

CHANGES IN THE STRUCTURE OF REGIONAL TRADITIONAL PRODUCTS IN THE LUBUSKIE VOIVODESHIP IN 2006-2024

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Purpose: Analysis of changes in the structure of regional traditional products in Lubuskie Voivodship in 2006-2024.

Design/methodology/approach: Statistical analysis of data contained in the register of traditional products, kept by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The analysis included data on traditional products registered in the Lubuskie Voivodeship in 2006-2024.

Findings: The research showed a slowdown in the dynamics of products introduced to the market, and in the last 4 years a complete halt in the process.

Practical implications: Intensifying the promotion of the regional market of traditional products and encouraging local producers to register these products on the list maintained by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Social implications: The research showed a slowdown in the dynamics of products introduced to the market, and in the last 4 years a complete halt in the process.

Originality/value: The article shows the current situation in the structure of traditional products and the changes that have taken place in 2006-2024. The recipients of the article may be local food producers, organizers of fairs and events related to the promotion of regional culture and consumers interested in buying traditional products.

Keywords: agri-food processing, food production, traditional products, regional culture, sustainable consumption.

Category of the paper: Research paper/Case study.

1. Introduction

The traditional products market plays an important role both in the European Union and in Poland, constituting an important element of the concept of sustainable development. It supports not only the income of farmers, enthusiasts involved in cultivating local traditions, but also integrates local communities and has a positive impact on the environment, including the diversity of agricultural production. Thanks to the use of short supply chains, this market

has unquestionable pro-ecological values, which additionally increases its importance in the context of contemporary climate challenges. At the same time, traditional products play an important role in cultivating local traditions and cultural heritage, supporting small producers in creating high-quality products. This aspect is particularly important in the case of regions "looking for" their identity, such as the "culturally and chronologically young" Lubuskie region. The decline in the dynamics of registration of traditional products in this region observed in recent years indicates the need to intensify promotional activities and activate local producers to include their products on the lists kept by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The small but crucial market for traditional products for cultivating tradition and culinary cultural heritage requires special attention so that its potential can be fully exploited and regional traditions can be preserved in the name of intergenerational solidarity for future generations.

Therefore, this article addresses the issue of overall changes in the assortment structure of the Lubusz traditional products market (in 2006-2024) and the dynamics of registration of new, Lubusz traditional products, trying to look at the processes taking place on this market, which may allow for the identification of trends and necessary actions to be taken to develop this area, which is important for the cultural identity of the voivodeship.

2. The origins of the traditional products market in the EU and Poland

The origins of traditional products in the European Union date back to 1992, when the European Union introduced the system of Protected Designations of Origin, Protected Geographical Indications and Traditional Specialities Guaranteed. In its original version, the system had its origins in Council Resolution EEC No. 2081/92 of 14 July 1992 on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for agricultural and foodstuffs (Council Regulation (EEC) No 2081/92) and Council Regulation EEC No. 2082/92 of 14 July 1992 on certificates of specific character for agricultural products and foodstuffs (Council Regulation EEC No. 2082/92 of 14). Currently, issues related to the protection of regional products and those produced using traditional methods are included in EU legislation, i.e. Regulation (EU) 2024/1143 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 on geographical indications for wine, spirit drinks and agricultural products, and traditional specialities guaranteed and optional quality terms for agricultural products (European Union, 2024). In Poland, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is responsible for managing the system of traditional products and geographical indications. The rules for registering designations of origin, geographical indications and traditional specialities guaranteed and maintaining the List of Traditional Products are regulated by the Act of 9 March 2023 on the registration and protection of designations of origin, geographical indications and

traditional specialities guaranteed for agricultural products and foodstuffs, wines or spirits and on traditional products. This document defines the process of assessing applications for registration, the conditions for temporary protection of names at the national level, as well as the control procedure and sanctions for non-compliant actions of producers or certification bodies (MRiRW, 2023). The List of Traditional Products available on the website of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development includes products whose quality and unique features result from the use of traditional production methods for at least 25 years, constituting an element of the cultural heritage and identity of local communities. The purpose of maintaining it is to promote products manufactured in accordance with historical methods and to strengthen their recognition (MRiRW, 2023). Without a doubt, the above regulations, by creating a legal framework, have created an extremely important and interesting from the researcher's perspective, market for products related to the culinary heritage of countries belonging to the European Communities.

