

## REGIONAL FOOD PRODUCTS: ONLY FOR TOURISTS OR ALSO FOR RESIDENTS

### SUMMARY

Regional products are cultural richness of states and nations, but in many cases, are undervalued in the local market. Food products in the region can play an important role in building local identity, and their sale is the ability to obtain additional income for farmers and rural residents. This means that they are important for the development of rural areas.

This study is based on primary sources. Data were collected using the method of direct interview with the research questionnaire. The research had local character. As a place of research has been selected region of Sudeten Mountain (south-western Poland), where a group of farmers wanted to launch a new regional product called "Sudeten Beef". The aim of the study was to determine whether potential consumers are interested in such a product and that its acceptance is different between a group of tourists and a group of local residents. Total number of respondents was 219. The obtained results allowed determining that there is strong interest in such a product on demand side of market. It was also found that there is no importance whether the responses gave local residents or visitors to the area covered by the study.

**Key words:** regional product, food, alternative food supply, rural development.

### INTRODUCTION

Regional products are specific goods typical for certain geographical or historical areas. Such products have often a long tradition of producing or ecological character and are a manifestation of the cultural and economic heritage. They show the otherness of a given territory or whole country (Zdon-Korzeniowska, 2009; Bilska, 2008; Gąsiorowski, 2006). Development of regional products market is now possible due to the change in consumer preferences (El Bilali et al., 2014; Renko et al., 2010). It can be described as a trend of regionalism, which is opposite to the ongoing globalization processes (Alvensleben and Schrader, 1998; Venn et al., 2006). More and more buyers have enough of highly processed foods that have a lot of artificial additives, and its consumption does not provide a healthy balance of diet, as well as appropriate mouth feel (Dereń, 2008; Tańska-Hus and Minta, 2012). Already for many

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consumers is not enough just nice package of goods to sell them in a simple and expensive way. The content of this package is becoming increasingly important. In the case of food, this means high healthiness, natural nutritional value, place of origin and real good taste. Therefore, an alternative to highly processed industrial foods are the regional and traditional products (Animashaun et al., 2013) which, because of long-standing tradition of manufacturing and use of local raw materials with often ecological character, get the taste of more demanding consumers.

Manufacture and sale of regional products carries important implications for regional development (Tańska-Hus, 2013). This is particularly related to the ability to raise additional income for residents living in a long distance of large urban agglomerations (Borowska, 2008). It is conducive to the sustainable socio-economic development that brings benefits to communities living today, but also respects the environmental conditions and is not a threat for the economic potential to future generations, and also helps to iron out economic divergence between the different territories (WCED, 1987; Pawłowski, 2011).

Technological specificity makes often the regional products are more expensive than industrial food. This can be a serious barrier to the development of regional products market, especially in combination with too little awareness of consumers about the possible benefits of their purchase (Minta, 2013). Raises the question, where to find customers willing to buy regional products and how high is acceptable level of prices to them. Is generally believed that the recipients of such products have higher incomes and therefore they also accept the higher prices for regional products, provided that these goods satisfy the higher requirements of consumer (Vanittersum et al., 2000). In the literature is weakly described issue of the impact of place of consumer residence to the desire of regional products purchase. As an example we can give the results of an American study, which involved the purchase of products from local producers (here, however, it was not exactly about regional products). In these studies it has been shown that the tendency to purchase local products is higher in the local community and is increases with duration of residence on the chosen area (Jekanowski et al., 2000).

In general, the production of regional products has a long history, but in practice it can also meet with local initiatives that aim to introduce a new product based on the natural potential of the region. Example of this is attempt to introduce new regional product called ‘Sudeten Beef’ in the area of the mountain counties of the Sudeten massif. It is located in south-western Poland in Lower Silesia Voivodship. The initiators of this idea are local farmers rearing beef cattle who were not satisfied with the prices they receive for livestock, while watching the local shops high prices and low quality of beef offered for sale in local shops. As a result of this situation, a special group of agricultural producers has been established, who took the production, promotion and sale of the product under the name ‘Sudeten Beef’ (wolowina-sudecka.pl 2014). Research described in this work was carried out as a part of cooperation with the farmers.

The main goal of the study was to find answers to the question whether the potential consumers would be interested in buying on a analyzed area a new regional product named 'Sudeten Beef', and if there are significant differences in the responses provided by local residents and persons visiting as a tourist.

An additional objective was to determine the acceptable level of prices for the dish is prepared with the proposed regional product.

