

T5.2 Case study report (Code PL2A)

**Farma Martynika: an ecotouristic and  
educational farm showing that changing  
from urban to rural life is difficult but  
possible**

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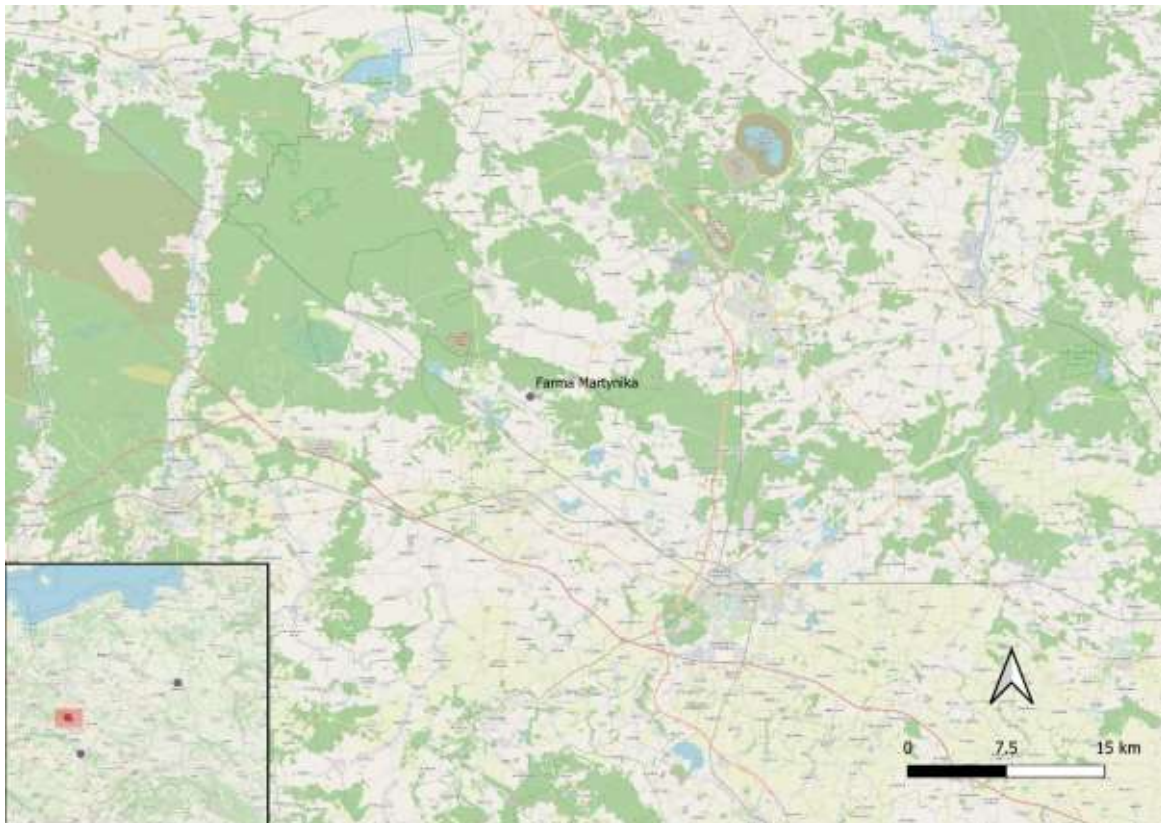
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## Context

Farma Martynika is an example of new entrants into farming. Farma Martynika is an agrotouristic farm located in south-western Poland (Fig. 1) run by a couple of former urbanites since 2013. The farm is located in Lower Silesia voivodship (NUTS 2), in the Legnicko-glogowski sub-region (NUTS 3). According to rural-urban typology the practice is located within an intermediate type of area. From the local perspective the farm is located in the rural municipality of Chojnów in Jaroszówka village. It is located at a distance of 10km from the nearest town (Chojnów - population 13,000). It is approximately 30 km away from Legnica (99,000 inhabitants), a centre of sub-regional importance, whose economy is closely dependent on the copper industry.



**Figure 1. Location of Farma Martynika against the background of the surrounding area and Poland.**

Source: Open Street Map.

