THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND REVITALISATION IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF RURAL AREAS AND AGRICULTURE

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Rural areas, constituting a specific category based on agricultural production and land resources, require purposeful formation of sustainable development and revitalisation processes. The purpose of this paper is to undertake an attempt at interpreting these processes with reference to rural areas.

Key words: revitalisation, rural areas, sustainable development.

Introduction

Transformation of the Polish economy is a long and hard process. Finding new development paths for agriculture will make it possible to change the social and economic structure of the Polish countryside, which is necessary to increase the competitiveness of rural areas. The effects of market competition call for increasing the cost-effectiveness of agricultural production through the application of modern knowledge, new production technologies, implementation of innovative solutions, continuous development and looking for new business formulae. It is necessary to adopt new functions by modernising rural areas and farms with a view towards sustainable rural growth.

Revitalisation, according to the EU requirements, signifies a comprehensive, coordinated and long-term renewal plan. It should be implemented in a clearly defined area. Revitalisation projects should also specify the process of spatial, technical, construction and architectural, social and economic transformations. In the course of the revitalisation process, conditions should be created to help the local community develop. The revitalisation programme itself should provide not only for the technical reconstruction of a certain set of facilities, but it should distinctly specify the objectives and goals which will strengthen the commune’s appeal to investors and tourists. In particular, financial aid applies to revitalisation projects involving reconstruction, renovation and equipment of facilities performing public, socio-cultural, sports and leisure functions, serving to promote rural areas, including the promotion and maintenance of historic heritage, tradition and culture.

Scientific problem is how to combine sustainable development as revitalisation two ways developing rural areas and agriculture.

The object of the research is rural and agriculture development in from the perspective of sustainable development and revitalisation.
The aim the research is an attempt at interpreting the general concept of lasting and sustainable growth, including the revitalisation process aimed at the economic development in rural areas.

The objectives set for the research are:

- to determine factors of contemporary rural and agricultural development,
- to discuss analyses of possibilities combine concepts sustainable and revitalisation in order to improve quality of life in rural areas.

On the purpose to determine possibilities of combining sustainable development and revitalisation the analyses of chosen factors of rural and agriculture development were provided.

**Scientific background and research organisation**

One special characteristic of rural areas is their socio-economic diversification. The regional cross-section of rural areas in Poland is highly diverse socio-economically. The problems of rural areas are mostly related to the structural problems in agriculture.

Rural underdevelopment, in comparison to urban areas, aggravates the undesirable phenomena in rural living conditions. Conversely, the bad situation in agriculture impairs the development options in rural areas. Polish rural communities are much worse off than urban communities, following a history of uneven development of individual regions and disparate financial status of rural and urban communities (Kozuch, 1999).

Sustainable development is defined in a number of ways, sometimes with differing interpretations. As agreed at the 1992 UN conference, it is the kind of development that fulfils the needs of today’s society without infringing on the capability of fulfilling the needs of future generations (Kaliszczak, 2001).

According to A. Wos, sustainable development takes into account the capability of systems to last and regenerate themselves by maintaining a balance between individual ecosystems (Ustawa..., 2001).

A comprehensive definition formulated by the Institute for Sustainable Development stipulates that socio-economic development should be aimed at improving the quality of life (Lojewski, 1999). Alternatively, B. Poskrobko perceives lasting and sustainable development in its environmental and civilisational aspect (Gorka, 2001). The most comprehensive and fundamental definition of sustainable growth is included in the Environmental Protection Act, which states that sustainable growth is the kind of socio-economic development which integrates political, economic and social activities while maintaining nature’s equilibrium and sustaining fundamental natural processes in order to ensure equal opportunities of access to nature for individual communities (Wos, 1992).

In its broadest interpretation, sustainable development signifies lasting development, meaning a balance between economic goals (economic order), social
goals (social order) and environmental quality (ecological order), providing for the maintenance of natural resources for the future generations (Gorka, 2001).

Sustainable development should guarantee access to production and social services as well as the natural environment without endangering ecosystems, or social and production systems on which these services depend (Prus, 2004).

In the interpretation of sustainable development as a set of qualities, the following qualities are mentioned: maintaining adequate proportions among respective dimensions (proportionality), necessity to treat the economic, social and natural processes as a whole (interdependence), need to treat all the dimensions equally (equivalence), indispensability of value-building and continuous growth over the long term (durability), minimising the risk of disturbed development (self-continuing development) and others.

