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FORMS OF ACTIVITY WITHIN A FARM – LEGAL AND PRACTICAL ASPECTS IN POLAND

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Purpose: The aim of the study is to analyse the forms of additional activities within a farm and to identify the legal consequences of selling food as part of such additional activities and in the absence thereof. Furthermore, the study aims to identify the types of additional activities chosen by local food producers in Poland and what is sold on a national scale and broken down by voivodeships.
Design/methodology/approach: The study involves a review of legal provisions relating to food production and sales activities, as well as an examination of the structure of these activities and product sales at the national level and by voivodeships. A quantitative analysis was applied to data concerning the forms of activity chosen by local food producers and the types of food products sold within short food supply chains.
Findings: The study demonstrated the legal possibility of conducting food production and sales within the scope of three forms of ancillary business activity, namely farm retail trade, direct sales, and marginal, local and limited activities. Each of these forms of activity provides legal protection for local food producers. The research findings indicate a clear dominance of farm retail trade as a supplementary form of activity and of bee products within short food supply chains.
Research limitations/implications: The research focuses on local food producers operating in the Polish market. This approach stems from preliminary research conducted as part of the VISION4FOOD project. Furthermore, research in this area will be expanded to include the other project partners.
Originality/value: The article addresses key issues for the modern consumer, who prioritises the quality of food products. It puts the ‘farm-to-table’ concept into practice by utilising short food supply chains, thereby supporting local food producers.
Keywords: farm retail trade (RHD), direct sales (SB), marginal, local and limited activities (MOL), short food supply chains, legal aspects.
Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

The ongoing growth in consumer awareness of sustainability has also extended to the food markets (Barska, Wojciechowska-Solis, 2020). A key aspect in this regard is the approach to introducing changes to the current and future food system. It is envisaged that food systems should transition to a fair, sustainable and regenerative model. Such a system can ensure healthy and accessible nutrition for the whole of society, whilst restoring ecosystems and supporting decarbonisation efforts. In response to the rise in consumer awareness regarding the quality of food consumed and the interest in purchasing local products, which has been observed in recent years, an opportunity for growth has consequently emerged for small-scale operators, i.e. small farms and local food producers. This refers to entities involved in food production, processing and sale to the final consumer. The food products traded are fresh, organic, minimally processed and, most importantly, produced using natural methods. Issues concerning local sourcing, shortening food supply chains and strengthening the position of small producers have become particularly significant in the light of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the war in Ukraine, which have highlighted the vulnerability to risks posed by long and centralised food distribution models (Kapała, 2025). Furthermore, growing public awareness of food quality has made people more inclined to purchase products from local food producers, i.e. those of known origin. However, the lack of a legal definition of local food and food from short supply chains, as well as the absence of a dedicated labelling system, means that consumers are unable to easily identify such products on the market (Kapała, 2025).

In order to increase customer trust and confidence in the food they purchase, and in the context of criminal liability, a farmer selling their own food should opt for one of the additional forms of business operation, namely farm retail trade (RHD), direct sales (SB), or marginal, local and limited activities (MOL). An advantage of operating under one of these forms is that there is no need to set up a business to sell one's own food products. Additionally, income from RHD up to 100,000 PLN per year is exempt from income tax. Another characteristic feature is the short food supply chain, in which participation means that the farmer is not only a producer of food products but also involves the farm in the processing, distribution and marketing of agricultural products, thereby minimising the number of intermediaries between the producer and the final customer (Bert, Mulligan, 2016; Wolniak, Olkiewicz, 2018). Short food supply chains involve the sale of products from the farm to the final consumer without the involvement of intermediaries (or with only one intermediary) (Borychowski et al., 2026). Short and medium supply chains constitute a reliable alternative to long supply chains because the food they provide is characterised by local sourcing, naturalness, healthiness and reliability (Aguiar, DelGrossi, Thome, 2018).

The proposed and implemented vision for the food system aims to create the right conditions for food production based on fair incomes and transparency throughout the food chain. It is emphasised that farmers should be the key element in ensuring food security and the supply of healthy, high-quality food to the public. This vision of food systems is reflected in farm retail trade (RHD), direct sales (SB), marginal, local and limited activities (MOL) as additional activities carried out by farmers. It can be unequivocally stated that the key element of the future food system is the additional activities of RHD, SB and MOL. The VISION4FOOD programme has taken steps to support cooperation in the transformation of the food system through co-creation, acceleration, evaluation and the exchange of knowledge regarding the future food system.

