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ECOLOGICAL ETHICS. VALUES AND NORMS IN LOCAL RURAL COMMUNITIES

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Abstract. An important role in sustainable rural development, involving economy, local communities and nature, should be played by ethics. This paper presents a theoretical and empirical characterization of basic problems of ecological ethics. First and foremost, the study characterizes the philosophical fundamentals of this ethics, with emphasis on ontological and anthropological views of selected thinkers. A universal concept of ecological ethics was proposed, containing values and moral norms that point to realization of this concept. Furthermore, the paper emphasizes empirical aspects of ecological ethics which manifest themselves in the awareness of inhabitants of rural areas. With respect to this topic, we presented selected results of the empirical survey carried out in rural areas in Poland by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The presentation of these results was preceded by a short discussion about relationships between ecological ethics and market economy ethics. The paper is based on the analysis of the related literature, legal documents and results of empirical surveys.

Key words: ecological ethics, values, norms, ecological awareness, rural inhabitants

INTRODUCTION

Are there doctrines and concepts of ecological ethics?

The first part of this question can be answered negatively. The concept of ethical doctrine can be understood as a coherent (internally consistent) set of values, with the primary value (human life in Christian ethics or happiness as maximization of individual pleasures in utilitarianism) and a set of moral norms presented in the form of moral imperatives aimed at achievement of the primary and other values. Furthermore, each doctrine also contains negative norms which prohibit certain behaviors and actions that prevent from realization of the values. Values and norms refer to the "wholeness" of human life. Values indicate goals in life, whereas norms regulate behaviors and actions taken in families, communities (religious, professional) and in social life.

Therefore, similarly broad doctrine of ecological ethics has not been proposed so far. There are two types of difficulty with development of such a doctrine. Firstly, there are no broadly developed philosophical views which would be the foundation for the doctrine, although "draft" philosophical assumptions for ecological ethics have been proposed by several thinkers, such as, in Poland, Julian Aleksandrowicz (1988) and Henryk Skolimowski (1992), who formulated the concept of ecophilosophy and, abroad, by William T. Blackstone (1995) and Roger Scruton (2000).

The second difficulty with development of the ethical doctrine is connected with the problem of its universal status i.e. widespread (global) respect for values an norms in terms of awareness and practical use by people, institutions and governments since the ecological

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damages, especially those caused by the economy, are observed all over the world.

A positive answer to the second part of the question asked at the beginning of this study about the concepts of ecological ethics will be discussed in the following parts of the paper, where our own project will be presented. It should be emphasized that the ethical concept is understood to mean "narrow" projects of ecological ethics, with authors recommending selected ethical values and justifying them in world view terms (nature is the value of the human world), political terms (ecology should be situated within the program of sustainable development) or with practical rationale (e.g. the argument that some world's resources are non-renewable and thus should be protected). Within ethical concepts, authors recommend certain norms of individual and institutionalized behaviour and even political principles which represent guidelines for directions of activities and principles as the methods of taking actions. Norms, directives and principles regulate how to realize the values adopted (Piątek, 1998). Examples of the documents construed as ethical concepts include Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992) and Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (1999).

THE VIEWS OF THINKERS ON ECOLOGICAL ETHICS

With respect to ecological ethics, both its missing doctrine and current concept should adopt (describe) values which refer to the wholeness of the natural environment people live in. Let us repeat that these values are grounded in either ontological assumptions or theological assumptions in the case of Christian concepts, which are beyond the scope of this study[1].

