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IX European Congress of Agricultural Economists Preparations, Course and Results

Congresses of the European Association of Agricultural Economists (EAAE) take place every three years. They are no doubt the most important scientific events — on a European scale — of the milieu dealing with the economy of agriculture, agricultural policy and rural development policy, the organization and management of agribusiness, business in agricultural food products and similar areas connected with agriculture and the countryside. The previous congress was held in Edinburgh, Scotland and in 1993 the congress took place in Stresa, Italy. Before the Warsaw congress there was only one which took place in Central Eastern Europe and that was Hungary in 1987. There are always many keen to organize the congress. Charging the organization of the congress to a particular country is a form of distinction and appreciation for the activity in the running of the association and achievement in the field of agricultural economy. Representatives of the the Polish academic world have been on the EAAE management board for a dozen or so years. The Polish representative until 1990 was Professor Hunek and from 1990 to 1999, the undersigned. My application for the Polish candidature almost six years ago as the organizer of the IX EAAE Congress had a significant competitor, Spain. The association management decided however, that the Spaniards would get permission to organize the congress after Poland. The X EAAE Congress will be held in Saragossa.

An Organization Committee consisting of the following members organized the IX EAAE Congress in Warsaw: Professor F. Tomczak (Chairman), Professor J. Wilkin (vice-Chairman), Professor M. Adamowicz, Professor K. Duczkowska-Małysz, Professor W. Józwiak, Professor B. Klepacki, Professor M. Kłodziński and Dr C. Siekierski. A Programme Committee consisting of the following members was responsible for selecting papers delivered at the congress: J. Swinnen (Chairman), J. Hartell (Programme Coordinator), M. Adamowicz, G. Anania, H. Anderson, P. Dauce, A. Fearne, T. Ferenczi, M. Hofreither, R. Huirne, and O. Melyukina. Professor M. Ada-

mowicz had the role of liaising between the Programme Committee and the Organization Committee.

Comparing with previous congresses, the Warsaw congress had certain novelties regarding programme and organization. Simultaneous translation of all the congress proceedings into French was done away with and the only language used was English. (It is worth remembering that English and French are the official EAAE languages). The number of plenary sessions was diminished while new so-called organized sessions were introduced. The organizers of such sessions submitted both the topics of the sessions as well as their proposed authors. The programme committee led by Professor Johan Swinnen from Belgium, chose the organized sessions and then evaluated and accepted the submitted papers. In three series of organized sessions there were nine meetings and three lectures were delivered at each of them. In all, 27 lectures were delivered at these congress sessions. The topics of the sessions were as follows:

1. The development of rural areas: economics and politics;
2. Measuring the effects of changes in agricultural policy in the field of commerce and level of wealth;
3. Vertical coordination of the world food industry: the emergence of competition in the chain of suppliers and its effects on agribusiness;
4. Agricultural credit and the rural financial system in the transformation of agriculture;
5. The economic modelling of agro-environmental policy;
6. Typical characteristics of family farm behaviour;
7. The analysis of food consumption in the countries undergoing transformation in Central and Eastern Europe;
8. The economic effects of agro-environmental policies in the European Union;
9. The insurance of agricultural income after the new round of the WTO.

The organized sessions turned out to be a good innovation and will no doubt be continued at later congresses.

As I mentioned above, in comparison with earlier congresses a small number of plenary sessions took place in Warsaw. There were only four, excluding the final session closing the congress and devoted, amongst others, to the choice of a new management for the association. Polish readers can become familiar with most of the papers thanks to a special issue of *Postępy Nauk Rolniczych* (Advances in Agricultural Studies) prepared by Professor Włodzimierz Kamiński, who translated the papers and saw to their publication. Traditionally, one of the plenary sessions was devoted to the agricultural problems of the country organizing the congress. This was the so-called Polish session opened by the well accepted presentation of Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski. The two main papers at this session were delivered by Professor Augustyn Woś and Dr. Jerzy Plewa. After the end of the Polish

session, the congress participants went on study tours to various parts of the country with the purpose of getting to know the problems of Polish agriculture and the development of rural areas, the functioning of agricultural food processing plants, agricultural consultancy institutions as well as seeing aspects of Polish culture. The congress participants had six sight-seeing routes at their disposal. This was an important and very successful part of the congress, promoting our country, its agriculture, culture and economy.