The structure of the article is divided into five parts. An introduction to the subject matter is presented in the first part. The second part presents forms of additional activity within the framework of a farm, i.e. farm retail trade (RHD), direct sales (SB) and marginal, local and limited activities (MOL). The following section discusses the criminal law provisions applicable to these forms of activity. Subsequently, the results of research on the number of local food producers at national level and in individual voivodeships, as well as the types and numbers of products involved in these activities, are presented. The final section of the article summarises the issues analysed.

2. Forms of additional activity within the framework of a farm

2.1. Farm retail trade (RHD)

Farm retail trade is one of the additional forms of business activity undertaken by small-scale farmers. This activity involves the production of food on farms and its subsequent marketing via short food supply chains (GIW, March 2026). Article 3 (3) (29b) of the Act of 25 August 2006 on food and nutrition safety provides a definition of farm retail trade, which involves the production of food that originates wholly or partly from the entity's own cultivation, rearing or breeding by an entity operating in the food market, and the sale of such food to the final consumer or to retail establishments intended for the final consumer (Dz.U. 2006). The definition of retail trade under Article 3 (7) of Regulation No 178/2002 applies here, which means the handling and/or processing of food and its storage at the point of sale or at the point of delivery to the final consumer (EU, 178/2002). The term 'retail trade' covers distribution terminals, catering activities, workplace canteens, institutional catering, restaurants and similar food service activities, shops, distribution centres in supermarkets and wholesalers (EU, 178/2002). Food produced within the framework of farm retail trade and intended for the final consumer may be sold throughout the country. Raw materials and processed products of plant origin must be registered with the State District Sanitary Inspector responsible for the area where the business is conducted at least 14 days before the start of operations (Mrożek, 2023). Conversely, raw materials and processed products of animal origin, as well as composite food consisting of products of both animal and non-animal origin, must be registered with the district veterinary officer competent for the establishment's registered office or place of business at least 30 days in advance of the planned date of commencement of operations (Mrożek, 2023). If, following an inspection, it is found that the establishment meets the requirements of food law, the district veterinary officer will issue a decision approving the establishment, assign it a veterinary identification number and enter it in the district veterinary officer's register (Sokołowski, 2025).

In response to growing consumer interest in short food supply chains, Poland has adopted legislation governing the retail trade in agricultural products. The aim of these measures was to increase sales of food produced by farmers on their own farms and supplied directly to final consumers. Although the retail sale of agricultural products is not classified as an agricultural activity, it is exempt from commercial law and farmers may operate it without the need for registration. Farmers therefore do not become entrepreneurs and can continue to benefit from their privileges, i.e. social security and tax exemptions, which strengthens their market position relative to food companies (Kapała, 2020). However, certain conditions have been set out that must be met in order to engage in the retail trade of agricultural products. Food processing must take place in a manner other than industrial. The final product should consist of at least 50% of products originating from the farm, which allows farmers to purchase products from outside their own farm for the purpose of food production (Kapała, 2020). It is important to note that food subject to the retail trade in agricultural products may only be sold to a specific group of buyers, i.e. final consumers throughout the country, retail shops and other entities, such as care homes and local restaurants. It is also possible to supply products to entities that deliver food to final consumers, but only to those located in the same voivodeship as the farm in question (Kapała, 2020). RHD operations utilise short food supply chains, which serve to shorten the distance products travel in line with the 'farm-to-table' concept and are also aimed at supporting local farmers and food producers. They also aim to eliminate or at least reduce the number of intermediaries involved in delivering the final product to the final consumer (Sikorska, 2019; Olkiewicz, 2025). This approach aligns with the mindset of the modern consumer, who prioritises fresh, minimally processed and organic food. Farm retail trade is gaining in importance due to consumers' increasing demand for local, organic and seasonal products, which offer an alternative to mass production (Pawlewicz, 2025). There is a noticeable trend whereby an increasing number of consumers are choosing to buy products 'from their neighbours', i.e. from local farmers, as they perceive these products to be of the highest quality and a guarantee of safety when consumed (Sikorska, 2019). A major advantage of setting up an RHD business is direct contact with the final consumer, which enables a better understanding of the expectations, needs and preferences of final customers. Furthermore, reducing intermediary costs usually results in lower prices for end consumers as well as an increase in the farmer’s margin as a local food producer (Hodór, 2025). The freshness, taste and unique character of the products on offer also attract customers’ interest. The only difficulty in running an RHD business is the need to familiarise oneself with and comply with the numerous regulations governing this type of activity; however, the time-consuming effort invested in understanding the requirements and adapting to them in the future can pay off handsomely (Hodór, 2025). It is important that the production and sale of food do not pose a threat to food safety or adversely affect public health. Fresh meat intended for processing within the RHD must be obtained lawfully, e.g. from a slaughterhouse or a wholesale market. It must not originate from the slaughter of animals carried out on a farm for the production of meat intended for personal consumption (Ficek, 2023). The Veterinary Inspection supervises the appropriate health standards of products of animal origin, whilst the State Sanitary Inspection authorities supervise the appropriate health standards of food of non-animal origin (Ficek, 2023). The signage at the premises where food is sold under the RHD scheme must be legible and visible, and must include the words ‘farm retail trade’ and the following details: the full name of the entity conducting the farm retail trade or its name and registered office, the address of the premises where the food being sold is produced, and the veterinary identification number (WNI) (Balaweneder, 2022).