3. Traditional products and their quality in scientific discourse

When considering traditional (food) products and their quality, it's worth first defining the components of food product quality in general. As Skowrońska M. Walczak J. et al. (2023) note "The elements that constitute food quality include primarily safety, nutritional value, sensory appeal, authenticity, origin, functionality, aesthetic value, ethical aspects, and convenience of use" (Skowrońska et al., 2023). Observing today's realities on the food market, one may venture to say that the issue of traditional products related to the culinary heritage of the regions of the European communities is an increasingly emphasized issue in public and scientific discourse, through the conduct of many information and promotional activities in the public sphere, but also through scientific efforts. Since the beginning of the functioning of the system of these products, many researchers have taken up this topic in their studies and publications. Among them, it is worth mentioning, among others: Tregear, Arfini, Belletti, Marescotti 2007 who analyzed the impact of regional product qualification processes on the development of rural areas (Tregear et al., 2007). Meanwhile, Moschini GC, Menapace L., Pick D. (2008), they addressed this issue in the context of the impact of geographical indications on the competitiveness and quality of agricultural products (Moschini, et al., 2008). Stranieri, Orsi, De Noni, Olper (2023) analysed the relationship between the introduction of geographical indications and innovation in the agri-food sector at regional level in the EU, examining how different levels of technological advancement of regions affect this relationship. They found that in the case of less developed regions, geographical indications increase their innovation, while in the case of technologically advanced regions this impact is small (Stranieri et al., 2023).

Emphasizing traditional production methods is becoming an increasingly attractive alternative to the mass and homogeneous model of food production that dominated in the second half of the twentieth century (Bryła, 2015). There is a noticeable increase in interest in the subject of traditional and regional products. It should be emphasized that tradition does not exclude changes brought about by the implementation of innovations. The production of food with higher health standards is characterized by high labor intensity, lower efficiency, and consequently high production costs. However, Polish consumers are willing to pay for this increased quality (Sieczko, 2008). The concept of quality indicates the unique qualities of a given product or service. It is often associated with the uniqueness of food products. In practice, the concept of a traditional product is used as a synonym for a regional, local or ecological product. Therefore, when raising the issue of food quality in the context of traditional products, it is necessary to distinguish between the concepts of traditional, regional, local and ecological products. As a result of research conducted by Truefood, it was determined that a traditional food product should meet the criteria regarding production, authenticity, long-term commercial availability, and gastronomic heritage (European Union, 2009). Hence, it can be assumed that a traditional product is a product that is made from traditional raw materials, has a traditional composition, is manufactured in a traditional way, and this method can be modernized without compromising the quality of the product. The product has unique properties and features, or quality that result from production in a traditional way. It may, but does not have to, be associated with the region. It is a protected food product (Guerrero et al., 2009). It should be emphasized that traditional methods are considered to be those that have been used for at least 25 years (Ministerstwo Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi, 2005). From a formal point of view, a traditional product is one that has been entered by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development on the List of Traditional Products (Dz.U. 2023, poz. 588). Regional products, on the other hand, can be defined as agricultural products, products and processed products of specific quality, the production of which is closely related to the conditions prevailing in a given area, and depends on the terrain, soil type, and characteristic climate (Kijak, 2008). Their characteristic features include their geographical location and several decades of production continuity (Grębowiec, 2010). From a formal point of view, a regional product can be defined as one entered into one of the three EU registers: the Register of Protected Designations of Origin, the Register of Protected Geographical Indications, the Register of Certificates of Special Character (Jakubowska-Łazęcka, 2006). A local product can be considered a product or service with which the inhabitants of the region identify. It is associated with a place in a rather narrow sense, e.g. a city, or two or three neighbouring villages. Local residents treat it as a product of everyday use, common, produced in a non-industrial, non-mass manner. It is considered environmentally friendly. It is produced from local raw materials, according to local methods. It is often produced by micro producers, which supports the local economy. It is characterized by low transport costs, has a positive impact on the environment. For people visiting (from outside) it is something exceptional,

specific (Jęczmyk, 2015). Such agri-food products are considered to be an organic product, which are characterized by high quality and do not contain harmful ingredients (Staniak, 2014). It is worth emphasizing here that some researchers claim that agri-food products as such do not have quality, but they do have physical features that are perceived by the final buyer as quality (Luning et al., 2005). Regardless of whether we are talking about traditional, regional, local or ecological products, food quality should be understood comprehensively as a set of features of a food product and factors and conditions that shape it at every stage of the life cycle. This includes both primary production, further processing, and trade in the logistics chain carried out by food operators, up to delivery to users and consumers. All these elements together ensure compliance with requirements and satisfaction of broadly understood needs (Wiśniewska et al., 2011). On the other hand, when addressing the issue of product quality, especially traditional and regional products, it is necessary to emphasize the objective difficulties in defining this concept. M. Bugdol lists the following as important reasons (Bugdol, 2008): knowledge and empiricism, changes occurring as a result of technological progress, awareness of quality systems and concepts, requirements set by the consumer, and interdisciplinarity and multidimensionality of the concept of quality.