The essence of the revitalisation is to rebuild the economic basis and business activities with endogenous functions. At the same time, it is important to determine the desired direction of transformations resulting from the current and planned organisational assets of a given place. Spatial revitalisation aims at introducing a spatial order, reconstructing the technical infrastructure (mainly buildings), adjusting the region’s spatial organisation to its surroundings. Changes in the regional management and its spatial structure as well as in the natural environment must be accompanied by social revitalisation. Its task is to create the mental framework for revitalisation without which deep and long-term change is not possible. Creating a favourable climate for change helps activate other elements of social revitalisation, such as: change of the social structure (professional, educational and demographic), curbing social impoverishment, exclusion and pathologies, and preserving the cultural heritage.

Detailed revitalisation goals include socio-economic stimulation, reducing discrepancies in the spatial development of the region, enhancement of commercial functions and services benefitting the inhabitants, strengthening local identity within the community, social integration and supporting social initiatives for local development.

An important role in the revitalisation process can be played by rural clusters. Clusters, as a method for including small capital and labour into the economy, may play a significant role in the development of rural entrepreneurship. The advantages of implementing this form of rural enterprise development are as follows: low risk of the investment, reduced costs of activities, more of the added value stays in the countryside, an environment is built for development and implementation of new technologies, clusters act as clients vis-à-vis IT and telecommunications companies.

Clusters are local structures by definition. With regard to rural clusters, there is a big role to played by the Agricultural Consultancy Centres which can help create clusters, which in turn is conducive to building relationships with academic centres. Cluster development should be supported by the local government by such measures as including clusters in investment contracts and assisting them in acquiring aid funds. Such cooperation can take the form of public-private partnership. Local banks
can play an important role therein, by enabling the development of weaker clusters in terms of economy. Proper security can be established by linking with the local government and the possibility of acquiring aid funds.

Sustainable development is a complex concept applying to such quantitative and qualitative changes in the socio-economic system of rural areas, which are subject to system limitations. At the same time, apart from the effectiveness criteria, social satisfaction and progress in the quality of life are being taken into account. Rural areas as a special category relying on agricultural production and land resources have a particular predilection for shaping the processes of sustainable growth. Sustainable development should take priority in the economic and social policy of local authorities. Next to the classic instruments supporting ecological and social activity.

In order to reach paper’s aims main development directions in rural areas were analysed, particularly in the light sustainable development and revitalisation.

**Research findings**

Agricultural enterprises and farms are the basic units of business activity and create the business environment. They determine the directions and scope of utilisation of the natural environment and production resources. Their activity generates the production of goods and services as well as revenue. They create jobs which account for the basis of tax revenue for the commune budgets. Their behaviours shape development processes, economic structure, opportunities for income accumulation and investment.

The emergence of the entrepreneurial society in rural areas results from the need for socio-economic development of the Polish countryside. The entrepreneurial society is characterised by: continuous improvement and education, rational economic decision-making, implementing innovations, constant mobility in realising goals and increasing the quality of production and services.

The Polish countryside should change its environment, modernising rural areas and farms with a view to multi-functional development. The above suggests that ways should be identified to prepare the rural population for the new opportunities of knowledge-building. Non-agricultural activity should be fostered, mainly in areas with little urbanisation and scant development options, so that the natural assets of the region can be utilised and turned into goods or services. Such activity should strengthen the competitive edge of farms and rural areas. Small service, production and retail facilities that have operated in rural areas to date did not require big capital outlay to be set up. The development of small production in rural areas satisfies the modest needs of the local population, creates a micro-market of goods and services, and thereby creates jobs. This approach does not, however, guarantee a stronger competitive edge of the rural areas in the long run.

The ideas of sustainable development and revitalisation of rural areas are complementary. The development of such areas hinges mainly on introducing varied
non-agricultural activity there, with the intention of eliminating the monofunctionality of rural areas and replacing it with entrepreneurship in a broad sense.

Rural entrepreneurship varies in terms of the number and forms of business entities. They are usually small and medium-sized enterprises, relying on the labour of the owners and their families. The existence of such entities in a given area is a basis for developing cooperation among the users of rural space and reaping the benefits thereof.

Rural enterprise development process is to a large extent dependent upon the support from the state and local authorities. The state support instruments include: privatisation policy, customs and taxation policy, labour policy, creation of economic zones, monetary policy, appointing specialised government structures and government programmes aimed at the small and medium-sized enterprise sector (SME). Apart from the above-mentioned state instruments, the actions of local authorities are very important. Enterprise support on a local level encompasses the following groups of activities:

1) fulfilment of statutory obligations regarding the provision of public services, assigned to the local government bodies,
2) application of appropriate policies towards small and medium-sized enterprises operating in a given area.

On the other hand, entrepreneurship impacts the communities’ development: by creating new jobs, increasing revenue budget through taxes, boosting investment (direct influence). By solving employment problems, entrepreneurship contributes to solving other problems, prevents pathologies, and also plays a role in the process of building a civil society; enterprises contribute to progress, too (indirect influence). Enterprise development generates other favourable phenomena, e.g. influx of investment, while a boost in investment in turn leads to a higher involvement of the local resources, etc. (the multiplier effect), the inhabitants turned into entrepreneurs learn to be active and solve problems independently (change of civil attitudes).