We would also like to indicate the ontological views of the twentieth-century thinkers which are likely to represent the philosophical assumptions (foundations) for ecological ethics. Martin Heidegger (1997) wrote that "our human existence in the world" consists in "dwelling", which means staying of "the Mortals on the Earth. But «on the Earth» means «under the Sky». Both terms also mean «dwelling before divinities» and «other people». With the power of primary unity, all the four: Earth and Sky, Divinities and Mortals, are oneness (...). This simplicity is termed fourfold (*das Geviert*)". Undoubtedly, this ontological fourfold should be regarded as a set of values of ecological ethics. Obviously, if one does not believe in Divinities, they adopt Earth, Sky and Mortals (meaning human beings) as values. Hans G. Gadamer (1992) (co-creator of philosophical hermeneutics) found that "facing modern science with its scope of technological applications which generate both benefits and the evil for people and «decompose the nature», we should take «increased responsibility»" since the focus should be on "the wholeness of human existence in nature, the task of controlling development of human well-being and humans' subordination of the natural forces in order for the nature not to be devastated and destroyed but survive with our existence on the Earth. The nature cannot be viewed as something to be exploited but it has to be, in all the forms of its existence, experienced as a partner, but this means that it should be understood as another being we live with". (Gadamer, 1992). In his philosophical and theoretical investigations focused on ecology, Julian Aleksandrowicz (1988), professor of medicine, adopted an ontological assumption about the "wholeness of the structure of being" as a composed system of "complicated mutual systems of mutual relationships between the parts of the wholeness". With this assumption, a methodological directive should be adopted that a man and the world should be "interpreted as parts of a complex holistic system" and that relations between these parts should be examined and the conditions of the balance (homoeostasis) should be recognized. Therefore, in theoretical terms, ecology has a holistic and interdisciplinary status and it should take into consideration the "ethical vector" by adopting that

[1] Ethical problems concerning the ecology were analysed by Pope John Paul II in e.g.: *encyclical Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1997), *Message for the 1990 World Day of Peace* (1990) and by Pope Benedict XVI in *encyclical Caritas in Veritate* (2009). These problems have been analysed by many authors e.g.: B. Jurczyk (2002). *Ekologia – człowiek – Kościół. Antropologiczny wymiar kryzysu ekologicznego w ocenie Kościoła*, Opole: Wydział Teologiczny Uniwersytetu Opolskiego; J. Mroczkowski (1986), *Środowisko naturalne człowieka jako problem etyczno-teologiczny*. „Chrześcijanin w Świecie", 11–12; J. M. Dołęga, J. W. Czartoszewski (Ed.). (1999). *Ochrona środowiska w filozofii i teologii*. Warszawa: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej.

Our opinion is that that the first doctrine of Catholic ecological ethics rooted in theological assumptions was presented by the Pope Francis in the encyclical *Laudato si*, published in June 2015. In general, the encyclical is intended to promote "ecological conversion" among people to take responsibility for maintaining sustainable ecosystem and biodiversity.

the "being" wholeness is not only a material but also an ethical value, which we should take responsibility for. The awareness of this value and taking responsibility will represent a "revolutionary transformation of awareness" and will form "human ecological conscience".

With respect for the ontological views of the above authors, the position should be adopted that moral status is inherent in both animate and inanimate beings which are present in individual systems: social system, ecosystem and the whole biosphere. This position can be termed both ethical and ontological holism, which assumes that ethical subjects are humans as it is humans who value the world while the ethical objects are formed by other wholes and individual beings included in these wholes (animals, plants, rocks, waters etc.) we assign individual values to. Due to these values, we develop specific relations which we regulate with ethical norms. This is how we propose to view ecological ethics (in holistic terms) and its subject scope (concerning people's duties) with respect to the wholeness of the world we live in.

Henryk Skolimowski (2007), as a founder of ecophilosophy, did not analyse the ontological problems. Ecophilosophy assumes that "ecology is a form of liberation" of humans from the awareness of utilitarian approach to the world of nature; ecophilosophy leads to considering the world as a "sanctuary" where human is a "submissive carer of the whole nature and is responsible for its whole well-being". With this approach, the above author provided only a "sketch" of the doctrine for ecological ethics, where ethical subjects (humans) are carers which act to take their responsibility for maintaining the "well-being" in nature.

PROJECT OF THE CONCEPT OF ECOLOGICAL ETHICS

Based on the above ontological views of three thinkers, the primary values in our concept include: individual people (mortals), earth, sky, water and air i.e. all nature and individual animate and inanimate beings; the value is also our partnership-based being in the biosphere and cosmos. These values have and autotelic status in a sense that they exist "for themselves", although it is we, humans, who add these values to ourselves and the external world since we are the only aware moral subjects. These values have also a purposeful status as we adopt them as the goals in life and individual, group and social activity. Furthermore, we adopt them if we accept them in our awareness and realize in political, economic and social practice.