The distinction between the concepts of traditional, regional, local and ecological products plays an important role in the process of defining and assessing their quality. It allows for the identification of characteristic components that may be subject to modifications and thus affect the assessment of quality. Product quality can be considered both from the perspective of the producer and the final purchaser. It can also be analyzed from a marketing perspective, especially in the context of promoting regional products, where the distinction between objective quality and perceived quality becomes important.

Considering the marketing quality of a regional and traditional product, it should be emphasized that it takes into account its brand with a specific verbal part and a unique graphic symbol, packaging with appropriate colors, the number of products registered so far, as well as quality markings of regional and traditional products, among which there are both those directly related to the European system of registration and protection of names of this type of products, as well as national marks characteristic of these specific products (Iwanicka, 2015).

In an attempt to generalize the concept of quality in the context of a traditional and regional product, one can refer to the definition of quality according to T. Wawaka, who defines it as the extent to which a product meets user requirements, where these requirements depend on its economic capabilities, especially income and resources (Wawak, 1989). This approach to quality emphasizes the dynamic nature, the state related to products, services, people, processes and the environment, which meets or exceeds expectations (Goetsch, Davis, 2000). It emphasizes all the properties and features of a product or service that determine its ability to meet real or supposed needs (Kotler, Kelle, 2012) satisfy needs and provide satisfaction (Butman, 1997).

The concept of quality in the context of tradition becomes much more flexible. In this light, the quality of a traditional and regional product can be modeled - individual attributes of the tradition can be subject to change. Combined with the atmosphere of innovation, this creates new opportunities for the development of economic entities (Sołdaczuk, 2024).

4. Findings

In order to understand the nature, dynamics and direction of changes in the structure of traditional products in the Lubuskie Province in the years 2006-2024, a detailed analysis of data contained in the register kept by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development was carried out. The analysis covered both the period before 2020 and data from the last four years, which allows for comparison and assessment of possible transformations in the structure of the regional market for traditional products. The results of the conducted research are presented below.

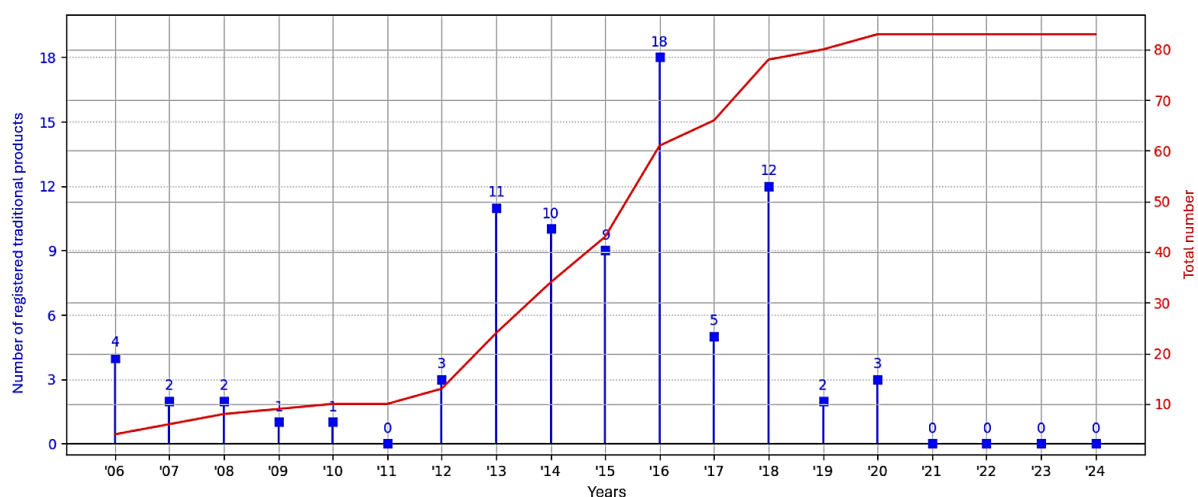


Figure 1. Dynamics of registration of traditional products in the Lubuskie Voivodeship in the years 2006-2024 in annual and cumulative terms.

Source: Own study based on the analysis of data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MRiRW).

Analyzing Fig. 1 it is easy to see that in the years 2006-2018, the number of registered traditional products in the Lubuskie Voivodeship showed an upward trend, reaching a peak in 2015 (18 registered products). Then, a decrease in the number of new registrations was visible, and from 2021, no new traditional products were registered. The cumulative value stopped at the level of 83 products. Such a trend may indicate the exhaustion of the registration potential, potential unidentified barriers or the need to change priorities in the promotion of culinary heritage, including the use of new support instruments.