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The municipality where the Martynika Farm is located is small - less than 10,000 inhabitants (in Jaroszkówka village less than 300 inhabitants). The municipality has an area of 231.21 km<sup>2</sup>, of which 20% is forest, 68% arable land, 2.3% urbanized land. In the vicinity of the village there is a protected landscape area with a large proportion of woodland. Jaroszkówka is a village with several horse studs, which are mainly run by people who have moved to the village from other areas, including urban areas. The village is characterised by poor quality soils, which is a significant barrier to the desire to make a livelihood from agriculture. According to the information received, due to the small areas of arable land in relation to soil quality, agriculture has lost its importance and is largely a complementary activity to other forms of activity - e.g. grazing animals, growing hay for horse feed. During the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, the village and the immediate area received a lot of interest from people from the city - willing to buy property. However, due to the scarcity of available resources for sale and restrictive laws on the matter, the influx of people from the city, especially those wanting to own a second home, is significantly limited. In the case of villages there are inconveniences mainly related to infrastructure, access to properties. Martinique Farm itself is located a short distance from the main part of the village.

From a social perspective, it should be noted that the influx of newcomers to the village is not associated with their involvement in social life, involvement in village affairs. The new residents live, as it were, on the sidelines, in their farms, focused on their own affairs. This is a significant problem - lack of cooperation between "new" and "old" villagers.

## Origin of the practice

Martynika Farm is currently an eco-touristic and educational farm established by a couple of newcomers from the city of Warsaw in 2013. The thought of escaping from the big city to the countryside germinated in them slowly, but the decision was taken quickly. They did not want to live in the city (to live in the eternal rush of the unknown, stress, noise, smog), they chose to live in the countryside to get away from it all and to live in peaceful surroundings, healthier and tastier. So the main motivation was to leave the city and live in the countryside and to pursue activities based on the use of resources and opportunities available in the countryside (and not based on links with the city).

The basic idea was to completely change their way of life, with the aim of living and making a living in the countryside. The aspect of self-sufficiency was also important to them. Given their experience in business and working with children (oligo-phrenopedagogics), they decided to buy and renovate the farmhouse and set up an agricultural and agritourism business offering additionally a wide range of workshops (for children and adults) (Fig. 2).

The funds required for a purchase of farm and initial renovation came from the sale of flats in the city. The preparations took approx. six months - they looked for a suitable farm to buy in Lower Silesia due to the fact that it is the warmest region in Poland (favourable for agriculture), but also from the point of view of the possibility of running the workshops (the buildings could be for renovation, but to be able to live there immediately). They also prepared themselves mentally and practically - they acquired new skills so that they could run the workshops.



Figure 2. Everyday life and workshops in Martynika Farm.  
Source: <https://www.facebook.com/martynikafarma/>



## Actors involved

The main actors of the practice are the pair – Marta and Mateusz - the owners and founders of Martynika Farm. They were influenced by similar initiatives in other parts of Poland. Although the key role in the practice is played by Marta and Mateusz - they have been closely cooperating with various actors from the region who have been supporting them in various ways.

Among important actors involved are other eco-touristic sites from the region (these are practices with the strong focus on permaculture, ecological building, etc.), but Farm is not collaborating with other agritourist sites located in the village (it is not very touristic area and maybe they either represent or see themselves as competition). The interviews gathered for this case study generally indicate a friendly stance towards newcomers; however, we also repeatedly heard that collaboration within local community is not sufficiently developed. Moreover, village inhabitants were indicating that local authorities (on the commune level) are not very active.

Important actors involved in Martynika Farm functioning are permacultural NGOs from Poland (i.a. providers of an expertise during workshops and knowledge transfer used for Martynika Farm development in terms of permacultural gardening and agriculture production planning). Martynika cooperate with schools and cultural centres from the region, for which they organise various workshops. Working with and for children is an important part of their activities, for example, they are involved in helping children from orphanages (stays at their farm with participation in many activities). The owner is involved in the activities of the Rural Housewives' Circle and therefore get support from local community women. Moreover, Martynika Farm is very active in social media networks of people who have left the city and started a new life in the countryside or are planning to do so - this activity works both ways, they get support in many aspects and they also share their knowledge and experience.

## Style of farming/activities promoted

Martynika Farm is formally a family farm of several hectares (part owned, part leased), it is also registered agro-tourism site. The owners used to run an organic goat farm and sold milk, among other. Currently they own meadows and cultivate fruit and vegetables for themselves and guests of the workshop and agro-tourism (also organic). They applied for special funds for modernization of the farm, but due to their age they did not have access to subsidies from the Young Farmers Programme.