In order to realize the above values, we first recommend ethical and political principles for political and local-government authorities:

- It is essential for the policy of sustainable development to take actions in all the entities towards protection of biosphere i.e. maintaining of integral and sustainable development of the world of animate nature and maintaining inanimate being;
- Legislature in a country passes the adequate law that obliges people and institutions for protecting the biosphere and the law that regulates penalties and compensations for the harm; analogously, in light of law, local government entities regulate, in the procedural (administrative) scope, obligations and penalties for those who destroy the world of nature;
- State institutions and local government entities provide information about ecological threats to both interested entities and citizenship associations in a specific area; making information confidential should be approached as ethically incorrect and punishable.

Moral norms which we recommend within the concept have a subject status i.e. they should be accepted and realized by individual entities:

- The primary moral norm in the ecological ethics should be prudence, which obliges every thinking person who accepts the value of this ethics to carefully consider (analyze) the project of actions, particularly the economic actions, and whether taking these actions will not result in ecological damages, including harm to human health; if the harms are expected, the moral duty of the person who designs individual, group and institutional actions is to cease to take these actions or remodel the project of actions towards elimination of the potential threats;
- The second norm is individual courage (in other words, the virtue of bravery), needed to criticize the views and anti-ecological decisions and to oppose to realization of these views and decisions; the norm is related to local members of citizenship societies which, if ecological actions are taken, have to oppose to the opinions that accept instrumental use of natural resources;
- The third norm recommends restraint in utilization of natural resources i.e. not using them in amount higher than biological individual or group needs and recommends the reasonable (prudent) fertilization of

fields, forests and meadows with chemical substances which cause disharmony in the ecosystem;

- The fourth norm suggests development of the attitude of the "submissive carer" of nature as an ethical attitude recommended by Henryk Skolimowski (2007).

The attitude of the submissive carer towards the world of nature would consist in selfless taking actions against the intended and realized harms and taking remedial actions if the harms occurred; the carer does not accept any rewards or payment for such actions but they rightly expect the ethical praise but do not approach this praise as others' (external) duty.

It can be easily noticed that the concept presented here is universal. The question arises whether it has any particular reference to societies living in rural areas. It is obvious that, except for the second ethical-political principle (concerning the political authority), other principles should be respected and realized by local government entities in all rural gminas (gminas are principal units of territorial division in Poland), not only as an administrative duty but also as a moral obligation. With respect to moral norms, their particular reference to inhabitants of rural areas consists in "everyday" (constant) realization within families and any everyday material activities, including economic an tourist activities since rural inhabitants are in direct personal relations with the world of nature. The submissive carer's attitude is also formed everyday within these direct relations (Sikora et al., 2015).

STATE OF ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS OF THE INHABITANTS OF RURAL AREAS (OPINIONS BASED ON THE SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES)

Integration of ethics with ecology as well as ethics and ecology with economy, and ethics and ecology with sociology is not easy. In the past it was assumed (and it should be continued to be assumed) that adoption of ethical goals as inherent in ecology, which determines economic and social life of humans and societies, is comprehensively justified. The ecological problems are characterized by a series of well-manifested properties. These problems are broad, varied and internally complex, conceptually unequivocal, empirical and continually transgressing new boundaries (Frysztacki, 1995). As emphasized by L. Kocik (1999), these characteristics, pointing to broad interdisciplinary ecological problems, should be supplemented by the fact that "it belongs to acknowledged systems of values, social stratification, state of awareness, political manipulation etc." Furthermore, it has a multi-dimensional conflict character as it should, by its nature, transgress the area of private interests and living and territorial space of various people and social groups.

The opinions presented indicate that the ecological problems are very broad. E. Kośmicki (1992) rightly argued that "ecology is something more than merely a new field of science; it is also a point of view and an action plan which is aimed at organization of problems connected with life and environment, including the problems connected with society and human affairs". Therefore, ecology is sometimes approached as a science without boundaries, which represents the intersection of a number of previously unrelated or even contradicting fields and domains of science.

