in the countryside, including interpersonal relations and the creation and development of local culture. Today, the villagers form non-governmental organizations that have a direct impact on the development of rural life. Thanks to the assumptions underlying regional policy we can participate in changes occurring in Polish countryside, changes for the better.

In mid-February this year, the first consultation phase on the government's Strategic Plan for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which is to replace the Rural Development Program implemented so far, ended. Where do you stand on the government's proposals?

I have already expressed my concerns about the Strategic Plan for the CAP being prepared by the Polish government. I initiated the adoption of a stance by the Wielkopolska Regional Parliament, in which we expressed our concerns as to the shape of this strategy to be given by Polish government. Making decisions on the development of Polish countryside at central level, taking away some competence from local governments and acting in favour of governmental agencies and institutions clearly show that this is not a desirable trend.

Regional policy is as different as the regions are. Wielkopolska, Podlasie, Mazowsze, Pomorze and others: regional matters cannot be put into a uniform, schematic framework, they must be handled by well-oriented local government. Will our government hear our voice? We will be eagerly awaiting its response.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RDP

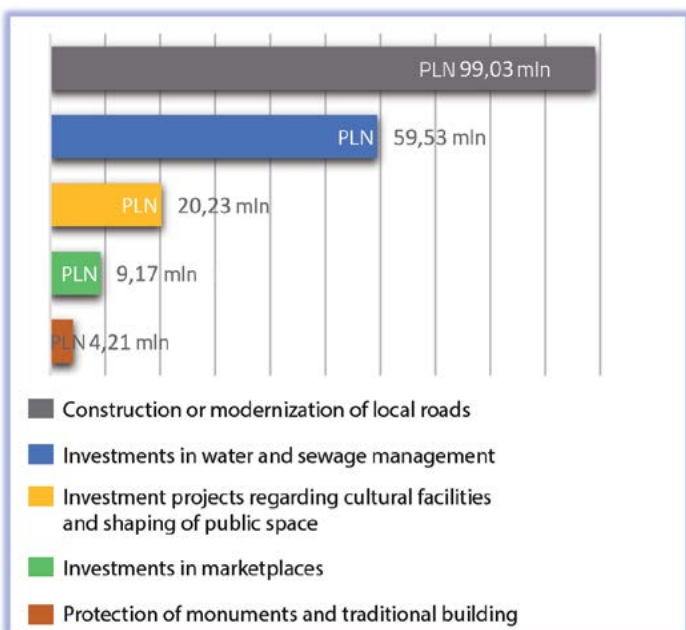
The RDP 2014-2020 in numbers

Due to delays in work on the new EU perspective 2021-2027 caused by various factors, including the pandemic, the European Parliament and the Council of the EU extended the implementation period of the Rural Development Program for the years 2014-2020 by means of a regulation of December 23, 2020 by two years. This means that the last tasks co-financed from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development will be settled by the end of 2025. However, the original RDP 2014-2020 time frame encourages us to summarize the implementation of the Program so far. In this article, we will focus on non-commercial infrastructure investment projects.

So far, PLN 192 million has been paid to the beneficiaries of RDP 2014-2020 for completed projects related to capital investments, including the construction or modernization of local roads, projects regarding water and sewage management, marketplaces, construction facilities intended to promote local products, cultural facilities, but also projects involving the shaping of public space as well as protection of monuments and traditional buildings. So far, 275 such projects have been completed. Additionally, at least PLN 141 million will be paid after the completion of tasks in progress today and also those to be performed in the future.

AMOUNTS PAID TO THE RDP 2014-2020 BENEFICIARIES UNDER THE MEASURES "BASIC SERVICES AND RENEWAL IN RURAL AREAS IN THE WIELKOPOLSKA REGION"

(data as of March 14, 2021)



The last 20 contracts will be signed soon for tasks related to water and sewage management, the co-financing of which was requested by communes and communal enterprises in 2019, but their commencement has so far been on the waiting list due to an insufficient limit of funds. Thanks to the possibility of transferring funds from other actions covered by the program, the Government of the Wielkopolska Region may co-finance all projects that were given a positive opinion as part of the call for proposals. In total, under the current financial perspective, we allocate as much as PLN 156 million from EU funds to water and sewage management. This is a very important support, without which the development of rural areas in our region would significantly slow down, emphasizes Krzysztof Grabowski, Deputy Marshal of the Wielkopolska Region.

