

Preventive actions of the KRUS Prevention Office during the COVID-19 epidemic

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Abstract

The study discusses the situation that took place in the world and in Poland after the new COVID-19 disease appeared in China, and the consequences that followed suit.

Due to the global pandemic, there were difficulties in the functioning of, among others, offices and institutions. One of them is the Agricultural Social Insurance Fund. The study aims to present the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the work of the Prevention Office of the KRUS Headquarters and the actions taken to protect employees and clients of the institution against the effects of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Keywords: COVID-19, preventive actions, competition, KRUS, protection, pandemic, prevention, training.

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The situation around the world

The number one topic around the world in 2020 was COVID-19. The first cases of this infectious disease were recorded in China. At this time, we are uncertain who was patient zero. Some people assume it was Wei Guixian¹, a 57-year-old shrimp saleswoman at a market in Wuhan, who reported symptoms of a cold on December 10, 2019 to a doctor at a local clinic. Others believe “patient zero” to be a 55-year-old resident infected on November 17, 2019² in the Hubei Province. Scientists are anxious to reach out to the person (or people) who first fell ill, as they hope to find the source of the pandemic. What we know for certain, is that during this period, mass cases of the infectious COVID-19 disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus began in the city of Wuhan in the Hubei province of central China. Then, hardly anyone thought of the consequences this disease would have on the lives of people around the world.

Already on March 11, 2020, the epidemic was recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a pandemic³. The information on this subject was provided by the WHO Director General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus⁴. COVID-19 was considered a pandemic mainly due to the fact that it very quickly spread to large areas on different continents. In a short time, many outbreaks of the disease appeared around the world.

By October 15, 2020, over 38.58 million people were identified⁵ to be ill with the SARS-CoV-2 infection cases in 188 countries. Nearly 1.09 million deaths and over 26.54 million healings were recorded. Until January 2020, the disease appeared mainly in the city of Wuhan. The virus then spread throughout China. Later, infections began to occur in more and more countries around the world.

Wherever infections have occurred, measures have been taken to block the spread of the virus. Numerous restrictions were introduced, including restrictions on movement. Quarantines were introduced for people coming from the areas affected by the disease and for those who had contact with the sick. A number

1. A. Woods, *Shrimp vendor at Wuhan market may be coronavirus 'patient zero'*, New York Post, 27 March 2020, <https://nypost.com/2020/03/27/shrimp-vendor-at-wuhan-market-may-be-coronavirus-patient-zero/>, access 15.11.2020.

2. *First coronavirus case happened one year ago today, according to China*, Independent, 17 October 2020, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus-china-first-case-b1724282.html>, access 17.11.2020.

3. World Health Organization, <https://www.who.int/>, access; <https://www.gov.pl/web/koronawirus/dzialania-rzadu>, access 15.11.2020.

4. World Health Organization, <https://www.who.int/director-general>, access 14.11.2020.

5. Poradnik Zdrowia, <https://www.poradnikzdrowie.pl/>, access 10.11.2020.

of sports, religious and cultural events have been postponed or canceled. Many countries have closed their borders, airlines have suspended commercial flights. A number of companies and institutions have suspended their activities. Controls were introduced consisting of measuring the temperature of people staying in public facilities. Schools and universities were closed in many countries due to the outbreak of the pandemic. People in countries affected by the pandemic have been ordered to wear personal protective equipment, such as nose and mouth masks and disposable gloves. Frequent, thorough hand washing with disinfectants was recommended. General home quarantines for all citizens have been introduced in many countries.

The pandemic caused the world's worst recession since the Great Depression. In the first period, as a result of panic all over the world, massive purchases of food and essential goods was observed. There was a shortage in the supply of shops. There was a great need for personal protective equipment. Therefore, the companies that produced them began to develop very dynamically. Stock exchanges around the world have experienced large drops in share prices. However, there were also companies that, thanks to their business profile, recorded significant increases and profits, although these are few cases in the overall comparison.