It is worth taking a closer look at the registration structure of individual groups of traditional products in terms of categories consistent with the list kept by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MRiRW) such as: Dairy products, Meat products, Fishery products, Vegetables and fruits, Bakery and confectionery products, Oils and fats, Honeys, Ready meals and dishes, Drinks, Other.

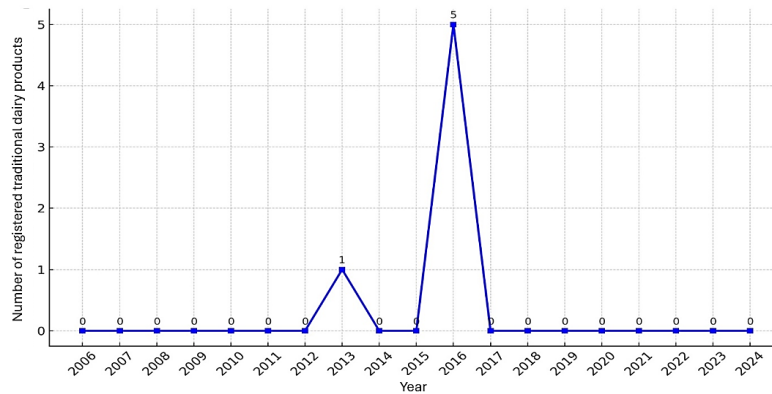


Figure 2. Number of registered traditional dairy products in the Lubuskie Voivodeship in 2006-2024.

Source: Own study based on the analysis of data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MRiRW).

Analyzing the above graph (Fig. 2), it can be stated that the general nature of the presented data suggests that the process of registering traditional dairy products in the Lubuskie Voivodeship was characterized by incidents and a low level of intensity in the analyzed period. Against this background, the year 2013 stands out clearly, in which one traditional product was registered in this category, and the year 2016, in which as many as five products were registered. Apart from these two years, the graph shows a clear dominance of zero values and a lack of a lasting upward trend. This may indicate limited motivation and interest of producers in using this form of protection of traditional regional products. It may also indicate potential barriers in registration, or insufficient promotion, an unadapted system of incentives or the exhaustion of regional potential in this area.

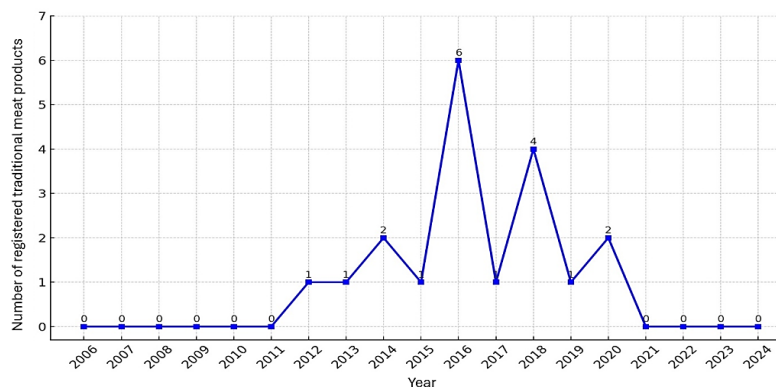


Figure 3. Dynamics of registration of traditional meat products in the Lubuskie region in 2006-2024.

Source: Own study based on the analysis of data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MRiRW).

The above graph (Fig. 3) shows the variability of the number of traditional meat products registered in the Lubuskie Province in the years 2006-2024. The presented data indicate significant variation in the intensity of the registration process in the analyzed period, with both moments of stagnation and periods of significant growth in the number of registrations of meat products constituting an element of the culinary heritage of the region easily distinguished. In the years 2006-2011, no product registrations were recorded in this category. A clear change occurred in 2012, when the first registration was recorded, signaling the beginning of producers' activity in this category of traditional products. In the following period, i.e. in 2013 and 2014, there was a small but noticeable increase in the number of registrations, in this period (a total of 4 products were registered) It is worth emphasizing that the highest intensity of the registration process was observed in 2016, when as many as six registrations were made, which is the peak value for the entire period under review. The year 2018 was another point of increased activity. Four products were registered then, which may suggest a second wave of interest in formalizing the status of more traditional products. After this period, a downward trend is visible. In 2020 and 2022, the number of registrations amounted to two products each, while 2021, 2023 and 2024 did not bring any new items to the list maintained by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Analyzing the distribution of data on the graph, it is easy to notice the heterogeneous nature of the registration process, which occurred in waves, in an episodic rather than systematic manner. These fluctuations may be the result of the changing level of interest from producers conditioned by various endogenous and exogenous factors.