In terms of the construction or modernization of local roads, the Government of the Wielkopolska Region arranged for two calls for proposals, in 2016 and 2019, allocating as much as PLN 137.5 million from the EAFRD funds to support 189 projects related to communal and district roads. The material effects of these investment projects to date are presented in the table below.

THE EFFECTS OF THE CONSTRUCTION OR MODERNIZATION OF LOCAL ROADS	
(data as of March 14, 2021)	
Built communal roads	22,21 km
Rebuilt communal roads	178,90 km
Reconstructed district roads	56,89 km
In total	258 km

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RDP

INVESTMENTS IN WATER AND SEWAGE MANAGEMENT – MATERIAL EFFECTS (date as of March 14, 2021)					
Collective water supply systems	Built	48,79 km	Water treatment plants	Built	3 plants
	Rebuilt	24,97 km		Rebuilt	16 plants
Collective sewage systems for communal sewage	Built	109,95 km	Sewage treatment plants	Built	4 plants
	Rebuilt	1,51 km		Rebuilt	2 plants
Home sewage treatment plants	Built	800 plants	Water intakes	Built	5 plants
				Rebuilt	3 plants

In 2016 and 2019, the Program beneficiaries could also apply for co-financing of investment projects related to water and sewage management. They include such tasks as construction and reconstruction of water supply and sewage systems, construction of home sewage treatment plants, construction or reconstruction of water treatment plants, sewage treatment plants and water intakes. The financial aid so far granted to the RDP 2014-2020 beneficiaries from EAFRD funds exceeds PLN 60 million. Ultimately, 133 projects should be executed with European funds in the amount of PLN 156 million. Information on the effects of tasks completed and settled so far is presented in the table below.

All co-financed investment projects regarding marketplaces or construction facilities intended for the promotion of local products have already been executed. The beneficiaries built 8 new marketplaces and 11 facilities

for the promotion of local products, rebuilt 6 existing marketplaces.

The Wielkopolska communal governments and their cultural units obtained EU funds from the RDP 2014-2020 amounting in the total to PLN 38.5 million for investment projects regarding cultural facilities, the shaping of public space and the protection of monuments and traditional building. Two-thirds of these funds have already gone towards the budgets of the beneficiaries. In addition, such tasks are performed with funds distributed through 28 local groups operating in the Wielkopolska Region. The implementation of local development strategies helps create or modernize already existing tourist and leisure infrastructure facilities. The material effects of the actions reimbursed so far are presented in the table below.

MATERIAL EFFECTS OF INVESTMENT PROJECTS REGARDING FACILITIES SERVING RURAL COMMUNITIES (date as of March 14, 2021)		
After-school clubs and community centres	built	11 objects
	rebuilt	25 objects
	equipped	18 objects
Libraries	rebuilt	2 objects
	equipped	1 object
Historic buildings renovated to preserve cultural heritage	10 objects	
Purchased buildings typical of the construction tradition in a given region for public purposes	2 objects	
Number of new tourist and leisure infrastructure facilities (as part of the Local Development Strategy implementation)	359 objects	
Number of modernized tourist and leisure infrastructure facilities (as part of the Local Development Strategy implementation)	113 objects	

NEW FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE EU

The voices on the Strategic Plan for the CAP

On February 15, 2021, the first phase of discussion on the draft document prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development ended. The Strategic Plan for the Common Agricultural Policy defines goals and actions to be taken under the EU new budgetary perspective after 2023. It includes instruments of both the first pillar of the CAP, i.e. direct payments and sectoral measures regarding agricultural markets, and the second pillar, i.e. support for rural development. During the 26th session of the Parliament of the Wielkopolska Region, the Region councillors expressed their position on the plans of the Ministry.

In the opinion of the majority of the Region councillors, expressed in the adopted stance, the draft Strategic Plan for the Common Agricultural Policy for 2023-2027 requires changes. First of all, it does not include support for local governments for a number of important infrastructure investment projects. The Rural Development Program for 2014-2020 allows the beneficiaries to spend EU funds on projects regarding the construction or modernization of local roads, water and sewage management system, construction or reconstruction of rural community centres, the shaping of public space and the protection of monuments. If the plan for the new financial perspective is adopted in its present form, communes and districts will not be able to count on funds to perform these tasks, which may drastically inhibit the development of rural areas in our Region. The scale of investment needs is still huge. The beneficiaries point to this fact in numerous letters addressed to the Government of the Wielkopolska Region. They show the demand for the construction of at least 3,500 km of new communal and district roads and 2,500 km of sewage and water supply system. The experience of two EU budgetary perspectives shows that financial aid for this type of tasks, distributed through regional governments, gives the expected results. According to the draft strategic plan, however, the competence of the Regions is going to be limited in this respect, which is very disturbing, says Krzysztof Grabowski, Deputy Marshal of the Region.

