

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Polish NGOs discuss TTIP with Representatives of Government.

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Approved By:

Russ Nicely, Agricultural Attaché

Prepared By:

Piotr Rucinski, Agricultural Specialist

Report Highlights:

During the debate on TTIP organized by three influential NGOs - the Green Institute, the Institute of Global Responsibility and the Institute of Civil Affairs, with participation of the representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Ministry of the Development and the Federation of Trade Unions of Agricultural Producers, the participants concluded that the TTIP Agreement may be detrimental to European consumers and agriculture due to the different standards of food production for the U.S. than is found in Europe.

General Information:

On June 29, 2016 three NGOs, the Green Institute, the Institute of Global Responsibility and the Institute of Civil Affairs, organized a debate on TTIP with participation of the representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), the Ministry of the Development and the Federation of Trade Unions of Agricultural Producers (FTUAP). The participants of the debate concluded that the TTIP Agreement may be detrimental to European consumers and agriculture due to the different standards of food production for the U.S. than is found in Europe. They also stated that there is no clear answer whether Polish food and agriculture are threatened by TTIP because the details of the negotiations are not known. However, the participants were of the opinion that the existing information suggests that the European Commission (EC), which negotiates on behalf of the EU countries, could agree on a solution which is unfavorable for agriculture.

Mr. Adam Gizinski, Head of the Strategy Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), said that MARD has the most "distance and careful attitude" towards TTIP compared to other Ministries. The position of the MARD towards TTIP is "negative/careful attitude". According to Mr. Gizinski the Minister of Agriculture has concerns whether in light of the current difficult situation in agricultural markets the trend within the EU to sign trade agreements with countries which are major exporters of agricultural products is appropriate.

Mr. Giziński noted that he shares the concerns of opponents of the agreement regarding different standards between the EU and the U.S. regarding food products. He said that the MARD does not want to support the agreement if it would lead to the decrease of quality standards of food products. The MARD also supports the idea of excluding "sensitive" products from the liberalization of tariffs. According to Mr. Gizinski's opinion, the agreement should contain a clause that allows the withdrawal of preferences when imports threaten the stability of the internal market. Mr. Gizinski said that the European Commission (EC) declares unequivocally that it would not agree to TTIP if it is going to result in a decrease of food security in the EU and claims that the EU will not agree to the full liberalization of trade of agricultural products.

Mr. Gizinski also admitted that the issues of food trade are associated with non-agricultural issues. For example Americans link the opening of the U.S. market for imports of cars from Europe with the opening of the EU market to imports of agricultural products. "This is a problem that the food trade is only a part of the agreement, and many cases relate to trade in industrial goods, services, government procurement, investment," - noted Mr. Giziński. The representative of the MARD also explained that exclusion of agriculture from the negotiations is impossible because of the rules of the WTO, which require that an FTA should cover all sectors. He also said that exclusion of agriculture from negotiations would not be accepted by the American side.

Mr. Adam Orzechowski, Deputy Director of Cooperation Department of the Ministry of Development, said that the completion of negotiations TTIP is planned for September of this year. He said that TTIP Agreement is a "difficult" document because it must take into account two very different legal systems. He added that the agreement will be made available for public consultation. Mr. Orzechowski said: "We have to accomplish two important things: access to public procurement markets in the United States, which is almost closed, and agree with the Americans on the chapter on energy, which would ensure trouble-free export of shale gas to Poland. This would lead to lower prices of natural gas in Poland".

According to Ms. Dorota Metera, expert of the Green Institute, European agriculture could be at risk due to the large-scale agricultural production in the USA (e.g. huge animal farms). She said that in the United States the industrial model of agricultural production dominates, while the EU is committed to sustainable development and multifunctional nature of agricultural production. In addition in the U.S. there is a completely different approach to the environment, land cultivation systems and animal production. Ms. Metera asserted that as a result the animal welfare is not taken into account. Hormones and various chemicals are used in animal production, e.g. poultry meat is not washed in water as in Europe but in chemicals. According to Ms. Matera European agriculture is not able to win competition with the U.S. producers.

Mr. Marian Sikora, President of the Federation of Trade Unions of Agricultural Producers (FTUAP), pointed out similar issues. He said that in the U.S. farmers use high amounts of hormones in animal production, which increases the speed of growth of animals. In the opinion of Mr. Sikora the climate is also more favorable for animal production in the U.S. than in Europe. According to Mr. Sikora Americans are not interested in the safety of production “from farm to table” but only in the safety of the final product. In his opinion, due to the strong position of the cattle producer’s lobby in the U.S., the TTIP Agreement will have to protect their interest. He also added that FTUAP is a member of COPA in which there are ongoing discussions on TTIP. He said that he observes that the position of opponents to TTIP has recently strengthened. Mr. Sikora said that to date the information on the details of the negotiations is very limited. According to Mr. Sikora, Poland will not benefit from this agreement, because Poland does not have any products to offer on the U.S. market due to high transport costs.

Please note that the information about the debate is based on the information published by the agricultural portal "Farmer" on June 30, 2016.

End of the Report