Therefore, the need arises for extending other sciences with ecological goals. In the first part of our study, we attempted to reveal the relations of the ecology with philosophy and ethics and partly with sociology. Further, the goals of the ecology and economy are often contradictory. As observed by W. Michna (1991), from the standpoint of application economy and application ecology, the ecological imperatives and economic imperatives are often contradictory. Ecology secures the eternity of humankind. Therefore, many expenditures which consume substantial resources are needed but the benefits will be observed after many decades. The economy inspires to strive for maximization of the current profit. It encourages to limitation of expenditures which produce any profits for generations to come. The nature of ecological imperatives differs from the nature of economic ones.

Therefore, the problem of ecological ethics and its values and norms is emerging: the need for realization of the adopted values according to the norms of human behaviours. The ethics of beliefs, obligations and responsibility is needed in human behaviours to represent the reflection of individual and social awareness. This means the awareness which assumes that the future depends on switching from economic, productive and modernist thinking oriented towards immediate profits into thinking about ecological and social orientation (Kocik, 1999).

Economy of profit expressed with the price and money should gradually become the economy of

eternal existence of humankind (Michna, 1991). K. Wódz (1993) argues that this obvious and primary value which is human life should be used to derive the values of nature and the environment as an element that determines and co-creates life, human conditions and its decent level. This direction of reflection must lead to conclusions where the central point of reference is relation of human to nature.

The questions are raised whether this positive relation of human to nature is observed in rural communities, who are very close to nature through everyday practices, and whether awareness of rural communities contains the respective social values and norms that represent the foundations for the ecological ethics?

We will attempt to answer these questions, using results of the empirical survey carried out in Poland on annual basis since 2005 among the inhabitants of rural areas (farmers and non-farmers) at the request of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in Warsaw, Poland. The survey is carried out using a technique of personal interview and survey questionnaire. The interview is conducted by qualified interviewers for the representative quota-purposive sample. 1,500 interviews are made in total. Maximal statistical error is +/–3.4%. Methodologically, the research procedure shows the representativeness of the results for the area of Poland (BIOSTAT, 2013). The empirical part of the paper presents selected results of the survey, concerning the state of ecological awareness of rural inhabitants. Of the values that are components of ecological awareness of the inhabitants of rural areas, we adopted: importance of rural areas to the inhabitants, effects of participation of farmers in agricultural-environmental programs and conditions of living that should be improved in the country.

Among the opinions expressed by rural inhabitants about the importance of the function of rural areas, the most important rural function is production of food (80% of the first, second and third indications). This is the economic value that determines the level of living in the country. The second position was taken by environmental protection (61% of the first, second and third indications). This value, present in awareness of rural inhabitants, determines production of food (agricultural function of rural areas) and the third role of rural areas, connected with the economic value, oriented at non-agricultural activities, i.e. tourism (36% of the first, second and third indications (Fig. 1). Among the values attributed to rural areas by rural inhabitants are culture and the need for preservation of cultural heritage (32% in the first three indications) – social value (Fig. 1).

The values indicated in the survey which, according to rural inhabitants, express the importance of rural areas for their inhabitants, represent an example of highly developed ecological awareness, which forms the ethics of beliefs, obligations and responsibilities concerning respect for the nature, culture and civilization heritage.

The most essential subject values which represent ecological ethics are the effects of participation of farmers in the agricultural-environmental program. According to the biggest groups of the farmers surveyed (62%), the major environmental effect of farmers' participation in the program included in the Rural Development Programme for 2007–2013 and 2014–2020 is that now farmers implement more sustainable management of fertilizers and crop protection chemicals. At the second position (54%), respondents indicated that the actions taken by farmers who participate in the program are aimed at an increase in biological diversity. The third place (53%) was taken by the raised awareness of farmers participating in the program concerning environmental protection (Fig. 2).

The survey showed that one of the manifestations of value in ecological ethics is care for the environment. 24% of the rural inhabitants surveyed indicated this problem as the third among the conditions of living in the country that should be improved (Fig. 3).