Healthcare collapsed in countries where the incidence was rising rapidly. Hospitals did not have enough beds for the needy and ventilators necessary for the treatment of severely ill patients. More deaths have been seen from the infection. There was a shortage of doctors and nurses.

The situation in Poland

The first case of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus infection in Poland was found on March 4, 2020 in a hospital in Zielona Góra⁶. The infected patient was a 66-year-old resident of Cybinka. The Polish government very quickly began to react to the pandemic situation. Among other things, sanitary controls at the borders were introduced⁷. Beginning on March 12, 2020, the functioning of the educational system units was limited. Kindergartens, schools and educational institutions, both public and private, ceased to conduct didactic and educational activities. The suspension of classes also took place in nurseries and children's clubs⁸. On the same day, a regulation came

6. *Koronawirus w Lubuskiem – kalendarium. Wszystko zaczęło się 4 marca*, Gazeta Lubuska, 23 March 2020, <https://gazetalubuska.pl/koronawirus-w-lubuskiem-kalendarium-wszystko-zaczelo-sie-4-marca-obecnie-mamy-23-przypadki-zakazonych-koronawirusem-co-wiemy/ar/c1-14874197>, access 10.11.2020.

7. Serwis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, <https://www.gov.pl/web/koronawirus/dzialania-rzadu>, access 15.11.2020.

8. *Ibidem*.

into force, under which an epidemiological emergency was introduced and nineteen hospitals could be transformed into infectious diseases hospitals⁹. The functioning of shopping centers was limited. All grocery stores, pharmacies, drugstores and laundromats remained open. Changes have been made to the operation of restaurants, cafes and bars. People could only place orders for take away or delivery¹⁰.

On March 14, 2020, the epidemiological threat was introduced in Poland, and on March 20, the epidemiological state of emergency was introduced by the regulation of the Minister of Health Łukasz Szumowski¹¹.

From March 15, Polish borders were closed to foreigners. All Polish citizens could return to the country, but a 14-day quarantine was introduced¹². The course of the spring pandemic in Poland was milder than in other European countries. The incidence growth curve was flattened and there was no sharp increase in the incidence characteristic of this pandemic. This state of affairs was certainly caused by the restrictions applied. In all companies where it was possible, it was recommended that employees transition to working remotely. The activity of companies providing hairdressing and beauty services was suspended. Hotels, accommodation and rehabilitation facilities were closed. The number of people who could simultaneously shop in stores was limited. Parks, boulevards and beaches were closed. People under the age of 18 were allowed to move on the street only under adult supervision¹³. The government started to introduce an aid package for the economy called the Anti-Crisis Shield.

Appropriate medical measures were taken in the health sector, the services implemented preventive measures, and it was also necessary to quickly look for new ways of organizing the work of companies, institutions, and banks whose management boards and employees found themselves in this new reality.

The situation at the Agricultural Social Insurance Fund

On March 13, 2020, in a letter addressed to employees in connection with the introduction of an epidemiological emergency in Poland, the President of KRUS, Dr. Aleksandra Hadzik, included recommendations on how to deal with the pandemic.

9. Ibidem.

10. Ibidem.

11. Ibidem.

12. Ibidem.

13. Ibidem.

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Coordinators responsible for introducing the recommended restrictions have been appointed in Regional Branches. The availability of Information Points for customers was suspended, direct contact with customers in Regional Branches and Local Offices was limited. Citizens could get in contact by phone, e-mail or by downloading documents from the KRUS website and sending them by traditional or e-mail. In closed field units, drop-in points were organized to which applicants could deliver documents.

All departures and business trips outside the Branches and Outlets, including farm visits, have been kept to a minimum. Due to the concerns about safety, also on the part of farmers, such activities did not take place in practice. Internal inspections and controls have been suspended. Private departures of employees were reduced to the necessary minimum, it was recommended to limit the movement of employees between offices.

In all KRUS units, the employees were provided with personal protective equipment, such as disposable gloves and masks. Thorough and frequent washing of hands, including the use of disinfectants, was recommended. Decontamination of office equipment elements available to all employees was carried out several times a day, with particular emphasis on door handles, handrails, toilets and light switches. An instructional video on how to properly carry out such disinfection has been developed at the KRUS Headquarters.