Both sustainable development and revitalisation call for an appropriate combination of the human capital, tangible and intangible resources, and hence one must not limit themselves to a single set of instruments. Considering the relatively high diversity of rural areas, local authorities must select their own sets of tools to stimulate development in their commune, in compliance with the national and regional policies in this scope. Most instruments of influence are available to the central and regional authorities, which hampers the effective implementation of rural development policies on a local level.

The commune is a primary unit in spatial planning, vested with planning rights by law, which means that it is authorised to make decision on spatial planning (determining the purpose and principles of use of a given area) and express them in the form of legal acts binding upon land owners as well as authorised to manage land, i.e. decide on its purpose and principles of use.

Space and the way it is developed has become an important factor of socioeconomic development, as well as a basis for shaping and preserving the natural
environment and cultural heritage. For this reason, local authorities should undertake actions aimed at reasonable land use and management. This purpose should be served by studies of spatial development conditioning and directions as well as local zoning plans. The necessity to draw up these documents stems from the need to maintain an appropriate land use structure, reasonable location of socio-economic functions in space, taking into account the assets and resources of the natural environment and cultural heritage, to create conditions for the business entities to operate effectively by building and expanding the facilities of technical and social infrastructure and the need to control how the space is being used in order to maximise its utility.

**Conclusion**

Summing up the above reflections, it should be highlighted that is expected that local authorities and business environment institutions get involved in a whole range of varied activities. They are expected to provide legal and financial consulting services. Thus, rural people mainly expect the local authorities to support institutions to make use of economic and social instruments, as well as provide training and consulting services.

**Bibliografia**

Сбалансированное развитие — это социально-экономический процесс, в котором происходит интеграция политических, экономических и социальных действий с основными природными процессами, с тем чтобы сбалансировать возможности доступа к естественной среде отдельных обществ. Это подразумевает баланс между экономическими (экономический порядок) социальными (социальный порядок) целями и качеством окружающей среды (экологический порядок), с учетом сохранения природных ресурсов для будущих поколений.

Идея сбалансированного развития и ревитализации сельских районов характеризует взаимодополнение. Цель ревитализации это создание условий для качественного и сбалансированного развития данной территории для улучшения условий жизни местных общин. Целью процесса ревитализации является оживление, чтобы выйти из кризисного состояния, удаляя события, которые привели к деградации. Ревитализация включает в себя преобразование деградированных земель в трех основных сферах: инфраструктурно-пространственной, социальной и экономической.

На основе проведенных рассуждений можно сформулировать следующие выводы:

• развитие сельской местности в основном зависит прежде всего от размещения там дифференцированной сельскохозяйственной деятельности, которая должна развивать сельские районы за счет расширения предпринимчивости;
• сбалансированное развитие и ревитализация это два процесса связанные с разработкой количественных и качественных изменений в социально-экономической системе, которая включает уменьшение эко-системы;
• основная цель развития сельской местности – стремление к повышению качества жизни и социально-экономической активации.

Ключевые слова: ревитализация, сбалансированное развитие, сельская местность.

SUBALANSUOTO ŽEMĖS ŪKIO VYSTYMOSI IR KAIMO ATGAIVINIMO KONCEPSIJA

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Santrauka

Darbo tikslas – bandymas sukurti aktyvinimo ir subalansuotos plėtros kaimo vietovėse procesų esmę.

Subalansuota plėtra – socialiniai ir ekonominiai procesai, kuriuose vyksta politinių, ekonominių ir socialinių procesų integravimas, siekiant subalansuoti atskirių bendrovių patekimo į natūralią aplinką. Aktyvinimo tikslas – sukurti tinkamas ir subalansuotas plėtros sąlygas teritorijoje, siekiant pagerinti gyvenimo sąlygas vietos bendruomenėms.

Straipsnyje suformuluotos tokios išvadas:

• kaimo vietovių plėtra daugiausia priklauso visų pirmas nuo diferencijuotos ne žemės ūkio veiklos, kuri turėtų vystytis verslumo sąskaita;
• subalansuotą plėtrą ir aktyvinimas – tai du procesai, susiję su socialinės-ekonominės sistemos, apimančios ekosistemos mažinimą, kiekybinius ir kokybinius pokyčius;
• pagrindinis kaimo plėtros tikslas – noras gerinti gyvenimo kokybę ir socialinė-ekonominį aktyvinimą.

Raktiniai žodžiai: aktyvinimas, gyvenimo kokybė, kaimo vietovė, subalansuota plėtra.