As regards farming the issue of distribution and sales proved to be a very big challenge and barrier to the development of Martynika Farms' agricultural activities. In practice, the agricultural activity proved to be more challenging than the owners had anticipated so they focused on the development of agro-tourism and workshops. Some of the workshops are closely related to rural life, e.g. permaculture, herbal workshops, preparing for rural life (one of the most popular workshop in this context is called "Escape from the city to the countryside - practical workshop"). But also organize other types of workshops such as ceramics, stove-making, and recycling/upcycling workshops. The workshops are for adults and children (including organised groups), they take place on a farm, in the form of an excursion or at an inviting institution and last for one or several days depending on their type and target group. As of now Martynika Farm owners are focusing on returning to active farming of organic crops, especially important are the preparations on how to distribute and sell – this is crucial for success.

Promotion of tourist, educational and cultural activities is carried out mainly online through social networks, and locally among local schools and cultural centres, etc. Currently planning the development of crop production, they are preparing for it and assume the development of cooperation networks in a modern form (buyers, co-operators). In terms of cultivation, they are using an innovative permaculture approach.

An important aspect of Martynika Farm is the strong focus on ecology - in terms of topics of the workshops, the agricultural production and generally way of life. Hence, in terms of environmental effects at local level the Martynika Farm is characterised by its positive impact on the environment - the crops are cultivated according to permaculture principles



(among others, they are absolutely opposed to the use of artificial fertilisers), the goat and alpaca breeding was also organic; they plan to develop organic crop production. In addition, they serve and promote a vegetarian diet to guests in their agro-tourism and during workshops. They attach great importance to the dissemination of ecological attitudes, including the teaching of ecological behaviour in relation to living and working in the countryside (children and adults). Their approach has some impact on the local community. Referring directly to the economic issues on Martynika Farm only the owners work permanently (no new jobs are created for the time being). They make their living from the activities carried out at the Farm (profitability more or less the same, but the previous year, i.e. 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic was tough). Whereas, indirectly, it should be pointed out that as a new economic entity in their village with an ecological approach they are part of the development of the region. Effects in social sphere and effects on social cohesion at local level seems to be rather limited. However, it is worth highlighting Marta's activity in the Circle of Rural Housewives and in organizing pilates classes. As regards effects at the cultural level it should be noted that Farma Martynika is highly attentive to local traditions, the preservation and promotion of traditional skills (ceramics, stove-making, carpentry), with plans to create a museum of disappearing professions.

The owners cultivate land guided by the principles of permaculture (used to run, i.a. goat farming, and currently are planning to start organic plant production), but at the same time they have a strong focus on complementing farming with other activities such as educational projects or workshops related to farming and handicraft (of course, this model has its limitations too, given the current small scale of farming is not able to serve as the main source of income).

Main results of Martynika Farm functioning are connected with, generally, knowledge transfer in terms of eco-approach to life and agriculture. This is done mainly through organised practical workshops. Moreover, the owners of Martynika Farm are willing to share their experience (in-person and on-line) and are an example for newcomers / newcomers to be as well as new entrants into farming that shows that the process of starting a new life in the countryside is difficult but possible.

## Synergies and networking

In order to integrate with the local community the owners are involved in various activities e.g. rural housewives' association, Village Renewal Group in Jaroszówka and other village development projects. As newcomers they were aware that establishment of good relationships with the local community is crucial for to function in harmony in a new social environment that may have been distrustful of newcomers. It is also important for success in economic terms, since the farm's business model is based primarily on cooperation and building a dense network of social contacts. However, as mentioned earlier, looking more broadly at the village as a whole, there is a perceived lack of networking and cooperation between entities engaged in similar activities. Therefore, while the activities undertaken by the Martynika Farm should be assessed as positive, they are not replicated in the local environment to such an extent that we can speak of synergies in the context of activities undertaken by other entities in the immediate vicinity.

In the functioning of Martynika Farm collaboration with other eco-practices is important (e.g. agritouristic farms, permaculture farms, permaculture NGOs) both for agricultural production, agritourism and the organisation of workshops. Networks provide knowledge transfer, partnership in workshops, good examples - so they provide a basis for self-improvement and development of their activities. Strong relations with schools and community centres from the region as the main target audience for child-oriented workshops is also crucial.

## Policies and institutional supports

The barrier to entry into farming is very high, especially in terms of buying farmland and starting up. For the development of the Farms' agricultural business, the obstacles proved to be too great and, as novices, they were not able to overcome them in the initial stage of their business in spite of previous quite thorough preparation. The main problem proved to be selling their eco-products. There was a lack of institutional support, but also a lack of networks of other such practices in the area, which Martynika Farm owners could join, whose experience and, inter alia, sales networks they could benefit from, especially in the initial stage of their agricultural activity (e.g. cooperatives).