The survey showed that first improvement that is needed in rural areas is access to health services (44%). The second frequently indicated problem (35%) was access to jobs.

These results suggest that three values are inherent in awareness of rural inhabitants: i.e. health, work and nature that should be cared for since they determine the conditions of living in rural areas. Therefore, they indicate that the primary values in ecological ethics are humans, their natural and cultural environment. They are primary values with autotelic and purposeful status. Realization of these values should take place according to the ethical principles adopted in the paper and used in activities taken by authorities and moral norms.

It is also worth noting that the components of ecological ethics in awareness of rural inhabitants have its own history. In the inter-war period of the 20th century, methodological assumptions of social agronomy appeared in program, with the creators being e.g.

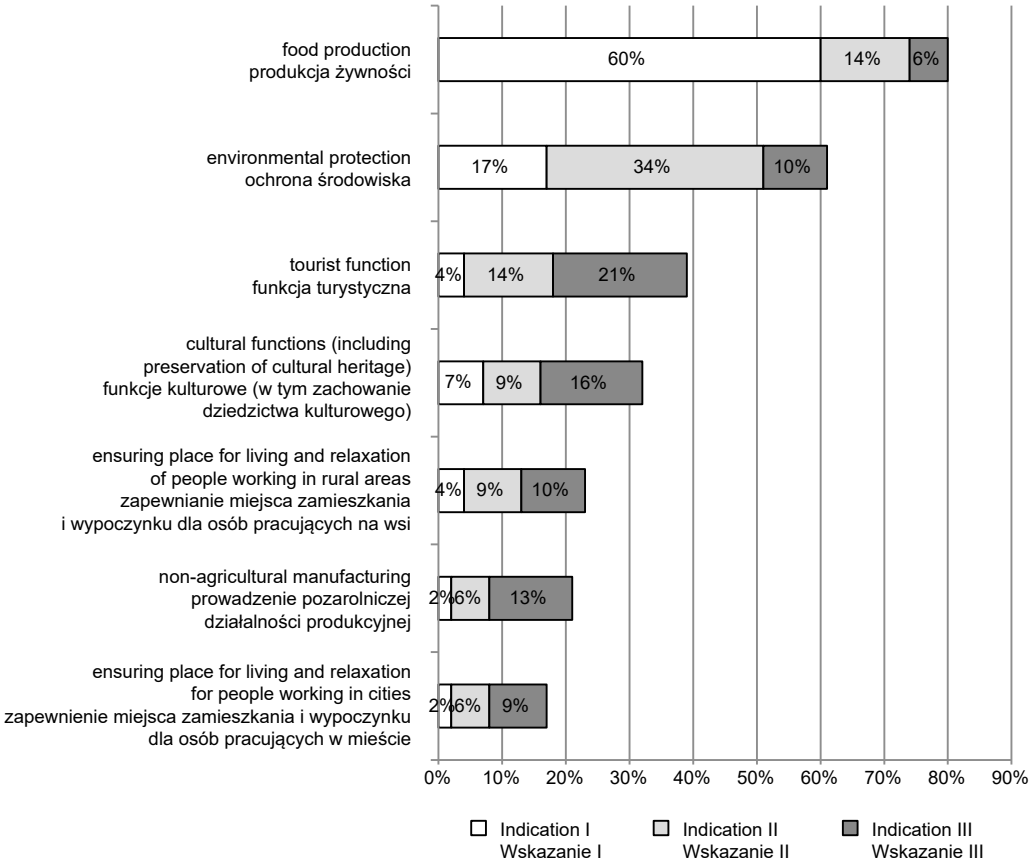

Fig. 1. Most important functions of rural areas in Poland according to rural inhabitants opinion (N = 1500)
Source: BIOSTAT, 2013, p. 115.
Rys. 1. Najważniejsze funkcje obszarów wiejskich w Polsce w opinii badanych mieszkańców wsi (N = 1500)
Źródło: BIOSTAT, 2013, s. 115.

