



The new Water advisors in Poland – roles and tasks

Janusz Dabrowski

CDR Poland

Starting point of Waterdrive intervention

Existing network of publicly supported agricultural advisory services – over 3500 advisors across Poland,

Financing to large extent by public resources (plus income for providing some services to farmers).

Set of advisors specialization (i.e. agri-environmental, farm management, plant production), none focusing on water as an individual topic.

Starting point of Waterdrive intervention

Advisory activities of the agricultural advisors operating within the framework of CAP and RDP programmes are related to the specific objectives connected with: farm profitability, facilitation of meeting all requirements by farmers imposed by the national and EU regulations. The issues related to water management at a farm/network of farms are perceived as an additional area of any agricultural advisory processes.

Dominant methodology – individual work with farmers, limited application of group work, lack of tradition (and real needs of working with group of farmers at catchment, semi-catchment level).

Contextual information

- Very poor appreciation of role water as source under threat in Poland
- Growing problems with supply of water, including agricultural, as a relatively new topic in public debate (moving water supply from marginal topic for experts to more and more widely recognised issue for all relevant actors (policy makers, farmers, general public)).

Specific for agricultural advisory services

- Pressure for changing mode of operation for public advisory services – from individual work towards returning to group advisory methodology in view of new related to Green Deal, AKIS etc.

Current situation

Scope of new specialization water advisor developed and in the process of updating – main assumptions:

- Build of existing knowledge and experiences of advisors
- Advisors as a information brokers – to know who has required information, not expert on all topics.

September 2020-November 2021: around 70 advisors trained as water advisors under Waterdrive project

February 2021 – formal submission by CDR to Ministry of Agriculture to include new specialization as one of specialization in training blocks for agricultural advisors.

Key issues

Institutional/financial aspects

Development of new services within the existing framework of the public advisory services

Advantage – not starting from the scratch, building on strong basis of professionally trained agricultural advisors

Disadvantage – incremental change of dominating approach focused on regulations, facilitating application processes etc., towards more holistic water oriented approach.

Key issues

Tasks for new services

1. To have in depth knowledge on legal regulations concerning key issues related water management in agriculture/farming practice.
2. To have practical, updated information on sources of funding for initiatives/investments related to water management in agriculture/farming practice.
3. To have wider, holistic understanding of water circulation at farm and farm's household level.

Key issues

Role in processes of advisory services delivery at farm level:

- To facilitate more rational water management in view of farm profitability,
- To ensure meeting all regulations requirements,
- To change farmers' behavior towards more rational utilization of limited water resources,
- To facilitate new investments at farm level funded by private, public and commercial resources.

Trade off between farmers' profitability and wider public goals related to water pollution, climate change etc.

Key issues

Professional development through training systems:

- Main challenge in training programmes construction – to keep balance between general knowledge/understanding required for water advisors (new services) and to specialized training - still straggling to find proper balance,
- To keep in mind – water advisor (new services) shall act as information broker, not taking over tasks of other relevant services,
- To add to already existing skills of advisors specific „water oriented dimension” – to ensure that advisors will be in position to provide as much as possible practically useful information for farmers.

Key issues

- Catchment level v. individual farmer – due to various factors (institutional, economic, historical etc.) water advisor have to focus on farmers' level solution as expected by farmers themselves, much less at catchment level. Maybe it is a result of structure of finding mechanisms – lack of fully effective instruments facilitating cooperation between all users at catchment level?
- Group advisory v. individual advisory service provision – dominance amongst agricultural advisors preferences to work on individual basis, except group training for farmers. Limitation for extending activities at catchment level.

Thank you for attention.