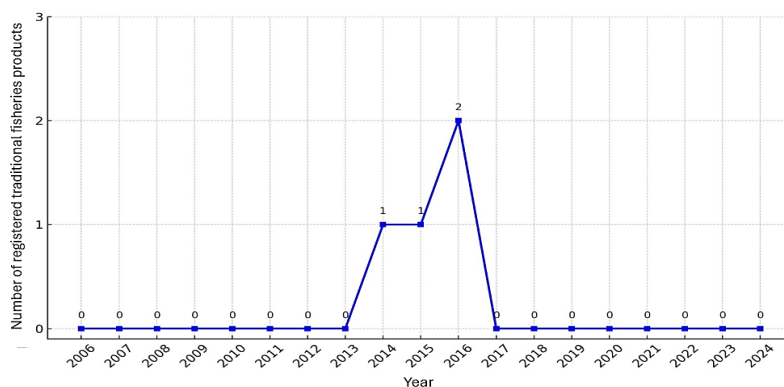


Figure 4. Registrations of traditional fishery products in the Lubuskie Voivodeship in 2006-2024.

Source: Own study based on the analysis of data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MRiRW).

The above graph (Fig. 4) shows that in the years 2006-2012, there were no registrations of traditional fishery products in the Lubuskie region. The first traditional products appeared in this category in 2013 (1 product), and in 2014 and 2015 the same level was maintained. The highest number of registrations was recorded in 2016 (2 products). Since 2017, there has been a complete disappearance of registrations, which lasted until 2024. This trend indicates the incidental nature of the registration process and the significantly limited dynamics of development of this category of traditional products.

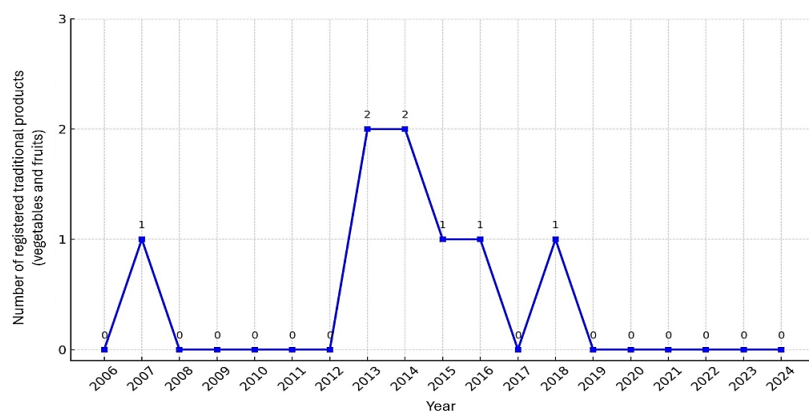


Figure 5. Number of registered traditional plant products (vegetables and fruits) in the Lubuskie Voivodeship in 2006-2024.

Source: Own study based on the analysis of data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MRiRW).

The above figure (Fig. 5) shows the number of traditional products from the "vegetables and fruits" category registered in the Lubuskie Province in the years 2006-2024. Data analysis indicates the highest intensity of the registration process in the years 2012-2014, when two new products were entered into the register each year. In other periods, this activity was significantly lower. Moreover, it is worth noting that since 2020 there have been no new product registrations in this category.

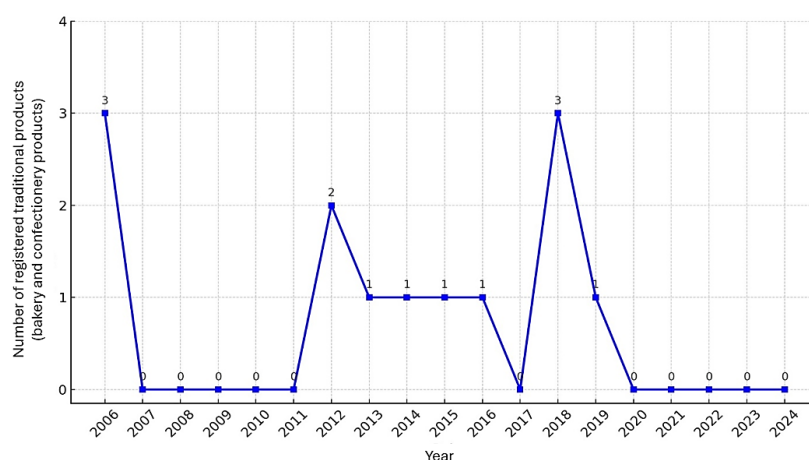


Figure 6. Number of registered traditional products in the "bakery and confectionery" category in the Lubuskie Voivodeship in 2006-2024.