Other local government officials also have their opinion on the Strategic Plan for the Common Agricultural Policy. We present the views of beneficiaries of the RDP 2007-2013, the RDP 2014-2020 and institutions involved in the development of rural areas in the Wielkopolska Region.



Jacek Gursz

Chairman of the Association of Communes and Districts of the Wielkopolska Region, Mayor of Chodzież

Speaking on behalf of rural communes, I would like to emphasize that the provisions of the draft Strategic Plan of the Common Agricultural Policy regarding the lack of support from the European

Agricultural Fund for Rural Development give rise to our concerns. The inability to obtain funds for the construction or reconstruction of roads, the expansion of water and sewage system or broadband Internet, may mean to rural and urban-rural communes a complete lack of support for the execution of investment projects of enormous importance to their residents. In our opinion, it is a paradox that on the one hand the authors of the draft Strategic Plan are aware of the existing development disparities in rural areas, but on the other hand they take away from local authorities a tool for reducing such disparities and ensuring better use of the potential of Polish countryside. The previous system allowed us to efficiently achieve goals of key importance to local government units and was in line with their real needs.



Mariusz Woźniak

Mayor of the Grodziec Commune

We are concerned about the government's draft Strategic Plan for the Common Agricultural Policy, a document particularly important for the development of rural areas. According to the draft, governments of the regions will

not be able to grant funds for partnership operations under the NRN (National Rural Network), financial support for the development of small infrastructure in rural areas will be limited only to the LEADER program, which has a relatively small budget and does not cover all communes, and major tasks regarding basic infrastructure will be excluded from EU funding. In our opinion, the document is unacceptable.

The Grodziec commune alone received EU support worth millions of zlotys through the Government of the Wielkopolska Region from the RDP 2007-2013 and 2014-2020. Therefore, it was possible to build kilometres of asphalt roads, rainwater and sanitary sewage systems, sewage treatment plants, a communal market, and after-school clubs. The stance presented in the Strategic Plan is in contradiction with local government ideas and local needs, therefore the Grodziec Commune is negative about it.

NEW FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE EU



Tomasz Lesiński

Mayor of Kobylin

As a small urban-rural commune, we are particularly interested in receiving support for rural areas from EU funds. The provisions in the draft Strategic Plan for the Common Agricultural Policy show that the government is planning to transfer funds from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), which have gone to the existing RDP programs, to purposes other than investment projects in sustainable rural development. In the past EU financial perspective, we used the funds under the RDP 2014-2020 to build and expand sewage systems and roads, establish leisure centres, recreate ponds and build hybrid lighting. The lack of these funds in the new Strategic Plan for the CAP means less technological facilities in our villages, less convenient transport connections between villages and cities, less attractions, investment projects and tourists, and thus fewer non-agricultural jobs in rural areas. We are a beneficiary of the RDP and for years we have used EU funds to develop our villages. The Program was designed in such a way that it satisfied our local needs.



Przemysław Majchrzak

Mayor of the Wągrowiec Commune

As emphasized in the governmental document called "Strategic Plan for the Common Agricultural Policy", and construction of roads and water supply and sewage systems, or the development of broadband Internet make a significant contribution to the growth of rural areas. This is why it came as a surprise and a contradiction that no funds were provided for the performance of these tasks under the Common Agricultural Policy. This solution is very unfavourable for local communities and regional government. We appreciate the fact that the document recognizes the important role of Local Action Groups in the process of rural development. However, financing the LAGs' public infrastructure projects only from modest LEADER resources is far too little compared to the already identified needs of rural areas. Thanks to the RDP 2007-2013 and 2014-2020, local governments successfully and consistently executed numerous projects related to rural, road reconstruction, water and sewage system construction with accompanying infrastructure, renewable energy installations, monument protection or actions involving integration and activation. These projects are necessary and socially important, they serve to meet vital and professional needs of rural communities and raise the standard of living in the countryside.



