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THE POSITION OF POLISH FARMERS AND STUDENTS ON THE DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to present the results of surveys and attitudes of farmers and students as representatives of Polish society to the problems of Sub-Saharan Africa. Special emphasis was put on the opinions of the EU's closure to the import of food products from African countries, which affects the socio-economic development of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Key words

development economics, development aid, Sub-Saharan Africa, agriculture, social attitudes

Introduction

This article presents the results of surveys and attitudes of farmers and students as representatives of Polish society to the problems of Sub-Saharan Africa. Special emphasis was put on the opinions of the EU's closure to the import of food products from African countries, which affects the socio-economic development of Sub-Saharan Africa.

The study was part of a project funded by the European Commission under the Europe Aid program, implemented in an international partnership of 11 countries, including 8 partners from the European Union and 3 from African countries: DR Congo, Kenya and Ethiopia. The project, entitled "Increasing the awareness of the Polish society of the impact of the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union on the socio-economic situation of Sub-Saharan Africa", in part addressed to the Polish society, was co-financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland within the framework of the Polish Aid for Development Education program.

The project in the component *Development education* aimed to bring together two social groups: Polish farmers and students, current developmental issues specific to Sub-Saharan African societies, and the implications of applying the protection mechanisms of the EU Common Agricultural Policy to Polish and European agriculture and to the poorest African countries.

An important goal of the project was to raise awareness of the development processes in the European Union and Sub-Saharan Africa, the course of globalization, the interdependence between agriculture in the EU and developing countries.

If we were to accept the assumption that the knowledge of the Polish society about Africa, and in particular Sub-Saharan Africa, its current development problems and socio-economic issues come primarily from the media, it can be concluded that this is knowledge built on negative, dramatic and sensational information. Africa is perceived as a continent of poverty and hunger, lacking access to water and suffering from tropical diseases and AIDS, tribal wars and genocide. Against this backdrop, only calls for humanitarian aid get through.

There is lack of reliable knowledge on social and economic issues, information on economic and social potential, African Nobel Prize winners, culture and possible cooperation areas. "Africa needs partners and investors more than donors."⁷⁴

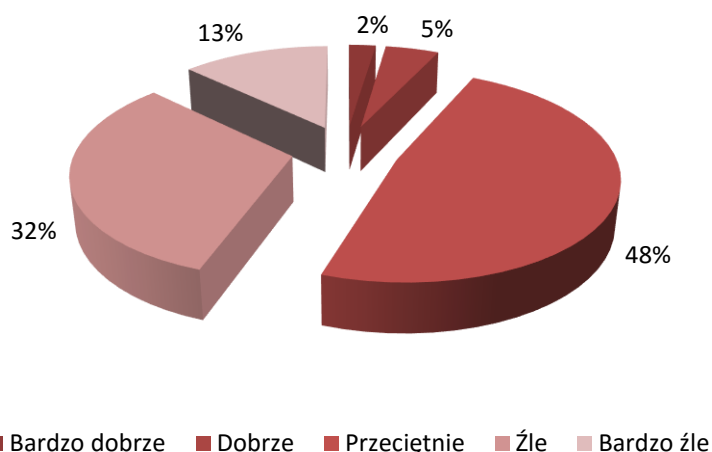
⁷⁴ Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU, seminar: "African Development Cooperation Strategies – Lessons from the New EU Member States", 26 July 2011, Warsaw 2011.

"Topics related to Africa and its people do not often come to the forefront of Polish newspapers and major editions of information services. If they appear in media headlines, it happens most often because of the dramatic event that consumes thousands of human lives, or because of other negative messages related to the African continent."⁷⁵

Development education should serve to break the schemes and stereotypes, to explain the phenomena in an objective way, to increase the interest of Poles in international issues, and to understand and gain acceptance for development cooperation. "Improving the living conditions of poorer people, their rapid development, and building a just and solid global society are our common responsibilities."⁷⁶

Questionnaire survey report

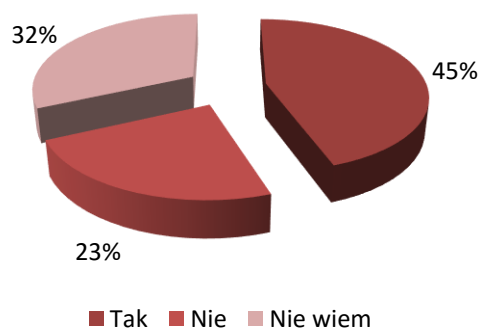
The survey was conducted among a group of 85 respondents, mainly farmers from the Łódź Region and students and postgraduates from higher education institutions in Łódź and Warsaw. The assessment of the respondents' knowledge on sub-Saharan Africa's development problems is illustrated in Graph 1.



