

A HARVEST OF REFORM

It may be too early to gauge the impact on Poland of all of the Task Force on Central and Eastern Europe's technical assistance projects, but not in the agriculture sector. A Canadian training project for 106 Polish veterinarians, dairy farmers and farm specialists is having an immediate return.

In southwestern Poland, near Katowice, Bernadeta Mlynczak is assisting her family double the size and improve the quality of its dairy herd. While neighbouring farms are downsizing because of a milk glut, the Mlynczaks are positioning themselves for eventual higher prices and consumer demands for better quality dairy products. What she learned in Canada will help Mlynczak realize her dream.

Putting Theory into Practice

Last summer, Mlynczak was one of 20 young Poles on a dairy farm management course at the International Livestock Management School (ILMS) in Kemptville, Ontario. Today her farm is benefitting from what she learned about genetics, artificial insemination and milk production. Advising and assisting her maintain a healthy, productive dairy herd are two fellow graduates of other ILMS courses, a veterinarian and a farm specialist. Together, they are also teaching other farmers how to better care for their herds and run more efficient businesses.

A Viable Industry

Small family farms are the backbone of Polish agriculture. By becoming more efficient, the farms will remain viable whether or not subsidies continue. Elsewhere in Poland, another ILMS-trained veterinarian is helping a farmers' collective organize its own dairy. In a country where the average shelf life of milk is less than one day, their aim is to improve the quality and safety of dairy products by controlling all aspects of production.

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For example, one Canadian initiative with a leading Polish agriculture institute in Skierniewice, southwest of Warsaw, aims to enhance fruit and juice processing capabilities and increase exports. Polish experts have visited Canada to learn more about quality control, marketing and packaging; later this year, Canadian fruit industry representatives plan a mission to Poland to explore trade and investment opportunities.

In other agricultural sectors, projects have trained Polish managers in the control of poultry and animal disease. They, in turn, will teach additional personnel in Poland in preparation for future animal trade between Canada and Poland. Other work is progressing to establish a joint venture in livestock artificial insemination and to develop training programs in the canola industry. ■