W. Grabski, W. Bronikowski and F. Bujak in Poland and A. V. Chayanov in Russia. There was a principle used in the system of social agronomy that human is a subject of effects and that development of his personality is the most important objective. Furthermore, development of forms and methods of working that are aimed at promotion of active attitudes of agricultural producers and rural activists requires the respect for nature, earth and food (Sikorska-Wolak et al., 2014). Another concept of agricultural and rural development in Poland was realized until the late eighties of the 20th century. The problems of relations between the economy and the environment and between society and the environment were not taken into consideration in this concept. Neglecting the environmental aspect resulted mainly from a strong pressure on the foods market. Development of agriculture was entirely subordinated to the idea of maximization, which was clearly supported with post-production orientation of the agricultural policy. Although the aim of production maximization was achieved, the practices used in agriculture substantially contributed to degradation of the environment. Striving for production maximization, such aspect of agricultural management as ethics with respect to soil, plants, animals and consumers was neglected (Sikorska-Wolak et al., 2014).

It was in the early nineties when substantial changes were observed in awareness of state policy orientation

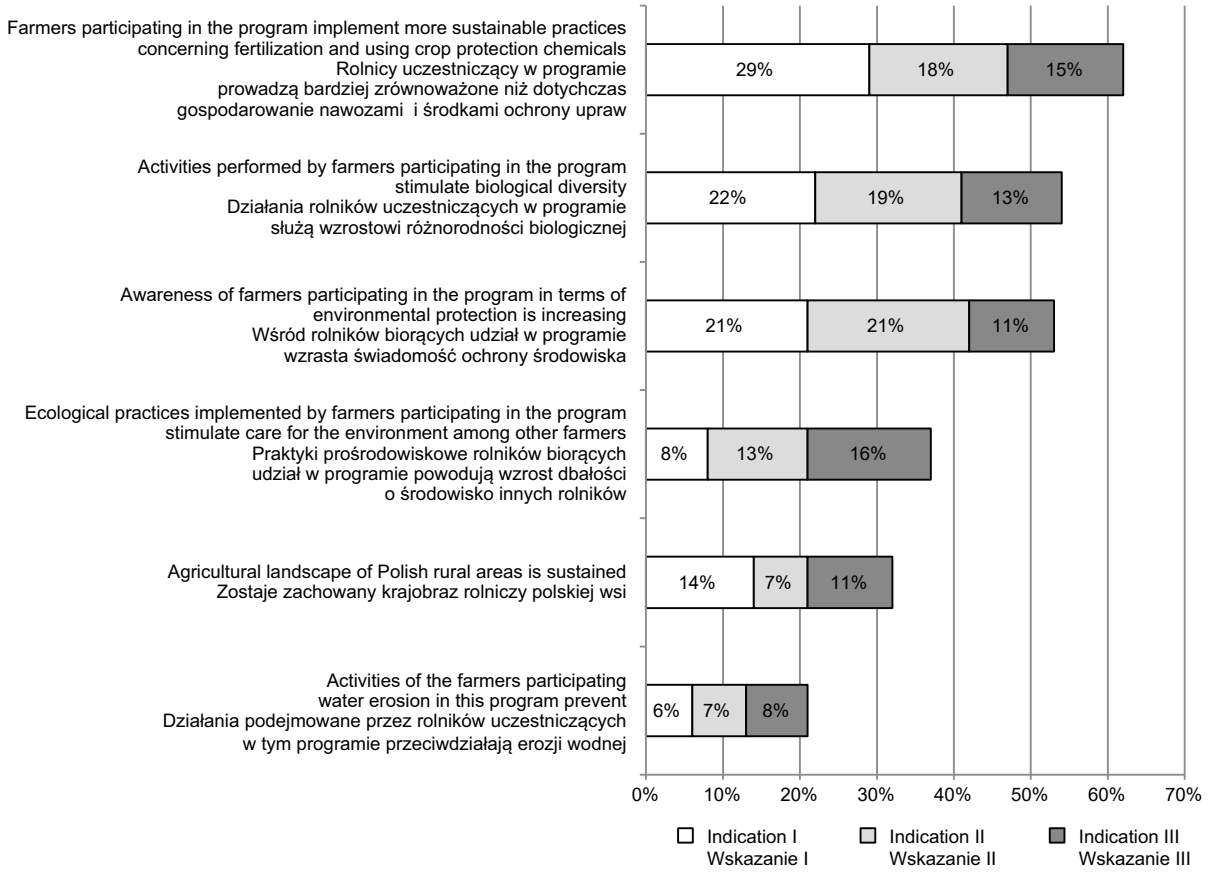

Fig. 2. Effects of farmers' participation in the agri-environmental programme (N = 867)
Source: BIOSTAT, 2013, p. 83.
Rys. 2. Efekty uczestnictwa rolników w programie rolnośrodowiskowym (N = 867)
Source: BIOSTAT, 2013, s. 83.

towards agriculture and rural areas. The care for ecological awareness was promoted, including the awareness among rural inhabitants. In pre-accession EU programs oriented at rural areas, more emphasis was put on ecological problems of the countryside, one of the examples being the Code of Good Agricultural Practice developed in 1999. More and more influence on raising ecological awareness among people, including rural inhabitants has been from various institutions and social organizations, schools, local society leaders, institutions of government and local government authorities. Their actions contribute to promotion of knowledge of ecology, environmental protection and ecological ethics.

CONCLUSIONS

According to the assumptions of the programs of the Common Agricultural Policy, including the Rural Development Programme for 2007–2013 and 2014–2020, an essential place is taken by the idea of multifunctional and sustainable development. The strategy of multifunctional development of rural areas is implemented according to the assumptions of sustainable development in the areas of economic activities, social activities and environmental protection. This activity, however, needs taking into consideration the ethical aspects that concern not only business but also social behaviours and friendly attitude with respect to nature. Therefore, it is also essential for modern agriculture and modern countryside

