



Implementation of the OFSA PROW IT system in ARMA.

Client's profile.

The Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture (the ARMA) was formed in 1994 in order to support development of agriculture and rural areas. The ARMA was designated by the Polish government to perform the function of an accredited payment agency. Its responsibilities include implementation of instruments co-financed with EU funds and granting aid financed with state funds. As an executing authority of rural policies, the Agency cooperates closely with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. It is also supervised by the Ministry of Finance within the scope of public funds management. Main beneficiaries of activities organised by the ARMA are farmers, villagers, traders, and local governments. The ARMA also helps entities operating in the fishing industry.

Client's requirements.

Implementation of the OFSA PROW system determined by the scale of tasks performed by the ARMA as a part of the Rural Development Programme for 2007-2013. They included over ten aid activities within four axes, thousands of applications for subsidies, and billions of Euros to be granted. On the other hand, the system had to take EU and domestic legislative requirements into account because spending aid funds has to be carefully planned, performed according to specific procedures, and reported correctly.

The Rural Development Programme for 2007-2013 conducted by the ARMA has been one of the largest Polish aid programmes for the agricultural and food industry, its budget being 17.2 billion Euros. The budget of the Programme includes funds of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (13.2 billion

Euros) and funds from the state budget (approximately 4 billion Euros).

Twenty second activities have been started as a part of the RDP, fourteen out of which are implemented by the ARMA, six – by voivodeship governments, one – by the Agricultural Market Agency, and one – by the Foundation of Assistance Programmes for Agriculture FAPA. The aim of the RDP for 2007-2013 is to increase multifunctionality of agriculture and rural areas. The purpose of this large-scale programme is to strengthen Polish farms in terms of economy, increase competitiveness of agriculture and food industry, and provide instruments for diversification of economic activities by obtaining and creating alternative sources of income for villagers.

Client's benefits.

Owing to OFSA, it is possible to process submitted applications efficiently. As a result, a half of budget funds available in the RDP for 2007-2013 was "contracted" as early as in August 2010 and Poland has become the European leader in this programme. Over 75,000 applications were processed and almost PLN 15.9 billion was paid until that time. Collecting data related to application processing in the system enables regular monitoring of the number of applications; their

processing stage; the number of reserved and paid funds; and the stage of annual budgets implementation divided into activities, recruitment processes, and years. What is also very important, it enables generation of annual reports required by the European Union. Owing to integration with other systems operating in the ARMA, it was possible to automate verification of applications by providing cross audits with other aid programmes, concerning participation of applicants in other RDP activities as well.

The system is constantly improved in order to reduce application processing time, e.g. as a result of providing an electronic version of the application form for subsidy [PDF], which enables automatic import of data. It facilitates faster subsidies payments to beneficiaries. More efficient application processing raises attractiveness of aid programmes in the opinion of potential beneficiaries. Hence the increased farmers' interest in the programme.

Successful completion of the Rural Development Programme will certainly be, to a great extent, a result of the implementation of the system.

Description of the solution.

As a tool for distributing funds, the OFSA PROW system is one of strategic IT systems in Poland (the ARMA is also a payment agency). The system supports distribution of funds in the areas of investment activities (which are handled by local ARMA divisions) and delegated activities (handled by voivodeship governments). The latter include the Leader activity, i.e. social activation in rural areas by starting local activity groups which implement local developmental strategies.

The IT tool implemented by Asseco Poland S.A. enables electronic processing of applications for subsidy and applications for payment; generating agreements and

annexes; making payments; checking beneficiaries' data in relevant registers; and performing cross audits with other aid programmes and within RDP. The tool

was created considering procedures which define application processing and with observance of formal and legal requirements (specifying envelopes and limits, announcing recruitment processes, monitoring performance of agreements with beneficiaries, and performing audits). The software is constantly developed and adapted to new needs of the Agency. Intensive cooperation resulted in mutual knowledge transfer and the development of an efficient system.