The next organizational innovation was doing away with starting discussions after the papers had been delivered. Starting such discussions was largely considered as a repetition of the contents of the papers and limited the time for open discussion. Thanks to these changes the congress participants had the opportunity to deliver almost 250 papers, including so-called poster sessions. There was also more time for discussion.

452 participants from 30 countries took part in the IX EAAE Congress, not to mention invited guests. Poland was represented by 42 people. The Polish representation at earlier congresses was far smaller and normally consisted of no more than 8–12 people. The Congress Organization Committee tried to encourage as large a number of Polish agricultural economists as possible to deliver papers at the congress. The results of these attempts were rather limited. The number of papers delivered by Polish scientists was relatively small and most of them were concentrated at the poster sessions. Leading representatives of the Polish agricultural economists' milieu were missing among the authors of congress papers.

The IX EAAE Congress in Warsaw was therefore not adequately used to represent the achievements of Polish scientists dealing with the wide field of problems of rural and agricultural development. I find it difficult to explain the reasons for this situation.

253 papers (for all kinds of sessions) were submitted to the congress, 8 of these were from Poland (excluding papers at the 'Polish session'). The highest number of papers was submitted by Germany (38) and France (27). Representatives from Central and Eastern European countries submitted 26% of all the papers, 20% of these were written together with western authors and 16% were texts written by them alone. The percentage of papers written by authors from post-communist countries which were accepted by the Programme Committee to be delivered at sessions other than poster sessions was however very low. One of the reasons for this were the numerous formal shortcomings in the submitted papers (format, abstracts, deadlines etc.). For example, 50% of the papers submitted by Polish authors contained shortcomings of this kind.

The Programme Committee drew up a list of topics most frequently presented in the delivered papers. The following were the most important:

1. Agricultural policy, prices and income in agriculture (29.1%);
2. Making use of natural resources in agriculture and ecological issues (10.8%);

3. The economics of farming, management of agricultural production, risk (9.9%);
4. International aspects of agricultural development and business (7.5%);
5. Development of rural areas (7.2%);
6. Marketing of agricultural products (5.4%).

The majority of the congress papers concerned various aspects of agricultural transformation and food production in the former communist countries. Most of the authors of the papers on these subjects were scientists from Western Europe and Germany in particular who represented the highest number of papers at the congress.

Apart from the considerable organizational effort made by the Poles, the preparation of two special issues for the congress deserves recognition: 'Issues of Agricultural Economy' and 'Countryside and Agriculture,' containing texts by Polish authors in English. These publications which came with the conference materials package for each participant, will be useful in popularizing Polish scientific output in the field of agricultural economy and rural development and will also allow specialists from other countries to better understand the problems of transformation of Polish agriculture and rural areas.

The EAAE Congress is always an opportunity for organizing meetings of various circles connected with the economy of agriculture and related disciplines. Such was also the case at the Warsaw Congress. During the event or immediately after it ended, two EAAE management meetings took place, a management meeting of the International Association of Agricultural Economists (IEEA), a meeting of the editorial team of the *European Review of Agricultural Economics* as well as a meeting of the representatives of the Network of Centres dealing with Agricultural Policy (NAP).

Organizing the EAAE Congress in Warsaw and the considerable participation of Polish scientists should lead to their greater activity in the international milieu of agricultural economists. Just before the congress an international academic seminar took place at the Agricultural University of Warsaw (SGGW), among the series of EAAE seminars, entitled 'Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment in Agri-Food Sectors. Competitiveness and Policy Implications.' This was a well organized and fruitful seminar. Similar events, included in the calendar of EAAE seminars, should be organized in our country in the next few years. A greater activity of our agricultural economists in the preparation of publications in international reviews and papers at leading scientific conferences is very necessary. The potential of the circle of Polish agricultural economists and specialists in related fields in the above subjects of activity is not adequately put to use. The earliest opportunity of representing our achievements is the Congress of the International Association of Agricultural Economists (IEEA) which will take place in Berlin in August 2000 as well as the X EAAE Congress in Saragossa in 2002.