Rules for dealing with documents from outside were introduced, as well as procedures to be applied in the event of symptoms of infection among employees. A rotational system of work with remote work of individual groups of staff was used.

Examination by medical examiners was suspended. Sanatorium and rehabilitation stays for farmers were also suspended. Stricter procedures for the exchange of all documentation between KRUS units were introduced.

Activities of the prevention department employees

The employees of the prevention department at KRUS headquarters and local units also had to face the situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Prevention Office of the KRUS Headquarters assessed that in the epidemic situation of the country, the implementation of the statutory tasks specified in Art. 63 of the Farmers' Social Insurance Act¹⁴, i.e. measures to prevent accidents and occupational diseases, was not possible in the forms used thus far.

14. Ustawa z 20 grudnia 1990 r. o ubezpieczeniu społecznym rolników, Dz. U. 1991 nr 7 poz. 24.

Preventive activities for the prevention of accidents at work and occupational diseases of the insured persons in the Fund, carried out by the Prevention Office and by local KRUS units, were significantly limited and had to be modified. Taking into account the guidelines of the GIS and the Government Crisis Management Team, the Prevention Office of the KRUS Head Office provided the Regional Branches with recommendations to suspend activities that required direct contact with farmers until further notice. A letter on this matter was sent to all Regional Branches of KRUS on March 12, 2020. Actions that had been previously introduced to the Calendar of Preventive Events were recommended to be left in the system with the status “unrealized”.

Due to limitations, it was recommended to duplicate the information for farmers on COVID-19 prevention and disseminate it in KRUS field units. It was recommended to inform rural residents about forms of preventive measures available on the Internet, which do not require direct and personal participation of farmers. All interested parties were encouraged to use the popularizing materials on the KRUS website and Facebook. Employees of the field units were instructed to ask them to familiarize themselves with the films, brochures and leaflets available on the KRUS website, as well as materials related to the Fund’s preventative campaigns, whenever they contacted the farmers. The Prevention Office also recommended that the Regional Branches should use TV, radio, press media, as well as websites of institutions operating in the Agro industry and local governments to disseminate the “Principles of health and life protection on a farm” and knowledge about accident hazards. Employees of field units were recommended to encourage farmers to independently carry out a safety review on farms based on the so-called checklists available on the Fund’s website. The lists have been prepared in such a way that the farmer could identify the accident hazards related to people falling, operation of agricultural machinery and equipment and animals on their own.

The Prevention Office of the KRUS Headquarters has developed and proposed to include in the materials published on the KRUS website and Facebook recommendations for farmers in connection with the epidemiological situation.

All mass events have been canceled throughout the country. Among other things, there were no agricultural exhibitions, harvest festivals and all kinds of cyclical celebrations organized in rural areas. This made the implementation of tasks much more difficult, because it is at such events that direct preventative activities in the field are carried out.

Prevention workers in local units suspended the organization of training courses and preventative competitions for farmers, which had so far been held in direct contact. Training sessions and competitions for children in schools were also

abandoned. There were no information and prevention stands or demonstrations of safe work for farmers and their family members.

Due to the situation, one of the flagship, cyclical preventive actions of the Agricultural Social Insurance Fund (KRUS) aimed at children, namely the National Art Competition for Children "Safe in the Country", proceeded differently than usual. In 2020, it was held under the slogan "You are not at risk when you know and respect animals". It was the tenth jubilee edition of this competition, and the honorary patronage was held by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Jan Krzysztof Ardanowski. In the organization of this event, KRUS was supported by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the National Labor Inspectorate, the National Center for Agricultural Support and the Agency for Restructuring and Modernization of Agriculture. The media patronage was taken up by the editors of Telewizja Polska SA, Agro Serwis biweekly, interactive television AgroNews.com.pl, Tygodnik Poradnik Rolniczego, agricultural magazine Agro Profil, portal Gospodarz.pl Twój Portal Rolniczy, monthly Wieści Rolnicze, Magazine of Entrepreneurial People AGRO and the magazine Rolniczy Przegląd Techniczny. The competition stage was successfully completed at the voivodeship level. The children completed the works and transferred them to KRUS local units. Despite the difficulties associated with the pandemic state, 57,569 students from 4,118 primary schools in rural areas joined this year's edition. 96 of the best works were handed over to the KRUS Headquarters. The members of the Committee selected the winners taking into account the statutory criteria. Due to the restrictions related to the pandemic, there was no official gala during which awards for the best works were to be presented. In recent years, ceremonial galas summarizing the event took place in the Sejm or in the Reading Room of the Central Agricultural Library in Warsaw. This time the prizes were handed over to the winners in the Fund's Regional Branches in a slightly more modest setting than before.