Graph 1. The assessment of the respondents' knowledge on sub-Saharan Africa's development problems.

Source: Research and Innovation Centre Pro-Akademia.

The views of the respondents on the need for Poland and the EU to support the development of the Sub-Saharan African region are presented in Graph 2.



Graph 2. The views of the respondents on the need for Poland and the EU to support the development of the Sub-Saharan African region.

Source: Research and Innovation Centre Pro-Akademia.

The causes for the need for Poland and the EU to support the development of the Sub-Saharan African region are presented in Table 1.

⁷⁵ Afryka i jej mieszkańcy w polskich mediach, Raport z monitoringu polskich mediów, Paweł Średziński, Fundacja „Afryka Inaczej”, Warsaw 2011

⁷⁶ <http://www.polskapomoc.gov.pl/Edukacja,rozwojowa,695.htm>

Table 1. The causes for the need for Poland and the EU to support the development of the Sub-Saharan African region.⁷⁷

Cause	Number of respondents
To eliminate poverty	31
Others helped us - moral obligation	4
We are rich enough to be able to afford it	6
TOTAL:	41

Source: Research and Innovation Centre Pro-Akademia.

The arguments against Poland and the EU engaging in support for the development of the Sub-Saharan African region are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Arguments against Poland and the EU engaging in support for the development of the Sub-Saharan African region.⁷⁸

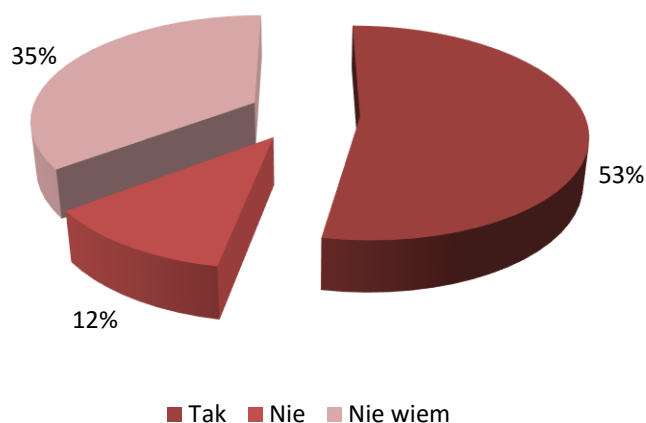
Argument	Number of respondents
We cannot afford to help others	19
Other countries did not help us when we were in need, so we do not have such an obligation	5
TOTAL:	24

Source: Research and Innovation Centre Pro-Akademia.

The few respondents who opposed the involvement of Poland and the EU in supporting the development of the sub-Saharan Africa region used broader argumentation. Free expressions were quantified, and took on the following formula of justification:

- Too much money has thus far been spent on African countries;
- We should first help our own citizens;
- By helping we get African countries used to aid.

The views of the respondents on the potential benefits for the EU stemming from supporting the development of the Sub-Saharan African region are presented in Graph 3.



Graph 3. The potential benefits for the EU stemming from supporting the development of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Source: Research and Innovation Centre Pro-Akademia.

