

Research Institute of Agricultural and Food Economics in Bratislava anniversary

The Research Institute of Agricultural and Food Economics (RIAFE) in Bratislava commemorates this autumn the 85th anniversary of the existence of an institutionalized research in the field of agricultural economics on the territory of what is now Slovakia. We associate this historical event with the establishment of the Bratislava branch of the Prague-based Farm Management and Accounting Institute in the year 1919. It had been endowed by the task of collecting data on economic and social situation of the peasantry by regular and occasional farm surveys and also by providing extension work among farmers on farm management. Later on, this activity base was being extended or narrowed in line with the existing political needs and statutory arrangements in force. The current Institute, which considers itself as the successor of the historical “nod” at which the later development of agricultural economics in Slovakia had started, is now a center of economic analyses and policy consultancy in Slovakia.

During the recent decade, the RIAFE has been playing an important role in assisting the sectoral public administration in preparing the sector for the EU membership. In this connection, researchers of the Institute elaborated a series of impact studies, based on model simulations and projections. Numerous studies have been conducted on the transformation process of the sector after 1990 and the ongoing structural changes in the farming sector, partly in co-operation with international research teams.

Important programming documents and those reflecting the agricultural situation in the country, such as the governmental “Green Reports”, are being compiled here. The strength of the Institute is in its endowment in the area of informatics. It runs the sectoral statistical database, the Land Valuation Database, it is the provider of the Farm Accountancy Data Network in the Slovak Re-

public and it is also responsible for setting up the Economic Account for Agriculture. Beside this, regular production cost surveys give the opportunity to assess the efficiency and profitability of farming on commodity basis. The RIAFE is also active in rural development analyses and assessments, especially in connection with evaluation of rural development and structural policy programs.

As a regular output of the Institute, commodity situation and outlook reports, which give a prospective view on Slovak agriculture and food markets, are being issued several times a year.

Research projects within the framework of the State Science and Research Programs, currently conducted by the Institute, deal with the assessment of economic, social and institutional adjustment of the Slovak agriculture and agri-food sectors and that of rural areas during the initial period of the country's EU membership.

Within the 6th Framework Program of the EU, the RIAFE is sharing a consortium of nine participants, working on the STREP project IDEMA (The Impact of Decoupling and Modulation in the Enlarged Union: a Sectoral and Farm Level Assessment). The Institute is also involved into a wide co-operation with international institutions like the FAO, OECD, the World Bank and other.

The research staff counts 47 persons with university and PhD degree (two of them are associated professors); the total number of staff is 76 (as to July 2004). The legal status of the RIAFE is a subsidized organization reporting to the Ministry of Agriculture.

We appreciate very much that the tradition of agricultural economic research has been maintained for over eighty years, what we consider as a special value.

At the occasion of the RIAFE anniversary, this issue of Agricultural Economics (*Zemědělská ekonomika*) is publishing papers all by authors affiliated to the Institute.

Gejza Blaas, Director RIAFE Bratislava