As a result of the pandemic, no other flagship cyclical operation of the Prevention Office of the Agricultural Social Insurance Fund took place, ie the National Safe Farm Competition. This year would be the 18th edition of this event. The limitations related to the COVID-19 epidemiological threat made farmers reluctant to submit their farms to the competition and the committees were unable to visit them. This year's Agro Show Agricultural Fair in Bednary was also canceled. It was at this event that the final gala was organized, during which the winners of the national stage were awarded. The first prize for several years is a tractor. Due to the epidemiological situation, the 18th edition of the National Safe Farm Competition was postponed until 2021.

The employees of the Prevention Office realized that they should modify their activities and adapt them to the current situation. It was decided that they would increase their communication with farmers and their families by electronic means, via the Internet.

At the beginning of April 2020, the Prevention Office presented a proposed form for reporting an accident during work on a farm to be posted on the Fund's website¹⁵. This solution was intended to make it easier for the farmers to report accidents and limit their direct contact with the employees of the Fund in the local units. The proposal has been accepted and information on how to report an accident, along with a link to the report form, is available on the website.

A leaflet about the coronavirus and an appeal to help the elderly living in the countryside were developed and disseminated among farmers. The method of presenting preventive materials on the Fund's website has been changed.

The Prevention Office created materials to be posted on the KRUS website regarding all preventive campaigns carried out in 2020. It also prepared the following studies:

- *Work safety in an orchard – identification of threats*
- *Work safety on the farm – electric shock*
- *Farm work safety – falling objects*
- *Road accidents in agriculture – transport on public roads*
- *Obesity – a contemporary problem, also among farmers*
- *How to work safely with dairy cattle?*
- *Can every farm be safe? Definitely!!!*

The studies thematically related to the pandemic, which were posted on the KRUS website, were also taken care of:

- *Let's not get stressed out in the face of the coronavirus threat,*
- *SARS-CoV-2 COVID-19 coronavirus,*
- *I have a bad feeling about this – how to deal with being in a bad mood during the coronavirus pandemic? A short subjective tutorial.*

In previous years, the Prevention Office launched a preventive campaign concerning accidents and occupational diseases of farmers related to the presence of animals on farms under the slogan: "You are not at risk when you know and respect animals". In 2020, the previous activities in campaigns with new slogans and logos were continued:

- *The role of the farmer in avoiding falls,*

15. <https://www.krus.gov.pl/zadania-krus/prewencja/wypadki-przy-pracy-rolniczej/zgloszenie-wypadku/>, access 12.11.2020.

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- *You are wise, you will not cause an accident,*
- *Farmer, do not get ticks,*
- *Bones and joints also a farmer's matter.*

It was decided to rebuild, as technically possible, the preventative content presented on the KRUS website. This was done in order to make it easier for farmers to access these materials. New tabs such as “Child safety on the farm” and “Safety on the farm” were created.

The Prevention Office of the KRUS Head Office continued to implement those activities planned for 2020, which could be carried out despite the epidemiological situation. Among other things, a brochure was developed entitled “Accidents at work and occupational diseases of farmers and preventive actions of KRUS in 2019”. It was posted on the Fund's website, printed and forwarded to KRUS Branches, to institutions cooperating with KRUS to improve safety and to libraries of agricultural universities.