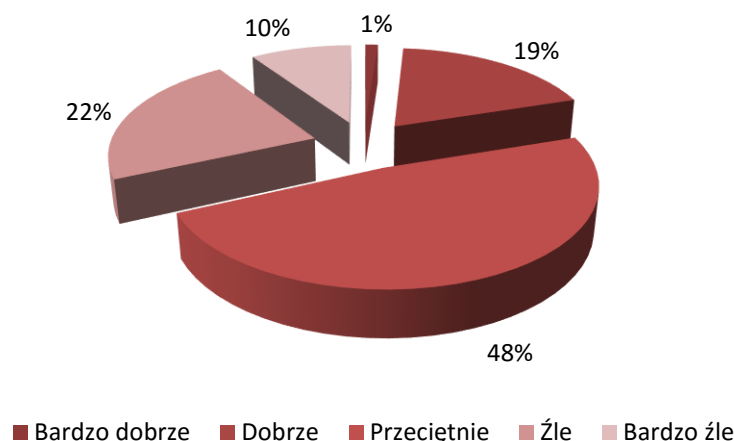
Respondents who perceived the potential benefits for the EU supporting the development of the sub-Saharan Africa region justified their choice as follows:

⁷⁷ Sum of responses > N, as a result of giving more than one reason.

⁷⁸ Sum of responses > N, as a result of giving more than one condition.

- EU policy can influence the development of Sub-Saharan African countries by opening or closing trade routes;
- Because production in Sub-Saharan African countries may be more profitable than in EU countries;
- The limits set by the EU restrict the import of products;
- The invested capital will be returned;
- They promote the EU market;
- What we do affects the whole country and not just the EU countries.

Another element of the study was the subjective assessment of the knowledge gained about the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union. The results of this research are illustrated in Graph 4.



Graph 4. Subjective assessment of respondents' knowledge of the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy

Source: Research and Innovation Centre Pro-Akademia.

The results of the study confirmed the subjectivity of the surveyed respondents, who generally assessed their knowledge highly, reluctantly responded to specific questions, such as the impact on African agriculture of the Sub-Saharan Common Agricultural Policy. Only five respondents answered this question, with four respondents considering this impact to be minor.

The next element of the study was to diagnose the opinions of the respondents about the obstacles faced by the socio-economic development of sub-Saharan African countries. The distribution of responses is presented in Table 3.

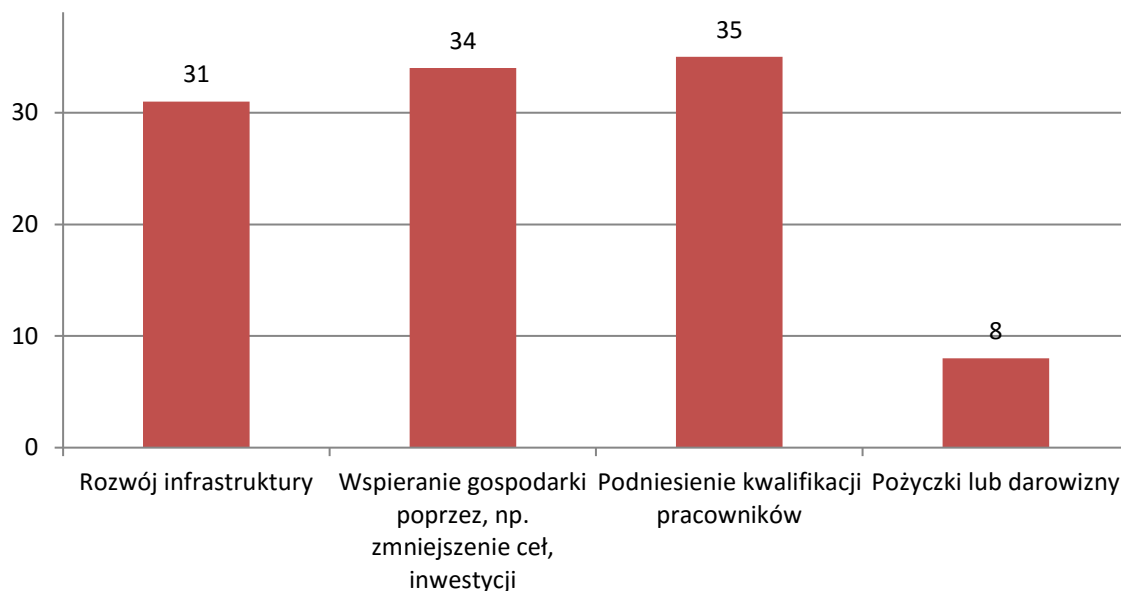
Table 3. Obstacles of socio-economic development of sub-Saharan African countries, in the opinion of the respondents.⁷⁹

Obstacle	Number of respondents
Inability to produce sufficient food	23
Lack of or limited access to drinking water	35
Poorly developed infrastructure	29
No capital for development	42
Other:	7
▪ Political and ethnic instability	
▪ Low level of knowledge	
▪ Lack of adequate resources	
▪ Diseases such as HIV	
▪ Poor quality control	
Total:	136

⁷⁹ Sum of responses > N, as a result of giving more than one obstacle.