Source: Own study based on the analysis of data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MRiRW).

The above chart (Fig. 6) illustrates the number of registered traditional products in the "bakery and confectionery products" category in the Lubuskie Province in the years 2006-2024. The highest registration volume was recorded in 2006 and 2018, when three products were registered each. In the years 2012-2016, there was a small but clearly regular activity, with one product registered each year. However, since 2020, the registration process in this category has been completely halted, which may indicate a decrease in interest from producers, exhaustion

of the regional potential for this category or limited support for the promotion of traditional products from this category.

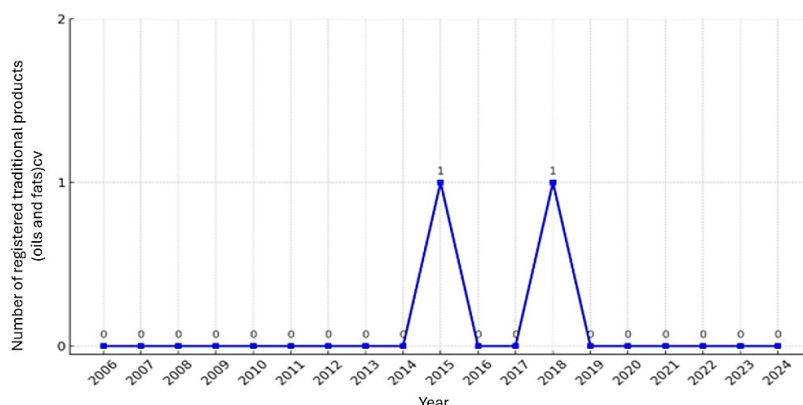


Figure 7. Number of registered traditional products – in the "oils and fats" category in the Lubuskie region in 2006-2024.

Source: Own study based on the analysis of data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MRiRW).

The above chart (Fig. 7) shows the number of registered traditional products in the "oils and fats" category in the Lubuskie Province - in the years 2006-2024. The presented empirical data indicate exceptionally low registration activity in this category, as only two traditional products were registered in the entire analyzed period. This happened in 2015 and 2018. In the remaining years, no new registration events were recorded. This situation may suggest the low importance of this group of products in the local culinary tradition and/or insufficient activities promoting their registration. The continued lack of registration after 2018 confirms the stagnation lasting until the end of 2024.

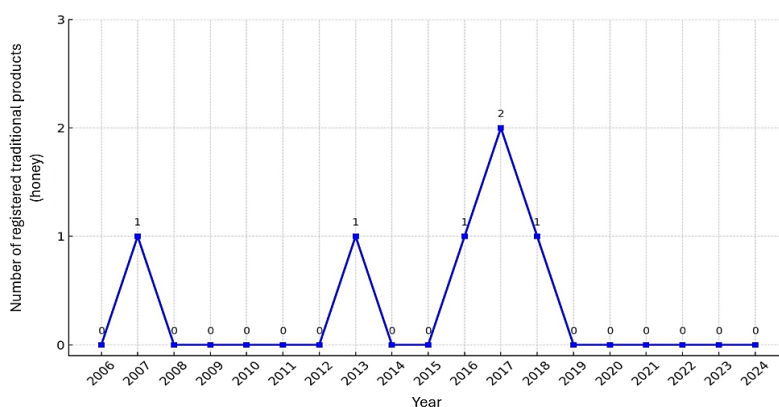


Figure 8. Annual number of registered traditional products in the 'honey' category in the Lubuskie region, 2006-2024.

Source: Own study based on the analysis of data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MRiRW).

The graph (Fig. 8) shows the annual number of registered traditional products in the "honey" category in the Lubuskie region, in the years 2006-2024. As empirical data show, the highest number of registrations was recorded in 2017 (2 products), while the remaining years were

characterized by single or no new applications. There is a clear irregularity in the registration process, with periods of several years of stagnation, interspersed with incidental increases. To sum up, the general trend indicates a low dynamics of registration of new products in this category.