Feliks Łaszcz

*Starost of the
Czarnków-Trzcianka District*

The District Board is concerned about the current governmental draft of the "Strategy Plan for the Common Agricultural Policy". It is clear that the objectives covered by the draft of the new CAP are mainly focused on increasing the profitability and income of farms and on actions related to environmental and climate protection. This is, of course, very important, but actions oriented at the sustainable development of rural areas, improvement of the living conditions of residents through investments in infrastructure are equally important, and they have been marginalized in the draft. Insufficient funds for investment projects of key importance for the development of rural areas, in particular the construction and modernization of local roads, will create a major barrier to their growth. Rural areas should not be regarded solely as places of agricultural production. It is also a place of cultural and natural heritage as much as a place where more and more non-agricultural enterprises are established. In the opinion of the Management Board of the Czarnków-Trzcianka District, the planned change in the RDP 2014-2020 concerning the financing of infrastructure investments only from modest funds from the LEADER initiative, will significantly slow down the projects execution.



Piotr Psikus

*Mayor of the Town and Commune
of Kępno*

As a beneficiary of the Rural Development Program, the Kępno Commune had an opportunity to benefit from financial support for the execution of many key investment projects. It is worth mentioning, for example, the reconstruction of community centres in eight towns in our commune, the expansion of the water and sewage infrastructure in three towns and the construction of two leisure and sports centres. The effects of these undertakings are noticeable. The projects executed for European funds significantly contributed to the improvement of the residents' quality of life, as well as to their increased involvement in social and cultural actions. For this reason, I believe that if the Strategic Plan for the Common Agricultural Policy for 2023-2027 does not include the possibility of co-financing large investment projects in rural areas, it will mean the necessity to abandon the projects that local communities in the Kępno commune are counting on and waiting for. I hope that the opinion of local governments on this matter will prove to be important and will be considered.

More funds to implements the Local Development Strategies

The Local Action Groups (LAGs) are announcing further calls for proposals under the LEADER initiative. From this year on, funds intended for this purpose may increase. This is related to new rules for calculating funds specified in framework agreements concluded between LAGs and the Government of the Wielkopolska Region. Thanks to the release of the so-called exchange rate difference, the LAGs will have more money to share with beneficiaries for actions to be taken under the Community Led Local Development (CLLD) strategy.



Photo: P. Kinal

In February 2021, the Town and Commune of Krotoszyn received funds to execute the project entitled "Bicycle stop with land development around the pond in Roszki", from the left: Izabela Mroczek, Head of the RDP Department of the Marshal's Office of the Wielkopolska Region, Grzegorz Galicki, Treasurer of the Town and Commune of Krotoszyn, Franciszek Marszałek, Mayor of Krotoszyn, and Krzysztof Grabowski, Deputy-Marshal of the Wielkopolska Region.

At the beginning of 2020, the Agency for Restructuring and Modernization of Agriculture developed a new instruction for converting amounts for sub-measure 19.2 covered by the RDP 2014-2020. The purpose of the update was to enable greater use of financial resources for measures to be taken under the Local Development Strategies. LAGs may or may not apply the new solution and use the financial surplus resulting from the exchange rate when converting the amounts. How does it work? Before the instructions were changed, the limits of funds for the implementation of local strategies were provided in euro in the framework agreements, and the amounts available for subsequent calls for proposals were converted into zlotys according to constant, indicative exchange rate $PLN 4 = EUR 1$. After the

update, funds in zlotys allocated for specific projects can be converted into EUR at the current exchange rate and only then will they reduce the overall pool of funds available to LAGs. Depending on the current exchange rate, there may be a surplus that LAGs can use to support the beneficiaries' operations. However, if LAGs want to benefit from the update, they must first apply to the Government of the Wielkopolska Region for the conversion of funds within the limits granted to them. Information on this subject was provided already last year.

The new rules for converting the available funds under the Local Development Strategies do not apply to the last year's completed calls, the beneficiaries of which begin to execute the projects after signing contracts with the Gov-

ernment of the Wielkopolska Region. Altogether, during the first two months of the year, a total of 45 contracts were signed under the LEADER initiative for an inclusive amount of PLN 4,119,204.00.

We present examples of selected projects co-financed in 2021 as part of the implementation of the community-led local development strategy.

The service and commercial company "Old Garden" Elżbieta Michalska from Sycewo, the Sompolno commune, runs a restaurant with a hotel in a garden setting. The company is one of the new members of the Wielkopolska Culinary Heritage Network (see more on pages 12-13), but also a beneficiary of the RDP 2014-2020. The purpose of the project is co-financed in the amount of PLN 100,00.00 is to expand the range of products by home-made preserves from fruit and vegetable picked from their own garden and to increase the processing while maintaining the full-value characteristics of products processed without preservatives. The company has a pear orchard with pear variety that used to be typical of this region (the Bera Ulmska variety).

