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## INTEREST OF OWNERS OF AGRITOURISTIC FARMS FROM THE LUBUSKIE PROVINCE IN BEEKEEPING

**Summary.** Tourists and holiday-makers are beginning to appreciate more and more the Polish countryside as a good place to spend free time and agritouristic farms provide a good base for this type of rest and may become an excellent means for the promotion of Polish beekeeping. The aim of this study was to determine possibilities of development of beekeeping in agritouristic farms in the Lubuskie province which, in future, could help improve profitability of their activities. The research assumptions of this study were achieved on the basis of a questionnaire survey. On the basis of the performed questionnaire survey it can be stated unequivocally that there is little interest in beekeeping among relatively young owners of the examined agritouristic farms.

**Key words:** agritouristic farms, interest, apiaries

### Introduction

The Lubuskie province can boast excellent touristic conditions due to the low level of environmental contamination and considerable forest cover as well as the abundance of waterways. It is well-known for its numerous landscape parks, among them the Warta River Estuary National Park associated with a water fowl reserve.

The above province attracts potential visitors with its rich eco- and agritouristic offers. Tourists and holiday-makers are beginning to appreciate more and more the Polish countryside as a good place to spend free time and agritouristic farms provide a good base for this type of rest and may become an excellent means for the promotion of Polish beekeeping (BRATKOWSKI and WILDE 2001, KAZIMIERCZAK-BARYCZKO et AL. 2002). Lubuskie Agritouristic Association unites over 50 farms which provide services in this field and focus on continuous widening of offers for potential visitors on the basis of local cultural goods and touristic attractions (STEVENS 1997).

The aim of this study was to determine possibilities of development of beekeeping in agritouristic farms in the Lubuskie province which, in future, could help improve profitability of their activities.

## Methods

The research assumptions of this study were achieved on the basis of a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire was sent to 30 owners of agritouristic farms at the end of May 2005. Within the period of three months, nearly half of the questionnaires were sent back which constituted 100% of the amount assumed by the authors. The addresses of the questionnaire remained anonymous.

The farms owners were expected to answer questions connected with their age, location and size of their farms as well as farm animals they kept on their farms. Questions regarding beekeeping comprised information about bee forage base, possession of an apiary, plans to establish an apiary, condition of apiaries in the neighbourhood. Part of the questions in the questionnaire also concerned interests of tourists in bee biology and bee products as well as in beekeeping as part of cultural heritage.

## Results

Table 1 presents the basic characteristics of the examined agritouristic farms from the Lubuskie province. The farm owners were less than 50 years old (53%) and their farms were located both among agricultural fields and in forests with the average farm size exceeding 5 ha. The main farm animals kept on these farms included: poultry (39%), swine (19%), cattle (15%) and horses (15%). It should be emphasised that animals were raised on the examined farms employing extensive, ecological methods, primarily, for the household own needs.

Table 2 collates data about beekeeping in the examined farms.

The bee forage base was satisfactory. The most common nectar flow occurring in the examined region included: acacia and lime trees as well as meadow plants. It was evident from the questionnaires sent back that 8% of the farms kept their own bees, while 73% neighboured with beekeeping farms.

Table 3 presents interests of tourists in bee biology, honey-bee products and the level of knowledge of responders regarding cultural goods from the fields of beekeeping. The interests of tourists in bee biology were small (13%). Half of the tourists consumed honey purchased in the neighbouring beekeeping farms. The knowledge of farm owners about open-air ethnographic and beekeeping museums was very low; majority of them (87%) knew the open-air beekeeping ethnographic museum situated in Pszczew.

