

REPORT

Workshop on Wholesale Markets after the EU Accession CEI Wholesale Markets Foundation Poland, 26–28 September 2005

Monday, 26th September

The workshop started at 6.30 in the morning when participants left the hotel. At 7.00 the group arrived at the Bronisze wholesale market and started visiting the market. The visit was guided by the president of the market Mr Janusz Byliński. As it was early visitors could see quite a lot of clients selling and buying on the market. During the tour he presented recent changes on the market:

- new surface provided for the open air vendors;
- changes in the rental structure: growing number of big companies renting large areas in favor of small wholesalers.

He also spoke about the plans of the development of the market:

- starting operations in the meat and fish sector in one of the halls (and possibly building new hall for the purpose in future);
- start up of a customs-logistics terminal;
- constructing a ramp for reloading of the trucks.

After the visit to the market participants had breakfast and afterwards at 9 am the discussions started in the conference room in the flowers hall.

The first to speak was Mr Byliński. He welcomed the guests and made a short presentation summing up the 10 year history of the Bronisze market. Presented figures were showing a successful development of the company throughout the period with real growth of the profit during last year.

Next presentation was made by the representatives of the Agricultural and Food Quality Inspection. The Inspection is the Polish governmental body subordinated to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development which is appointed to carry out checks on conformity on agricultural and food products according to EU regulations and Polish Acts. The agency employs around 700 workers in: Main Inspectorate, sixteen Provincial Departments and in fifteen laboratories. The main speaker, Mrs Marzena Chacińska presented the role of this institution in relation to fresh fruit and vegetables trade and summarized the impact of the EU accession on the control system. According to the EU regulations Agricultural and Food Quality Inspection is obliged to carry out marketing standards control of fresh fruit and vegetables at three market stages: internal market, import and export. The inspectors of the agency are present on the Bronisze market, controlling labeling of some products (e.g. potatoes), also storage and transport conditions.

After a short break Mr Jerzy Plewa, agriculture negotiator in EU accession talks, summarized the Polish accession negotiations with the EU in regards to agricultural sector with main focus on fruit and vegetables. It was a very interesting presentation, which was followed by a long discussion. Mr Plewa's main conclusion was that the compromise was reached during the negotiations. In the end Poland does not have all the rights from the beginning but neither has to meet all the obligations.

According to his presentation, the main initial results of membership in the EU for the Polish agricultural sector are:

- elimination of trade barriers within the EU 25 (duties, export subsidies, quotas);
- elimination of queues on EU internal borders;
- adoption of external trade tariff (Increase of duties e.g. rice, bananas, decrease of duties e.g. spirits, rape);
- export growth of Polish food;
- growth in price of agricultural products on domestic market;
- Polish goods considered as EU products on third countries markets.

In the discussion Mr Byliński confirmed that those results are also visible on the Bronisze market, particularly by increasing number of big foreign companies renting space.

The next speaker was Mr Andrzej Kowalski, president of the Bronisze Logistics Platform — trade company operating on the Bronisze market. He reported positive results of joining the EU in terms of increased interest of western companies for Polish fresh fruit and vegetables. Although he also spoke about some difficulties related to trade with Poland's eastern neighbouring countries. Mr Kowalski described experience of his company in trade within the new structures.

Mr Tibor Kékedi and Mr György Kovács, representatives of the Budapest wholesale market, made a presentation on "Budapest wholesale market after the EU accession". Their experience was less enthusiastic than the Polish one. One of the problems they mentioned was that the vendors and buyers tend to bypass Budapest wholesale market. Large part of the trade in fresh fruit and vegetables was overtaken by the big supermarket chains, which buy products directly from farmers or import them. Joining the EU weakened the position of the Hungarian farmers.

After the session participants were transferred by bus to the agro-tourism farm in Swornegacie, near Chojnice in the northern Poland. There was a dinner in the evening on the farm and later guests were accommodated on the farm. The idea was to show the participants the Polish agro-tourism sector, developing more rapidly after the EU accession.

Tuesday, 27th September

After early breakfast the group left for Gdańsk. At 9 am it arrived at the Gdańsk Wholesale Market "Rėnk". The visit started with a tour of the market facilities. The market started operating in 1999. It has an area of 23 hectares, including 25 thousand square meters dedicated to trade under roof. There are three halls: one for flowers, one for fruit, vegetables and also flowers and one rented for warehouses. The main obstacle to the further development of the market are 2 competitive markets located in the Gdańsk-Gdynia region. For the moment the market is not able to repay the construction loans, which are repaid by the state that was the guarantor.

After visiting the market the discussion session was held in the conference room. It was a moment to ask questions to the management of the Gdańsk wholesale market and exchange experience between representatives of different wholesale markets.

Afternoon there was a tourist program that included a guided tour of Gdańsk Oliwa, the Gdańsk Shipyard and the Old Town. Later in the evening there was a dinner in Swornegacie with accompanying local folk music group. Accommodation was again in the same agro-tourism farm.

Wednesday, 28th September

The last day of the workshop again started very early. The group had to leave the agro-tourism farm at 7 am in order to get to the Poznań market.

The visit to the market started at 10 am. The Poznań wholesale market is an example of a successful operation in the fresh fruit, vegetables and flowers sector. The market was opened in 1992 as the first modern fruit, vegetables, flowers and foodstuffs wholesale market in Poland. The total area of 12 hectares accommodates 12 trading facilities of the total area of 4 hectares — 2 fruit and vegetable halls, 4 food halls, 2 fruit halls, warehouse and refrigeration store, pavilion with garden products and 2 umbrella roofs. The visit was very interesting as for most participants it was the first time that they could see this market — one of most important in Poland.

After the visit, during lunch, there was time to ask questions to the management of the market and to discuss.

Afterwards the group was transferred back to Warsaw, to the Bronisze market. There was an official closing of the workshop and a dinner with the management of the Bronisze market.