The company Allsenses sp. z o.o. sp. k., with a branch in Zielątkowo in the Suchy Las commune, also received funds from the RDP 2014-2020. Co-financing in the amount of PLN 79,829.00 will be allocated for the construction of the "Laboratory of Taste and Smell in Zielątkowo". This will allow the company, which on a daily basis sells aromatic substances for teas, to expand their offer with their own products.

The Association for the Development of the Village of Łokacz Mały "Królewski Zakątek" ("Royal Nook") from the Krzyż Wielkopolski commune, the Czarnków-Trzcianka district, received financial aid in the amount of PLN 299,958.67 for the execution of a project aptly named „Ranczo Królewski Zakątek" ("Royal Nook Ranch"). An interactive educational path leading to the "Golden Mountain" will be created; according to the Association, it will encourage residents to sports and tourist activities and will become a leisure centre.

Anna Nita from Krajenka in the Złotów district received PLN 60,000.00 for the development of an interesting initiative called "Nitkomanka – a handicraft workshop". Anna has been knitting for 15 years, weaving for 1.5 years, and she has been promoting and selling her products as a hobby on the Internet for 2 years. She wishes to develop her business mainly based on the slow fashion trend. Anna's goal is to increase income from a handicraft-based business so that it becomes the primary source of income. She is going to use the EU funds to buy looms, frame looms and other

weaving devices and to develop corporate social media. She hopes she will manage to create a local group of handicraft fans, including socially disadvantaged people, who will engage in joint projects, photo sessions, campaigns promoting sustainable fashion, ecology in fashion, handicraft techniques.

In the town of Bługowo (the Lipka commune), located in the same district, a seventeenth-century palace park will be revitalized thanks to EU funds, so that it becomes a local tourist attraction. Anna Grubich received funds for the project which should be completed in June 2021.

In Roszki, the Krotoszyn commune, which is almost at the other end of the Wielkopolska Region, a project called "Bicycle Stop With Land Development around the Pond in Roszki" will be implemented. The purpose of the project is to encourage residents to actively spend time outdoors and use bicycles as an ecological means of transport. The commune achieves the purpose by developing non-commercial infrastructure.

The Swarzędz commune received funds in the amount of PLN 109,408.00 for the construction of an innovative rain garden, i.e. green infrastructure. The execution of the task will contribute to the shaping of pro-ecological and pro-environmental attitudes among the residents of the commune and the area covered by the "Trakt Piastów" LAG. The project will include the construction of infrastructure for collecting rainwater, a system for its distribution (irrigation), a sensory path and a playground for children.

In the Czerwonka village located in eastern Wielkopolska (the Chodów commune, the Koło district), a modern leisure centre will be built. The Volunteer Fire Department in Chodowo obtained funds for this purpose. It is assumed that, after the pandemic subsides, the centre will be used to hold cultural and outdoor events and integration meetings. Co-financing from EU funds amounts to PLN 227,373.00.



Volunteer fire fighters from Chodów not only save the lives and property of residents, but also take care of the look of villages and towns in their commune. Thanks to their efforts, the project "Leisure Centre in Czerwonka" will be executed co-financed by the RDP 2014-2020.

Photo: Volunteer Fire Department in Chodów

CULINARY HERITAGE

Support the Wielkopolska producers

At the end of March, the “We Support the Wielkopolska Producers!” campaign was already in its third edition. It is a continuation of actions taken by the Government of the Wielkopolska Region aimed at helping members of the Wielkopolska Culinary Heritage Network in the pandemic era. The government, acting in cooperation with local media, published a series of promotional articles encouraging the residents to use products offered by producers associated in the network. At the same time, the Region Management Board exempted the Wielkopolska Culinary Heritage Network members from membership contributions. Furthermore, we are pleased to announce that six new members joined the Wielkopolska Culinary Heritage Network. Short description of their business activity is presented herein.

125 entities already belong to the Wielkopolska Culinary Heritage Network, including sellers of high-quality agricultural and food products, farmers, gardeners, owners of restaurants, hotels, fishing enterprises and food processing companies. The Network members have more in common than the sign, including the highest quality of services and products based on local raw materials.