In order to increase the possibilities of effective functioning of Martynika Farm, as well as similar initiatives of new entrants into farming, more external support is necessary. A major problem is the considerable dispersion of information on various aspects of doing business in a rural area or, in general, living in a rural area. For new entrants into farming this is a significant impediment to functioning. Hence, it would be desirable to create a system of "care", connected with direct support or at least support in access to information concerning e.g. access to land, choice of crops, knowledge of the region and market connections, design of supply chain and sales chain, applying for financial support, obtaining various types of certificates, etc.

It would also be helpful to develop a set of "best practices" for new entrants into farming showing all stages of the multi-faceted and time-consuming process of becoming a farmer. As this example shows, this process is partly still ongoing in relation to farming.

Social networks of similar practices should play a very important role in the transfer of knowledge and experience of entrants into farming. Since they very often do not exist in the immediate surroundings (as in the example described), it is necessary to support regional and national authorities in establishing network relations and making information about already existing networks available. In addition, the possibility to obtain some form of financial security is an important element, as new entrants take very high risks and require support to survive in case of failure.



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In the case of new entrants into farming, knowledge and its acquisition is important therefore a system of advisors/advisors, who would help people with the idea of new agricultural activity (in various aspects), e.g. organised by local municipalities, who are interested in the development of new agricultural activities, would be very helpful. An important conclusion from the analysis of this practice is that starting agricultural production by new entrants is very difficult and requires very extensive preparation. A good solution is, as the owners of Martynika did, to prepare an alternative, plan-B path to earn money in the countryside in case farming activity is not sufficiently successful.

Main recommendation based on the results of Martynika Farm case study is the need for comprehensive institutional support for new entrants in many aspects (the purchase of a farm, decisions on the type and form of crops, and especially sales channels).

## Impact and perspectives

The basis of the farm's success was its flexibility - activities originally planned as additional ones (organization of workshops and agrotourism) are so far the main source of income and enable further development.

For the time being Martynika Farm owners are trying to return to active cultivation of organic plants. In this case it is necessary to create a stable distribution and sales network, which requires mastering the ability to function in a new business environment (sales of agricultural products). They plan to continue organizing workshops and developing the agritourism base. In addition, they plan to open three workshops of disappearing professions - blacksmithing, stove and pottery - at the Farm and renovate additional rooms at their farm for this museum/workshop.

Martynika Farm with its activity contributes quite a lot to the local community and becomes one of its important elements. It seems, however, that due to quite a significant divergence of ways of functioning in comparison to other local farms (thus a strong lack of community of interests and community of needs) the strength of created local social networks is not high. In the future, supra-local networks will play a much greater role, and probably networks created with similar-profile farms, based on strong mutual partnerships and business relations. The actual impact on local farms may be indirect and involve them taking over some elements related to the way Martynika Farm operates.

## Annex 1. The list of interviews

Code	Role	Date	Place
PL2A/Int.1	practice leader	13.05.2021	Jaroszówka
PL2A/Int.2	neighbour	17.05.2021	phone
PL2A/Int.3	neighbour	17.05.2021	phone
PL2A/Int.4	workshops participant	13.05.2021	Jaroszówka
PL2A/Int.5	workshops participant	13.05.2021	Jaroszówka
PL2A/Int.6	collaborating practice leader	14.05.2021	Henryków
PL2A/Int.7	collaborating practice leader	14.05.2021	Osiecznica
PL2A/Int.8	local administration representative	10.05.2021	phone
PL2A/Int.9	horse farm / horse riding	17.05.2021	phone
PL2A/Int.10	potential young farmer	17.05.2021	phone
PL2A/Int.11	local agritourist business representative	18.05.2021	phone
PL2A/Int.12	farmer / local agritourist business representative	7.05.2021	phone
PL2A/Int.13	farmer / local agritourist business representative	26.05.2021	phone
PL2A/Int.14	local agritourist business representative / farmer	18.05.2021	phone
PL2A/Int.15	local agritourist business representative / farmer	19.05.2021	phone
PL2A/Int.16	local agritourist business representative / farmer	19.05.2021	phone
PL2A/Int.17	local agritourist business representative / farmer	20.05.2021	phone
PL2A/Int.18	farmer	21.05.2021	phone
PL2A/Int.19	local community representative	13.05.2020	Jaroszówka
PL2A/Int.20	local community representative	13.05.2020	Jaroszówka

Table 1 - Interviews