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SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE: THE STUDY ON FARMERS’ PERCEPTION AND PRACTICES REGARDING NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT AND LIMITING LOSSES

Abstract

The paper presents the results of a scientific project focused on limiting nutrient losses from farms by introducing measures to apply fertilizers in a more sustainable way. It is a case study of selected aspects of farm management, focusing on the issue of sustainable agriculture and their tools. The main aim of the study was to analyse and evaluate farmers’ knowledge of the fertilizing process and its aspects, as well as applying sustainable agricultural activities on farms. The study emphasised the importance of nutrient management, as very important for sustainable farming. Also, the links between farmers’ opinions and their activities were analysed. The important issue concerned measures for sustainable farm management introduced on the farms, as well as measures to limit nutrient leaching into groundwater. Twenty-eight farmers from two regions in Poland were interviewed about their perceptions for the case study. In general, the farmers considered their farm activities to be more sustainable than in the past. They demonstrated an understanding of the general idea of sustainable agriculture. However, many farmers still demonstrated a poor grasp of nutrient flows and nutrient balances on farms. Their knowledge and perception was based on general, rather than specific knowledge gleaned from an academic/vocational course. The farmers demonstrated a realization that there were some new, or low-cost measures that could be introduced to make management more sustainable and pro-environmental, but there was still a need for wider adoption of sustainable agricultural practices.

Key words: farmers, fertilizers, nutrients, sustainable agriculture