On March 16, 2020, a contract was concluded to print a puzzle, a memory game and a card game for children. As is the case every year, a procedure was carried out to issue a preventive calendar for farmers for 2021. The calendar has been prepared for many years and is very popular among the rural population.

The regulations for granting the trade fair award “Product increasing work safety on a farm” were developed. Work was carried out to update the Farm Life and Health Protection Rules issued by the President of the Fund.

The Prevention Office also took non-standard actions, forced by the pandemic. There are two separate invitations on the Fund's website – for farmers and children – encouraging them to use popularizing materials on the KRUS website and Facebook. Among other things, the already existing tool was used, which is the e-learning course entitled “We are safe in the countryside – we prevent falls.” There were prizes for children who solved it – as many as 100 scooters were to be given away. The rules for drawing prizes are available on the Fund's website. This activity took place entirely on the internet, without the need to contact the participants directly. Participating children sent in their applications via e-mail. After completing the test, the child printed the certificate of completion and sent it to the Prevention Office together with the application form. Applications could be submitted until September 30, 2020. Since the announcement of the draw, i.e. from June 29 this year, a total of 1,470 applications have been submitted, and over 10,000 entries have been registered on the course website during that time. On October 9, 2020, at the Headquarters of the Agricultural Social Insurance Fund, a drawing of prizes was held, crowning this action.

The e-learning course “We are safe in the countryside – we prevent falls” is a tool which, in a modern form, introduces children to the risk of accidents on farms and teaches them correct behavior while staying in the yard. The course is still available at <https://prewencja.krus.gov.pl/>. This solution is especially useful during a pandemic, it enables children to gain knowledge anywhere and anytime, also free from learning, in the company of siblings and parents. By playing, children acquire knowledge, thanks to which they become aware of threats to life and health on the farm.

A completely new activity carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic aimed at children aged 11 to 14 was a competition for composing a preventive nursery rhyme entitled, “I feel good when I rhyme about safety”. The aim of the competition was to promote correct habits and behavior of children related to work and play on the farm, and to popularize the “List of particularly dangerous activities related to running a farm, which should not be entrusted to children under 16 years of age”. Composing a nursery rhyme was supposed to motivate children to broaden their knowledge about safe stay on a farm.

The competition was carried out during the holiday season, 212 works were submitted. The summary was made in mid-September 2020. Safety is an important issue – this is how we can summarize the message of all works sent by the farmers’ children. Twenty authors of the best nursery rhymes were awarded with smartwatches.

During the pandemic, the Prevention Office prepared and carried out one more new activity. It was the National Test Competition in the field of Safe Work in the Farm – Safe Handling of Farm Animals. This time it was addressed to adult farmers who were subject to farmers’ social insurance at the time the test was taken. In order to participate in the competition, you had to register on the indicated website and provide correct answers to 20 multiple-choice questions in the shortest possible time. 706 farmers took part in the competition, and 100 of them were awarded. The prizes were tool trolleys. The moodle platform was used to carry out this new activity. It is a modern tool that during the coronavirus pandemic enables educational activities for farmers without the need for direct contact. The subject of the competition was related to the preventive campaign to reduce the number of accidents at work and occupational diseases related to the handling of animals, under the slogan “You are not at risk when you know and respect animals”. The competition was announced in early August 2020 and ran until September 15, 2020.

The Prevention Office of the KRUS Headquarters in cooperation with the IT and Telecommunications Office is in the process of implementing electronic puzzles for children illustrating the list of particularly dangerous activities related to running

a farm, which cannot be entrusted to children under 16 years of age. The puzzles will be placed on the Internet and will allow children to learn through play the knowledge of safe behavior on a farm.

The Prevention Office is finishing the preparation of a board game for children, which also deals with the list of particularly dangerous activities related to running a farm, which must not be entrusted to children under the age of 16.