Source: Research and Innovation Centre Pro-Akademia.

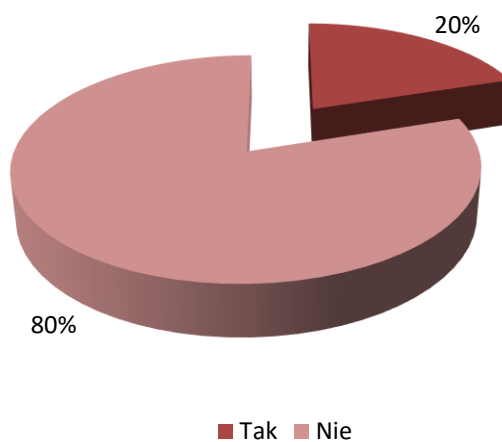
Another element of the study was to diagnose the opinions of the respondents on the potential of Poland to contribute to the socio-economic development of Sub-Saharan African countries. The distribution of responses is presented in Graph 5.



Graph 5. Potential offer of Poland, conducive to the development of Sub-Saharan African countries.⁸⁰

Source: Research and Innovation Centre Pro-Akademia.

The last element of the study was to diagnose the form of assistance given by respondents to Sub-Saharan African nationals. The distribution of responses is presented in Graph 6.



Graph 5. The forms of assistance measures given by respondents to Sub-Saharan African nationals.

Source: Research and Innovation Centre Pro-Akademia.

The research has shown that few respondents have taken assistance measures for Sub-Saharan African nationals. Respondents declaring action indicated the following forms:

- Financial support for the construction of wells,
- Long-distance adoption,

⁸⁰ Sum of responses > N, as a result of giving more than one obstacle.

- Supporting missions in Africa.

Conclusion

The analysis of the research conducted leads us to formulate several conclusions:

- Polish society is not very interested in the problems of Africa;
- Less than half of the respondents believe that Poland has a moral duty to assist the poorest countries;
- Those who recognize the need to help the poorest countries justify their convictions with support given to Poland in postwar times, systemic transition and post-transformation;
- Half of the respondents consider that domestic problems should be resolved in the first instance, without showing any support to those from whom Poland never received support;
- Many respondents consider that too much money, in the form of donations and humanitarian aid, has been earmarked to support Africa, which is aroused by claims in the community, helplessness and passivity;
- More than half of the respondents perceive benefits for the European Union as a result of supporting the development of Sub-Saharan Africa, which may prove to be beneficial;
- The major obstacles faced by the socio-economic development of Sub-Saharan African countries are capital deficits for investment, poorly developed infrastructure, lack or limited access to drinking water, lack of capacity to generate sufficient food, political and ethnic instability, low social capital, epidemics of infectious diseases, HIV, illiteracy, poor quality control;
- Even though Poland can offer Sub-Saharan Africa co-operation, assistance to raising the qualifications of workers, support for the economy, most of the respondents (80%) have never personally assisted Africans.

Literature:

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STANOWISKO POLSKICH ROLNIKÓW I STUDENTÓW WOBEC PROBLEMÓW ROZWOJOWYCH AFRYKI SUBSAHARYJSKIEJ

Abstrakt

Celem artykułu jest zaprezentowanie wyników badań opinii i postaw rolników oraz studentów jako reprezentantów społeczeństwa polskiego wobec problemów Afryki Subsaharyjskiej. Szczególnie skupiono się na opiniach wobec zamykania się UE na import produktów rolno---spożywczych z krajów afrykańskich, co wpływa na rozwój społeczno---gospodarczy tych regionów.

Słowa kluczowe:

ekonomia rozwoju, pomoc rozwojowa, afryka subsaharyjska, produkty rolno-spożywcze, postawy społeczne