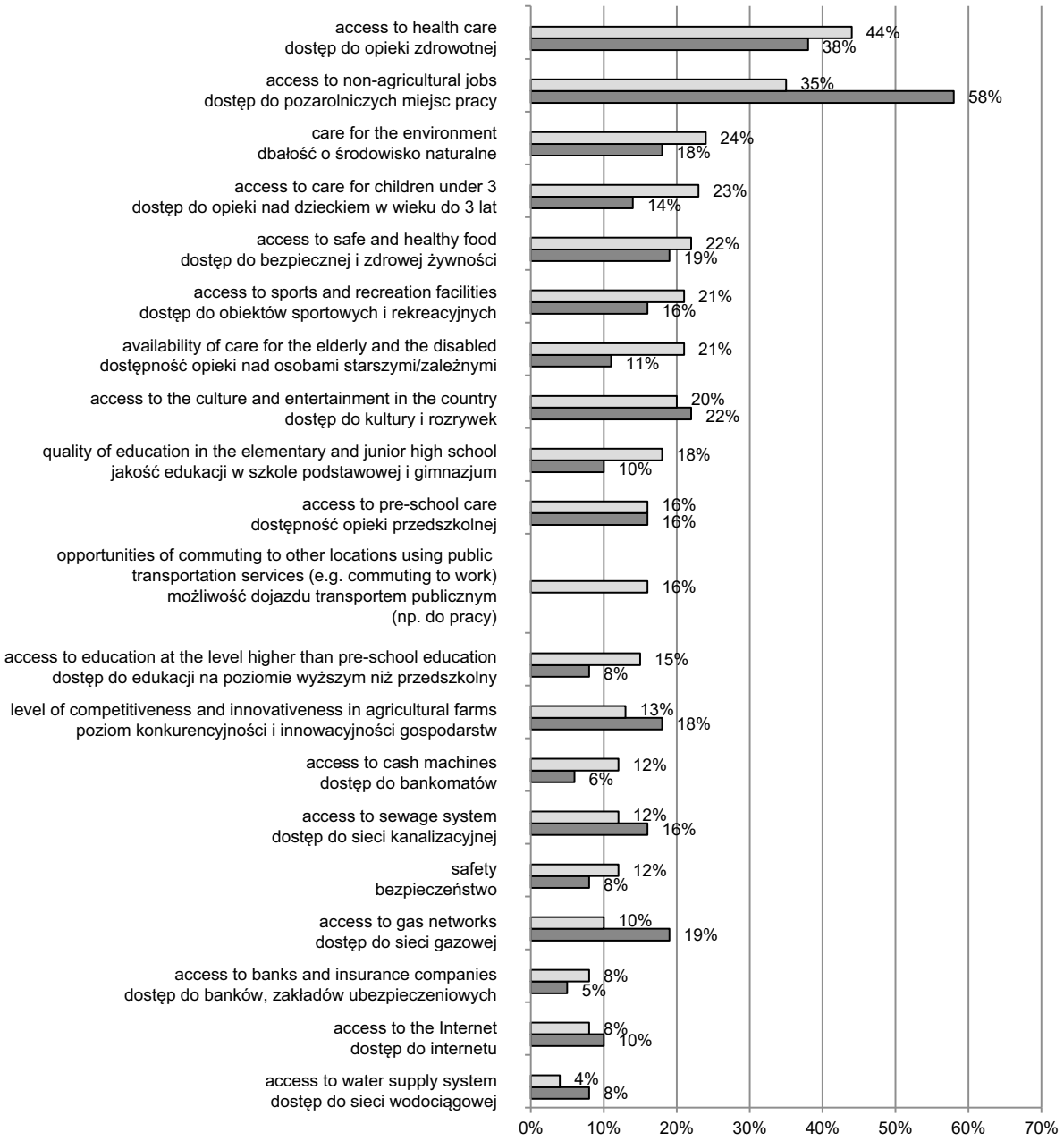

Fig. 3. Problems that have to be addressed in rural areas in Poland according to rural inhabitants (N = 1500)
Source: BIOSTAT, 2013, p. 126.
Rys. 3. Kwestie, które należy poprawić na obszarach wiejskich w Polsce w opinii mieszkańców wsi (N = 1500)
Źródło: BIOSTAT, 2013, s. 126.

that awareness of rural inhabitants, including farmers, is remodelled, in order for them to gradually get used to values and norms of ecological ethics. Using the EU support in full awareness is connected with the need for overcoming awareness barriers, with particular focus on implementation of norms and criteria concerning protection of the environment, food safety, health and animals' well-being.

Ecological awareness does not only require proper level of knowledge but also a rational and emotional acquisition of this knowledge. Therefore, educational institutions and grassroots ecological movements are likely to have a great influence on raising the ecological awareness and popularization of ethics.

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ETYKA EKOLOGICZNA. WARTOŚCI I NORMY W ODNIESIENIU DO SPOŁECZNOŚCI LOKALNYCH NA OBSZARACH WIEJSKICH