### **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

This work is based on field research survey. Research area included the counties lying in Sudeten Mountains. This location has great potential for tourism and rehabilitation, so it is popular place to visit by many tourists and patients. Source materials were collected in October 2012 by direct interviews on the streets using special questionnaire (Stachak, 1997). The studies had local range and exploratory nature. Sample for the study was selected randomly. Therefore, the results cannot be considered as representative, but they can be a good starting point for further research. The total number of respondents was 219 people. The answers given by these people were analyzed, especially using statistical research of chi-square test and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (Lipiec-Zajchowska, 2003). Data were elaborated using computer programs: MS Excel and STATISTICA v. 10 from StatSoft Inc.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Selected elements characterizing the persons involved in the study are shown in Table 1. Overall the data were obtained from questionnaires completed by 219 adults, and more than a half of them were women (almost 56% of respondents). Most respondents were between 36 – 65 years old (52.1% of respondents). Younger persons in age group 18 – 35 years were about 35% of respondents and the rest (12.3%) were the persons older than 65 years. Frequently, the person providing answers had secondary level of education (almost 45% of respondents) and lived in the cities (more than 79% of responses).

For the purposes of the study, respondents were divided into three groups based on the place of residence (according to the Polish administrative division into counties). The first group consisted of people living in the area under study (Sudeten counties), where it has to be manufactured and sell the new regional product 'Sudeten Beef' (40.2% of respondents). Second group were people living in other counties lying in Lower Silesia (20.1% of responding persons), and the third group were the people living in other locations than Lower Silesia (Table 1). Proper part of the study was to gather information, whether the tested group of people would be interested in buying the 'Sudeten Beef', and more precisely the acquisition of food containing such specific meat. Respondents had a choice of responses: 'Yes' – I am interested in buying, 'I don't know' – I do not have a strong opinion on this subject, and 'No' – I am not interested in purchasing such a product.

Table 1. Characteristic of respondents selected for the study (n=219)

Specification		Structure of indications [%]
Sex	Women	55.7
	Men	44.3
	Total	100.0
Age group	18-35 years	35.6
	36-65 years	52.1
	Over 65 years	12.3
	Total	100.0
Level of education	Lower than secondary	16.0
	Secondary	44.7
	Higher	39.3
	Total	100.0
Place of residence divided into urban and rural areas	Urban areas	79.2
	Rural areas	20.8
	Total	100.0
Place of residence according to the administrative division of the country	Sudeten counties from Lower Silesia	40.2
	Other counties from Lower Silesia	20.1
	Other place of residence	39.7
	Total	100.0

The majority of respondents, regardless of place of residence, chose the answer 'Yes'. The share of undecided was about 20-30%, and the least were people strongly negatively related to the proposed acquisition of the product (Figure 1).

The same has been constructed question of how level of price is accepted by the respondents if 'Sudeten Beef' would be a meat produced in the Sudetenland, with high quality. In this case, it could be given answer that higher, lower or the same level. Most people indicated a higher level of prices. The exact distribution of answers to this question is shown in Figure 2.

Distribution of answer between the groups of residence was slightly differed. In order to determine whether these differences are significant and that the tested characteristics are dependent on each other, further statistical analysis was performed. Because the examined phenomena were determined in a qualitative way, for the detailed analytical work about statistical relationship were selected chi-square test and Spearman's rank correlation. Adopted null hypothesis was spoken about the lack of relationship between the place of residence and the potential interest in buying the analyzed regional product and indication an acceptable level of prices for this product. The results of these operations are presented in Table 2.