During this difficult pandemic time, I encourage you to show local patriotism by purchasing groceries from pro-

ducers being members of the Wielkopolska Culinary Heritage Network. We publish information about their offer on an ongoing basis on the website <http://sdk-wlkp.pl> and on social media, including Facebook and Instagram. You can use also a free mobile application called “Culinary Wielkopolska”, says Krzysztof Grabowski, Deputy Marshal of the Wielkopolska Region.

In 2021, three restaurants, a brewery, a farm, and a company offering BIO products joined the Network.



Artur Piotrowski's Restaurant “Lizawka”

Poznań is the Polish Game Embassy. It serves czernina, a traditional local soup made of duck blood and clear poultry broth prepared in accordance with a recipe passed down from generation to generation. The Culinary Heritage Certificate was awarded for the restaurant's entire activity.



The “OLD GARDEN” Restaurant E. A. Michalska

in Sycewo, the Sompolno commune in the Konin district. The restaurant uses products picked right from their own garden and expands its assortment by fruit and vegetable preserves. The Culinary Heritage Certificate was awarded for the restaurant's entire activity.

CULINARY HERITAGE



The "IMPULS" Restaurant Marzena Swora

in Zduny, the Krotoszyn district, serves Old Polish, regional and hunting dishes made of local products. The restaurant has its own smoking chamber as well as a rabbit husbandry and carp farm. The Culinary Heritage Certificate was awarded for jacket potatoes with cottage cheese, fried cottage cheese with dill or caraway seeds, duck blood soup with dried fruit and giblets served with home-made noodles, roast duck with steamed dumplings and red cabbage with apple, deer roll served with baked apple and cranberries, roast wild boar served with groats and sauerkraut with mushrooms, rabbit stewed in cream, carp in onion sauce, smoked wild boar ham.



The Michalak Ilona Agricultural Farm "SEROWNIA" Backyard Cheese Production

in Kuchary Borowe, the Rychwał commune in the Konin district, has been making cheese from unpasteurized cow's milk from cattle from their own husbandry for two years. The Culinary Heritage Certificate was awarded to the "Kucharski" ripening rennet cheese with various additives (bear's garlic, fenugreek, black cumin, walnut, cranberry, mixed herbs, dried tomato), the "Straszak" ripening rennet cheese, smoked rennet cheese, sour-ripened cheese with fromage herbs, ricotta cheese, feta-type cheese in brine, cottage cheese, natural yoghurt, butter.



The Gzub Brewery Katarzyna Staszewska

from Annapole in the Środa Wielkopolska commune produces re-fermented craft beers. It is a family brewery with a modern twist. The Culinary Heritage Certificate was awarded for the brewery's entire activity.



The BIO Bogaczyński company from Doruchów in the Ostrzeszów district promotes and sells, also on the Internet, food products made with traditional, craft methods. The Culinary Heritage Certificate was awarded to rye and wheat flours.

CULINARY HERITAGE

Traditional Poznań cake

We associate cake primarily with Easter. It comes as no surprise as the tradition of baking cakes in this period dates back to the 17th century. Making this cake required a lot of strength and skills from housewives, especially that they did not have any of today's household appliances. Over time, the cakes have taken various forms: teacake, sand cake, steamed cake, punch care. Currently, it is commonly baked and is available in pastry shops not only for holidays, but also on an everyday basis.

In Wielkopolska, the Poznań cake is popular, often baked in an oblong form. It is called "sand cake" from its fine crumbly texture. It is different from other cakes of this type because it calls for potato flour, which makes it light, crisp and fluffy. The cake with a slight lemon aftertaste is perfect every day and also once in a blue moon. It is quite dry, so it is best to serve it with afternoon coffee or tea.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 and ½ cups of potato flour
- ½ cup of wheat flour
- 1 cup of sugar
- 250g of butter
- 5 eggs
- 4 teaspoons of baking powder
- pinch of salt
- lemon zest (from half a lemon)
- lemon juice
- icing sugar

HOW TO MAKE

Place the butter in a saucepan and cook over low heat until the butter is melted. Mix both types of flour with the baking powder and sift through a fine sieve into a bowl. Put lemon in the boiling water to scald it, use



Photo: www.stockierantazje.pl

a fine grater to grate the zest and squeeze the juice out of half of the lemon. Beat the eggs with sugar until it becomes thick, fluffy, and triples in volume, add a pinch of salt, lemon juice and zest. Add the sifted and mixed flour. At the end, slowly pour in the melted butter, stirring constantly. Place the dough into a greased and floured baking pan. Bake for about 40 minutes at a temperature of about 170°C. Sprinkle with icing sugar after baking.

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