Streszczenie. W zrównoważonym rozwoju obszarów wiejskich, obejmującym gospodarkę, społeczności lokalne i przyrodę, istotną rolę powinna spełniać etyka. W artykule przedstawiamy teoretyczną i empiryczną charakterystykę podstawowych zagadnień etyki ekologicznej. W pierwszej kolejności scharakteryzowano jej filozoficzne podstawy, zwracając uwagę na poglądy ontologiczne i antropologiczne wybranych myślicieli. Zaproponowano uniwersalną koncepcję etyki ekologicznej, w której zawarte zostały odpowiednie wartości oraz normy moralne, wskazujące na ich realizację. W dalszej kolejności zwrócono uwagę na empiryczną stronę etyki ekologicznej, która przejawia się w świadomości mieszkańców wsi. Przedstawione zostały wybrane wyniki badań empirycznych na ten temat, przeprowadzonych na polskiej wsi przez Ministerstwo Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi. Wyniki te poprzedza krótka dyskusja poświęcona relacjom etyki ekologicznej z etyką gospodarki rynkowej. Artykuł powstał na bazie analizy odpowiedniej literatury przedmiotu, dokumentów urzędowych oraz rezultatów badań empirycznych.

Słowa kluczowe: etyka ekologiczna, wartości, normy, świadomość ekologiczna, mieszkańcy wsi

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