2.2. Direct sales (SB)

Direct sales are another form of business activity (GIW, March 2026) reserved for farmers. Although it has a long history, it is only since 1 January 2016 that farmers in Poland have been able to legally sell food products they have produced from their own raw materials without having to register a business (Kokoszka, Pink, 2018). On 1 January 2017, the Act of 16 November 2016 amending certain acts to facilitate the sale of food by farmers came into force (Kokoszka, Pink, 2018). Direct sales cover only products of animal origin and may relate only to products produced from raw materials sourced from farms whose activities include the production of products of animal origin intended for direct sale (Mrożek, 2023). This form of sale may be directed at the following recipients: the final consumer or a retail outlet directly supplying the final consumer (Mrożek, 2023). The sale of products may take place on the producer’s farm and at local markets. The geographical scope of direct sales is limited to the voivodeship in which the animal products are produced, to neighbouring voivodeships, and to other voivodeships within Poland, however, only during exhibitions, festivals, fairs or markets organised for the purpose of promoting these products (GIW, March 2026). However, before commencing operations, it is necessary to register direct sales with the District Veterinary Inspectorate at least 30 days in advance (Mrożek, 2023). In the case of direct sales at exhibitions, festivals, fairs or markets organised to promote products in a voivodeship other than the one where they are produced, it is necessary to notify the district veterinary officer responsible for the location where the planned sales are to take place, 7 days before the start of such sales (GIW, March 2026). Such notification must include the full name or business name of the entity engaged in the production of these products, as well as the address of the premises where this activity is carried out. Furthermore, details must be provided regarding the location and the period during which the sale of these products will take place (GIW, March 2026). Direct sales are characterised by short food supply chains, which protect farmers from unfair commercial practices in processing and distribution. Short food supply chains enable price control and, consequently, a fairer income from the perspective of the local producer (farmer). Furthermore, as short food supply chains do not require long-term storage, the food reaching the final consumer is fresher and of better quality. It is also important that the absence of long-distance food transport contributes to reducing the carbon footprint of local food distribution (Sieczko, 2019). The sale of animal products via direct sales is regulated in detail by the Regulation of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of 30 September 2015 on veterinary requirements for the production of animal products intended for direct sales (GIW, March 2026). It is specified therein that the following products fall within the scope of direct sales: 1) carcasses or offal obtained from poultry slaughtered on the operator's farm, 2) carcasses or offal obtained from lagomorphs slaughtered on the operator's farm, 3) carcasses and offal obtained by a hunting club, 4) fishery products, 5) live land snails, 6) raw milk, raw cream, obtained on the farm during the milk production stage, 7) eggs obtained from poultry or ratites, 8) unprocessed bee products, including honey, bee pollen, bee bread and royal jelly (Dz.U. 2015). Direct sales provide farmers with the opportunity to increase their income, receive feedback from final customers, and build their own brand (Kawecka, Gębarowski, 2015). For consumers, direct sales offer access to higher-quality food with better taste, knowledge of its origin, and support for the local economy (Kawecka, Gębarowski, 2015). One of the factors influencing the effectiveness of direct sales is the salesperson's communication skills. In the face of continuous market development and increasing competition, the seller's knowledge and experience, as well as their ability to close a sale, can help in building lasting relationships with customers (Jaska, Stolarska, Werenowska, 2020).

