

Preface

On the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the founding the Research Institute of Agricultural Economics (RIAE), an international scientific seminar on the topic "Pre-accession Strategy of Czech Agriculture on the Way to the EU" was held in Průhonice close to Prague on September 27–28, 2003. Here we submit to the readers of the *Agricultural Economics*, in the frame of a mono-thematic issue, selected contributions of the seminar, mainly by our foreign partners with the stress on the contributions of the Brussels administration political representatives, the OECD representatives and on the contributions from the individual CEFTA countries' representatives. From the home participants, we present the common opening contribution of the RIAE director T. Doucha and P. Blížkovský (Permanent mission of the CR at the EC), characterising the preparedness for Czech agriculture to the EU accession.

The main criteria for selection of contributions were not only their scientific assets, but also other aspects. The purpose was to acquaint the scientific community with the complete pre-accession strategy of the countries entering the EU.

The social importance of this meeting of top economists was emphasized in the opening speech of the minister of agriculture CR J. Palas. At the end of his contribution, he stressed the positive role of the RIAE as a basic research and service workplace fulfilling a whole series of important tasks at the call of the MA CR and other governmental institutions.

It is an indubitable fact, that at the present period, the priority of the economic research is the harmonisation of national agrar policy tools with the valid norms of the CAP, in connection to the prepared accession of the CEECs to the EU.

The long-term concept-maker of the CAP – D. Ahner, director of the DG – comments in his contribution proposals on the half-time revision of the CAP, submitted by the EC in July 2002. We get thus actual and valuable information on the state of labour, in which the proposals of the CAP reform in the near future are found at the moment.

S. Tangerman, director of the food, agriculture and fishery division of the OECD, reaches a very important conclusion in his contribution, that the EU enlargement need not meet with any considerable difficulties with regard to fulfilment of the new member countries' commitments to the WTO with regard to home support and export subsidies. Certain difficulties will probably be brought about by the tariff harmonisation of the candidate countries, since these are in many of these countries considerably lower than in the EU.

Economic research has initiated and further develops the European model of agriculture, which has also become the base of the agrar policy concept of the CR before the EU accession. Issuing from the social market

economy concept presented by the former Austrian minister of agriculture J. Riegler, this model is confronted, in connection with the half-time evaluation of the Agenda 2000, with new challenges. The new European appeal in the direction of strengthening the principles of solidarity, sustainability, multi-functionality and subsidiarity forms a valuable outcome for solving the problems of Czech agriculture and rural areas.

To the question of credit and fiscal policy in the CEECs agriculture, the head of the agrar policy division of the OECD non-members, A. Trzeciak-Duval, contributes her opinion. In her contribution, she sums up the basic system conditions of the approach to credit, the role of policy tools, and lists the possible ways of financing agriculture and rural development. The problem of Czech agriculture in this connection is the accessibility of financial, namely credit, resources and the institutional strengthening of the agrar banking net.

From the contribution of the director of the USDA Economic Research Service (ERS) S. Offutt, there issues an important conclusion that the important goal of agrar policy is sustaining or rather improvement of the farm families economic situation. The aim group of the policy is therefore also farm household, not only just farm, and the household is also the relevant unit for the agrar policy impacts analysis.

The information regarding the specific accession question of the direct supports level for the CEECs after their accession to the EU is useful for Czech agriculture. The clear standpoints of Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, as well as other countries to the problem form an important lead also for forming of the Czech position. Valuable are also the experiences of our neighbours in Germany and Austria, since the direct support level influences the competitiveness of individual agrar commodities in a considerable way.

Model calculations of the presupposed impacts of the EU enlargement on agricultural budgets of individual candidate countries form another valuable output of the agrar economic research. Different scenarios of these models and the quantification of the CAP impacts on the relevant candidate country agriculture present important tools for the state administration decision-making during the pre-accession period. To these questions, a great deal of attention was paid in the contributions of the participants from Austria, Poland, Slovakia and the CR. An important part of these models are forecasts of the EU accession impacts on the main agricultural commodities economics. In this connection, there are of utmost importance the comparisons of the CR and Austria situation and then also quantification of the possible impacts of the present CAP on the changes in the main commodities support level utilising the "production support estimate" indicator (calculations and contribution of the OECD).

The contribution of Polish representatives brings an important notion, that there is usually overlooked the fact of guaranteeing long-term stable development conditions for agricultural producers in the EU conditions. For Polish farmers, who are submitted to frequent changes of agricultural policy, these stable conditions may present an equally important factor as the promised financial support.

Considerable space was dedicated to the questions connected with the competitiveness evaluation in milk production and processing in the frame of the International Farm Comparison Network (IFCN). The output cost relations of milk producers in different regions of the world (F. Isermeyer FAL., director of the Research Insti-

tute of Enterprise Economics, Braunschweig, BRD) are presented on the basis of unified indicators.

As a conclusion, we can emphasize, that the seminar topic served to a useful exchange of opinions and has brought about a number of new notions which could be practically utilised in the final etap of the pre-accession negotiations. It also served to the exchange of opinions regarding the role of economic research in the changing world conditions. Using the words of one of the lecturers, M. Schneider (WIFO, Wien), it can be concluded, that "... we have managed to organise a really successful meeting of prominent lecturers on the top topic and at the right time".

Ing. J. Kraus, CSc., scientific guarantee of the mono-thematic issue