In previous years, it was a tradition of the Prevention Office of the KRUS Headquarters to award the “KRUS Safety Label” during the gala of the International Agricultural Technology Fair AGROTECH in Kielce. Due to sanitary restrictions, this year the “KRUS Safety Label” was awarded exceptionally at the Headquarters of the Agricultural Social Insurance Fund. The “KRUS Safety Label” and the “DOBROŚLAW” statuette, symbolizing protection of the health and life of farmers, were awarded to safe polyurethane shoes – models 1042, 2048, 2051 – and men’s shoes with a composite toe cap and an anti-puncture insert – model 707 by PPO PP Strzelce Opolskie. The official awarding of the “KRUS Safety Label” took place at the Fund’s Head Office on September 23, 2020.

Prevention Office employees want to use every possible information channel to reach farmers. Hence the idea to use the e-KRUS portal, which is a kind of internet platform for farmers, to communicate messages about new activities of the Prevention Office. At the beginning, an information campaign was carried out in this way to inform the farmers about the most important national preventive events organized during the pandemic: the e-learning competition “We are safe in the countryside – we prevent falls” and the National Test Competition on Safe Work on a Farm – Safe Handling of Farm Animals. The range of the e-KRUS tool is approximately 30,000 users. Based on this number, we hope to reach a wider group of recipients with the knowledge about safe work on a farm. In the future, it is planned to place a preventive tab on this portal, which will include, among others, documents needed to report an accident during work on a farm. The farmer could send the application directly from their e-mail box, which everyone using this portal will have at their disposal.

The Prevention Office, as part of its standard activities, carried out inspections in the Regional Branches in Olsztyn and Warsaw. The inspections concerned mainly the correct receipt of reports of accidents at work in agriculture, the implementation of tasks in the field of preventing accidents and occupational diseases of farmers, the functioning of the Preventive Events Calendar, the correctness of completion.

In the case of the inspection of the Regional Branch in Warsaw, due to the epidemic situation in the country, the Deputy President of KRUS, Mr. Artur Warzocha, agreed to carry out activities on the basis of documentation transferred from the Branch

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to the seat of the Prevention Office at the KRUS Headquarters in Warsaw. The date of the inspection in the Regional Branch in Łódź has been postponed to the fourth quarter of 2020. In the last quarter, the Prevention Office carries out an inspection of the Regional Branch in Bydgoszcz, in the same way as it was done in Warsaw, i.e. on the basis of documentation submitted to the headquarters of the Prevention Office at the Headquarters KRUS in Warsaw.

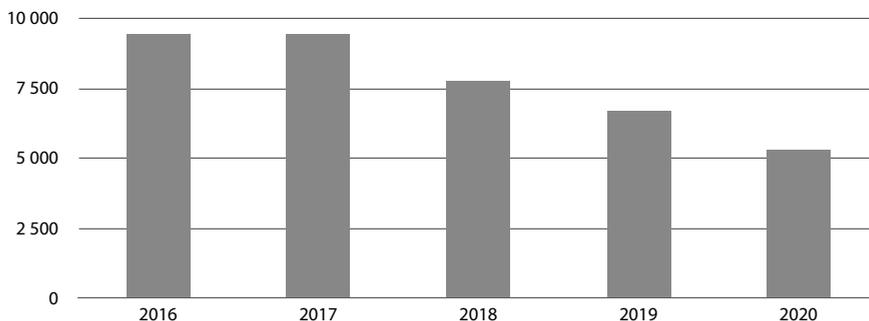
Preventive statistics for the first half of 2020

Prevention Office employees prepared statistical statements for the first quarter and the first half of 2020.

Accident reports

In the first half of 2020, 5,302 accidents were reported to local offices and regional branches of KRUS, 1,430 (21.2%) less than in the first half of the previous year.

Figure 1. Accidents reported in the first half of the year in 2016–2020



Source: Agricultural Social Insurance Fund.

Decisions made on the implementation of applications for one-off compensation for injuries as a result of an accident during agricultural work

The procedure for the implementation of 5,049 applications for one-off compensation for permanent or long-term health impairment or death caused by an accident during agricultural work was completed. There were 4 510 accidents during work in agriculture, within the meaning of the Act on social insurance for farmers (regardless of the health consequences of the accident).