2.3. Marginal, local and limited activities (MOL)

Marginal, local and limited activities refer to the processing and sale of food of animal origin carried out on a small scale in small or medium-sized establishments (Mrożek, 2023). The possibility of conducting such activities responds to the expectations of local food producers (farmers) who wish to operate in establishments producing specific types of products, often with distinctive characteristics, for which demand exists mainly in the local market (GIW, March 2026). A prerequisite for MOL operations is the sale of food directly to the final consumer as well as to establishments engaged in retail trade intended for the final consumer, i.e. canteens and restaurants (Mrożek, 2023). In the case of this type of activity, the provision of deliveries is mandatory. As regards sales to final consumers, there are no quantitative restrictions; however, deliveries to other establishments engaged in retail trade for final consumers are subject to quantitative restrictions and applicable limits (GIW, March 2026). As regards territorial scope, MOL's activities and deliveries to other establishments must take place within a single voivodeship, within the districts neighbouring that voivodeship, or within the cities serving as the seat of the provincial governor or provincial council, located in voivodeships neighbouring the voivodeship where these products are manufactured. The only exception where these restrictions do not apply is the sale of products of animal origin or ready-made meals to consumers during festivals, exhibitions, fairs and markets organised for the purpose of promoting these products. In such cases, sales are permitted throughout Poland; however, the district veterinary officer responsible for the place of sale must be notified in writing at least 7 days before the start of such sales (GIW, March 2026).

MOL activities are subject to mandatory registration with the District Veterinary Inspectorate upon a written application submitted at least 30 days before the planned start of operations. Commencement of activities is possible after obtaining an administrative decision regarding entry in the relevant register and the allocation of an identification number (Mrożek, 2023). The scope of MOL activities is defined by the Regulation of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of 21 March 2016 on the detailed conditions for the recognition of marginal, local and limited activities. It follows from this that the scope of production and sale of products of animal origin within the framework of MOL activities includes: 1) dairy products and colostrum-based products, 2) pre-processed or processed fishery products, 3) egg products obtained as a result of the treatment or processing of eggs that have previously been cooked in their shells, 4) meat products, minced meat, raw meat products, 5) the cutting of fresh beef, pork, mutton, goat, horse, poultry or lagomorph meat, game animals shot in accordance with hunting regulations, and wild animals kept on farms, 6) ready meals (dishes) made from products of animal origin or containing such products, provided that at least one product of animal origin constituting a main ingredient of the meal was produced at that establishment (Dz.U. 2016).

3. Criminal liability in relations to business activities – legal aspects

The Act of 25 August 2006 on food and nutrition safety contains criminal provisions (Srogosz, 2025) in the form of sanctions and financial penalties for various infringements committed in connection with or in the course of business activities. The production or placing on the market of a foodstuff commonly consumed that is harmful to human health or life may result in a fine, a penalty of restriction of liberty or imprisonment for up to two years (Art. 96, ust. 1, Dz.U. 2006).

Committing a similar act, but in relation to a foodstuff for special dietary purposes, a food supplement or a novel food, is punishable by a fine, a sentence of restriction of liberty or imprisonment for up to 3 years (Art. 96, ust. 2, Dz.U. 2006). In the case of an unintentional act, the offender is liable to a fine, a penalty of restriction of liberty or imprisonment for up to one year (Art. 96, ust. 4, Dz.U. 2006). A more severe penalty in the form of imprisonment for a term of between 6 months and 5 years applies where the offender has made a regular source of income from the above offences or where these offences are committed in relation to foodstuffs of significant value (Art. 96, ust. 3, Dz.U. 2006).

Article 97(1) of the Act on Food and Nutrition Safety uses the term 'adulterated foodstuff', the definition of which is set out in Article 3 (3) (45) of that Act (Srogosz, 2025). The production or placing on the market of a foodstuff that is spoiled or adulterated is punishable by a fine, a restriction of liberty or imprisonment for up to one year (Art. 97, ust. 1, Dz.U. 2006), and if it concerns foodstuffs of significant value, to imprisonment for a term of between 6 months and 3 years (Art. 97, ust. 2, Dz.U. 2006). A fine, restriction of liberty or imprisonment for up to 2 years may be imposed for, amongst other things: labelling genetically modified food in breach of Regulations No 1829/2003 and No 1830/2003, placing genetically modified food on the market without authorisation or in breach of the conditions set out in that authorisation, failure to comply with the obligation to monitor genetically modified food placed on the market in the manner specified in Regulation No 1829/2003, and failure to withdraw from the market genetically modified food that does not meet the requirements laid down in Regulation No 1829/2003 (Art. 99, ust. 1, Dz.U. 2006).