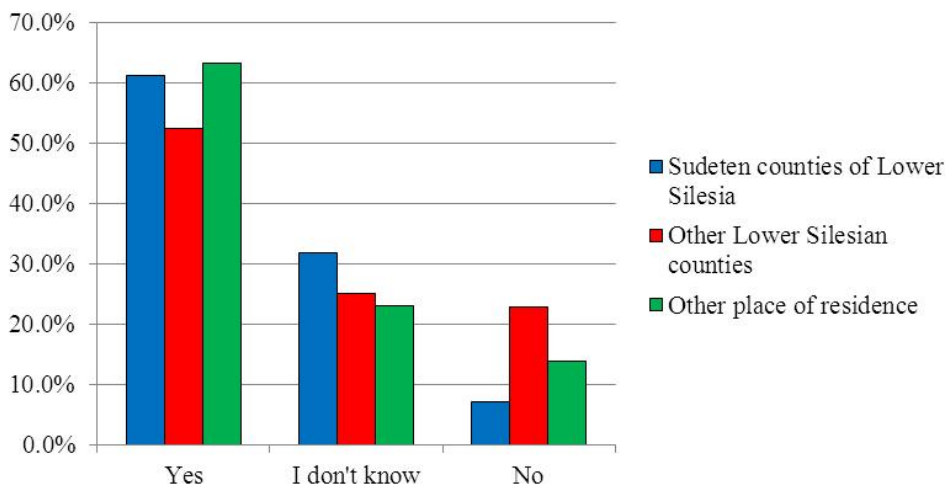


Figure 1. Distribution of answers regarding potential willingness to purchase 'Sudeten beef' (a breakdown by place of respondents' residence in the Sudeten districts and beyond)

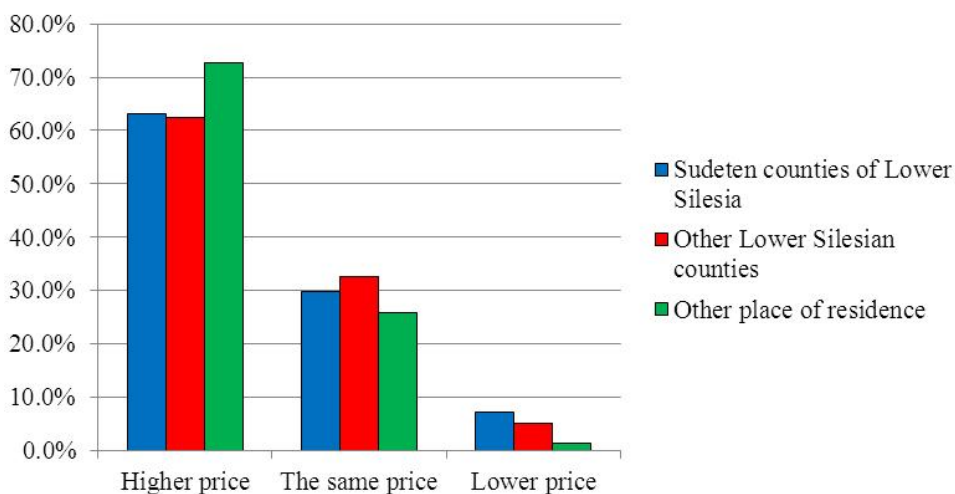


Figure 2. Distribution of answers regarding acceptable level of price for a dish made of 'Sudeten beef' (a breakdown by place of respondents' residence in the Sudeten districts and beyond)

The calculated value of chi-square in both cases were lower than the theoretical values read from statistical tables for the significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ . This result confirmed the null hypothesis of no relations between the analyzed traits. This was also confirmed by the calculated value of the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. It was slightly negative but very close to the value 0, so this should be interpreted as a lack of relationship between the examined characteristics.

Table 2. Results of the independence analysis between the place of residence (by counties) and declarations about the potential desire to buy 'Sudeten Beef' and acceptable level of price for a dish made of 'Sudeten Beef'

Tested hypothesis	Sample size	Value of chi-square test (df = 4, $\alpha = 0.05$ )		Spearman's rank correlation coefficient
		calculated	theoretical	
H <sub>0</sub> : place of residence (according to the division of counties) has no effect on the potential willingness to buy the regional product 'Sudeten beef'. H <sub>1</sub> : there is a statistical relationship between the studied features.	n = 219	5.60	9.49	-0.005695
H <sub>0</sub> : place of residence (according to the division of counties) does not affect the declaration of an acceptable level of prices for a dish made of regional product 'Sudeten beef'. H <sub>1</sub> : there is a statistical relationship between the studied features.	n = 219	4.63	9.49	-0.075616

## CONCLUSION

Market of regional products has good growth prospects, despite the fact that they are in most cases more expensive goods. To a large extent this can be explained by changes in consumer preferences and the increased search for products unique, tasty, healthy, with ecological character and produced by traditional methods. Price in this case is not a key selection criterion of purchase. Such a situation may stimulate the introduction into commerce of new products of this type, and an example of this is described 'Sudeten Beef'. Presented studies indicated that in the area chosen for the study is a large potential interest in buying a new regional product 'Sudeten Beef'. Detailed analysis of the data indicated that the place of respondents' residence did not have a statistically significant effect on potential interest in purchasing of regional products. In both groups – the residents and visitors – can be observed a similar structure of responses. Therefore, on the basis of carried out research it can be concluded that the potentially interest in buying of regional products occurs regardless of whether this applies to residents or tourists.

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