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Table 1. Characteristics of agritouristic farms under investigation  
Tabela 1. Charakterystyka badanych gospodarstw agroturystycznych

Specification	Share of “yes” answers (%)
Age of farm owners (years)	
20-30	0
31-40	20
41-50	33
> 50	47
Size of farm (ha)	
≤ 5	33
> 5	67
Farm location	
in the forest	44
among fields and meadows	56
Farm livestock	
pigs	19
cattle	15
horses	15
sheep	4
poultry	39
honey bees	8

Table 2. Elements of beekeeping  
Tabela 2. Elementy gospodarki pszczelarskiej

Specification	Share of “yes” answers (%)
Forage base of bees in a 2 km radius from the farm	
orchards	8
lime-trees	36
acacia	28
meadows	18
rape	10
Owned apiaries	8
Interest of farm owners in possessing an apiary	10
Neighbourhood with beekeeping farms	73

Table 3. Interest of tourists in bee biology and bee products and the knowledge of responders about beekeeping museums and open-air ethnographic sites

Tabela 3. Zainteresowanie turystów biologią pszczół, produktami pszczelimi i wiedzą respondentów o muzeach i skansenach pszczelarskich

Specification	Share of “yes” answers (%)
Interest of agritourists in bee biology and bee products	13
Bee products in the responders’ menus	
honey	53
pollen	7
Knowledge of responders about	
beekeeping museums	13
“Sądecki Bartnik” – a private open-air beekeeping ethnographic site in Pszczew	87

## Discussion

The mean “bee saturation” in our country is low. TRZEBIŃSKI (2005) maintains that there are about one million bee families in Poland which gives approximately three colonies per 1 km<sup>2</sup>, whereas in our climatic – honey-flow conditions, five or even more families could easily be sustained on this area. It seems that the observed increasing popularity of agritouristic farms could open up a chance for the improvement of Polish beekeeping as the farmers look for ways of widening their touristic offer to become more competitive on the market. Mlynarczyk (AGROTURYSTYKA 2002) claims that agritourism is perceived as one of the ways of improving operational profitability of agricultural farms. Extension of this approach to the area of beekeeping can contribute to a better functioning of apiary farms and improve difficult fate of beekeeping economy in general. The above study aimed at determining possibilities of development of beekeeping in agritouristic farms situated in the Lubuskie province. On the basis of the performed questionnaire survey it can be stated unequivocally that there is little interest in beekeeping among relatively young owners of the examined agritouristic farms. More than 80% of responders confessed that they had never considered the idea of establishing an apiary on their farm despite the fact that the results of the performed questionnaire survey as well as MIKUŁKO (2004) indicate that the Lubuskie province has ideal conditions for the development of beekeeping. It is clear from investigations conducted by KAZIMIERCZAK-BARYCZKO et AL. (2002) that the interest in beekeeping of owners of agritouristic farms in the Wielkopolska province is much higher than in the Lubuskie province and reaches almost 60%.

The responders did not show much knowledge concerning cultural goods from the area of beekeeping. They showed the highest level of knowledge about the Pszczew beekeeping ethnographic museum situated nearby.

## Conclusion

Although there are good foraging conditions for bees and favourable location of agritouristic farms in the Lubuskie province, responders failed to show interest in the development of beekeeping on their farms.

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## ZAINTERESOWANIE WŁAŚCICIELI GOSPODARSTW AGROTURYSTYCZNYCH Z WOJEWÓDZTWA LUBUSKIEGO PROWADZENIEM PASIEKI

**Streszczenie.** Turysti coraz bardziej zaczynają doceniać możliwości spędzania wolnego czasu na polskiej wsi, a szansą na taki wypoczynek są gospodarstwa agroturystyczne, które mogą się stać doskonałym promotorem polskiego pszczelarstwa. Celem pracy jest określenie możliwości rozwoju gospodarki pasiecznej w gospodarstwach agroturystycznych województwa lubuskiego, co w przyszłości mogłoby się przyczynić do poprawy opłacalności ich funkcjonowania. Założenia celu pracy zrealizowano za pomocą badań ankietowych. Na podstawie ich wyników można jednoznacznie stwierdzić, iż zainteresowanie pszczelarstwem wśród stosunkowo młodych właścicieli gospodarstw agroturystycznych jest niewielkie.

**Słowa kluczowe:** gospodarstwa agroturystyczne, zainteresowanie, pasieki

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