A fine may be imposed for, amongst other things: using a foodstuff in production or placing it on the market after its use-by date or best-before date has expired; failing to implement procedures based on the principles of the HACCP system within the establishment; or failing to comply with hygiene requirements; failure to carry out activities relating to the identification of food suppliers or recipients, and failure to display a label at the point of sale of food within the farm retail trade, or providing incomplete or false information on such a label (Art. 100, ust. 1, Dz.U. 2006). Financial penalties are imposed in the event of non-compliance with food labelling requirements, including in relation to presentation, advertising and promotion, and non-compliance with food labelling requirements set out in the provisions of: a) Regulation No 1333/2008 on food additives, b) Regulation No 1334/2008 on flavourings, c) Regulation No. 1169/2011, the marketing of a non-food product as food, and the failure to withdraw from the market a foodstuff harmful to human health or life, a spoiled foodstuff or an adulterated foodstuff (Art. 103, ust. 1, Dz.U. 2006). In the cases mentioned, the amount of the financial penalty may be set at up to five times the gross value of the disputed quantity of the foodstuff or non-food product placed on the market as food (Art. 103, ust. 2, Dz.U. 2006).

A financial penalty is imposed for the production or placing on the market of food in a manner inconsistent with the establishment approval decision (Art. 103, ust. 1, Dz.U. 2006) in an amount of not less than PLN 500 (Art. 103, ust. 2, Dz.U. 2006). The following are also subject to a financial penalty: conducting activities involving the production or marketing of food without submitting an application for entry in the register of establishments or for approval of the establishment and entry in the register of establishments, or contrary to a decision refusing approval of the establishment in accordance with the procedure and principles laid down in Regulation No 852/2004, selling, as part of business activities, foodstuffs to an educational establishment other than those falling within the categories of foodstuffs intended for sale to children and young people, advertising or promoting, as part of business activities within an educational establishment, foodstuffs other than those falling within the categories of foodstuffs intended for sale to children and young people; and, whilst carrying out activities relating to the mass catering of children and young people within an educational establishment, using foodstuffs that do not meet the requirements (Art. 103, ust. 1, Dz.U. 2006). In the situations indicated, the amount of the financial penalty may be set at up to PLN 5000, but not less than PLN 1000 (Art. 103, ust. 2, Dz.U. 2006). Carrying out activities in the field of food production or trade contrary to a decision to withdraw or suspend the approval of an establishment, or contrary to a decision to temporarily suspend the operation or close all or part of a given establishment pursuant to Regulation No 882/2004, as well as obstructing or preventing the performance of official food controls, also result in the imposition of financial penalties (Art. 103, ust. 1, Dz.U. 2006). All the financial penalties listed are imposed in an amount of up to thirty times the average monthly wage in the national economy for the preceding year, as announced by the President of the Central Statistical Office, on the basis of the provisions on pensions from the Social Insurance Fund, in the Official Journal of the Republic of Poland 'Monitor Polski' (Art. 103, ust. 1, Dz.U. 2006). Financial penalties are imposed, by way of a decision, by the competent provincial sanitary inspector (Art. 104, ust. 1, Dz.U. 2006), taking into account, when determining the amount of the financial penalty, the degree of harmfulness of the act, the degree of culpability and the scope of the infringement, the entity's previous activity in the food market, and the scale of the establishment's production (Art. 104, ust. 2, Dz.U. 2006). Financial penalties constitute revenue for the State budget (Art. 104, ust. 4, Dz.U. 2006), and in matters not regulated by this Act, the provisions of Section III of the Act of 29 August 1997 – Tax Ordinance, subject to the proviso that the powers of the tax authority are vested in the competent provincial sanitary inspector (Art. 104, ust. 3, Dz.U. 2006).

4. An analysis of the structure of additional activities carried out by farmers in Poland

In order to better illustrate the situation regarding farm retail trade, direct sales and marginal, local and limited activities in Poland, data from the register of registered establishments available on the website of the Chief Veterinary Inspectorate was analysed and compared. The study examined the register of entities engaged in farm retail trade, the register of entities engaged in direct sales, and the register of entities engaged in marginal, local and limited activities. The study will take into account the following information: the total number of entities carrying out a given activity nationwide, the number of entities per voivodeship, as well as the types and number of products involved in a given activity. A significant limitation is that some entities may operate without being registered and are therefore not included in the registers. The aim of the analysis is to demonstrate which activity is conducted on the largest scale, which voivodeships dominate in carrying out particular forms of activity, and which products are most frequently sold within the framework of farm retail trade, direct sales, and marginal, local and limited activities.