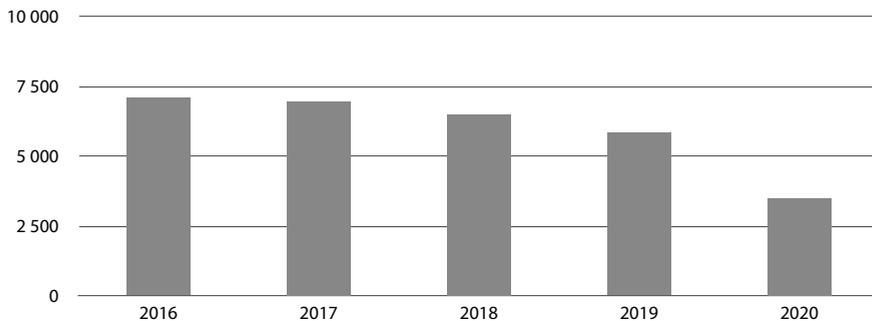
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Among the decisions made were:

- 3,498 decisions granting one-off compensation (66.5% of all decisions) – including 57 based on appeals,
- 1,666 decisions refusing one-off compensation (31.6% of decisions),
- 100 cancellations due to the waiver of claims (1.9% of decisions).

One-off compensations were paid for 18 fatal accidents, and 8 people were found to be unable to live independently due to accidents during agricultural work. The number of accidents resulting in the payment of claims decreased by 2,343 (40.1%) compared to the same period last year. Fatal accidents decreased by 5 (21.7%).

Figure 2. Accidents resulting in the payment of one-off claims in the first half of the year in 2016–2020



Source: Agricultural Social Insurance Fund.

The largest number of accidents resulting in injuries were recorded in the following groups:

- “people falling” – 1,640 injured (46.9% of accidents ended with granting a one-off compensation in the reporting period),
- “Other events” – 477 injured (13.6% of accidents),
- “being hit, crushed, or bitten by an animal” – 395 injured (11.3% of accidents),
- “ being grabbed and hit by moving parts of machines and devices” – 386 injured (11.0% of accidents).

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Table 1. Accidents resulting in the payment of one-off claims in the first half of 2019–2020

Description	In total					Including fatalities		
	2019	2020	the dif- ference 2020– 2019	2020/ 2019	Share of accident groups in %	2019	2020	the dif- ference 2020– 2019
Total including:	5 841	3 498	-2 343	59,9	100,0	23	18	-5
people falling	2 747	1 640	-1 107	59,7	46,9	3	2	-1
objects falling	401	199	-202	49,6	5,7	7	4	-3
contact with sharp hand tools and other sharp objects	267	171	-96	64,0	4,9	0	0	0
being hit or crushed by materials and mechanically transported items	119	80	-39	67,2	2,3	0	0	0
being run over, hit, or caught by a moving vehicle	90	64	-26	71,1	1,8	6	4	-2
being caught and hit by moving parts of machines and devices	689	386	-303	56,0	11,0	3	3	0
being hit, crushed, or bitten by animals	697	395	-302	56,7	11,3	1	2	1
fire, explosion, natural forces	30	28	-2	93,3	0,8	0	0	0
result of extreme temperatures	40	15	-25	37,5	0,4	0	0	0
result of hazardous materials	2	5	3	250,0	0,1	0	0	0
sudden illness	54	38	-16	70,4	1,1	1	2	1
other	705	477	-228	67,7	13,6	2	1	-1

Source: Agricultural Social Insurance Fund.

Occupational diseases

In the first half of the year, 162 applications for one-off compensations for health impairment resulting from an occupational disease were submitted, i.e. 90 (35.9%) less than in the corresponding period of the previous year.

