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INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

Manuscripts should be prepared in English and sent via e-mail to the Editor-in-Chief at studies@aki.gov.hu.



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Foreword

As has become customary, the first issue of this volume of *Studies in Agricultural Economics* has been compiled in partnership with the European Rural Development Network (www.erdn.eu). It shares the theme ‘Innovation and Cooperation in Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Rural Regions’ with the 15th ERDN Conference which was organised by the Bundesanstalt für Agrarwirtschaft, Wien, and held in Eisenstadt (Austria) on 3-4 October 2017. Several of the papers included in this thematic issue were presented at the conference.

As the basic and infrastructural conditions in many rural regions of the European Union (EU) have steadily improved in recent decades, specific and integrative topics on the further development, chances and opportunities of rural regions are increasingly being addressed in research, policy making and the public discourse. Against this background, this issue of *Studies in Agricultural Economics* includes papers on diverse topics such as the provision of public goods, inclusive and sustainable development of rural municipalities, and changes in consumer preferences. Papers related to innovation in farming address adaptation to climate change and the roles of precision agriculture and organic farming.

In the frame of the EU H2020 research project PEGASUS, Nigmann, Dax and Hovorka explain the manifold interrelations among the diverse ecosystem services and functions of land use and land management, based on the empirical findings of twelve case study areas from across the EU. The Common Agricultural Policy has a core role for provision of ecosystem services beside other EU and national policies.

Owing to the nature of its history, Poland includes historical borderlines that separated diametrically-opposite agricultural systems. The impact of this historical factor was shown by Rudnicki, Jezierska-Thöle, Wiśniewski, Janzen and Kozłowski to be evident even today, especially in the territories further away from that borderline, particularly for features associated with agrarian structure, rural socio-demography, and productivity and profitability of agricultural holdings.

Monitoring and evaluation is crucial to enhance the sustainable development of municipalities in an inclusive and sustainable way, in terms of their long-term intention of greater attractiveness, competitiveness and sense of identity. CommunalAudit is a tool developed in Austria for achieving this development. Quendler sets out the relevant definitions and concepts of this tool and discusses its implementation, benefits and drawbacks, and further evolution.

The Leader approach is now well established across the EU. Chmieliński, Faccilongo, Fiore and La Sala show that

their case-study Local Action Groups in Poland and Italy were generally working effectively. However, excessive institutionalisation (transfer of the proposal evaluation role away from the LAG in Poland, and excessive formalisation of the application rules in Italy) could be the major constraint to effective programme implementation.

In the context of the increasing interest in functional foods in Hungary, four consumer segments were identified by Soós and Biacs, and characterised according to socio-demographic, behavioural and attitude variables. Familiarity with the term ‘functional food’ is still limited, and consumers’ demand for information to justify food purchase decisions varies according to their level of knowledge, involvement, personal attitudes and socio-demographic indicators.

The remaining three papers cover aspects of agricultural innovation and sustainability. Using different methodological approaches, Vígh, Fertő and Fogarasi sought to determine the climate factors which may influence the technical efficiency of Hungarian arable farms. Their results show that the processes resulting from climate change are determining factors in the evaluation of the adapted sectoral patterns and market conditions.

Precision agriculture technologies have been recognised as one of the rare win-win solutions for environmental and socio-economic goals. Data analysis and survey work conducted by Takácsné György and colleagues confirm that precision farming leads to increasing yields and has profitability benefits compared to conventional farming. The high investment cost is the main barrier to diffusion, while subsidies and more appropriate information could foster it.

Finally, Baer-Nawrocka and Blocisz compare the efficiency of Polish organic and conventional farms. In terms of efficiency criteria only, the organic farms show significant disadvantages in land and labour efficiency which should be considered when formulating agricultural policy objectives and conceptualising measures. Rather than competing with each other, the concepts should be seen as complementary.

ERDN seeks to advance international scientific cooperation in rural development and agriculture, as well as to share and promote scientific experiences and achievements in order to support policy makers and stakeholders. We, the joint Editors, hope that this thematic issue of the journal contributes to the further development of these objectives.

S. Egartner, J. Niedermayr and K. Wagner
Wien, March 2018

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Researchers, academics, policy makers and practitioners in agricultural economics and rural development, especially in eastern central and south-eastern Europe.

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