Nationwide, 21,111 entities operate in the RHD sector, 16,225 in direct sales, and 2,161 in MOL activities (Figure 1). RHD is the most popular form of activity and is currently the largest-scale activity nationwide among the additional forms of activity carried out by farmers. Direct sales rank second in terms of the scale of operations nationwide. MOL activities are conducted on a significantly smaller scale compared to other forms of business and are the least popular.

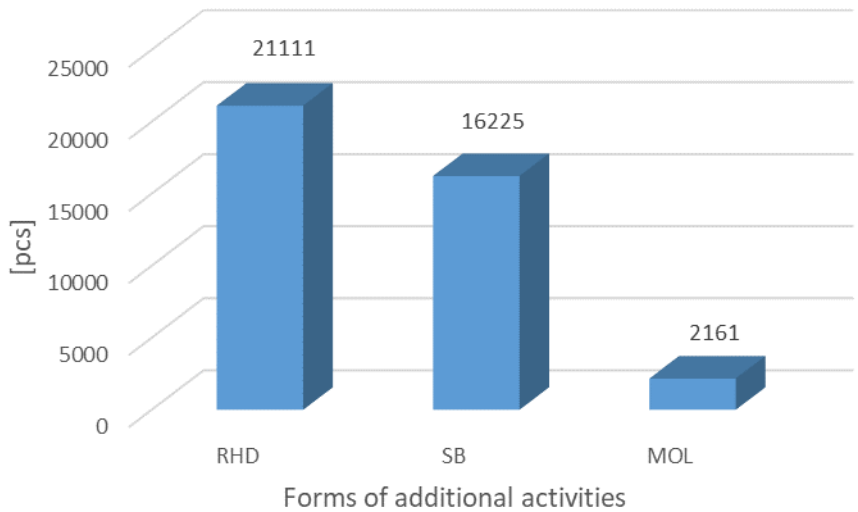
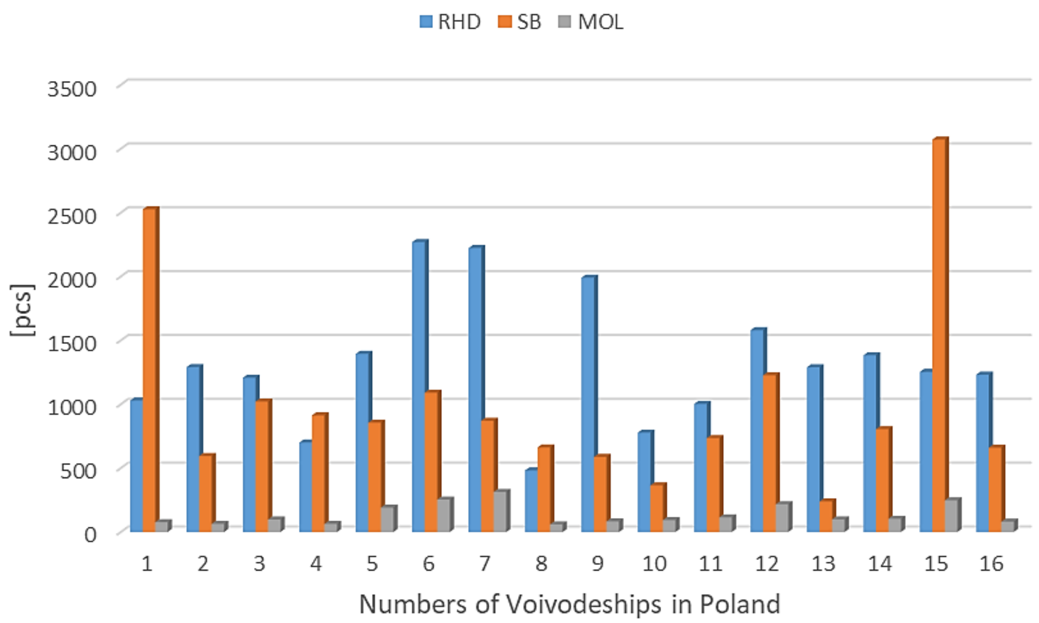


Figure 1. Structure of additional activities carried out by farmers in Poland: RHD – farm retail trade, SB – direct sales, MOL – marginal, local and limited activities.

Source: own calculations based on GIW, March 2026.

