



RUCHNIAK FARM

Crop farm managed by student interested in precision farming

Identification details

Name: Michał Ruchniak

Location: Mieszkowice, Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship, Poland

Farm size: 11 ha

Year of foundation: 2019

Main activities: crop production, rape, winter barley, seed peas

Web / Facebook / Twitter: N/A

Farm is managed by 23-year-old man, who completed the BSc programme in Agriculture and currently is a student of MSc programme in the field. He started the agricultural activity in 2019 with overtaking the part of the farm from his parents. He is an owner of 11 ha UAA. The farm specializes in plant production. Rape, wheat, winter barley and seed peas are mainly grown and sold in a collector. In contrast to his parents, that young farmer introduces precision farming practices focused on the use of modern technologies, including soil conditions analyses, in order to apply resources exactly when and where they are needed. Such techniques help the farmer improve yields, while saving expensive resources such as water or fertilizers at the same time. Economic benefits are accompanied by the environmental ones resulting from a lower usage of fertilizers. The farmer considers a precision farming as a good practice and promotes it among other farmers, however, he also indicates that laboratories for testing the soil samples are not easy available for farmers. It means that there is still not enough laboratories for a large group of farmers to use them.

The farmer is not a member of any agricultural producers' group or organisation at this time. His motivation to start the agricultural activity was agricultural tradition and the possibility of benefiting from the EU funds. The farmer used EU funds under the "Setting up of young farmers" and "Modernisation of agricultural holdings" measures of the Rural Development Programme to buy a sprayer. He strongly declares that without the financial support from the EU that investment would not be possible. This shows the importance of the Common Agricultural Policy to the operation of small farms. The farmer realizes that knowledge and innovation are keys of successful activity. Hence, more agricultural land and equipment were purchased, while the manager systematically participates in various trainings and courses, including those related to the cultivation and operation of a sprayer, telescopic loader, etc.

The farmer is also improving his soft skills. All these training activities delivered by both fertilizers and plant protection products' traders and the university let the farmer extend the knowledge and practical skills necessary for everyday agricultural activity.

His future plan is to manage a fully mechanized farm generating stable and satisfactory income. Willingness to introduce innovations under the precision farming combined with the EU subsidies obtained constitutes the advantage of this farm over the competitors. The farmer considers also the possibility to start non-agricultural activity in the field of agricultural services to improve the farm income. He also takes into account a possible membership in the agricultural producers' group. On the one hand, the farmer supposes that membership in such a group could help him obtain more favourable prices for means of agricultural production and higher purchase prices, but on the other hand, he doubts that these benefits could be greater

than those obtained by him now, thanks to the cooperation with his parents, who run a large-scale farm and can negotiate prices.

Photos: N/A