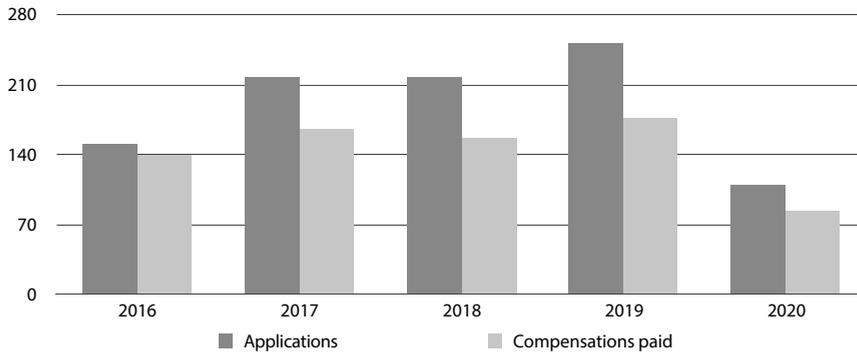
There were 31 negative and 84 granting decisions.

Compared to the first half of the previous year, the number of negative decisions decreased by 51 (62.2%) and the number of decisions granting one-off compensation decreased by 92 (52.3%).

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Among 84 occupational diseases causing health damage and the payment of one-off compensations, infectious diseases dominated – 69 cases.

Figure 3. Applications submitted and compensations paid for occupational diseases in the first half of the year in 2016–2020



Source: Agricultural Social Insurance Fund.

Table 2. Data on accidents at work and occupational diseases of farmers in the first half of 2020 by voivodship

Voivodship	Number of accidents				Number of occupational diseases
	reported	ended with a negative decision	ended with a one-off compensation payment	fatal	
dolnośląskie (OR Wrocław)	174	63	104	0	1
kujawsko-pomorskie (OR Bydgoszcz)	416	184	186	2	2
lubelskie (OR Lublin)	689	172	615	0	10
lubuskie (OR Zielona Góra)	85	31	59	1	5
łódzkie (OR Łódź)	446	136	402	1	4
małopolskie (OR Kraków)	455	147	292	0	1
mazowieckie (OR Warszawa)	671	198	453	2	17
opolskie (OR Opole)	80	22	43	2	0
podkarpackie (OR Rzeszów)	367	155	239	0	3
podlaskie (OR Białystok)	474	113	261	1	12
pomorskie (OR Gdańsk)	153	51	96	1	6
śląskie (OR Częstochowa)	80	30	45	0	0

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Table 2. Data on accidents at work and occupational diseases of farmers in the first half of 2020 by voivodship (cont.)

Voivodeship	Number of accidents				Number of occupational diseases
	reported	ended with a negative decision	ended with a one-off compensation payment	fatal	
świętokrzyskie (OR Kielce)	275	52	147	1	1
warmińsko-mazurskie (OR Olsztyn)	268	94	162	3	15
wielkopolskie (OR Poznań)	617	204	349	4	7
zachodniopomorskie (OR Koszalin)	52	14	45	0	0
	5 302	1 666	3 498	18	84

Source: Agricultural Social Insurance Fund.

Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the work of the Prevention Office in 2020. Some of the tasks that could be carried out under the new conditions were unchanged.

Several projects conducted by the Office for years were abandoned. Among other things, one of the flagship activities of the Prevention Bureau, which is the National Competition “Safe Farm”, was not held. This year, was supposed to be 18th edition of the event “The National Art Competition for Children”, which had been organized for many years, was held under new circumstances.

Most of the activities have been modified. The pandemic state forced the division of employees into two teams. In the case of many ongoing projects, this is a major difficulty. Office employees devote more attention to proper communication with each other. For communication, e-mail or telephone contact must often suffice. It was necessary to find new ways of carrying out tasks and new methods of communication with the farmer, i.e. with personal contact limited to the necessary minimum. The employees of the Prevention Office successfully found their footing in this new reality.

Ongoing tasks have been modified so that they could be continued during the COVID-19 pandemic. New measures have been initiated that take into account the requirements of the existing situation.

The epidemiological state its the related restrictions have created many difficulties and inconveniences at work. At the same time, this situation is an opportunity to look at preventive measures and the communication channels with farmers from a different perspective. It is possible that many of the new projects would never have come into existence had it not been for the pandemic. Certainly, this is an opportunity to accelerate actions aimed at enabling farmers to contact the Agricultural Social Insurance Fund via the Internet, which is an undeniable convenience.

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received: 20.10.2020
accepted: 20.11.2020

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