Breaking down the national picture into individual voivodeships, the following trends can be observed (Figure 2). Two voivodeships dominate in terms of the number of entities engaged in farm retail trade: Małopolskie Voivodeship (2270) and Mazowieckie Voivodeship (2223). Next in line are the voivodeships of Podkarpackie (1991), Śląskie (1580), Łódzkie (1395) and Warmińsko-Mazurskie (1384). An even smaller number of RHD businesses are operated in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship (1291), Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship (1290), Wielkopolskie Voivodeship (1254), Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship (1232) and Lubelskie Voivodeship (1208). A small number of RHD entities operate in the Dolnośląskie Voivodeship (1030) and Pomorskie Voivodeship (1003). The fewest RHD entities are found in the following three voivodeships: Podlaskie (778), Lubuskie (701) and, by far the fewest, in the Opolskie (482).

Conversely, the highest number of direct sales outlets was recorded in the Wielkopolskie Voivodeship (3072). The Dolnośląskie Voivodeship ranks second in terms of the scale of this activity (2526). Next in line are the following voivodeships: Śląskie (1227), Małopolskie (1091), Lubelskie (1021), Lubuskie (913), Mazowieckie (871), Łódzkie (856) and Warmińsko-Mazurskie (805). Direct sales are conducted on a small scale in the Pomorskie Voivodeship (735), Opolskie Voivodeship (662), Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship (660), Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship (595) and Podkarpackie Voivodeship (588). The lowest number of direct sales businesses is found in the Podlaskie Voivodeship (365) and Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship (239). The structure of direct sales businesses by voivodeships is shown in Figure 2.



RHD – farm retail trade, SB – direct sales, MOL – marginal, local and limited activities, 1 – Dolnośląskie Voivodeship, 2 – Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship, 3 – Lubelskie Voivodeship, 4 – Lubuskie Voivodeship, 5 – Łódzkie Voivodeship, 6 – Małopolskie Voivodeship, 7 – Mazowieckie Voivodeship, 8 – Opolskie Voivodeship, 9 – Podkarpackie Voivodeship, 10 – Podlaskie Voivodeship, 11 – Pomorskie Voivodeship, 12 – Śląskie Voivodeship, 13 – Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, 14 – Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship, 15 – Wielkopolskie Voivodeship, 16 – Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship.

Figure 2. Structure of additional activities carried out by farmers across the 16 Voivodeships of Poland.

Source: own calculations based on GIW, March 2026.

In contrast, marginal, local and limited activities MOL are conducted on the largest scale in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship (314). MOL activities are conducted on a fairly large scale in the following voivodeships: Małopolskie (254), Wielkopolskie (248) and Śląskie (217). Next in terms of the number of MOL activities are the voivodeships of Łódzkie (191), Pomorskie (115), Warmińsko-Mazurskie (104), Świętokrzyskie (99), Lubelskie (98), Podlaskie (93), Podkarpackie (83), Zachodniopomorskie (81) and Dolnośląskie (77). The lowest number of MOL activities is found in the voivodeships of Kujawsko-Pomorskie (64), Lubuskie (63) and Opolskie (60). The structure of MOL activities by voivodeships is shown in Figure 2.

When comparing the results of all types of additional activities in terms of their prevalence across individual voivodeships in Poland, it can be observed that different voivodeships dominated in each of the listed forms of additional activity, and the situation also varied among the voivodeships at the bottom of the ranking in terms of the popularity of a given form of activity. RHD activity dominates in the Małopolskie Voivodeship, direct sales in the Wielkopolskie Voivodeship, and MOL activities in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship. The fewest entities operate RHD in the Opolskie Voivodeship, whilst direct sales are least popular in the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, and MOL activities are least prevalent in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Lubuskie and Opolskie Voivodeships.

What types of products are sold within the farm retail trade, and which of these are the most common and which the least common?

The list of entities engaged in farm retail trade shows that the most frequently cited type of product is unprocessed bee products, including honey, bee pollen, bee bread and royal jelly, totalling 16,194. Their number far outweighs that of other product types, as the next most common are poultry eggs, numbering 2923, and food, including ready meals (dishes), containing both foodstuffs of non-animal origin and products of animal origin, numbering 1307. Next in line are dairy products or colostrum-based products at 1141 and meat products at 1045. The following product types numbered fewer than 1000: raw milk or raw milk and colostrum 994, fresh beef, pork, mutton, goat or horse meat, or raw meat products or minced meat made from such meat 892, and ready-made meals (dishes) from products of animal origin 547. Fewer than 500 RHD operators indicated pastries, cakes and biscuits 478, raw cream 456, fresh poultry or lagomorph meat, or raw meat products or minced meat produced from such meat 442, live or killed fishery products that have not undergone any processes altering their original anatomical structure 367, and confectionery products 343. Ready-made non-meat meals (dishes) 274, pre-processed or processed fishery products 241 and egg products 126 are relatively unpopular choices. The following types of products are the least common within RHD activities: fresh meat of farmed game animals or raw meat products or minced meat produced from such meat 47, eggs from ratites 44 and live land snails of the species Helix pomatia, Cornu aspersum aspersum, Cornu aspersum maxima, Helix lucorum and of the family Achatinidae 16. It follows that, among the listed types of products subject to farm retail trade, unprocessed bee products were mentioned most frequently, whilst live land snails were mentioned least frequently.