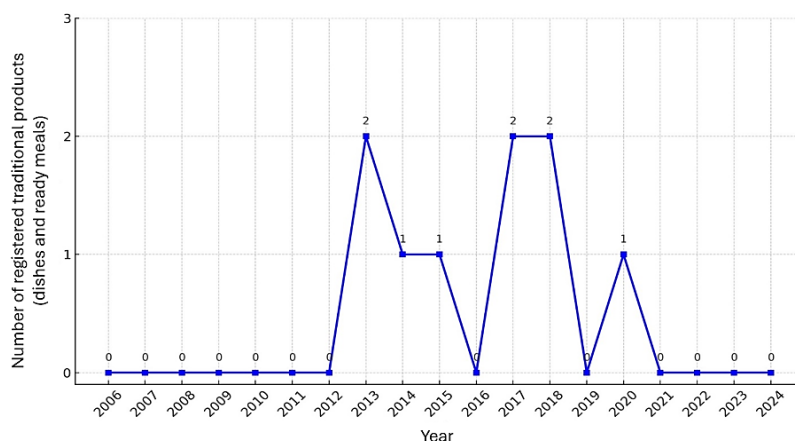


Figure 9. Number of registered traditional products in the "dishes and ready meals" category in the Lubuskie region, 2006-2024.

Source: Own study based on the analysis of data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MRiRW).

The graph (Fig. 9) shows the annual number of registered traditional products in the "dishes" category in the Lubuskie region in the years 2006-2024. As can be seen in the graph, after a period of no registrations (in the years 2006-2011), there was an increase in the activity of producers, especially visible in the years 2013, 2014, 2017 and 2018, where two registrations were recorded per year. Despite some fluctuations, there has been a moderate increase in interest in the registration of ready meals and traditional dishes since 2012. In the last 4 years (i.e. in the period 2021-2024), the lack of new registrations is again noticeable.

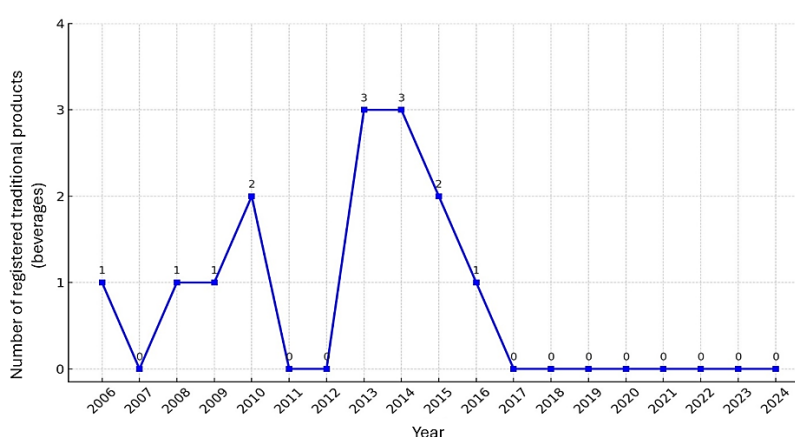


Figure 10. Number of registered traditional products in the "beverages" category in the Lubuskie region in 2006-2024.

Source: Own study based on the analysis of data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MRiRW).

The graph above (Fig. 10) shows the annual number of registered products in the "beverages" category in the Lubuskie region, in the years 2006-2024. As can be seen in the graph, the highest registration activity among producers was recorded in 2013 and 2014 (3 products registered in this category), with a significant increase starting in 2010. Since 2017, the number of new registrations has been falling to zero, indicating a halt in the process of entering "new" beverages on the list of traditional products. The general trend shows an "early" increase in interest, followed by a long-term stagnation lasting until the end of the analyzed period.

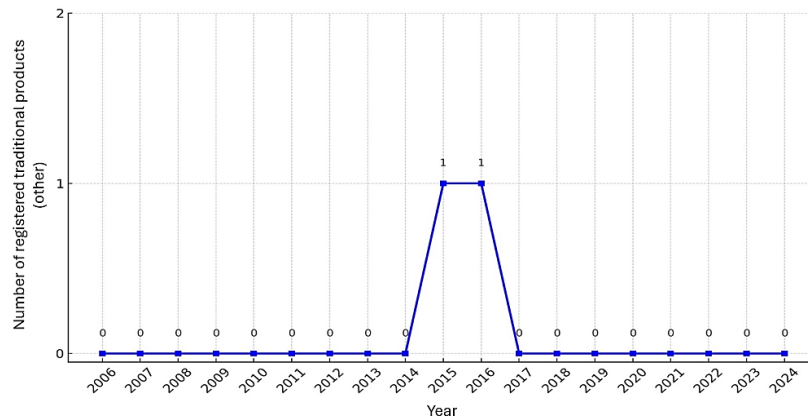


Figure 11. Number of registered traditional products in the "other" category in the Lubuskie region in 2006-2024.

Source: Own study based on the analysis of data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MRiRW).

As the above chart (Fig. 11) shows, in the analyzed period of 2006–2024, only two cases of registration of traditional products were recorded in the Lubuskie region, in the "other" category. Both in 2015 and 2016. In the remaining period, this category is characterized by a complete lack of new registrations.