However, what types of products are sold through direct sales?

The list of entities engaged in direct sales shows that the most common type of product is unprocessed bee products, totalling 12,615. The situation is similar to that in farm retail trade, where this type of product also dominated over the others. In second place, with a much smaller number compared to the first, were table eggs, totalling 1803. Here too, the situation is similar to that in farm retail trade. Next came fishery products with 1113. It is worth noting here that the number of fishery products sold through direct sales was three times higher than in the RHD sector. Next came game at 490, poultry at 369, and milk and cream at 177. In second-to-last place in the product type category for direct sales were lagomorphs at 61. By far the rarest product, which came last in direct sales, is live snails with 4 units. Here, the situation is similar to that in RHD activities, where live snails also came last in very small quantities. To summarise the frequency of occurrence of specific product types in direct sales, bee products can be identified as the most common, and live snails as the rarest; this conclusion is analogous to that for RHD activities, where the same products also appeared at both opposite ends of the frequency hierarchy.

5. Conclusions

To summarise the research conducted on the impact of legislation on local producers, short supply chains can be identified as a common component of all forms of additional activities carried out within the farm. Farm retail trade has the widest territorial reach, as it can be sold throughout the country. Direct sales are restricted to the voivodeship in which products of animal origin are produced, neighbouring voivodeships, and other voivodeships within Poland, provided that such sales take place at exhibitions, festivals, fairs or markets as part of the promotion of the products produced. Marginal, local and limited activities are carried out within a single voivodeship and in neighbouring counties and towns, whilst sales throughout the country are only possible at exhibitions, festivals, fairs and markets. The subject of RHD may include raw materials and processed products of plant origin, as well as raw materials and processed products of animal origin, and composite food consisting of products of both animal and non-animal origin. Direct sales apply exclusively to products of animal origin. In contrast, MOL's activities, unlike direct sales, include the processing and sale of food of animal origin.

As for the criminal provisions applicable to offences committed in the course of or in connection with business activities, these are regulated by the Act of 25 August 2006 on food and nutrition safety. These include the production or placing on the market of a foodstuff commonly consumed that is harmful to human health or life, punishable by a fine, restriction of liberty or imprisonment for up to two years. A fine may also be imposed for using a foodstuff in production or placing it on the market after the expiry date or the best-before date has passed.

Financial penalties are imposed for failure to comply with food labelling requirements, including those relating to presentation, advertising and promotion, or for carrying out food production or marketing activities without applying for entry in the register of establishments or for approval of the establishment and entry in the register of establishments, or in contravention of a decision refusing approval of the establishment.

The results of the studies cited in the article, which aimed to illustrate the scale of local producers' activities in Poland at national level and within individual voivodeships, as well as to identify the types and quantities of products involved in supplementary activities carried out on farms, are as follows. Nationwide, RHD activities dominate (21,111), followed by direct sales (16,225), whilst MOL activities are the least common (2,161). As regards individual voivodeships, farm retail trade is most prevalent in the Małopolskie Voivodeship (2270), whilst it is least common in the Opolskie Voivodeship (482). In turn, direct sales are conducted on the largest scale in the Wielkopolskie Voivodeship (3072), and on the smallest scale in the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship (239). MOL activities are most popular in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship (314), and least popular in the Opolskie Voivodeship (60). As regards the types of products and their frequency of occurrence, in both farm retail trade and direct sales, bee products are the most common, whilst live snails are the least common. The dominance of bee products in sales stems, amongst other things, from the long tradition of beekeeping in Poland, the relatively straightforward production methods, and the seasonal nature of this production. By contrast, the sale of live snails is a new product category which is still in its infancy in Poland.

The issues analysed in this article are significant for efforts to shape the future of agriculture and the agri-food sector for future generations in Poland, as well as at European and global levels. In February 2025, the European Commission presented its Vision for Agriculture and Food, in which local food is a key element of future food systems. It emphasises the key role of farmers in our lives, and the proposed vision for the food system aims to create conditions that ensure the development of RHD, SB and MOL activities. Such measures can benefit society today, tomorrow and in 2040.

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