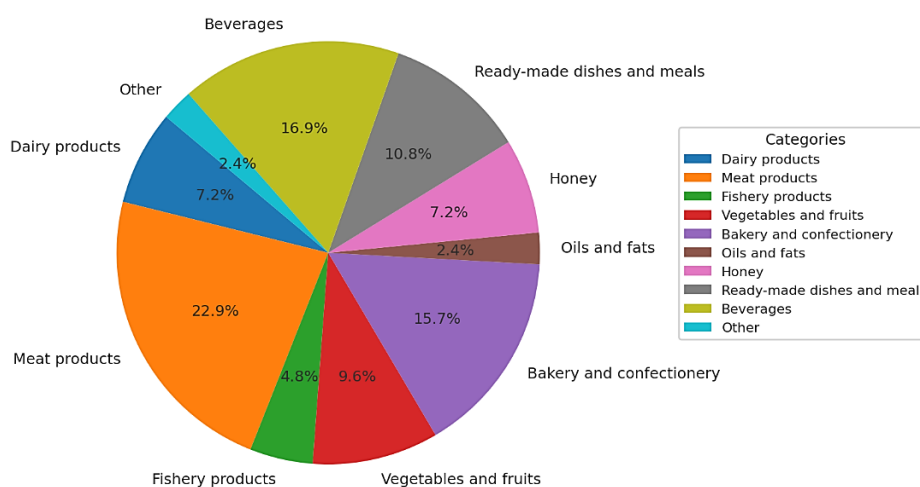


Figure 12. Current structure of regional traditional products in the Lubuskie Voivodeship - as of the end of 2024.

Source: Own study based on the analysis of data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MRiRW).

The above chart (Fig.12) shows the current structure of traditional regional products in the Lubuskie Province - as of the end of 2024. Empirical data indicate that the largest share in the Lubuskie market of traditional products is held by meat products (22.9%), which indicates their dominant position in the regional culinary tradition. The second largest category is beverages (16.9%), which include both alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, indicating their significant importance in the region famous for the production of wine, which is worth adding was the first registered regional product in the Lubuskie Province. The next places in the structure of traditional Lubuskie products were confectionery and bakery products (15.7%) and ready meals (10.8%), also constituting a significant part of the culinary heritage of the region. In addition, vegetable and fruit products (9.6%) retain a significant share in the analyzed structure. Dairy products (7.2%) and honey (7.2%) remain a moderately important element of the assortment structure of the analyzed market. At the same time, as the graph shows, fish products (4.8%) and fats (2.4%) play a marginal role in the structure of regional traditional products. It is worth noting that the category "other" (2.4%) includes other products that do not fit into the separate groups. To sum up, it should be recognized that the analysis of the graph shows the diversity of regional production of traditional food.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of changes in the structure and dynamics of registration of traditional products in the Lubuskie Voivodeship in the years 2006-2024 conducted in this article enabled the identification of key trends and indication of potential development barriers in this specialized segment of the agri-food market. As the results of the analysis conducted have shown, in the initial phase of the system's functioning, a relatively high dynamics of introducing new products to the list of traditional products, maintained by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, was observed. It seems that this state of affairs corresponded with the activation of local producers and the widely noticeable increase in interest in culinary heritage, treated as a resource also of economic importance. However, what is worth emphasizing, after 2015, there was a gradual slowdown in the dynamics of registration, and from 2021, there was a complete stagnation of new product registrations. This state of affairs can be interpreted in the light of the theory of regional development as the effect of endogenous barriers - such as the depletion of easily accessible cultural resources and/or deficits in the scope of support mechanisms and institutional coordination of this area of the regional market. In this context, the key aspect seems to be the need to rethink the strategy of influencing the market segment with appropriate instruments. This is extremely important because the traditional products market segment plays an extremely important role in the process of shaping regional identity, building regional comparative advantages and supporting the development of local micro and

small enterprises and local agricultural producers focused on the production of the analyzed traditional goods. As shown by the research on their structure in the years 2006-2024, in the analyzed period, an easily noticeable dominance of the meat, beverages, and bread and confectionery categories was noted, which may suggest a strong embedding of these products in local cultural and consumption practices. At the same time, the relatively low registration activity in the remaining categories may suggest a lack of use of the endogenous potential of the Lubuskie region, which could be developed through appropriate activation and promotional activities for the systematic increase in the offer of traditional products in the Lubuskie Voivodeship and interest in this segment of the market. Finally, it is worth emphasizing that supporting this sector of the food market is also extremely important from the point of view of shaping sustainable consumption patterns, because the functioning of the traditional food market is based on short supply chains, using local resources and distribution channels, making this market more environmentally friendly.

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